

Fishburne goes under 'Deep Cover' in cop film

By JORGE CARREON

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His name isn't all that common, but 30-year-old Larry Fishburne has been working the American film industry for big roles since he was 14.

After being cast in Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" at the age of 14, Fishburne knew he had a shot at becoming a successful actor. Fishburne has established a canon of work with such luminaries as Steven Spielberg ("The Color Purple") and Spike Lee ("School Daze").

But if you ask him how he is most remembered, he will tell you it was for his role in "Boyz n' The Hood," which thrust him into the mainstream America's conscience. No longer a trend, "Boyz" finally captured the minority experience with truth and reverence.

"For me it was an opportunity to play a character we hadn't seen before," Fishburne said. "To be involved in a very serious piece that spoke to African American men of my generation, of generations before me, of generations to come; then that's a powerful tool. It sent a message that we can take control of our sons, that we can control them if we have the courage to stand up and control them."

Initially, life after "Boyz" offered little variety for Fishburne, but all that changed quickly. Fishburne currently is starring in

the Broadway-bound production of Pulitzer-Tony winning playwright August Wilson's "Two Trains Running." Then there is his current release, "Deep Cover."

The film is a gritty detective thriller about the seduction of greed and power. Directed by Bill (A Rage in Harlem) Duke, Fishburne portrays a cop recruited by the Drug Enforcement Agency to infiltrate a drug ring. What he finds instead questions his own ethics and values—quite a switch from "Boyz."

"It was great," Fishburne said. "This is where I get to do the whole 360 thing. I'm really happy about it because I think I really did a good job in terms of what I wanted to do. It's the kind of role I always wanted to do. I couldn't have picked a better one."

When it comes to selecting roles, Fishburne is not motivated by any particular message. He is interested in the challenge. The performance results from years of observing the smaller details of normal people. The result is a powerful realism.

Like many artists, Fishburne turned to the guidance of role models to help him in his pursuit of an acting career.

"It was difficult," Fishburne said. "In the Hispanic community as well as the African American community, role models are scarce. There were men in my life, one man who was a college professor, another was a movie director and another was an actor. And not all of them were black. We



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA

He may not be a household name, but Fishburne (right) has worked in Hollywood since age 14.

shouldn't limit ourselves to just our race or our group when we're in search of role models."

The truth remains that for every positive image on screen, a stereotype will always lurk in the background. Fishburne remains hopeful that a new generation of filmmakers will improve the situation, on and off the screen. That's not his crusade, but reality. "You do whatever you feel is necessary for you to get where you want to go," Fishburne said.

And for minorities who don't want to take on Hollywood's offers of playing the pimp, addict or gang member, he offered this incentive.

"Then you create what you want to do. Write it. Go find the money. Go do it. It's

possible. Spike (Lee) proved that it is possible."

Harbor no illusions, however. Even Fishburne admitted his career has been hard.

He still has a few dreams of his own, namely writing and directing his own projects. What are the prospects of these plans?

They are still in the planning process, and he wants to keep them a secret, for now at least. "I don't want to put the jinx on it," he said.

And to the thousands of eager artists bursting out of universities these next weeks, Fishburne says keep a realistic vision in mind. "It's all about having the courage to go ahead and live your dream," he said.

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enough to buzz to the marriage capital of the world with Parker. Allegedly, Julia's ensue, James Caan coming off an impressive turn in "For the Boys," co-stars.

"Mo' Money" (Columbia Pictures)

Damon Wayans, from TV's "In Living Color," wrote this story of a small-time hustler who gets involved in a credit card scam. Wayans has lots of talent and the inventive writing on "In Living Color" means the script might be decent. But this movie also sounds cliched. And why do summer films always have a line about men falling for women? Far too objectifying, if you ask me.

"Live Wire" (New Line Cinema)

Boys playing with bombs cause lot of trouble, when the invention of the ultimate explosive results in international terrorism against U.S. senators—how convenient. Brave FBI men must save the day. Cast includes Pierce Brosnan, Ben Cross and Ron Silver.

"The Looters" (Universal)

An urban suspense adventure, or so says the early press, this Walter Hill (48 Hours) film looks like interesting entertainment. With eclectic cast Bill Paxton ("Aliens," "New Dark"), Ice T ("New Jack City") and Ice Cube, the mixture might raise it above its average plot. Potential looters cross paths with local criminals. Hill also directed "Warriors," so maybe there'll be lots of running.

"Pet Sematary II" (Paramount Pictures)

No one in Hollywood seems to know when enough is enough. While "Pet Sematary" certainly scared me, part of its effect came from horrormeister Stephen King's novel. Number II doesn't have that, so it could turn into one of those other great horror sequels like "Scanner 31" and any film of the "Friday the 13th" chain.

"Bebe's Kids" (Paramount Pictures)

Reginald Hudlin is just all over this summer. This time he co-produces with his brother



A pair of Ices: Cube and T in "Looters"

Warrington. More comic nightmares—are those even possible for the tall and winter months?—when a first date turns crazy and Bebe's kids run a trip to an amusement park.

"Prelude to a Kiss" (20th Century)

A love story. When an old man kisses Meg Ryan, their souls transpose, testing the couple's affection. This Broadway play garnered much praise, and with Chris Lucas adapting his own play, the film might have an irresistible charm. Norman René directs.

"Rapid Fire" (20th Century)

Yet another action flick, this time with Bruce Lee's strapping son Brandon and Powers Boothe. Lots of cops and drug lords fighting to break down, or build up, a heroin cartel. Lee plays a martial arts hero, Boothe a cop. Brandon's last action thriller took a dive at the box office. Maybe he doesn't have the kick of his father.

"Encino Man" (Hollywood Pictures)

Pauly Shore, Mr. MTV, stars in this film about average high schoolers who dig up a frozen dude. The caveman awakens to the 20th century, mayhem ensues. Pauly can handle a few hours on cable, but carrying an entire picture may be a little much. Think about it.

"Universal Soldier" (Carolco Pictures)

Jean-Claude Van Damme and Dolph Lundgren star. The government tries to engineer the perfect soldier, but a kink in the system allows two of the manufactured warriors to remember their past. How sensitive.

"Sister Act" (Touchstone Pictures)

Whoopi Goldberg resurfaces beaming after her Academy Award-winning role in "Ghost," in this identity comedy. Maggie Smith (Granny Wendy in "Hook") co-stars as a nun in the convent where on-the-run Whoopi hides. Goldberg's talent as a comedienne won't assure a hit—remember "Burglar"?—but it has a chance.

"A League of Their Own" (Columbia Pictures)

More stars than you can swing a bat at headline this 1943-period piece directed by Penny Marshall. Not every woman spent World War II in the factory. Some spent it on the baseball field. The performers reportedly went through rigorous training. This ain't softball, ya know.



Ooh, Baby Bebe.