



# 5

## Minutes With... **Lee Daniels**

Lee Daniels ultimately wants to make movies his 10-year-old twins can watch. But for now the Philly-born producer is focused on content that's clearly for mature audiences. From the tension-filled drama in *Monster's Ball* to the tale of a child molester's struggle against relapse in 2004's *The Woodsman*, Daniels is a crusader for truth on film. And this month Daniels, 46, takes the director's chair on another controversial film: *Shadowboxer*, a sordid tale of unconventional family values and blurred personal boundaries starring Cuba Gooding, Jr., Mo'Nique and Macy Gray. We checked in with the filmmaker to see what his first time was like:

***Shadowboxer* has quite a plot. How would you describe it?**

The story is a twisted, action-packed roller-coaster ride. It's a bit urban and Euro, a bit ghetto and gay. I think it represents America.

**Hollywood seems so scared to promote the complex topics your films explore: racism, addiction, infidelity and pedophilia. Why?**

Hollywood likes everything wrapped in a neat bow, but life is about the gray areas. Hollywood also has its own perception of Black people. I want to break those stereotypes. With *Shadowboxer*, I was asked, "Who will believe a nice-looking White man would want Mo'Nique's character?" I said, "You need to log on to a chat room or read the back of the *Village Voice*!" My mother taught me never to lie, so I try to bring honesty to the screen.

**You've been successful at telling the truth.**

It's funny. Since my heart attack last October, I define success as just waking up. Before, success was trying to get a movie made. Now it's making sure the bills are covered, and my kids are eating and in school. [Laughs] Honestly, that's what gives me happiness. REGINA R. ROBERTSON

