

# Devine opines on career renaissance in film

By Kam Williams  
Sentinel-Voice

Houston's Loretta Devine is a classically-trained thespian and vocalist who burst onto the scene in 1981 when she played Lorrell as a member of the original Broadway cast of "Dreamgirls." She then used that stage success as a springboard for an enviable career on TV and in film, which has landed the versatile actress five NAACP Image Awards.

Among her eighty acting credits are memorable appearances in such well-received films as "Crash," "Waiting to Exhale," "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge" and "Woman, Thou Art Loosed," and recurring roles on TV shows like "Grey's Anatomy," "Boston Public" and "Everybody Hates Chris."

Loretta is now enjoying something of a renaissance on screen, as she is starring in two movies currently in theaters, "Dirty Laundry" and "This Christmas." Plus, she has another, "First Sunday," set to open next month.

KW: How did you decide to do "Dirty Laundry?"

LD: What really interested me was the writer/director Maurice Jamal. You know how you meet somebody and there's something special about him? Plus, the size of the role. When you're Black in Hollywood, it's very hard to get that kind of piece to do. Have you seen the movie?

KW: Yes.

LD: Remember the monologue at the dinner table at the end? That was such a challenge, especially because we had such a small window to complete it in. I really wanted to see if I could meet that challenge. It was very low budget, so we worked long hours, and hard. And I thought the content was incredible. It was about Maurice's mother to some extent, so it was a personal experience for him, and that made it more interesting to me. Also, it was sort of a different character from the sweet, wonderful person that I usually get to play.

KW: It's funny that you have two movies out at the same time where you're playing a family matriarch.

LD: But they're flips of each other. They're totally different women. We actually shot "Dirty Laundry" two years ago. Maurice had been struggling to get it mainstreamed,



Loretta Devine is a top-notch entertainer.

and finally it happened for him. Things happen when they happen.

KW: So, it's just a coincidence that they've been released together. How would you describe your character in "Dirty Laundry" — Evelyn?

LD: She's a washer woman who smokes, and drinks and curses and is not considered a very good mother, yet is a wonderful mother in her own way.

KW: How do you decide whether to take a role?

LD: Well, you're lucky just to get roles. Be mindful of who you're asking. [Laughs] My career has been blessed. Sometimes I feel like I'm so favored. Like now, having three films opening back-to-back. "First Sunday" is an ensemble piece, but I still have a very good role in that. This is feeling like the beginning of my career, even though I've been doing it forever, since the "Dreamgirls" days 25 years ago.

KW: I'm on the nominating committee of the NAACP Image Awards. You've won five times before. Do you think one of the studios will get behind you for one of these new pictures?

LD: Who knows? I hope so. After a while, you just do the work, and whatever else happens is sort of like gravy. I don't even think about it really, because it's so unpredictable,

and everything depends on what's in season or what's hot at the time. I've been blessed with incredible projects like "Waiting to Exhale." And I've worked with just about everybody in my peer group in some capacity, whether in a small role, or whatever.

KW: And you must be bringing a lot to the table, too, to remain in demand and to be associated with so many successful productions.

LD: Well, you know, I have a Doctorate in Theater from the University of Houston, a Masters in Fine Arts from Brandeis University, and I studied in New York. I think the bottom line is the work, whether or not people can relate to the work, whether or not you can create characters that people can identify with. I'm lucky that I look like I'm kin to everybody. [Laughs] Everybody comes up to me and says, "You look just like so and so," or "I look just like you." I get that so much from all kinds of people.

KW: To what do you attribute your longevity in showbiz?

LD: For one thing, the studying. And I'm always on time, and I work really hard. I think that makes a difference in whether or not you continue to work. And I love it. This is what I always wanted to do since I was young. God is so good to me. I think it's heaven sent. I can't think of it any other way.

KW: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

LD: I'm afraid to give advice, ever since Kanye West put out that song, what is it, "Can't Tell Me Nothing." I don't know if young people want advice, and everything is

so different from when I started long ago. I think a few of the key things are the same: that you need to love it, and that you be prepared to struggle, because it looks easy, but it's not. It affects your personal life. It's rewarding, but it also takes you away from family and friends a lot. You might think you're going to be rich, but you have less than others, yet people might think you have everything. You have to study and work hard, and know your stuff better than anybody else around in order to keep working. Some young people get one big break, but that's all they get.

KW: Are you happy? I first posed that question, by the way, to your co-star, Columbus Short, in "This Christmas."

LD: I don't know why anybody would bother even asking Columbus that question because he's always grinning. His spirit is just like a bouncing ball. Who would even think to ask him that? Everybody just assumes he's the happiest man in the world.

KW: Are you happy?

LD: Yes, I'm happy. When you're able to picture things in your life, and then accomplish them, it's just a wonderful thing. Being in this business is so much fun. You get a chance to meet some incredible people and to go incredible places. You may not be a millionaire, but you make enough to live well and to support your family. And you just feel favored. And I'm in love, so I'm happy!

KW: You're in love? Do you want to share anything about that?

LD: No, I don't. [Chuckles]

(See Loretta, Page 10)

## Pimp C

(Continued from Page 6)  
"Ridin' Dirty" in 1996, considered a rap classic.

Over laid-back beats, they laid out incisive details that remain Southern rap mainstays: descriptions of sex and conspicuous consumption, wood-grain steering wheels and triple-beam scales used to weigh drugs.

The duo's career was derailed when Pimp C was jailed for three years in 2002 on gun charges. But he got as much exposure as ever, as the "Free Pimp C" slogan spread.

An unauthorized album of Pimp C's freestyle rhymes was released while he was in prison. When he and Bun B finally put out an album this year, they felt such a need to

re-establish themselves they titled their album "Underground Kingz," as if to underscore a new start.

Critics praised the CD, which included the hit "International Player's Anthem (I Choose You)," featuring OutKast. Pimp C's verse riffs on high-class women and cars: "I'm pullin' Bentleys off the lot. Smashed up the gray one, bought me a red. Every time we hit the parking lot we turn heads," he raps.

Barry Weiss, CEO of Jive, said in a statement: "We mourn the unexpected loss of Chad. He was truly a thoughtful and kindhearted person. He will be remembered for his talent and profound influence as a pioneer

in bringing Southern rap to the forefront."

Butler, who grew up in Port Arthur, Texas, came from a musical lineage. His father was a professional trumpet player, and the rapper studied classical music in high school. He even received a Division I rating on a tenor solo at a University Interscholastic League choir competition.

"That's how I came up listening to everything," he said in a 2005 interview. "Music don't have no color or no face. It's a universal language. I think being exposed to all that kind of stuff influences the way I make records."

Pimp C is survived by a wife and three children.

Follow the Rainbow to...

# Good Health!

When your family counts on you to stay healthy, you can count on Rainbow Medical Centers' board certified family physicians to provide the highest quality of primary and urgent care services. Our facilities offer lab, x-ray, and are open evenings and weekends for your convenience. Rainbow Medical Centers has also been awarded Joint Commission Accreditation (JCAHO) for maintaining national standards of quality healthcare.

Track your health at  
**My Health Zone**  
You'll find it at...  
[www.rainbowmedical.com](http://www.rainbowmedical.com)

**RAINBOW Medical Centers**

**PRIMARY & URGENT CARE**

Board Certified Physicians  
Most Insurances Accepted

|  |  |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| <b>West</b><br>255-6657<br>1341 S. Rainbow Blvd. | <b>East</b><br>438-4003<br>821 N. Nellis Blvd. | <b>North</b><br>655-0550<br>4920 Lone Mtn. Rd. | <b>Rampart</b><br>254-9192<br>8522 Del Webb Blvd. | <b>Galleria</b><br>436-5800<br>1397 Galleria Dr. | <b>Golden Triangle</b><br>657-9555<br>1302 W. Craig Rd. | <b>Boulder Hwy</b><br>898-1405<br>4241 S. Nellis Blvd. |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|