



Hudson stars this October with Queen Latifah in *The Secret Life of Bees*.

JENNIFER HUDSON

The Fifth SATC Gal

FROM *DREAMGIRLS* TO A DREAM role! Oscar winner **Jennifer Hudson**, 26, joins the four *SATC* gals as Carrie's assistant in the flick. She tells *Us* about the shoot.

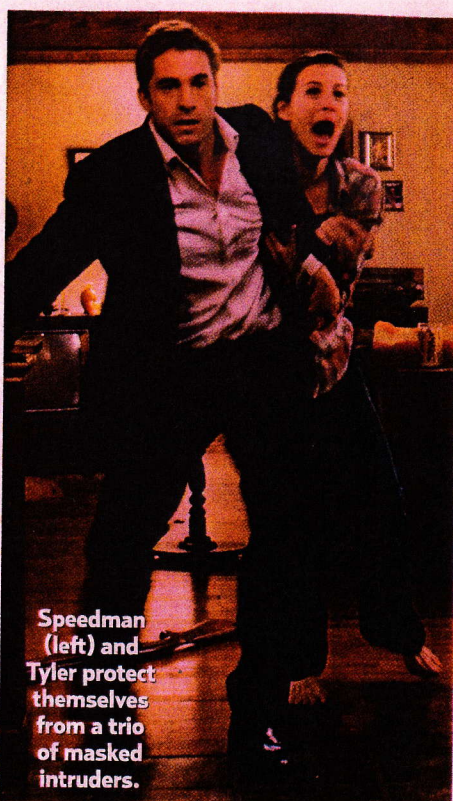
Q: Did you and SJP talk fashion? Purses! She complimented me on my bag, but she thought it was my character's. I was like, "No, this is Jennifer's bag." I'm a bag girl. At the moment I have about 14.

Q: Did she ask you to sing a lot? Our biggest connection was music. One day she had me singing "And I Am Telling You" [from *Dreamgirls*]. And I'd play music from my album [due this fall]. I would take my iPod to her dressing room and leave it in there so she could listen.

Q: Since you had the full script, did friends beg to know the plot? My sister's a big fan, but I didn't tell her a thing. I was like, "You'll wait."

Q: Your Oscar's in your Chicago apartment. Can people touch it? It's on its own mantel on a lighted stand, and I allow a few people to touch it. But some people just pick it right up without asking. I'm like, "Why would you do that?" I mean, really!

BRADLEY JACOBS



Speedman (left) and Tyler protect themselves from a trio of masked intruders.

OPENS FRIDAY 5/30

The Strangers

★★★★☆

After attending a friend's wedding, overwrought couple Kristen (**Liv Tyler**) and James (**Scott Speedman**) head to separate bedrooms at his parents' empty country house after she turns down his marriage proposal — and then the night only worsens. At 4 A.M., after a loud knock on the door, three strangers launch a savage invasion that puts the pair's relationship woes in raw, gory perspective. Tyler and Speedman make for a believable, attractive couple, and the scares are straightforward and unironic. The strong performances and tight narrative — combined with the effective use of a remote South Carolina location — add up to an unnerving thriller that may have you reconsidering the summer weekend in the country!

MUSIC

IN STORES TUESDAY 6/3

Ashanti The Declaration

★★★★☆

Was it too much too soon? Ashanti once had three Top 10 singles at the same time, and her 2002 album broke the first-week sales record for a female singer's debut. But her career hasn't lived up to its initial promise. While her fourth CD of self-penned R&B tracks contains a few hip beats (such as the piano-driven first single, "The Way That I Love You"), the sound feels out of date — and her collaborations with **Robin Thicke** and beau **Nelly** don't compare to her early teamings with **Ja Rule** and **J. Lo**. The new disc lacks her old-school heat. (*Universal/Motown*)

IAN DREW



Ashanti (on May 8) wrote the emotional track "Mother" about her momager, Tina Douglas.