

## Dreaming in Cuban

**T**hough 37-year-old director **Mira Nair** began her career with low-key documentaries about India, she casually uses Marquezian magical realism and the kind of heightened romanticism found in *Like Water for Chocolate* for her latest movie, *The Perez Family*. It tells the story of a Cuban refugee (Alfred Molina, pictured at right with Marisa Tomei) who arrives in Miami after decades of prison, hoping to reunite with his wife (Anjelica Huston). Those familiar with Nair's feature debut, *Salaam Bombay!*, a painfully realistic look at street children, will be especially surprised by the fantastic touches of *Perez*, such as when Molina's breaking heart is symbolized by blood oozing out of his chest. "This one, I felt, was giving itself over to magic," says Nair, "not knowing where dream ends and reality begins. Cubans are definitely given to that condition. They're a passionate culture." Nair is equally passionate about plunging ahead with a career happily delayed by the birth of her son after 1991's *Mississippi Masala*. She's considering a Bob Marley project and has already started work on *The Kama-sutra*, an Indian *Dangerous Liaisons* set in the thirteenth century and based on the famous Sanskrit text, which details codes of behavior but is best known to westerners for a section on sexual techniques. "People are always tittering about the title," she says. "But I'm sure they'll run to see it."



MICHAEL GILTZ