

scary boys in the hood

Tales From The Hood is a mysteriously eccentric view into the dark side of mankind. "This is not a comedy," says Darin Scott, director and co-writer of *Tales*. "It's Black horror." This feature film from Savoy Pictures is the first urban, action-horror film and is composed of four different stories and packed with special effects.

The film opens with three young hard-boiled street thugs, products of inner-city violence, on their way to the local mortuary. Actors De'Aundre Bonds, Sam M4207670107065776onroe and Joe Torry portray p... the three have previously visited gravesites, paying their respects to fellow gang members.

This time Ball, Bulldog and Stack are on a mission to retrieve some mislaid drugs that were found by the mortician, Mr. Simms, played by Clarence Williams III. Before the gangbangers can proceed with their business, however, the sinister, malevolent undertaker has some horror stories to tell them.

"My character is a hard gangbanger who is very superstitious," says Torry, currently the host of Russell Simmons' *Def Comedy Jam*. He has also starred in a number of films, including *Poetic Justice* and *Strictly Business*. But *Tales* "is the first movie I've been in where everything is done on schedule," the comedian explains.

Warm-hearted Lamont Bentley from Milwaukee, at age 20 the youngest of the cast members, makes his feature film debut in *Tales* as Crazy K, the stone-cold, ignorant, hard-core gangbanger in one of the stories told by the mortician. Bentley won the role after captivating the makers of



Tales. "I just went in and auditioned one day and later my agent told me I got the part," Bentley says. His television roles include the critically acclaimed and now-defunct Fox series *South Central* and an afterschool special.

Rusty Cundieff, director and co-writer of *Tales*, says that he based parts of the film on real-life situations. His most recent joint effort with Scott is the critically acclaimed film *Fear Of A Black Hat*, which Cundieff co-wrote and directed and Scott produced at a low budget of \$1 million.

Tales had an unusually fast turn-around, going through the industry. When

whatever it is, it looks frightening.

Spike Lee saw *Fear*, he asked if he could work on a project with Cundieff. In December 1993, co-writers Cundieff and Scott presented the script for *Tales* to Lee, who immediately saw the potential and a chance to expand the perimeters of his 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks company and signed on as executive producer. Lee took the *Tales* screenplay to the president of Savoy Pictures. With Lee on board the film was budgeted for \$10 million and began production in only six months.

—venus bivins

the definition of busy

Playwright Laurence Fishburne—wait a minute! "Since when is he a playwright?" you ask. Yes, that's right. Fishburne has risen from t.v. mediocrity as Cowboy Bill on the now-defunct children's show *Pee-wee's Playhouse* to leading-man status as Ike Turner in *What's Love Got to Do With It*. Now he's trying his hand at playwriting and directing. *Riff Raff* is a 90-minute play that Fishburne stars in about the aftermath of a botched drug heist. The play features Heavy D., a last-minute addition to the three-man cast. Audiences were "blown away by Heavy's performance," says Fishburne. The actor wrote *Riff Raff* in eight days and it took him almost three months to get it to the stage. The hardest part about directing, Fishburne says, is trying to figure "where I'm supposed to be and when I'm supposed to be there."

—sibylla nash

laurence "groucho marx" fishburne.

