



FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES
A UNIT OF FOX FILMED ENTERTAINMENT

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**FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES BEGINS PRODUCTION ON FILM
BASED ON BEST SELLING BOOK "THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES"**

**Queen Latifah, Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson, Sophie Okonedo, Alicia Keys,
Paul Bettany, Hilarie Burton and Nate Parker Lead an All-Star Cast**

LOS ANGELES, CA January 18, 2008 – Fox Searchlight Pictures announced today that principal photography on the film, based on the New York Times best selling novel by Sue Monk Kidd *The Secret Life of Bees*, began on January, 9, 2008 in North Carolina. Starring Queen Latifah (CHICAGO), Dakota Fanning (CHARLOTTE'S WEB), Jennifer Hudson (DREAM GIRLS), Sophia Okonedo (HOTEL RWANDA), Alicia Keys (THE NANNY DIARIES), Paul Bettany (THE DA VINCI CODE), Hilarie Burton (*One Tree Hill*) and Nate Parker (THE GREAT DEBATERS) with Gina Prince-Bythewood (LOVE AND BASKETBALL) directing the film from her adapted screenplay. Set in South Carolina in 1964, the film is the moving tale of Lily Owens (Fanning) a 14 year-old girl who is haunted by the memory of her late mother (Burton). To escape her lonely life and troubled relationship with her father (Bettany), Lily flees with Rosaleen (Hudson), her caregiver and only friend, to a South Carolina town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by the intelligent and independent Boatwright sisters (Latifah, Okonedo and Keys), Lily finds solace in their mesmerizing world of beekeeping, honey and the Black Madonna.

"Gina Prince-Bythewood has adapted Sue Monk Kidd's beautiful book into a vivid screenplay," said Claudia Lewis, President of Production. "We are thrilled to be working with Gina and these wonderfully talented actors on such a unique and inspiring film."

"The sheer talent of our cast, and their unbridled passion for this film, continues to amaze and inspire me," said Prince-Bythewood. "For millions of readers around the world, *The Secret Life of Bees* is more than a favorite novel. It's a testimony to the power of family, in all its varied and unexpected forms. I'm thrilled to work with such a remarkable cast and crew in honoring a story that means so much to so many."

"From the moment I read Sue Monk Kidd's beautiful novel, I knew it would make a wonderful, sweeping film," said Shuler Donner. "*The Secret Life of Bees* is a deeply moving saga with bold, brave characters who grab hold of you and never let go. Gina Prince-Bythewood is the perfect filmmaker to bring this piece of literature to life. We cannot wait to share it with those who adore the book, and with new fans to come."

The film will be released by Fox Searchlight in 2008. Zola Mashariki, Vice President of Production, and Veronica Lemcoff, Creative Executive, are overseeing the project. The film is being produced by Lauren Shuler Donner and Jack Leslie of The Donners' Company, James Lassiter and Will Smith of Overbrook Entertainment and Joe Pichirallo.

Fox Searchlight Pictures is a specialty film company that both finances and acquires motion pictures. It has its own marketing and distribution operations, and its films are distributed internationally by Twentieth Century Fox. Fox Searchlight Pictures is a unit of Fox Filmed Entertainment, a unit of Fox Entertainment Group.