



VALENTINE'S DAY

Love & Basketball

Love & Basketball

Director: Gina Prince-Bythewood

©: New Line Productions Inc.

Production Company:

40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks

Presented by: New Line Cinema

Executive Producers: Andrew Z. Davis, Jay Stern, Cynthia Guidry

Producers: Spike Lee, Sam Kitt

Executive in Charge of Production: Carla Fry

Production Executive: Michele McGuire

Supervising Production Co-ordinator: Emily Glatter

Production Controller: Paul Prokop

Location Manager: Wayne Middleton

Executive in Charge of Post-production: Jody Levin

Preview Technical Supervisor: Lee Tucker

1st Assistant Director: Mark Anthony Little

Script Supervisor: Martin Kitrosser

Casting: Aisha Coley

Written by: Gina Prince-Bythewood

Director of Photography: Reynaldo Villalobos

Hi-8 Footage: Reggie Rock Bythewood

A Camera Operator: Joseph D. Urbanczyk

Steadicam Operator: Joe Chess

Key Grip: R. Michael Stringer

Edited by: Terilyn Shropshire

Production Designer: Jeff Howard

Art Director: Susan K. Chan

Set Designer: Ron Wilkinson

Set Decorator: Dena Roth

Property Master: Jimmie Herron Jr

Costume Designer: Ruth Carter

Key Make-up Artist: Anita Gibson

Key Hairstylists: JoAnn Stafford-Chaney,

Sterfon Demings

Main/End Titles Designed by: Custom Film Effects

Opticals: Custom Film Effects

Colour Timer: Jim Williams

Music: Terence Blanchard

Music Conducted/Orchestrated by:

Terence Blanchard

Music Editors: Lori Slomka, Michael Dittrick

Sound Supervisor: Frederick 'Mastavisa' Howard

Sound Mixer: Willie Burton

Boom Operator: Marvin E. Lewis

Re-recording Mixers: Marc 'M3' Fishman,

Derek 'DMD' Marcil

Dialogue Editors: David Grant, Kevin Hamilton,

Robert Getty, Michael Hertlein

Sound Effects Editors: Benjamin Cook,

Michael Kamper, Lisle Engle, Mark Hunshik Choi

ADR Supervisor: Susan 'Sound Sista' Shin

Foley Artists: S. Diane Marshall, David Lee Fein

Stunt Co-ordinator: Manny Perry

Basketball Advisers: Dick Baker,

Colleen Matsuhara, Steve Spencer

Basketball Double (Sanaa Lathan): Kerrie Marshall

Cast:

Omar Epps (Quincy McCall)

Sanaa Lathan (Monica Wright)

Alfre Woodard (Camille Wright)

Dennis Haysbert (Zeke McCall)

Debbi Morgan (Nona McCall)

Harry J. Lennix (Nathan Wright)

Kyla Pratt (young Monica)

Glendon Chatman (young Quincy)

Christine Dunford (Coach Davis)

Erika Ringor (Sidra O'Neal)

Regina Hall (Lena Wright)

Jess Willard (Jama)

Chris Warren Jr (Kelvin)

Naykia Harris (young Lena)

Colleen Matsuhara (UCLA coach)

Director and screenwriter Gina Prince-Bythewood wrote the original screenplay for *Love & Basketball* while taking a sabbatical from her six years of writing various television series, including *A Different World*, *South Central*, and *Felicity*.

'I had been saying for some time "I really want to direct" and "I'll write a feature screenplay in my off-hours,"' says Prince-Bythewood, who won an Emmy nomination for writing and directing the CBS School Break Special *What about Your Friends*. 'The problem was, there aren't any off hours in television. It was scary to take time off to write a screenplay, but I realised that no one was going to just hand me a movie to direct.'

When she sat down to begin the screenplay in 1996, she knew she wanted to write a love story about young African Americans. She also knew that she wanted to do a film about women and basketball.

Prince-Bythewood has always been an all-around athlete, lettering in six sports in high school. She would have played basketball in college had she been recruited by UCLA, but she studied film instead. While at UCLA she received the Ray Stark Memorial Scholarship and the Gene Reynolds Scholarship for Directing for her 16mm thesis film, *Stitches*. She also found time to run track, making it to the PAC10 championships in triple jump during her sophomore year.

'There's been such a stigma attached to women's sports. It really wasn't until the WNBA, and this year with the Women's World Cup Soccer Team, that women were taken seriously,' says Prince-Bythewood, who still plays in LA municipal basketball leagues.

'Some people just don't think women can play ball. I wanted to put it out there that we can, and I used that as a backdrop for a love story about two people trying to achieve their dreams without losing each other.'

Prince-Bythewood actually turned down offers for development deals sparked by an early draft of *Love & Basketball* because they came with suggestions that she preferred not to adapt. Energised by a week of mentoring from seasoned pros at the Sundance Institute's prestigious Writer's Lab, she reworked the script but continued to say no to producers until she had done a reading at the Institute's Director's Lab.

'I didn't want people telling me what to do,' she explains, 'because it was so clear in my mind what I wanted this film to be. After the reading more producers got interested, so there was this great bidding thing.'

Among those in attendance at the Sundance reading was Sam Kitt, president of production at Spike Lee's 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks. At the time, Lee and Kitt were preparing to expand the scope of film projects produced by the company and were actively looking for new material.

'I had read an early version of Gina's script and told her my ideas,' recalls Kitt. 'Then when I attended the reading at Sundance, I loved it – it's a very modern story about romance at a time when women are able to pursue their careers and their passions the same way men do.'

'When she was really ready to go out to producers, we were already in the loop and we were fortunate enough to find Mike De Luca (President of Production) at New Line, who felt strongly about it, too.'

Al Foster (*Coach Hiserman*)
Nathaniel Bellamy (*high school referee 1*)
Shar Jackson (*Felicia*)
Gabrielle Union (*Shawnee*)
James DuMont (*reporter*)
April Griffin (*Dorsey High School player*)
Boris Kodjoe (*Jason*)
Kara Brock (*college girl 1*)
Aichi Ali (*college girl 2*)
Charles O'Bannon (*Reggie*)
Robin Roberts (*herself*)
Dick Vitale (*himself*)
Jimmy Lennon Jr (*sports announcer*)
Terry Cummings (*himself*)
Andre Bellinger (*college referee*)
Monica Calhoun (*Kerry*)
Dion Basco (*college student*)
Marta Bou Morera, Marta Crespo,
Raquel Hurtado (*Spanish girls*)
Jordi Clemente (*security guard*)
Jesse Corti (*Coach Parra*)
Leticia Oseguera (*Luisa*)
Selah (*Spanish band*)
Mar Castro (*lead singer*)
Yussi Wenger (*guitar*)
Django C. Porter (*bass*)
Alberto de Almar (*guitar*)
Paris H. Rooks (*guitar*)
Julio Ledezma (*percussion*)
Chick Hearn (*himself*)
Stu Lantz (*himself*)
Trevor Wilson (*himself*)
Rebecca Patterson (*nurse*)
Tyra Banks (*Kyra Kessler*)
Steve Spencer (*Lakers trainer*)
Lisa Barkin Oxley (*bank officer*)
Madison Duvernay (*Lena's baby*)
USA 2000
127 mins
Digital

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Recalls the director: 'When I walked in the room with New Line, one of the first things they said was, "When do you want to shoot it?" There was no question who I was going to go with after a meeting like that!'

Lee and Kitt brought in Andrew Z. Davis, who previously produced the blockbusters *Enemy of the State* and *Volcano*, to executive produce *Love & Basketball*. 'Gina is incredibly confident,' observes Davis. 'I think that's because she really understands this material, and can draw from personal experience.'

For many of the roles, Prince-Bythewood envisioned certain actors while she was writing: Omar Epps, Alfre Woodard, Dennis Haysbert, Debbi Morgan and Kyla Pratt. 'When you're writing,' she explains, 'you have your dream cast in your head. You're stuck at the computer and that's what gets you through. I always pictured Omar in the lead, and then I started thinking about other actors I wanted, like, "Could I possibly get Alfre Woodard? Probably not, but wouldn't that be great?"' Ultimately, she got them all.

Principal photography for *Love & Basketball* began in mid-June of 1999, filming in Baldwin Hills. Nestled in the hills of Southern Los Angeles, the neighbourhood is home to many of the city's affluent African Americans. Certain areas retained much of the visual landscape the filmmakers were looking for to reflect the 80's and early 90's, in which the film is set.

What proved to be a formidable task for production designer Jeff Howard, who designed the distinctive looks for *Eve's Bayou* and *Little Big League*, was working within the very specific parameters of Prince-Bythewood's script, where the layout for several key scenes was described in detail as an integral part of the action. In particular, having the McCall and Wright homes next door to each other was crucial for the relationship between Monica and Quincy.

Howard worked very closely with location manager Wayne Middleton to find homes in which the architecture reflected the very different lifestyles of each family – conservative refinement for the Wrights, colourful and modern for the McCalls – and satisfied the scripted logistics of filming the scenes. The traditional-style home used for the Wright family was designed by noted African American architect Paul R. Williams, who is perhaps best known for designing the signature elliptical theme restaurant at Los Angeles International Airport and the original Beverly Hills Hotel.

Production remained in South Los Angeles for much of the 43-day shooting schedule, filming at such revered landmarks of Los Angeles basketball as the Great Western Forum, the LA Sports Arena, the University of Southern California and Crenshaw High School.

One of the more exciting parts of the shoot was an evening spent filming a scene at the Great Western Forum for a WNBA game between the Los Angeles Sparks and the Washington Mystics. In an unprecedented move by the WNBA and the Sparks, the filmmakers were permitted to shoot on the floor of the Forum during an actual game, with a 'one-take' opportunity to film the starting line-up announcement which included Sanaa Lathan as a starting Sparks player with the other real-life starters, including Lisa Leslie. Los Angeles Sparks president Johnny Buss even got into the act, appearing as himself in the scene.

Production notes