

2006 PREVIEW WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

Wendy Williams and Sommore dish on what's up next for our biggest stars



Astrologers forecast human behavior by looking at the stars. For predictions on our favorite stars' upcoming projects, ESSENCE dialed up the gossip queen of the radio airwaves, Wendy Williams (top left), and comedian Sommore (top right). Together this opinionated pair deliver the first word on films they want to see, celebs who deserve more love, and music they hope to hear—or not. Listen in.

ESSENCE: It has been ten years since the Fugees released *The Score*. Next month they're back with their third album. Will they stay together as a group?

Wendy Williams: It'll work temporarily. There's too much history between Lauryn and Wyclef. His [fashion designer] wife, Marie Claudinette, is gonna shut it down.

Sommore: Everybody knows what happens on the road. Claudinette's going to step in and say, "Do you think I'm getting ready to sit here and sew up these clothes while you're on the road? Oh, no."

ESSENCE: Do you think someone as talented as Jay-Z can retire to the boardroom?

W.W.: I don't think it's a real retirement. He'll still collaborate with other artists, but I like him in the boardroom and in a stable relationship.

ESSENCE: Lil' Kim's calling a federal detention center home until September.



Denzel, get ready for Spike Lee's next joint.

Will folks still be checking for her when she's released?

W.W.: The real question is, How are you gonna lie to the feds? I mean, come on!

Sommore: I respect her courage. I would have given full names.

ESSENCE: After they showed their even-weirder-than-we-thought private life on

reality TV, can Whitney and Bobby make a comeback? Maybe record a CD of duets?

W.W.: A duet album is corny. Their love is beyond therapy songs—they're together forever.

ESSENCE: Former Destiny's Child LeToya Luckett is releasing an album in April. How will she do as a solo artist?

Sommore: She's gonna have it rough. The minute she hits a wrong note or wears the wrong outfit, it'll be like, "Oh, that's why they cut you."

ESSENCE: And speaking of DC, the film version of the Broadway hit *Dreamgirls*, starring Beyoncé, Jamie Foxx and Eddie Murphy, is being cast. Who do you think should play vocal powerhouse Effie?

W.W.: I want someone with real weight on her, not padding. How about Countess Vaughn? She hasn't worked since *The Parkers* and she can sing.

ESSENCE: Musicals seem to be hot for 2006. *Idlewild*, set in the 1930's, opens this

spring and features OutKast [Andre 3000 and Big Boi] with Terrence Howard, Cicely Tyson and Patti LaBelle.

Sommore: I think Dre is sexy, and I can't wait to see Patti all girdled up.

ESSENCE: What about Big Boi?

Sommore: No love scenes, please.



Bobby, Whitney and Bobbi Kristina

ESSENCE: This May, Halle returns as Storm in X3. Is she forgiven for *Catwoman*?

Sommore: I cheer for Halle because she never plays it safe, but I'm not into superheroes.

ESSENCE: What about superman Denzel Washington? He's starring in Spike Lee's *Inside Man*, playing a hardworking cop trying to save his career.

Sommore: It sounds interesting, but nothing can beat *Training Day*. I need Denzel to be wicked.

ESSENCE: I know you two have big plans for 2006. What's in your future?

Sommore: I'm filming my one-woman special to be released on DVD later in the year. It'll be a must-have for the ladies.

W.W.: My third book, *Drama Is Her Middle Name*, is out in June. It's about a deliciously diva radio personality who's all up in people's business. She's loved and hated. We just happen to have the same career [laughs].

—INTERVIEW BY REGINA R. ROBERTSON □



Will Jay-Z keep his day job?



No cell-out: Lil' Kim

Halle is back as Storm in X3.

wendy.sommore