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Dueling Dania

The dynamic *dominicana* raises hell with Halle in 'X-Men' flick

By MERCEDES SANCHEZ

HOLLYWOOD'S latest Latina star is not Jessica Alba, it's not Eva Longoria, and it's not Jennifer Lopez. The freshest face hitting the big screen (in the blockbuster "X-Men: The Last Stand") is none other than *dominicana* Dania Ramirez.

The 26-year-old originally auditioned for the role of Stacy X, but there was a small problem.

"We believed the role [of Stacy X] was too 'white,' and I'm obviously not," laughs Ramirez. "So they looked for a character whose background was unknown in the comic books. Callisto's background is unknown, and she's from the streets of New York. I love [Callisto] — she's a badass."

In the sequel, the U.S. government discovers a drug that can make the film franchise's trademark mutants human again.

"It's a three-way war between the government, the humans, and us [the mutants]," says Ramirez. "Some are for the cure, and some are not."

Although this isn't her first film (she previously starred in "Fat Albert" and "She Hate Me"), "X-3" is Ramirez's action debut.

"This is my first big movie, period," says the proud Jersey-bred beauty. "I had never seen any of the X-Men movies before, but now I'm a hardcore fan. Callisto's a villain, and I've never played a role like that."

Callisto — a former model turned mutant with super speed and powers that allow her to locate other mutants and assess their powers — is the leader of a



group of social rejects called the Morlocks. She's also a longtime enemy of Oscar-winner Halle Berry's character, Storm.

Fans of Dania and Halle can look forward to seeing them go at it in several racy fighting scenes.

"[Halle's] the sweetest person. We both wanted to do our own stunts, which we did — except for the dangerous ones like jumping off a tall building," Ramirez says.

"[The fighting] was challenging. I didn't want to injure her, or hit her at the wrong time and then catch her face."

We don't see much of Ramirez in the public eye or in tabloids like other Latin stars (who shall remain nameless) but that doesn't mean the emerging actress is media-phobic.

"My fiancée worries about that more than me," she assures.

And who might that lucky man be? It's acclaimed hip-hop video and movie director Jessy Terrero ("Soul Plane").

"He proposed in a helicopter in Puerto Plata, [Dominican Republic] over the Christmas holidays — it was so sweet," says the giddy bride-to-be.

While the couple is still in the process of moving into their new West Hollywood condo, they have yet to decide on a wedding date.



Alex Turner/Splash News

With the release of X-Men: The Last Stand," where she battles with Berry (inset), Ramirez is poised to become a true A-lister.

With upcoming appearances in the independent, Thailand-based thriller "The Fifth Element," Carlos Santana's video "Cry Baby, Cry," and a role in "The Sopranos" season finale in June, along

with the high-profile release of "X-3," Dania seems destined for greatness in 2006.

"X-Men: The Last Stand" hits theaters May 26.

Boricuas a vanishing breed?

Lamenting the shrinking impact of Puerto Ricans

By FELIPE LUCIANO

PUERTO Ricans are vanishing. More than fifty years ago we stormed the harbors of New York City — farmers, cane-cutters, fishermen, musicians — and made the transition from a humble, agrarian culture into a formidable urban movement of textile workers and janitors, *bodegueros* and teachers, bandleaders and civil servants, housewives

and intellectuals.

We demanded cultural respect and political representation from mainstream America, not only for ourselves, but for every Latino immigrant escaping dream-defying poverty and political repression.

Today, we are fading out of sight, insignificant in the true power circles of New York City. There are leaders, yes, but they've been so enveloped in the institutions

that they're indistinguishable from the bland and arrogant status quo — no militancy, no vision, no plan or platform, no intelligence.

It's resulted in a middle class that has moved out of our core communities, disgusted with crime and corruption, and a grassroots populace poorer than ever, physically sicker than ever, more unemployed than ever, with more drop-outs and more incarcerated than ever.

Puerto Ricans are losing their stores, their nightclubs, their neighborhoods, their children. Gentrification is certainly a factor. Chelsea,

Park Slope, the Lower East Side, Williamsburgh and now El Barrio were the diamonds in the crown of Puerto Rican power until the developers invaded. They made deals with the local *caciques*, made some superficial concessions and then gobbled up everything in sight, raising rents and forcing the Rican pioneers out.

Puerto Ricans own no major media outlet. Univision is not ours, Telemundo is not ours, La Mega Radio is not ours, but we keep them in the black by buying the products they advertise, even when their program-

ming and music does not represent us. That goes for hip-hop media, too.

The magazines, Latina, Hispanic, etc. are not ours and, by the way, neither is El Diario.

Puerto Ricans are invisible, not only to others but, to ourselves.

We should be leading the immigration movement. The evangelical church should stop shouting about the devil and morality and start communicating with our youth rather than condemning them, men need to hug their sons and teach their daughters self-respect and

women need to stop speaking ill of the fathers of their children.

Who knows? Maybe, we can make a comeback. But we've got to first remember the color of our courage.

Felipe Luciano is a poet, lecturer, reporter and one of the founders of the Young Lords Party.

Do you agree that Puerto Ricans are losing their political and cultural impact? Let us know: Tempo, N.Y. Post, 1211 Ave. of the Americas, NY, NY 10036 or tempo@nypost.com.