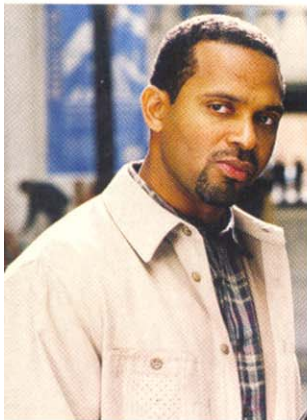


## THEMIX

### TO THE MOON

For a street-hustling kid who grew up in and out of juvenile halls, comedian Mike Epps (below) has come a long way. Today the hilarious brother who made us howl on HBO's *Def Comedy Jam* has cleaned up his act, won the battle against his demons, and is getting ready for his close-up—several of them, in fact.



You've seen him as the wise-cracking security guard Day-Day in *Next Friday* and *Friday After Next* with Ice Cube, as trash-talking Luscious in *The Fighting Temptations* with Beyoncé and Cuba Gooding, Jr., and as the confused cabbie in *Guess Who* with Bernie Mac and Ashton Kutcher. On June 10, Epps remixes the rôle of Ed Norton in an urban take on the TV classic *The Honeymoon-*

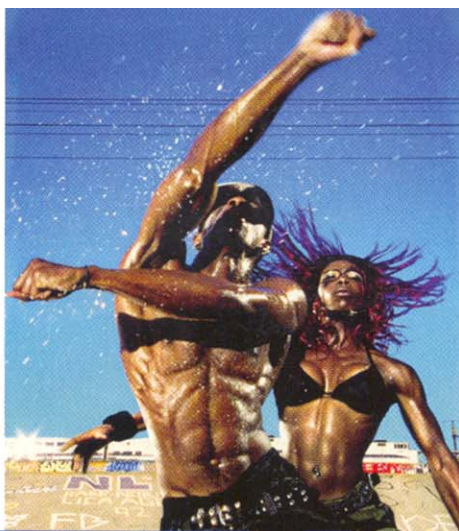
*ers*, costarring with Cedric the Entertainer, Gabrielle Union and Regina Hall. He also has a turn in *Roll Bounce*, featuring Bow Wow and Nick Cannon, opening in September.

Though the heat is steadily rising on his career, he remains a cool-headed brother from the hood. This 33-year-old father of three little girls believes it's not about the Hollywood hype, it's about the fans. "I don't mind doing just one scene in a movie because the Lord has blessed me beyond belief. When I think about my life, sometimes I can't believe I'm still here," says Epps. "I'm just trying to stay humble and true to myself because then nothing can stop me."

—SHERRI MCGEE MCCOVEY

## STREET LIFE

A South Central Los Angeles dance craze gets the spotlight in the documentary *Rize*



Clowning Around (at top, clockwise): Lil' C and Miss Prissy work it out; a shadow dancer; and Lil' C and Tight Eyez's encore.

Just when we start thinking that hip-hop's originality and skills have been lost to commercial monotony, a new trend comes out to prove us wrong. The latest case in point: krumping (also known as clowning), a manically energetic, full-body gyrating dance style born of the creativity, anger, self-expression and frustration of youths in South Central Los Angeles.

A popular birthday-party entertainer, Tommy the Clown, pioneered krumping in the wake of 1992's L.A. riots. The dance form—rooted in both the hip-hop tradition of dance battles and African tribal rituals including the use of clown makeup or warrior face paint—eventually spread to others searching for an escape from the drug abuse and gang violence of their surroundings. The result is a raw, almost seizurelike display caught beautifully on film in the documentary *Rize*, which hits theaters nationally June 24.

*Rize*, directed by photographer David LaChapelle, 36, offers an intimate look at krumping, with peeks into the lives of its teenage dancers, like star players Miss Prissy and Tight Eyez. The film is a departure for LaChapelle, known for his outrageous celebrity images—who could forget his iconic shot of Lil' Kim fully body-painted in Louis Vuitton insignia? Still, he effectively portrays krumping as a movement that goes beyond escaping ghetto pitfalls and outdancing opposing crews. For its performers, it is pure artistic expression and a way of life. —CYNTHIA GORDY



### MS. DIRECTOR

A young, relatively unknown woman from Los Angeles is a surprising choice to inherit the rôle of director for the big-budget continuation of the 1970's all-American action-comedy franchise *Herbie, the Love Bug*. Nevertheless, Angela Robinson (at left, center) turns it out.

Her spin on *Herbie: Fully Loaded*, in theaters June 22, puts teen princess Lindsay Lohan in the driver's seat as she dares to compete on the NASCAR circuit. "The story shows the struggle females have trying to make it in a guys' world," Robinson, 34, says of her studio follow-up to her indie debut, *D.E.B.S.*, which is about a band of miniskirted, crime-fighting spy babes. "Disney wanted something that was clever but with a lot of heart. *D.E.B.S.* is a girl-power movie and so is *Herbie*."

Though she's yet to sign her next project, Robinson has, in fact, begun broadening her filmmaking ideals: "My goal is to make movies with a clear, interesting voice, but still do trendy big-studio movies, which is hard." In an industry where women of color are less than few, Robinson boldly claims, "I want to compete with the big boys."

—JANICE RHOSHALLE LITTLEJOHN □