



Behind the Scenes

All eyes were on the Queen on March 26, 2009, in Santa Monica, California, as she primed and posed for her sixth ESSENCE cover. As soon as she walked into Pier 59 Studios West in her black velour tracksuit and exclaimed, "Okay. Let's go!" we knew it was on. "You could tell she felt comfortable in her own skin," says Beauty and Cover Director Mikki Taylor. "This is the best I've ever seen her." **Queen's court, clockwise from bottom left:** Taylor, hairstylist Iasia Estée Merriweather, makeup artist Sam Fine, stylist Timothy Snell, Latifah and photographer Timothy White.



Get her look...

with the **CoverGirl Queen Collection:** Vibrant Hue Color in 24 Carat (\$7), Natural Hue Minerals Pressed Powder or Bronzer (\$8 each) and LashBlast Luxe Mascara in Black Platinum (\$8, all at drugstores).



Aaron McCargo, Jr.

Background: This celebrity chef is the star of the Food Network's cooking show *Big Daddy's House*.

Assignment: For "Turning Up the Heat" (page 138), McCargo added his unique touch to barbecue faves like salmon burgers and macaroni salad. "I dream up recipes in my sleep," says McCargo, who stores notebooks by his bed. "They are gifts from God."

What's next: Tune in for season three of *Big Daddy's House*, airing mid-July.

Regina R. Robertson

Background: Robertson has chatted with some of the boldest ladies in film, including Suzanne de Passe, Regina King and Kerry Washington.

Assignment: Our intrepid West Coast editor caught up with Queen Latifah at West Hollywood's Le Montrose Suite Hotel for "I'm the One That They Call Queen" (page 106). "Confirming a slot on her hectic calendar wasn't easy," says Robertson, who spent time with Latifah as she was celebrating her thirty-ninth birthday. "But once we sat down, she was very easy to talk to."

What's next: Robertson looks forward to seeing Anita Baker and Teena Marie at the Essence Music Festival.



Benjamin Todd Jealous

Background: He's the seventeenth president and CEO of the NAACP and the youngest person to hold the position in the organization's history.

Assignment: In "For the Sake of My Daughter" (page 102), Jealous outlines the hurdles African-Americans are still struggling to overcome. "This is the time to reflect on what we've accomplished as a people in the last 100 years and to take stock of what we still have to do," says the fifth-generation NAACP member.

What's next: The NAACP Centennial Convention is July 11–16 in New York City. For more information, visit naacp.org. □