

Whitney Houston Sets Worshipful Tone in 'Sparkle'

Whitney Houston fans are seeing their idol act and sing one more time in *Sparkle*, her final film.

The movie rounded out the top five at the box office in its debut weekend, pulling in \$12 million.

Churchgoers are partly responsible for those figures. Many sponsored bus trips to the theaters to witness Houston singing an age-old gospel hymn, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow."

That song also moved the film's cast and crew to tears.

"I saw hands lifted and tears streaming, I mean from everyone in the trailer, it was amazing," celebrity makeup artist Kym Lee said.

Lee was responsible for the picture-perfect looks of actors Carmen Ejogo, Tika Sumpter and Houston. She recalled her days on the Detroit set in a recent interview with CBN News.

"Whitney sang from her heart every time and tears were streaming down from her eyes. And everyone in the room was just worshipping God. It was amazing," she said.

Lee said there was tearful worship for all 12 takes of the church scene, where Whitney sang, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow."

But for Houston, that worship continued off the set. It was how she began her day when she sat down for her three-hour make-up session.

"She came in. She stakes a claim and she said, 'Hey, this is how I start my day,'" Lee said. "And she put on Fred Hammond. And we started off with worship, and it was incredible because she set the tone."

That tone allowed Lee to share Scripture and devotional readings with Houston. Many of those devotions are part of Angela Thornton's book, *Unlocked, Keys for Godly Living*.

The film is a remake of a 1976 musical about the rise and fall of a trio of singing sisters. In it, Houston plays the role of the wise mother.

She began working to bring the movie to the big screen more than 20 years ago and was a producer on the project, along with Bishop T.D. Jakes.

Jakes spoke with CBN News about the project.

"I found Whitney Houston to be very professional on the set. She was an excellent actress," he said. "She was very very effective, obviously as a singer."

The team wrapped production of *Sparkle* in the fall of 2011, just three months before Houston drowned accidentally in a California hotel with drugs in her system.

Houston's best friend, gospel singer Kim Burrell, remembers all she did to prepare for the role.

"It was a passion of hers to do it," Burrell said. "She was calling me from the set. She was so proud of Jordan Sparks.

"Whitney worked hard to get her voice together for that because she really wanted to do well," she continued. "But when you sing about God, you know He equips you to get the message out. She knew that."