

# Waiting to exhale

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



The film I chose to write about is a popular African American film titled, *Waiting to Exhale*. I chose this film, because it showcased the problems that a lot of African American women face today in their relationships; divorce, looking for love again, having successful careers, managing the home, anger, and having friends to lean on during hard these times. It also has a great soundtrack composed by Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds. *Waiting to Exhale* is a 1995 romance and dramatic film directed by Forest Whitaker.

The film is based on the novel, also titled *Waiting to Exhale*, by author Terry McMillan. It centers around four black women living in the Phoenix, Arizona area all trying to find the same thing, a successful and happy relationship. The characters are Bernadine Harris (Angela Bassett-main character I followed), Savannah Jackson (played by Whitney Houston), Robin Stokes (Lela Rochon), and Gloria Matthews (Loretta Devine). The film shows these women, who are all in their late 30's, supporting one another through personal and professional struggles and successes.

We can also see the characters emotions through the music that Babyface provides the audience with. He makes it so the music is heard and felt by the audience, even if there was no dialogue. These women manage to maintain every element of their lives well, except finding the right man. As stated before, the soundtrack for *Waiting to Exhale* received very good reviews. Here Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds, in top form as a songwriter and producer, came up with an amazing soundtrack featuring a top line up of the most respected female r&b artists during the decade.

The soundtrack features greats like Whitney Houston, Chaka Khan, Brandy, Mary J. Blige, Toni Braxton, and many more. With such great artist and talent, the soundtrack became 1996's " No. 1 Soundtrack Album" on the Billboard year-end charts and the " Best-selling Soundtrack Recording" by the National Association of Recording Merchandisers in 1996. The soundtrack was also certified 7x Platinum in United States by the Recording Industry Association of America in late 1996. Unfortunately, this would be Babyface's last great piece of work before he would experience a steady rapid decline.

I decided to write how the music depicts the characters mood and personality, and the placement of this idea. Music placement is very important to a film because it is what can make the audience feel certain emotions the director is trying to portray. Throughout the film of Waiting to Exhale, the music gives its audience cues on the characters struggles and battles. Without music and its cues, we wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a scene that causes tension from a mellow scene, or a climatic scene from one that is a love scene.

One element that was illustrated through the music was a change in characters. By using certain cues at special points in the characters appearance on screen, Whitaker/Edmonds can display without words a change the characters feelings, thoughts, and personalities. In the beginning of the film, the audience is introduced to each character one by one in a segment introduction. Each character receives a small amount of camera time along with a small monologue to represent their character and their troubles.

In the background plays soft jazz music (source music; we often hear this type of music throughout the film) in which it depicts the happy and easier times that each character is currently in. Not too long after the beginning of the film, the audience experiences its first character change. Bernadine Harris receives information from her husband that he is divorcing and leaving her for another woman. Due to the shock of hearing such news, Bernadine becomes enraged with anger. The following scene we witness Bernadine talking to herself, releasing the anger she feels, while at the same time destroying her husbands personal belongings.

As in the beginning, when we first meet the character, soothing jazz music is played, while in this scene slow steady strings and horns are played to portray sadness and anger. The movements of the camera and the actor are fast, and the use of quick cuts are used to increase suspense, while the music plays a opposite background to create a medium in the scene in which nothing feels out of place. Midway through the movie the audience witnesses the character Bernadine again, yet this time in a victorious mood.

After receiving comfort and advice from her friends, Bernadine finally allows herself to move on with her life and not let the wrong doings of her husband bother her. To help cope with her situation she holds a garage sale consisting of her now ex husbands belongings that he did not recover from the house. In the background the song, Not Gon' Cry by Mary J. Blige is being played. The song portrays a woman who has experienced wrong doings from her significant other and the pain he has caused her, yet instead of harping

on the situation, she decides to not cry anymore, because he is not worth the pain.

By using the placement of this song, we see everything that Bernadine is feeling and the unhappiness in her life. In conclusion, Waiting to Exhale contained great source music and music placement. It made us feel every bit of emotion along with the characters, which including being sad all the way to feeling joyful. Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds out did himself composing great music that is still played, loved, and listened to even in this decade.