



## Big Screen Classics

# Hollywood Shuffle

### Hollywood Shuffle

*Director:* Robert Townsend

*Production Companies:*

Goldwyn Entertainment Company,  
Conquering Unicorn Productions

*Executive Producer:* Carl Craig

*Producer:* Robert Townsend

*Location Manager:* Kojo Lewis

*Screenplay:* Robert Townsend,  
Keenen Ivory Wayans

*Director of Photography:* Peter Deming

*Special Photography:* Paul Slaughter

*Special Effects:* Howard A. Anderson Company

*Editor:* W.O. Garrett

*Art Director:* Melba Katzman Farquhar

*Wardrobe:* Andre Allen

*Make-up:* Deborah Fleming, Tara Posey

*Titles and Opticals:* Pacific Title

*Music Composed/Conducted/Arranged by:*

Patrice Rushen, Udi Harpaz

*Keyboard Technician:* Todd Grace

*Music Editing:* Music Design Group

*Music Editor:* Richard Luckey

*Music Recording:* Cribband Interlock Studios,  
Mike Perricone

*Choreography:* Donald Douglass

*Sound Recording:* William Shaffer

*Sound Re-recording:* Greg P. Russell,  
Jeffrey J. Haboush, Randy Honaker

*Supervising Sound Editor:* Sam Horta

*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Steve W. James

*Cast:*

Robert Townsend (*Bobby Taylor*)

Anne-Marie Johnson (*Lydia*)

Starletta DuPois (*Bobby's mother*)

Helen Martin (*Bobby's grandmother*)

Craigus R. Johnson (*Stevie Taylor*)

Ludie Washington (*Tiny*)

Keenen Ivory Wayans (*Donald*)

Roy Fegan (*Jesse Wilson*)

Marc Figueroa (*sit-com father*)

Sarah Kaite Coughlan (*sit-com girlfriend*)

Sean Michael Flynn (*sit-com boyfriend*)

Brad Sanders (*batty boy*)

David McKnight (*uncle Ray*)

John Witherspoon (*Mr Jones*)

Don Reed (*Maurice*)

Kim Wayans (*customer in chair*)

Gregory Alexander (*pimp*)

Conni Marie Brazelton (*1st hooker*)

Lorrie Marlow (*2nd hooker*)

Sena Ayn Black (*receptionist*)

Lisa Mende (*casting director*)

Dom Irrera (*writer*)

Eugene Robert Glazer (*director*)

Bobby Mardis, Jesse Aragon, Bobby McGee,

Verda Bridges, Richard 'Romeo' McGregor, Rusty

Cundieff, E.J. Murray Jr, Carl Craig, Angela Teek,

Nancy Cheryl Davis, Tony Edwards

(*actors in auditions*)

*Black Acting School:*

Angela Teek (*Harriet*); Rusty Cundieff, Roy Fegan,

Richard Cummings Jr (*slaves*); Grand Bush

(*Mandingo/Ricky Taylor*); Verda Bridges (*Bessie*);

Anne-Marie Johnson (*Willie-Mae*); Sena Ayn Black

(*Missy*); Robert Townsend (*Jasper*); Jesse Aragon,

Michael T. Smith (*students*); Eugene Robert Glazer

(*1st teacher*); Michael Conn (*2nd teacher*); Jimmy

Woodard (*advance student*); Franklyn Ajaye, Damon

Wayans, Michael Colyar (*bodyguards*); Carl Craig,

Donald Douglass, Bobby Mardis, Jimmy Woodard

(*basketball players*)

*Sneakin' in the movies:*

In a recent survey conducted by the Black American magazine *Ebony*, film historians and representative filmmakers were asked to list their personal selection of the ten best Black films of all time. Martin Ritt's *Souther* (1972), starring Cicely Tyson, received the largest number of votes, and Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* was also included in the list, a remarkable achievement for a film that was only released in the United States last year.

The story of *Hollywood Shuffle* began almost four years ago when Robert Townsend, then an actor and comedian, decided to co-write, produce, direct and star in a comedy about young Black actors trying to break into the film industry. Says Robert: 'I switched from acting to directing because I wasn't getting any work doing the kinds of roles I wanted to play. I found myself auditioning for different stereotypes and I got fed up with it. I decided to make a movie and talk about what I was going through because I didn't want to be bitter. I had never directed anything before. I didn't go to film school or anything like that. I learned by just watching when I worked on films as an actor, like *A Soldier's Story*, *Streets of Fire* and *American Flyers*. I taught myself by trial and error. I'm still learning!'

Using an ensemble cast of actors and actresses, many of them unknown, Townsend started filming in 1984. '*Hollywood Shuffle* was done over two and a half years, in 14 days,' he explains. 'We worked four days in 1984. Then I ran out of money. Then we shot four days in 1985. The final days of shooting were in 1986. At first I used money from the films I had acted in. That came to about \$60,000. Then there was no money in sight, and I didn't have any jobs coming up. I was desperate. But when you're an actor, credit card companies send you applications, and I had a stack of them in my home. I was sitting there thinking "How am I going to finish my movie?" So I decided to use the cards. I called all the banks, and got \$40,000 in credit cards. I charged everything, from raw stock, to processing the film, to wardrobe, even to taking the cast out to a nice restaurant!'

One of Townsend's interests is Black American film history, and he is aware of the struggles of the many talented Black artists who went out to Hollywood in the 30s and 40s, and were forced to 'shuffle'. He says: 'Back then the fight was even harder for dignity and for quality roles. But when I see stuff now, and they still have Black people talking that way in 1988, I say nothing has changed. There are still the maids, the butlers and the Black buddy sidekick to the white hero. It still happens. Hollywood hasn't changed. The only movie to come out of Hollywood last year with a Black cast was *Hollywood Shuffle*.'

When Townsend, as Bobby Taylor, sacrifices his movie career by refusing to play a pimp, his stand is reminiscent of those taken by Paul Robeson and Butterfly McQueen in the 40s. Says Townsend: 'History is lost. A lot of people aren't aware of the stands taken by Robeson and McQueen. Now with *Hollywood Shuffle* people are understanding what I'm talking about, and what they were talking about. It's the same thing. People think that Hollywood is very glamorous. I remember the first time I auditioned for a pimp. I thought it was great. Then when I played a pimp for the 39th time, I thought "Hey, is this it?" I began to hate my life. A lot of actors find themselves having to pay the mortgage. They have families to support. To me that wasn't the motivating

Robert Townsend (*Speed*); Jimmy Woodard (*Tyrone/punk*); Eugene Robert Glazer (*Amadeus/Chicago Jones/Dirty Larry*); Sena Ayn Black (*woman on cliff/1st hostage/hooker*); Michael Conn (*1st police detective*); Christopher Jackson, Jesse Aragon (*punks*); Verda Bridges (*2nd hostage/hooker*); Nancy Cheryl Davis, Angela Teek, Anne-Marie Johnson (*hookers*)

#### **Zombie Pimps:**

Richard Cummings Jr (*usher in theatre*); Richard 'Romeo' McGregor, Jesse Aragon, Michael T. Smith, Rusty Cundieff, Jimmy Woodard, Roy Fegan, Bobby McGee (*zombie pimps*); Gregory Alexander, Carl Craig, Rusty Cundieff, Donald Douglass, Tony Edwards, Omar W. Hester, Bobby Mardis, Bobby McGee, Richard 'Romeo' McGregor (*Eddie Murphy types*); Kim Genelle (*1st beautiful girl*); Conni Marie Brazelton (*2nd beautiful girl*); Larry Cortinas (*chauffeur*)

#### **Death of a Breakdancer:**

Robert Townsend (*Sam Ace*); Nancy Cheryl Davis (*Debra Jenkins*); Shirley Ann Jenkins (*Cookie's mother*); Nick Stewart (*Cookie's father*); Damon Wayans (*Willie*); Richard Cummings Jr, Jesse Kitten, Steve W. James, Jimmy Woodard, Grand Bush (*hoods*); Keenen Ivory Wayans (*Jerry Curl*); Le Tari (*Rudie*); Sarah Kaite Coughlan (*rehearsing actress*); Greg Nave Hartwell (*rehearsing actor*); Jake Blackschmidt (*snake killer*); Howard Allen, Steven Fertig (*agents*); Michael LaViolette (*wardrobe man*); Paul Mooney (*president of NAACP*); Beverly Brown, Carl Craig, Sarah Kaite Coughlan, Charles R. Edwards, Tamra Naggar, Peter Krug, Brad Laven, Lorrie Marlow (*reporters*); Myra J. Wren T. Brown (*picketers*); Jesse Aragon, Carl Craig, Rusty Cundieff, Roy Fegan, E.J. Murray Jr (*members of The Beaners gang*); Gregory Alexander, Verda Bridges, Donald Douglass, Tony Edwards, Bobby Mardis, Bobby McGee, Angela Teek, Richard 'Romeo' McGregor (*members of The Afros gang*); Tony Livingston (*Cordelia*); Carl Craig (*fool*); Kathleen Clark (*award presenter*); Tammy Kaitz (*model with award*); Lydia Nicole (*makeup woman*); Shirley Ann Jenkins (*wardrobe person*); Mark Westover (*1st assistant director*); Robert R. Shafer (*commercial director*); Nancy Scher, Marc Figueroa (*clients*); Stephen Adrianson, Jimmy Woodard, Greg Nave Hartwell, Larry Cortinas (*commercial TV crew members*)

USA 1987

81 mins

35mm

The screening on Wed 6 May will be introduced by Rógan Graham, BFI Film Programmer

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**SIGHT AND SOUND**

force to act. I never looked at a movie and said "I could make money doing this." I looked at a movie and said "I want to touch people." That was the motivating force for me. Hollywood dictates that you make movies for money. I say no. You do it for the art.'

Stephen Bourne, *Films and Filming*, April 1988

## **Spike Lee on the importance of 'Hollywood Shuffle'**

When people talk about the so-called *renaissance* when it comes to Black cinema, I feel that there were two films that did it: Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* and *She's Gotta Have It*. Those are the two films that made Hollywood realise once again there's an audience for these films, and not just a Black audience but white audiences were going to them also.

Spike Lee interviewed in George Alexander, *Why We Make Movies* (Harlem Moon, 2003)

## **Robert Townsend on 'Hollywood Shuffle'**

I made *Hollywood Shuffle* with Black actors but I don't believe in a separate cinema. I want Black people to participate in mainstream cinema and not be limited to a few negative stereotypes. For 40 to 50 years, Black people have been shown as slaves, muggers, rapists, and as cowards in war films like *Platoon*. I want to get rid of these degrading images. For years, we haven't been able to show a Black man as sexy, as kissing a Black or white woman.

The auditions in *Hollywood Shuffle* are based on reality; I've seen casting directors like that. I'd go to auditions and they'd say, 'Act like a pimp'. And I'd say, 'What? I use the Stanislavski technique'. And they'd say, 'Act jive. Can't you make it any blacker?' There's real street idiom and there's a whole jive vernacular that the cinema has created and that doesn't exist in the Black community. Whites invented words like 'honky' and 'jive turkey'. We have a whole language and way of being created for us. When you have someone like Bill Cosby, who speaks correct English, they say he's trying to be white. The image game is so controlled and Black people have to fit into what white people want to see.

Robert Townsend interviewed in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1988