

SOMETHING NEW

Sanaa Lathan and Simon Baker in Something New () Sanaa Lathan and Blair Underwood in Something New () Taraji Henson and Jeff Something.

OK, it is a romantic comedy, technically, but the romance and the comedy don't arrive easily, and along the way the movie truly is something new: A touching story about a black professional woman facing problems in the workplace and the marriage market. How the movie finally ends will not be difficult to guess. The basic story isn't new, but telling it this way is really something. She's fiercely driven, a child of ambitious parents, a graduate of top schools, a candidate to become a partner in her firm. That is not a prejudice, she tells Brian, but a preference. They size up Brian and like what they see. The movie depends on a sudden rain shower, that old Victorian standby, to drive them into the shelter of a tree for an unexpected kiss. The movie has frank dialogue about race -- not platitudes about how we're all really the same, but realistic observations about race in modern America. Like its heroine, it knows good reasons for dating within one's race. At work, she advises an important client to stay away from a merger; this is not news the client wants to hear, and he is unhappy hearing it from a black woman who seems better-informed than he is. Kenya's father Earl Billings is head of his department at Cedars-Sinai. They love each other, but are they ready to take on the responsibility of declaring their love and living with it? Petersburg Times graded the film B and commented, "I like the way *Something New* presents facets of African-American life seldom seen in mainstream movies, such as the formality and brief funkiness of a debutante cotillion ball, the affluent sophistication making such events important. Sanaa Lathan stars as Kenya, a Los Angeles accountant who is a workaholic. But the movie knows that if two people truly connect, that is a rare and precious thing and must be respected. She doesn't date. It's how it gets there that's compelling. She does hire Brian to landscape her backyard, and gradually finds herself drawn to him, against her will. And it shows Kenya's family and friends observing the relationship carefully and observing that it seems to work for her, for this driven woman who seemed to be unmarriageable. With this film and the completely different but also observant Queen Latifah comedy *Last Holiday*, black women are being paid a kind of attention they deserve but rarely get in the movies.