

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, November 27, 2002

## From Oscar to Bond

### Award-winner Berry brings strength to the role of 007's leading lady

KRT—Halle Berry gave one of Oscar's longest and most moving speeches in March when she became the first black woman to win the best-actress accolade.

And she still has something to say. Her Oscar was for *Monster's Ball*, a small but harrowing film that was shot in four weeks in the Deep South. She can now be seen in *Die Another Day*, a James Bond opus that's anything but small. It required six months of location shooting in Iceland, England and Spain. She plays Jinx, the good/bad girl who gives Pierce Brosnan's Bond more than he bargained for.

What Berry wants us to know is that Jinx is one Bond Girl who doesn't swoon.

"So many times, the women in Bond movies start off being strong and determined, with their own agenda," Berry said in a recent telephone conversation. "But after maybe five minutes with macho James Bond, they swoon into his arms. It took Pussy Galore (*Goldfinger*) a little longer than five minutes, but she wound up swooning."

Not this time, Mr. Bond. "Jinx isn't like that," Berry insisted. "All their verbal exchanges are as equals, and so are their love scenes. This time there was a definite effort to make James more vulnerable and the women characters less vulnerable."

Berry's introduction to Bond Babes was as a young girl watching *Dr. No's* Ursula Andress emerge from the ocean like a mythical sea goddess, with a knife strapped to her bikini.

"I don't even know how old I was when I saw *Dr. No*," she says. "I just remember watching it on television and thinking how glamorous and beautiful everything and everyone was. I didn't grasp the storyline and I had only a very basic understanding of the sexual politics between Sean Connery and Ursula Andress."

In *Die Another Day*, Berry's Jinx makes a similar entrance, striding through the ocean waves with a big "Here I am, world!" grin and a knife tied to her bikini. "This is the 40th anniversary of the James Bond films," she says. "Some of the scenes, like Jinx emerging from

the ocean, are intended to have a commemorative air."

Berry's performance so impressed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that the studio signed her to a series of films that will feature Jinx as a CIA agent. Who knows, even Bond could pop up in a Jinx film. "I definitely have an idea that James Bond and Jinx have not seen the last of each other," Berry said.

Her schedule has few blank pages, with five projects in production and pre-production. And some of the roles she has been offered since the Oscar were not written specifically for a black actress.

"That means a lot. Maybe in some ways, that means some doors have opened up. But I know there is plenty of racism in the world, and some doors will never be open. ... I've always thought the ideal situation would be to make both small, forceful movies and also make big-budget, straight entertainment movies. And that's what I'm able to do now."

*X-Men 2*, due for release in early summer 2003, falls into the big-budget, straight entertainment category. But *October Squall*, which will start filming in 2003, fits the small, forceful prototype.

"*October Squall* was one of the films written specifically for a woman of color," she says. "I will play a rape victim who decides to keep the baby. I feel like it could be another *Monster's Ball*."

Her Oscar acceptance speech, in which she named black actresses who suffered career setbacks because of their race, was warmly received at the time. But an inevitable backlash followed.

Berry smiled at a "Saturday Night Live" parody, in which her character cited, among others, "the lady who stands by the Slurpee machine in the 7-Eleven commercials." But she regrets not having mentioned co-star Billy Bob Thornton.

"Some of the media commented on that, and it was very remiss of me," she said. "I was on such an enormous high at that moment. I wanted all the women who had been overlooked to share this won-

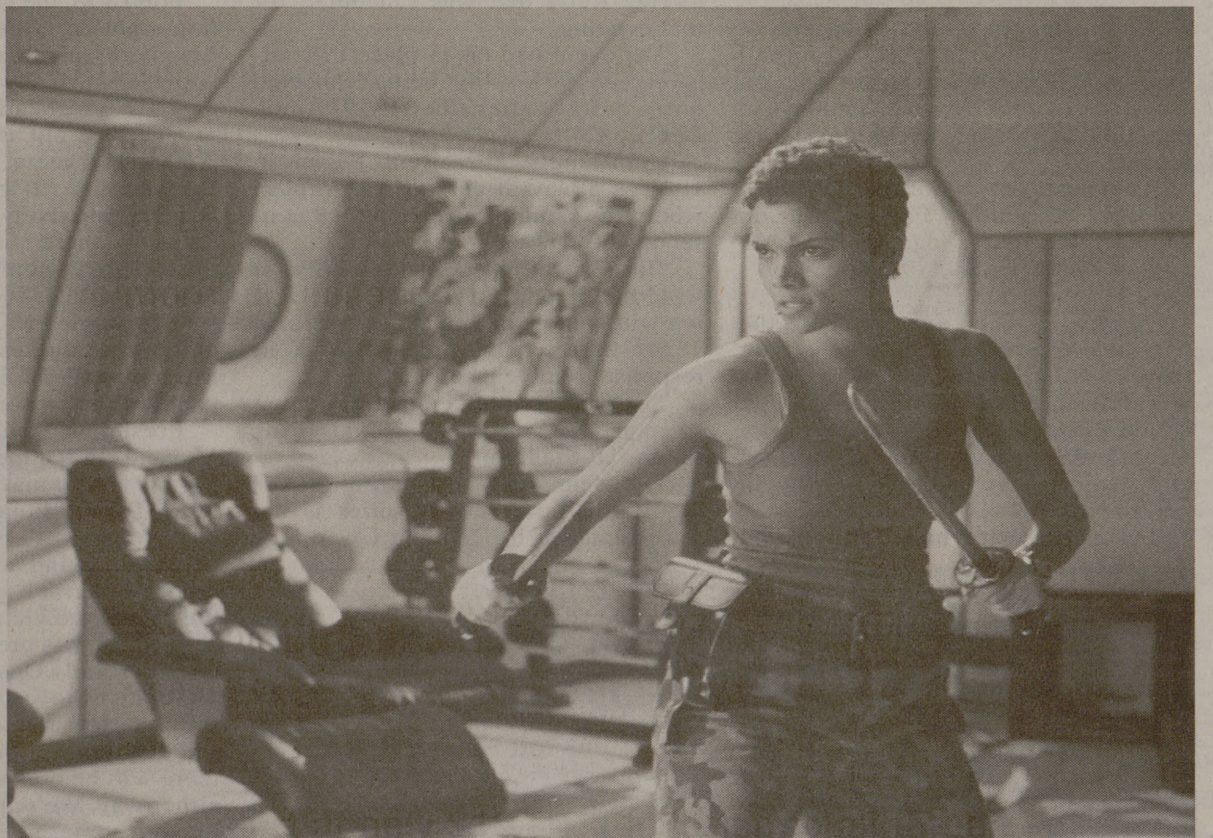


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT

Actress Halle Berry plays "Jinx" in the latest installment of the James Bond film franchise, *Die Another Day*, costarring Pierce Brosnan. Berry won the best-actress Oscar for her work in last year's *Monster's Ball*.

derful moment with me, and I wanted to name them all. They had the same problems that all women do in male-dominated professions, but those problems were multiplied a hundred times by the fact that they were women of color. But I was very upset when I realized that I hadn't mentioned Billy Bob."

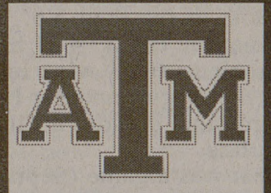
Another criticism came from Angela Bassett, who told a national publication that she felt Berry's role in *Monster's Ball*, with its explicit sex

scene with Thornton, was demeaning. Bassett's comment started a controversy among both black and white actors.

"I felt sad for a day or so," Berry says. "It did bring me down a little bit from that wonderful high. But I told myself that Angela, God bless her, has the right to her feelings. And if she wants to express them, well, then God bless Angela, that's her right, too."

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**Seton Hall**

**Baylor**

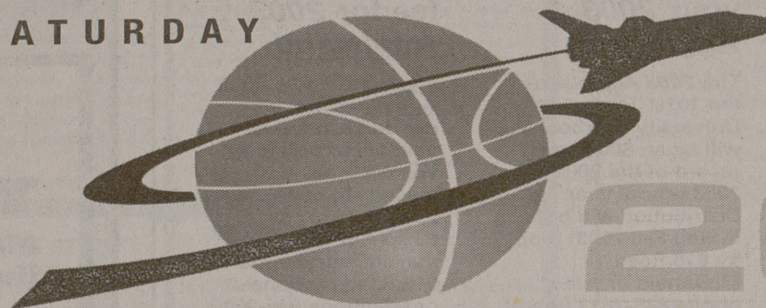
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