



No Place Like Home?

Martin Lawrence hits theaters with *Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins*, a laugh-out-loud family drama

No matter how far you fly from the nest, a trip home can snap you right back to reality. In the case of Roscoe Jenkins (Martin Lawrence), the trek from Hollywood to the Deep South transports him back to a place he spent nine years trying to forget. After tempering a lukewarm reception from Daddy Jenkins (James Earl Jones) and ducking verbal jabs from his family, RJ, as he's known to viewers of his popular TV talk show, soon realizes that nobody's feeling his lapdog-toting fiancée, Bianca (Joy Bryant), who has come along to meet her future in-laws.

"I wanted to make a reunion movie that displayed an American family with a lot of individual personalities," notes writer-director Malcolm Lee during a break on the film's Shreveport, Louisiana, set. "You can relate to Mama Jenkins (Margaret Avery), the nurturing mother who wants her son to do right, or cousin Reggie (Mike Epps), who always has money in his pocket but never

has a job." According to Lee, RJ is on an emotional journey, but there will be laughs along the way.

Lee concedes that he had Mo'Nique in mind when he created Betty, RJ's five-times-married sister, who gives back to the Lord through her prison ministry. Mo'Nique's take on Betty: "Folks get nervous when Betty comes around, but they love her because she comes straight from the heart. She don't mean no harm."

With such an all-star lineup, how did the cast keep the peace? They all stayed in their own lane, and let the laughter flow. "I don't like to force comedy by trying to find a funny beat," Lawrence says. "If it makes sense for what we're doing, then it's funny—that's where you can find the magic." Cedric the Entertainer, who portrays RJ's competitive cousin Clyde, agrees with a laugh: "We have such great talent in this film that you have to be accommodating. You just have to let it be hot and get in where you fit in."

—REGINA R. ROBERTSON



Martin Lawrence and Mo'Nique are squabbling siblings.

Lawrence goes back home with on-screen fiancée Joy Bryant.



set
scoop

Movie: *Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins*

Starring: Martin Lawrence, James Earl Jones, Mo'Nique, Joy Bryant, Cedric the Entertainer, Nicole Ari Parker, Mike Epps, Michael Clarke Duncan, Margaret Avery

Plot: A famed talk-show host returns to his roots to reunite with his estranged family.

Behind the scenes: Bodyguard-turned-actor Michael Clarke Duncan, who plays RJ's big brother, Otis, was thrilled about joining his former client Martin Lawrence. But the Oscar nominee was awed by Bryant, who quickly debunked his initial impression. "I thought she would be this prissy little thing, but she's very physical," he says. "She does push-ups and chin-ups—Joy Bryant is a warrior!"