

# Will 'X' mark a turning point?

## Los Angeles hopes for a healing in Malcolm's message of empowerment

By Tom Mashberg  
GLOBE STAFF

**L**OS ANGELES - Still collecting itself nearly seven months after the worst urban uprising of the century, Los Angeles is looking ahead with apprehension and exhilaration to the opening tomorrow of "Malcolm X."

The Spike Lee film offers an eerie commingling of LA's two realities: the fantasia of Hollywood and the blood and grit of the inner city.

Its message of empowerment begins with footage of the beating of Rodney King. But that shocking taste of brutality, meted out in the dark of night in one of the city's poorest corners, quickly gives way to the kind of lustrous epic imagery only Hollywood can muster.

"It's important that what Hollywood does so well offers a message of healing to our city," said Michael Preston, chairman of the political science department at the University of Southern California. "LA is still very angry. You could say that the veneer of civility is still very thin here."

Amid all the film hoopla, one hard truth has been overlooked: In the city's poorest neighborhoods - South Central, Watts and Crenshaw Heights - there are only two theaters with nine screens between them. In the rest of LA County, there are 65 theaters with about 150 screens.

"It means that the people the film is most intended for have to travel four to six miles to see it," said Nelson Bennett, president of Inner City Cinemas, which manages the two theaters in Southern Los Angeles. "This is a problem endemic to the inner city: no place to go for inexpensive entertainment."

The film will open in five theaters in and around Los Angeles. Three are 1,500-seat megacomplexes in Westwood, Hollywood and Univer-



DENZEL WASHINGTON . . . plays Malcolm X

sal City, two are 400-seat cineplexes in Baldwin Hills, a middle-class black neighborhood. With emotions raw across the city, Westwood Village, a neat college town eight miles from the city's riot-scarred boulevards, has taken pains to prepare for long lines and high spirits.

After meetings with community leaders, Westwood doubled its police force to 80,

screened "Malcolm X" for merchants and initiated a weekend of "Peace in the Streets" featuring Afro-centric merchandise and food.

"We wanted to put everyone on the same wavelength," said Barbara J. Stanton, who organized the peace fair. "Many of these merchants aren't used to folks from Watts, like myself, pouring into their neighborhoods."

A year ago, the film "New Jack City" opened in a sour atmosphere, and two gang-related killings ensued. Now, beleaguered shopkeepers look to "Malcolm" for an economic shot in the arm.

"It's a healing film, and we're proud to have it shown here," said Hillary Gibson, president of the Westwood Village Association.

At the Westwood Waldenbooks "X" was outpacing Madonna's bawdy bestseller, "Sex."

At the peace festival, tents festooned with pennants and balloons also held all manner of X memorabilia: X T-shirts, X pendants, X caps. Eyeing a 3' gold-encrusted X made of styrofoam (\$100), Darleane Pace jabbed her boyfriend, Peter, and said: "Looks like X stands for Xpensive."

But there were sobering moments.

On the fairground, three black children playacted what looked chillingly like the King beating. Two police officers, one a white man, the other a black woman, broke up the scuffle.

"Bang! Bang!" shouted the children, pointing. "No, no guns, no guns," said Sgt. Rick Kuehn.

"Let me show you something," he said. Bending over, he showed a boy the triple-grasp street handshake. Patting hands, they waved goodbye.

On the fairground stage, the Watts Rapper had the crowd laughing with political humor.

"But seriously," he added seriously. "We've all got to go see 'Malcolm X.' Gotta go see the first black Hollywood superhero on the silver screen."





AP PHOTO

**THE BUZZ ON MALCOLM X** – *Hairstylist Ralph Wilburn Jr. applies the finishing touches to Christopher Shepard's Malcolm X haircut at The Buzz in New York Wednesday. The movie "Malcolm X," directed by Spike Lee, hit the big screen nationwide this week, boosting the sale of Malcolm X posters, clothing and hairstyles.*

## Spike Lee lashes out

More on **Malcolm X**: **Spike Lee**, in his Black Entertainment Network appearance this Sunday on "Personal Diary with **Janet Langhart**," calls columnist **Carl Rowan** "an Uncle Tom, handkerchief-wearing [expletive]" and a "front for the CIA." Rowan retorts: "My column is a threat to his money-making schemes. When people don't have an intellectual argument, they fall back on that Uncle Tom stuff." ... Also, on the CBS News home video, "The Real Malcolm X" narrated by **Dan Rather**, Bostonians might recognize the familiar visage of **Ray Barron** talking about his

days with then-Malcolm Little when both men were fixtures at the Hi-Hat Club. Barron, now with the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, says they didn't discuss politics, just "women and music."

## Another shot fired in War of the Allen-Farrows

It appeared yesterday that there may be a cease-fire in the Allen-Farrow child-custody battle, but if there was it was short-lived. **Woody Allen** reached an agreement with his former lover, **Mia Farrow**, under which he could see their 4-



**"TWO THUMBS UP, WAY UP!  
WONDERFUL. A GREAT FILM.  
A movie for all people."**  
- Siskel & Ebert

**DENZEL WASHINGTON**

A SPIKE LEE Joint

# Malcolm X

**"FASCINATING.  
POWERFUL.  
EPIC."**

- David Ansen,  
NEWSWEEK

**"TRIUMPHANT.  
SPELLBINDING.  
A rousing, full-sized epic.  
Denzel Washington gives  
the performance of the year."**

- Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

**"AN 'A'.  
Spike Lee's triumph  
is one of the most  
passionate films ever made."**

- Owen Gleiberman,  
ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

**★★★★**

**One of the decade's best  
and most important  
films. A must-see!"**

- Arch Campbell,  
WRC-TV  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**★★★★**

**Great-like 'JFK' and  
'Dances with Wolves'."**

- Jeff Craig  
SIXTY SECOND  
PREVIEW

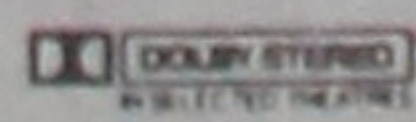
WARNER BROS. Presents  
In Association with LARGO INTERNATIONAL N.V.  
A 40 ACRES and A MULE FILMWORKS Production A MARVIN WORTH Production  
A SPIKE LEE Joint DENZEL WASHINGTON "MALCOLM X"  
ANGELA BASSETT ALBERT HALL AL FREEMAN, JR. DELROY LINDO  
SPIKE LEE Editor BARRY ALEXANDER BROWN Production Design WYNN THOMAS  
Photographed by ERNEST DICKERSON, A.S.C. Original Music Score TERENCE BLANCHARD  
Co-Producers MONTY ROSS JON KILIK PRESTON HOLMES Screenplay by ARNOLD PERL and SPIKE LEE  
Based on the book ALEX HALEY Produced by MARVIN WORTH and SPIKE LEE Directed by SPIKE LEE  
"The Autobiography of Malcolm X" as told to



Original Score Album  
Available On 40 Acres/Columbia

Soundtrack Album on QWEST  
Records, Cassettes and CDs

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED  
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13



WARNER BROS.  
A TIME WARNER ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY  
TM & © 1992 Warner Bros. All Rights Reserved

**NOW PLAYING AT THESE SELECTED THEATRES!**

LOEWS  
**CINEMA 57**  
STUART ST. NEAR PARK SQ.  
+ 482-1222

SHOWCASE CINEMAS  
**CIRCLE**  
CLEVELAND CIRCLE  
566-4040

LOEWS  
**JANUS**  
57 JFK ST. CAMBRIDGE  
+ 661-3737

GENERAL CINEMA  
**PEABODY**  
NORTHSHORE SHOPPING CENTER  
\*599-1310

LOEWS  
**+ NATICK**  
RTE 9 OPP. SHOPPERS WORLD  
653-5005 / 237-5840

SHOWCASE CINEMAS  
**DEDHAM**  
RTE. 1 & 128 EXIT 15A  
326-4955

SHOWCASE CINEMAS  
**REVERE**  
RTE. C1 & SQUIRE RD.  
286-1660

GENERAL CINEMA  
**BURLINGTON MALL**  
ROUTE 128 - EXIT 32B  
\*272-4410

LOEWS  
**SOMERVILLE**  
OF ASSEMBLY SQ. RTE 93  
+ 628-7000

Late show tonight at Somerville

NO PASSES ACCEPTED FOR THIS ENGAGEMENT

★ FOR ADVANCE SALE TICKETS CALL (617) 333-4GEN

★ FOR ADVANCE SALE TICKETS CALL (617) 333-LOEWS