



Daytime stars Montana Moorehead (Cathy Moriarty, left) and Celeste Talbert (Sally Field, centre) are rivals for the crown of queen of the soaps. Rooting for Celeste is head writer Rose Schwartz (Whoopi Goldberg).

SOAPDISH

SALLY FIELD IS THIS COMEDY'S GUIDING LIGHT

In her film career, Sally Field's greatest successes have arisen from examinations of some fairly serious causes and issues.

She was the plucky small-town widow struggling to keep her family together in *Places in the Heart*, and a working-class hero on the picket line in *Norma Rae*, both roles hav-

ing earned her Oscars for best actress. Even her comedies like *Steel Magnolias* and *Punchline* have had a dramatic edge.

But now in *Soapdish*, Field lightens things up with a frothy off-camera look at the lives of the cast and crew of a long-running soap opera. Field plays Celeste Talbert, diva of the daytime series *The Sun Also Sets*, whose insecurities lead her to drop by suburban shopping malls for the occasional pick-me-up as

she basks in the crowd's adulation.

It is her one-time paramour, former cast member Jeffrey Anderson, who really sets off the fireworks upon his return to the series. As Jeffrey, Kevin Kline once again climbs straight over the top, still wired from such wacky roles as those he had in *I Love You to Death* and *A Fish Called Wanda* (for which he won his own best-supporting-actor Academy award).

Field and Kline are complement-

ed by a strong ensemble cast, including Robert Downey, Jr. (*Air America*) as David Barnes, the lecherous young producer of *The Sun Also Sets*. As Celeste's nemesis, there's Cathy Moriarty (*Kindergarten Cop*, *Raging Bull*) playing the conniving Montana Moorehead, eager to replace her rival as reigning queen of the soaps. She's aided and abetted by bubbly Teri Hatcher (*Tango & Cash*) as Ariel Maloney, an actress whose bra size is definitely bigger than her IQ.

On Celeste's side is head writer and confidante Rose Schwartz, played by Whoopi Goldberg (fresh from last year's huge hit *Ghost*), as well as the soap star's young and restless niece, Lori Craven (Elisabeth Shue of *Back to the Future II* and *III* fame), whose boy troubles land both her and her aunt in hot water.

Carrie Fisher takes some time off from her writing career (*Postcards from the Edge*, *Surrender the Pink*) to strut her stuff as Betsy Faye Sharon, the casting director whose auditions on the couch help decide which studs make the suds. And Garry Marshall, director — most recently — of *Pretty Woman*, has an amusing part as Edmund Edwards, head of daytime programming and a man committed to keeping his soap on top of the ratings, even if it means airing everyone's dirty laundry.

Soapdish producer Aaron Spelling is no stranger to the intimacies of television. From *The Mod Squad* to *Dynasty*, he has been the guiding light behind more TV series and films than just about anyone else in the industry. The *Guinness Book of World Records* recently made it official by naming Spelling TV's most prolific producer, with more than 2,500 hours of programming under his belt.

Together with director Michael Hoffman, Spelling worked closely with production designer Eugenio Zanetti in creating a set that is a veritable Dante's *Inferno*, reinforcing the perception of daytime TV as an "actor's hell."

"We wanted to make the stage where the actors work seem like a pit, red and warm," says Zanetti. "Above this are the rings of offices and dressing rooms that look down upon the stage area, giving the impression of no privacy and that everybody is spying on everybody else. We chose colors that are neurotic — oranges and reds. With the characters of **Soapdish** there is this crescendo of craziness and the colors reinforce this mood."

With a roster of wacky characters and a large, talented cast, this comic peek behind the scenes of a soap opera should attract both daytime and nighttime audiences.

Soapdish opens this summer.

— David Mills



FOURTEEN