

## Talent

# Darnell Martin

**T**he sharp, vibrant drama *I Like It Like That* got a lot of attention at Cannes, but Darnell Martin was so swamped with interviews, she barely had time to read what was being said about her movie debut. "Journalists would refer to these really positive reviews I hadn't seen," says the twentyish *New Yorker*, "and I'd be like, 'Can I see that?'" One of the few women to direct a major studio feature, she's also experienced a classic example of Hollywood hazing. Martin turned down New

Line's \$2-million budget to make her script about a young woman in the Bronx who learns to stand up for herself. Instead, she held out for more, finally Columbia's \$5.5 million. Martin then found the same executives who wanted to play up her race and gender in ads



*Darnell Martin talks with actor Jon Seda.*

(Wow! Black female directs!) pushing her to cut a few tough scenes and reshoot the ending. "It's been fight after fight after fight. But I have to really give them credit for changing their minds. They listened to me." With her movie already perceived as a success in Hollywood, Martin isn't wasting any time: She wrote her next script while directing this one. "You know how when it's really late at night and you're so tired that just closing your eyes is enough?" she laughs. "Well, that's when I wrote it."

**MICHAEL GILTZ**