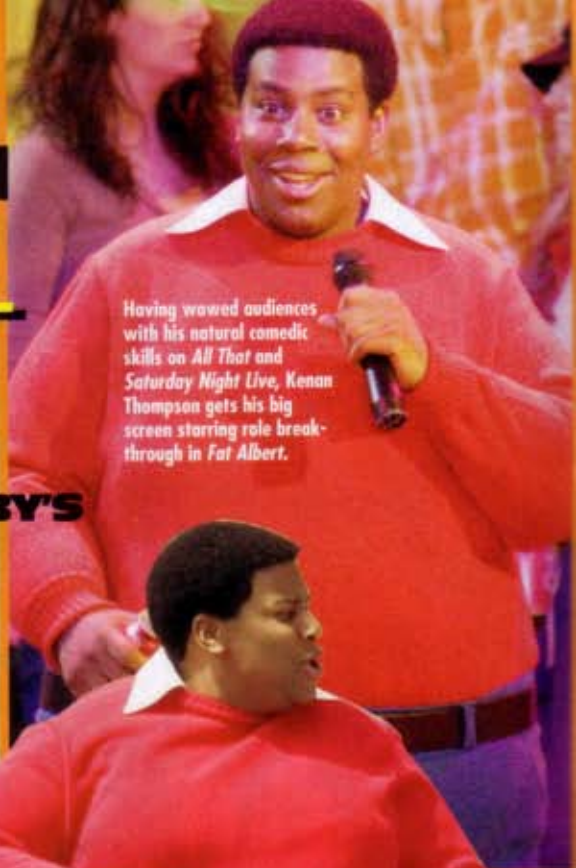



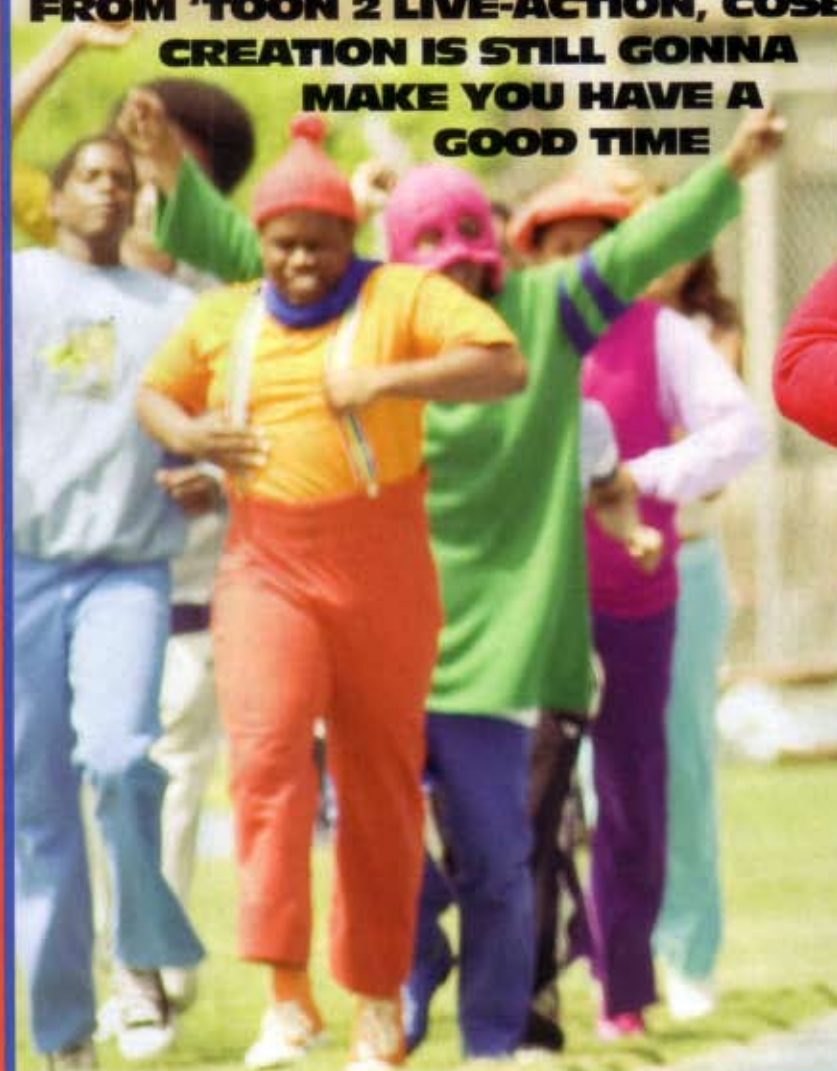
Fat Albert on the mic?! Nationwide audiences get to find out why on Christmas Day.

# FAT ALBERT

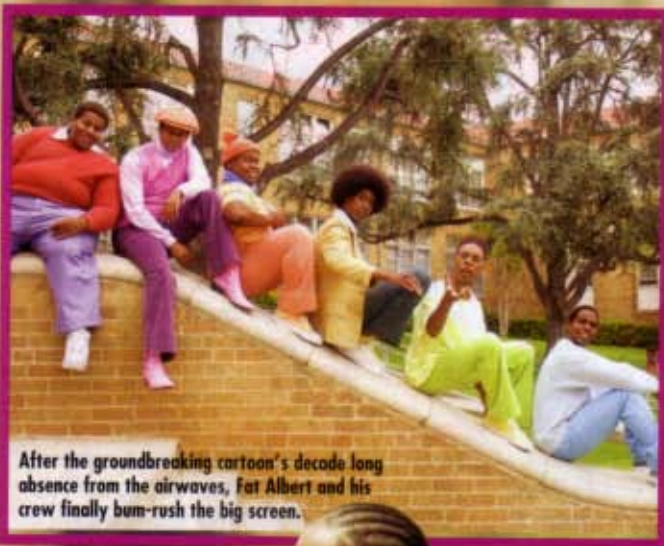


Having wowed audiences with his natural comedic skills on *All That* and *Saturday Night Live*, Kenan Thompson gets his big screen starring role breakthrough in *Fat Albert*.

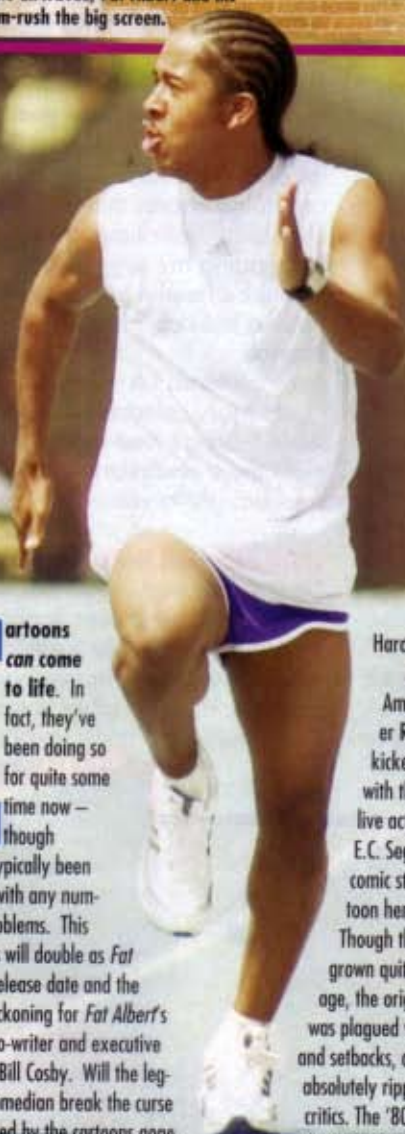
**FROM 'TOON 2 LIVE-ACTION, COSBY'S CREATION IS STILL GONNA MAKE YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME**



Ever animated Fonzworth Bentley (left) appears as a fast-talking salesman trying to persuade Fat Albert to buy some new gear.



After the groundbreaking cartoon's decade long absence from the airwaves, Fat Albert and his crew finally bum-rush the big screen.



Looks like Fat Albert is getting a run for his money from his arch rival (portrayed by R&B heart-throb, Omarion).

BY ANTHONY Q. CASASNOVAS

**C**artoons can come to life. In fact, they've been doing so for quite some time now — though they've typically been plagued with any number of problems. This Christmas will double as *Fat Albert's* release date and the day of reckoning for *Fat Albert's* creator, co-writer and executive producer Bill Cosby. Will the legendary comedian break the curse experienced by the cartoons gone live-action of years past, or will *Fat Albert* wind up back in the junkyard with Rudy, Mushmouth, Dumb Donald, Bill, Russell, Old Weird

Harold and Bucky? Maverick American filmmaker Robert Altman kicked off the '80s with the big budget live action version of E.C. Segar's classic comic strip-turned-cartoon hero *Popeye*. Though the film has grown quite popular with age, the original production was plagued with problems and setbacks, and was absolutely ripped to pieces by critics. The '80s also saw popular *Mattel* toy-turned-Filmation cartoon *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* make it's way to the big screen as an

overblown, poorly acted and downright hilarious b-movie featuring an absurdly greasy Dolph Lundgren as the frequent Castle Grayskull resident. This past decade saw a boom in the output of cartoons-gone-live action.

The '90s saw Jay Ward Studios resurrecting old favorites like *Rocky & Bullwinkle* and allowing Brendan Fraser to star as both *George of the Jungle* and the equally irksome *Dudley Do-Right* — a move that has left Fraser's career battle scarred 'til this day. Hanna-Barbera reached into its vaults to bring colorful over-the-top and CGI-laden portrayals of the *Flintstones* and *Scooby-Doo*, along with a teeny-boppish version of *Josie and the Pussycats* — each of which managed to annoy and/or bore, rather than recreate the magic of their animated counterparts. Dr. Seuss' words and the art of Chuck Jones came to life with dismal results in both the boring by-the-numbers *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and lowbrow *Cat in the Hat*. Warner Bros.' live action *Looney Tunes* films have been generally panned by those longing for the animation studio's golden age and *Back In Action* ironically starred instant dud-maker, Brendan Fraser. Most recently, we witnessed yet another comic strip-turned-cartoon make it to theaters in the absolutely lifeless *Garfield*. Now it's time for Albert and his massive physique to step up to the plate and swing for the fences.

The popularity surrounding the *Fat Albert* character is quite astounding, considering the show hasn't been on air — even in re-run form — for well over a decade. Adults who grew up watching the show have even been known to rock *Phat Farm's* line of *Fat Albert*-licensed clothing. The concept came from Bill Cosby's '60s stand-up routine chronicling his childhood upbringing in Philly and has since become a timeless pop-culture icon. Filmation's *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* debuted in 1972 as a part of CBS' Saturday morning line-up. It lasted seven long years before it was replaced by its follow-up, *The New Fat Albert Show* — which lasted

another five years.

The show's success can be attributed to a number of different things. For starters, a cartoon that focuses on the educational adventures of a group of urban Black youth is something of a rarity, even to this day. Additionally, the moral values and lessons learned in each episode can be attributed to any child — making the show a hit amongst all cultures. It's this across-the-board appeal that makes *Fat Albert* perfect for the big screen. But will it succeed?

Starring Kenan Thompson (*All That*, *SNL*, *Good Burger*), Raven Simone (*That's So Raven*) and *You Got Served's* singing and dancing heartthrobs, Omarion and Marques Houston (whose face will remain unseen as the character Dumb Donald), the film has plenty of youthful pull that should attract a new generation of *Fat Albert* fans. The plot centers on Albert's need to leave the confines of his animated world in order to help a specific viewer. However, once Al and company enter the "real world," they realize that things are quite different and aren't as cut-and-dry as they are in cartoon land. This leaves a naive Albert with his own set of problems. In a humorous race against time, Albert must solve everyone's problems — including his own (which finds him face-to-face with his creator, Mr. Cosby himself) — and return to TV land before he completely fades away for good.

The film holds onto its social and moral messages, most likely because Cosby's pen graced the screenplay, and manages to stay lighthearted and funny just like it was back in the '70s. With Omarion and Marques starring in this live-action romp, it should come as no surprise that there are a number of original songs (including an update of the show's original theme) performed during the course of the movie. And with comical heavyweight (pun alert!) Kenan carrying the weight (double pun alert!) of *Fat Albert*, chances are that this is one cartoon-to-film outing that'll have beaten the curse. Hey, hey, hey!