

KING'S RANSOM

Everybody wants a piece of Malcolm King...

A successful and wealthy businessman, with plenty of attitude to spare, Malcolm (Anthony Anderson) has made more than his share of enemies over the years, including his soon-to-be ex-wife (Kellita Smith) and his overworked, under-appreciated employees. Not wanting to go through a messy and expensive divorce played out in the media, Malcolm devises a plan to save his money from his wife's eager hands. Along with the help of his mistress, Peaches (Regina Hall), Malcolm plots his own kidnapping in order to secure a fictitious ransom so extremely high that, once paid, the public will think he's broke and unable to meet his wife's financial demands.

But unbeknownst to Malcolm, he's not the only one with a kidnapping plan. Not only his wife, but one of his long-suffering employees (Nicole Parker) and a dim-witted local bumpkin (Jay Mohr), have all cooked up separate schemes of their own, each more ridiculous than the next. What results is a wild, comedic ride for Malcolm that will change his life forever.

Directed by Jeff Byrd, *King's Ransom* stars Anthony Anderson (*Barbershop*, *Malibu's Most Wanted*) opposite a talented supporting cast that includes Jay Mohr (host of TV's "Last Comic Standing"), Kellita Smith ("The Bernie Mac Show"), Nicole Parker (*Brown Sugar*), Regina Hall (*Scary Movie*, *Malibu's Most Wanted*), Loretta Devine (*Kingdom Come*), Donald Faison (TV's "Scrubs"), Leila Arcieri (*Daddy Day Care*), Brooke D'Orsay (*Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle*) and comedian Charlie Murphy (Comedy Central's "Chappelle's Show").

King's Ransom is produced by Darryl Taja and executive produced by Mike Drake and Jeremy Barber from a screenplay written by Wayne Conley. The behind the scenes crew includes director of photography Robert McLachlan

director of photography, costume designer Rita McGhee, editor Jeff Cooper, and production designer Kalina Ivanov.

King's Ransom (rated "PG-13" by the M.P.A.A. for "crude and sexual humor and language") will be released in theaters nationwide on April 22nd, 2005.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The story behind *King's Ransom* begins with its talented star, Anthony Anderson, who makes his feature film starring debut. The project, which in its early stages of development was known as *The Untitled Anthony Anderson Project*, was specifically created with the actor in mind.

A gifted comedic actor who had built a strong fanbase thanks to scene-stealing supporting turns in films such as *Barbershop*, *Malibu's Most Wanted* and *Scary Movie 3*, Anderson was thrilled to have the opportunity to make his starring debut on a project that was being produced by New Line Cinema.

"New Line aggressively came after me, and knowing how they promote and get behind the people and films that they believe in, that's definitely a place where I wanted to be in business," says Anderson. "And they gave me the freedom to bring things to this character – I sat in on producer sessions, weighed in on some of the casting – having that input really attracted me to the project."

Anderson was also excited at the opportunity to portray the character of Malcolm King, a self-made millionaire with a healthy dose of arrogance and ego.

"Malcolm is an entrepreneur who started with the last dollar in his pocket and turned that last dollar into a \$15 million marketing firm that he owns," says Anderson. "Because of that success, he's become a bit arrogant and has a very solid sense of self-worth. He's not really a ruthless type of employer or businessman, but he is very demanding and self-centered."

Anderson admits that his character can be "a bit of a jerk," but adds that it was one of the things that made Malcolm King such a fun character to play.

"I get to wear his arrogance as a badge of honor," says Anderson. "It's what Malcolm King is all about."

While the character was one of the main elements that attracted Anderson to the project, it was the actor's involvement that proved to be one of the biggest draws for the film's director and other cast members.

"I think Anthony Anderson is hilariously funny, and knowing that he was involved really boosted my desire to do this movie," says director Jeff Byrd, who makes his feature debut on the film. "I love working with Anthony, he's always good and always there with another level of something funny. He's also always ready to challenge himself and I'm always ready to challenge him, so that's a good thing. He's one of those actors who is open to trying things different ways – it's a pleasure to work with a guy as flexible as he is."

Anderson's fellow actors also sing the praises of the film's star.

"I was attracted to this project because of Anthony Anderson, who has been making me laugh for a long time," says co-star Jay Mohr, who plays the bumbling Corey. "And then I read the script and realized that it was something I could do that's really funny, but it also provided me with an opportunity to make the character even funnier than he was on the page."

The script for *King's Ransom*, written by Wayne Conley, provided a solid mix of comedic action, dialogue and set pieces for the director and actors to explore. "When I first read the script, what brought me on board was the sheer majesty of it all, the bigness," says director Jeff Byrd. "It was written in a very big way, which is great since I hadn't done anything of this scope."

Byrd also liked the way the script managed to address cultural issues and was more than just a series of jokes strung together. "It really reminded me of some movies that I love, like *Boomerang*, films that are contemporary African American

films but have a bigger theme,” says the director. “They have a bigger meaning and more universal implications.”

In order to bring the tone of the script to life on screen and to maximize the humor in the film, Byrd created a competitive environment in which he challenged his actors to come up with funnier takes than even he could envision.

“I always try to bring things off the page and make them a little bit funnier than the way they were originally written,” says Byrd. “I always challenge the actors and let them challenge me. Who’s funnier? Whose idea is funnier? You get into this nice little tennis match with them over what works better and then they try it all.”

Anderson and his fellow cast members thrived from this environment and jumped at the freedom they had to improvise on set while maintaining a focus on what the movie is meant to be.

“I don’t find it hard to reel anything in with regards to my ad-libs or improvisation because I know what the rating of this film is, I know where I can and can’t go,” says Anderson. “I know where our producers, the studio and the director want this film to go and I know what ground we can and cannot tread upon. First and foremost I’m a professional, and everything comes from a place of honesty – everything comes from the character itself.”

While Byrd ran a very collaborative set and encouraged input and feedback from his cast, he was also careful to stay true to his own vision for the film.

“My philosophy on directing is that you really need to listen to your gut,” says Byrd. “One of the biggest problems I think directors have is that sometimes we don’t follow our gut because there are so many circumstances swirling around us and there’s so many questions that you have to answer and so many people that

need your time and attention. Your gut is a powerful thing and if it's moving you to do something, you should probably do it.”

Byrd also says that his faith in his own instincts is what allows him to keep a very calm demeanor when he's on set, no matter what ups and downs of production he may face.

“Being calm and relaxed on a set all boils down to preparation,” he says. “I'm usually very un-calm during prep and preproduction, but during production everything kind of falls into place the way we had discussed, and I am calmer. It's really not the time to be nervous because at that point it is a system barreling forward at full speed. I have a tendency to focus on moving forward as opposed to focusing on the problem.”

Despite being a first-time feature director, producers had the utmost confidence in Byrd's ability to bring *King's Ransom* to life.

“The more you work, the more you're going to learn, but I'm a firm believer that no matter how old you are or how many films you've made, you'll never know everything,” says executive producer Mike Drake. “I just worked with a director who is 78 years old and directed 70 films – the guy's got like six Emmy's and it was no different than what I experienced with Jeff. It's never the same because you are dealing with different personalities, but there is nobody that knows everything.”

One of the major advantages Byrd had in helping him to overcome any obstacles during his first studio film was that he had assembled an amazing ensemble cast to work with. While Anthony Anderson headlines the film, he is ably supported by an impressive ensemble of actors who have extensive backgrounds in comedy.

For the role of Corey, a bumbling fast-food worker turned kidnapper, the producers cast popular comedian and actor Jay Mohr. A veteran of such comedies as *Are We There Yet?* and *Jerry Maguire*, in addition to hosting television's "Last Comic Standing," Mohr found himself in an increasingly familiar role - as one of a few white characters amid a largely African-American cast.

"This is my second studio picture in a row where it's a predominantly black cast and I get to play the dumb white guy," says Mohr. "But these guys are actually really fun, great characters – who happen to be sort of dumb. And I know plenty of dumb white people, so I have no problem with it."

Taking on the role of a parking valet who assumes Malcolm King's identity is Donald Faison, a talented actor who showcases his comedic abilities every week on the hit NBC television series "Scrubs." For Faison, it was the opportunity to improvise on set that proved one of the most exciting elements of the production.

"We get to improv a lot and Jeff Byrd is really good at controlling which way the improv goes and what you say, which is a great quality to have as a director," says Faison. "He gives us enough rope, but he's able to hold on to it and pull us back in when we've gone too far away from the boat."

The *King's Ransom* cast also features an accomplished group of female actors including Nicole Parker, Regina Hall, Loretta Devine, Leila Arcieri and Brooke D'Orsay, who lend a women's perspective to the film's madness.

"There's a lot of women in this movie and the beauty of them is that they are all challenging, they all have their own separate personalities that really work well for the picture," says Byrd.

Playing the role of Peaches, Malcolm King's ditzy mistress, is Regina Hall, who had worked opposite Anthony Anderson previously in *Malibu's Most Wanted* and

the *Scary Movie* franchise. Hall enjoyed playing the role, but was quick to point out the differences between herself and her character.

“Peaches and I are really different,” says Hall. “I don’t think Peaches can spell Sunday and if she does, she probably would spell it ‘sundae’ like the dessert, not the day. I think she lives in a reality that allows her to always see the innocence in people, which is kind of nice. But I like to think I’m a lot smarter than she is. I’m optimistic too, but certainly not naïve like Peaches.”

One thing that every member of the ensemble cast shared was the belief that the film was a fun project and that the fun they had on set will translate to the final results on screen. However, that’s not to say that the production didn’t involve its share of hard work.

Faced with a modest budget, the production team had to make the most of what it had to work with. Their success in doing so is a credit to the film’s hard-working cast and crew.

“What we’ve done is we’ve taken a \$16 million movie and made it look like a \$30 million movie thanks to Jeff Byrd and his whole team,” says producer Darryl Taja. “They’ve really knocked themselves out and as far as the production design goes, we’ve done a lot of stuff with what people would consider a very modest sum in terms of a studio film.”

In the end, the combination of the hard-working production crew, collaborative filmmaker and talented cast came together to create a film that is full of laughs and represents a true collaborative effort.

“Jeff Byrd and the writers have given us a great path to walk down and a great blueprint to work with so we are all on the same page,” says Anthony Anderson. “We all know what we want this movie to be and we want it to be a huge

crossover success. That's why we have assembled the cast we have, that's why the subject matter is so accessible. We set out to make the best possible film we could and then we just leave it up to the people and how they receive it. We had fun and hope that when people spend their hard-earned money to see this movie they can appreciate and enjoy what we did."

ABOUT THE CAST

Anthony Anderson (Malcolm King)

Anthony Anderson has appeared in over 20 films that have grossed a total of over \$1 billion and has earned two NAACP Image Award nominations. Anderson will next be seen on the big screen *Hustle & Flow* for director John Singleton which made its debut at Sundance this year. In addition, Anderson has just joined the cast of the FX drama “The Shield” opposite Michael Chiklis and Glenn Close and will be recurring on the HBO series “Entourage” playing himself.

Anderson first gained attention as one of Jim Carrey’s sons in *Me, Myself and Irene*, and has subsequently appeared in such blockbuster films as *Scary Movie 3*, *Barbershop*, *Kangaroo Jack*, *Exit Wounds*, *Cradle 2 the Grave*, *Two Can Play That Game*, and *Malibu’s Most Wanted*.

Last year, Anderson starred opposite Eddie Griffin and Michael Imperioli in *My Baby’s Daddy*, opposite Frankie Muniz in *Agent Cody Banks 2* and had a cameo in *Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle*. He also brought his talent and humor to the small screen in his own WB sitcom “All About the Andersons” which was loosely based on his life.

Anderson grew up in Los Angeles and while pursuing his acting career, he continued his education by attending the High School for the Performing Arts, where he earned first place in the NAACP’s ACTSO Awards with his performance of the classic monologue from “The Great White Hope.” That performance, along with his dedication and talent, earned him an arts scholarship to Howard University.

In 1996, Anderson landed his first professional job starring in the teen series *Hang Time*. He then quickly landed guest-starring roles on other shows including

“J.A.G” and “NYPD Blue.” Producer David E. Kelley was so impressed with Anderson’s talent that he wrote a two-episode arc especially for him on the hit series “Ally McBeal.”

Anderson currently lives in Los Angeles. He is married to his college sweetheart and they have two children.

Jay Mohr (Corey)

Jay Mohr is a quadruple threat. Film, television, radio and stand-up are all among the treasures in the bag of tricks he’s been working on throughout the career he began as a teenager.

He has worked with superstars, matching wits and chops with Tom Cruise in *Jerry Maguire*, Al Pacino in *Simone*, Eddie Murphy in *Pluto Nash* and Bill Murray in *Speaking of Sex*.

He starred as Peter Dragon in the critically acclaimed Fox series “Action”, and co-created, executive produced and hosted two seasons of NBC’s Emmy-nominated “Last Comic Standing.”

He is the best-selling author of [Gasping for Airtime](#), the darkly funny memoir of his two years on “Saturday Night Live.”

He Last guest hosts Premiere Radio’s “Jim Rome Show,” the number one syndicated sports radio program in the country and is a most-requested guest on L.A.’s number one morning show, KROQ’s “Kevin & Bean.”

He sells out theaters, clubs and colleges all over the country, earning standing ovations for his keen observations on the world and the people who live in it.

The multi-talented Mohr had his breakthrough film role as rival agent to Cruise in the blockbuster hit *Jerry Maguire*, and followed up in a touching good-guy turn opposite Jennifer Aniston in *Picture Perfect*. He starred in Doug Liman's critically adored *Go* and co-starred in *Pay It Forward* with Kevin Spacey. His other film credits include *Playing By Heart*, *Suicide Kings* and *Seeing Other People*.

Last summer peaked with publication of [Gasping for Airtime](#) (Hyperion). Mohr first wowed "SNL" audiences with his dead-on impressions of Christopher Walken, Ricki Lake, Dick Vitale and Sean Penn, and [Gasping](#) is a brutally honest look at both the hilarity and the flipside of the fun.

From "SNL" Mohr made his move on Hollywood. His work as host of Fox's "NFL This Morning" and narrator of "Beyond the Glory" led to "Mohr Sports", a weekly comedy/music/sports talk hour he produced and hosted for ESPN. He is now at work on a 2005 schedule of comedy tours, television guest spots and feature films.

Kellita Smith (Renee)

Kellita Smith co-stars as Wanda Mac, the independent, career-savvy, yet loving and charming wife of comedian/actor Bernie Mac on the FOX Television series, "The Bernie Mac Show."

Clearly establishing a presence on the small screen, the beautiful and talented actress has also graced the big screen. She co-starred in Fox Searchlight's *Kingdom Come* starring Whoopi Goldberg, Miramax's *The Crossing Guard* with Jack Nicholson directed by Sean Pean, and New Line Cinema's *House Party III*. Last fall, Smith starred in the indie comedy feature *Beauty Shop – The Movie* opposite Mo'nique. This summer she can be seen in Fox Searchlight's *Roll Bounce*, directed by Malcolm Lee.

Kellita's dynamic aura and genuine love for people have always been prevalent and her energy and charm will captivate any audience. She eventually discovered and developed her acting talent by a chance-casting in the play, "Tell It Like It Tiz," which toured the U.S. for two years. Other theatrical credits include the Los Angeles productions of "No Place To Be Somebody" at the K.C. Theatre Company, "Feelings" (The Hudson Theatre), for which she won an NAACP Theatre Award for Best Supporting Actress, and "The Thirteenth Thorn" (Complex Theatre), for which she was nominated for an NAACP Theatre Award for Best Actress. In the past, she has held recurring roles on CBS' "Nash Bridges," UPN's "Malcolm & Eddie," FOX Television's "Martin" and The WB's "Jamie Foxx Show" and "Sister, Sister."

Kellita was born in Chicago and raised in Oakland. She relocated to L.A. where she currently resides to pursue an acting career. In her spare time, she practices other art forms such as fencing, tae kwon do, snowmobile riding, tennis and recently, she's taken on sculpting. Kellita admits, "I envision myself as the next action babe...watch out Angelina Jolie."

Nicole Parker (Angela)

This young actress is best known for dazzling viewers each week in the outstanding role of Teri Joseph of Showtime's award winning original series "Soul Food." She portrays a strong and powerful woman to her siblings and their families. The strength of her character is much like that of her person; although both are very professional, Parker is much more fun loving.

Nicole can now be seen on "Second Time Around" for UPN starring opposite fiancé Boris Kodjoe where they play a once married couple that after years of being apart, decide to remarry and give their relationship a second try.

Parker is as adept at portraying strong sexy women as she is at playing complicated diverse characters. Parker has displayed her acting range in several

blockbuster and independent films. She has been featured in Touchstone Picture's *Remember the Titans*, *Blue Streak* with Martin Lawrence, *Boogie Nights* with Mark Wahlberg and the HBO Original Film, *Dancing in September*. She has also been featured in many independent films like *200 Cigarettes*, Shooting Gallery's *Loving Jezebel*, *Subway Stories*, and *Sebastian Cole*, a winner at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival.

Parker has an extensive background in theatre, having performed in incredible Off-Broadway productions like "Chicago", "House of Lear", and "Romeo and Juliet." She also appeared in the television movie "The Wonderful World of Disney's: The Loretta Claiborne Story", "Exiled", and "Mind Prey."

Growing up, Parker always knew she wanted to be an actress. She began pursuing her dream at the Baltimore Actors Theatre and then it was on to Washington Ballet Company before moving to New York to study acting further at New York University. She is a graduate of NYU's famed Tisch School of the Arts. Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, Parker currently resides in both New York and Los Angeles and during the season makes her home in Toronto, Canada.

Recently, her natural beauty has been embraced by *Oil of Olay* in their nationwide special advertising campaign that ran in Vanity Fair, Harper's Bazaar, Elle, and Vogue.

In the Fall of 2002, Parker appeared in FOX Searchlight Picture's *Brown Sugar*. She plays the role of Reese, who is described by Husband Dre, played by Taye Diggs, as "the quintessential woman." She *is* Brown Sugar. Smart, fine, sexy and classy, the role embraces the real woman Parker has become.

Parker has been nominated for six NAACP Image Awards and had the pleasure of presenting President Bill Clinton with a Thurgood Marshall Lifetime Achievement

Award at a ceremony hosted by the NAACP. She also received a special award at the Urban World Film Festival, for Outstanding Body of Work as an Actress.

Parker is a participant of Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit organization that builds homes for single mothers across the country to Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Latin America to the Caribbean and Canada.

Nicole resides with fiancé Boris in Los Angeles

Regina Hall (Peaches)

An actress who brings a naturally luminous presence to her performances, Regina Hall will continue to capture the attention of audiences with several upcoming projects for film and television.

Hall will next star in John Schultz's *Honeymooners* opposite Cedric the Entertainer, Mike Epps and Gabrielle Union for Paramount Pictures.

Hall was recently seen in *Malibu's Most Wanted* directed by John Whitesell for Warner Bros. Hall played Shondra, a young woman from Compton who aids in a kidnapping in order to get the money to open her own beauty salon. The film also starred Jamie Kennedy, Taye Diggs and Blair Underwood and was released by Warner Bros. on April 18th, 2003.

Hall also starred as Coretta Lipp on David E. Kelley's critically acclaimed show, "Ally McBeal." Hall first appeared on "Ally McBeal" in the spring of 2001 for a 3 episode arc as the junior associate to Larry Paul, played by Robert Downey Jr. Based on a successful stint, Hall signed onto "Ally" as a season regular as Coretta Lipp for the 2001/2002 season.

Hall's other film credits include John Whitesell's *Malibu's Most Wanted* opposite Jamie Kennedy, Taye Diggs and Blaire Underwood, Gina Prince-Blythewood's

Love & Basketball opposite Omar Epps, Sanaa Lathan, and Alfre Woodard; Malcolm D. Lee's *The Best Man* opposite Taye Diggs, Sanaa Lathan and Nia Long; and Charles Stone's *Paid in Full* opposite Mekhi Phifer, Chi McBride and Kevin Carroll.

On the small screen, Hall starred opposite Wesley Snipes and Sanaa Lathan in Gina Prince's "Disappearing Acts" for HBO Films. Hall's other television credits include "NYPD Blue" and "New York Undercover."

Loretta Devine (Miss Gladys)

Loretta Devine has compiled an impressive list of film credits including such films as *I Am Sam* with Sean Penn and Michelle Pfeiffer, *Woman Thou Art Loosed*, Maya Angelou's *Down in the Delta*, Bill Duke's *Hoodlum*, *Stanley & Iris* with Robert De Niro and *Little Nikita* opposite Sidney Poitier. Devine has received two NAACP awards for her supporting roles in Forrest Whitaker's *Waiting to Exhale* and Penny Marshall's *The Preachers Wife* with Denzel Washington and Whitney Houston. Other film credits include *Urban Legends: Final Cut*, *What Women Want*, *Book of Love* and *Kingdom Come*.

On television, Devine played teacher Marla Hendricks on "Boston Public" for Fox Television and was the voice of Muriel in Eddie Murphy's animated cartoon "The PJ's." Her numerous television movies and miniseries include "Rebound," "Clover," "Don King: Only In America" and "Jackie's Back." She also starred as Rudy Dandridge in the critically-acclaimed HBO movie "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge." On the New York stage, she has originated the roles of 'Lorell' in the Broadway musical "Dreamgirls" and 'Lillian' in Bob Fosse's "Big Deal."

Donald Faison (Andre)

A New York City Native, Faison began his acting career as an enthusiastic five year old attending the Children's School of Intuitive and God-Conscious Art. His

passion and talent led him to study theatre at the Professional Children's School where he developed into an amazing and talented actor.

Donald Faison is starring in his fourth season on NBC's "Scrubs," and was nominated for a 2002 People's Choice Award.

He will next be seen in the independent comedy feature *Venus and Vegas* which stars Molly Sims, Eddie Kay Thomas and Eddie Guerra. *Venus* follows a trio of crooks -- Faison, Thomas and Guerra -- who must work together to repair their fractured relationship after they botch a holdup job.

Donald Faison made his film debut in a role opposite Angela Bassett in *Waiting to Exhale*. Shortly thereafter, he landed the role of Murray in the cult comedy hit *Clueless*. This film left no doubts about Faison's comedic skills, but it was his performance *Remember the Titans* starring with Denzel Washington in 2000 that showcased his dramatic skills as an actor.

Soon after, Faison co-starred with Elizabeth Hurley in the independent feature film *Double Whammy*. This film premiered at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival and once again showed the dynamic and comedic talent of Faison. His additional film credits include *Josie and the Pussycats*, *Trippin'*, *Can't Hardly Wait*, *New Jersey Drive*, *Prep* and *Juice*.

On the small screen, Faison portrayed Tracy on the popular television drama "Felicity" for two seasons. Prior to this he reprised his role as Murray for three seasons in the television version of "Clueless." He has also appeared as Raury in "Party of Five." His notable guest-starring credits include "Sister, Sister" and "New York Undercover."

Leila Arcieri (Kim)

From her sizzling small screen role in Howard Stern's top-rated show "Son of the Beach" to breakout feature performances in the hit comedy *Daddy Day Care* with Eddie Murphy and the action-packed, box-office smash, *xXx*, Leila Arcieri is proving there's more to this former Miss San Francisco than meets the eye.

Leila most recently was seen guest starring on two episodes of the UPN's hit show "Kevin Hill" in November 2004. Her performance was so terrific that they asked her back to shoot additional episodes, which will begin airing in March 2005. Her character will be the love interest to Kevin Hill (Taye Diggs) and will be much like what 'Mr. Big' is to 'Carrie' in "Sex and the City."

Prior to signing on for *King's Ransom*, Leila took on a role that demonstrated her dramatic range starring opposite Adrian Grenier (*Hart's War*, *Artificial Intelligence*) in the psychological thriller *A Perfect Fit*. As 'Sarah,' she plays the love interest to Grenier's character 'John,' an unstable man whose psychological problems are masked when they meet. Unaware that John is secretly monitoring her computer activities to position himself as her ideal man, Sarah unknowingly falls into a dangerous relationship that spirals out of control as John heads deeper into, psychotic territory when he is unable to continue to control the relationship.

A stunning multi-cultural beauty, Leila landed six national commercials including AT&T, Starburst and the Bud Light Super Bowl campaign with Cedric the Entertainer in her first year in front of the camera. She also appeared in videos for musical heavy hitters Sean "P. Diddy" Combs and Boyz II Men. Feature film roles soon followed including parts in *Wild Things 2*, *George of The Jungle*, and *The Parent Trap*.

Before stepping in front of the camera, Leila put her creative skills to work as a graphic designer, photographer and make-up artist - learning the biz from

behind-the-scenes. She also studied her craft with renowned coaches Susan Batson and Leslie Kahn to prepare for the transition into the spotlight.

Brooke D'Orsay (Brooke Mayo)

Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, Brooke started acting in independent films and soon after joined the comedy troupe "Trailervision." This experience took her throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe shooting "spoofs" of real movie trailers for two years and was a huge success on the web, getting 10,000 hits per day. Brooke had the opportunity to act in as well as direct a few of those creative, low-budget trailer productions.

After more dramatic training and securing a Toronto agent, coupled with Brooke's competitive gymnastic skills, she was an instant hit in the television commercial world. Quickly too, principal work in Toronto local series and the lead in both an MTV pilot and feature film followed ("My Life is a Movie", "Everybody's Doing It"), garnering glowing reviews from the directors and producers involved who discovered this fresh new talent.

Brooke has since moved into large screen roles, voicing for animation characters, and the American TV market, recently doing an appearance on NBC's "Medical Investigation". Of late Brooke has been turning in comedic performances, among them co-starring in *Harold and Kumar Go To Whitecastle* (New Line), "Life on a Stick" (Fox) and the ABC Family Channel movie *Beautiful Girl*. She can currently be heard in the new hit Teletoon series "6Teen" as the animated character 'Caitlin', as she also had a re-curring role in the BBC co-production "Ace Lightning", an action/comedy hybrid with CGI animation cleverly matted into live action. Brooke has family in both Toronto and California and is currently L.A. based.

Charlie Murphy (Herb Clarke)

Most people feel they're just being introduced to Charlie Murphy. They know him as the guy who's just finished a *very* successful second season on the three time Emmy nominated "Chappelle's Show"; the hottest and most talked about show on television. The show has seen a steady increase in ratings since the airing of "Charlie Murphy's True Hollywood Stories – Rick James". According to a Variety article on April 11, 2004, the show hit record highs with a 5.6/18 rating, the highest on Comedy Central in seven years! Plus, Paramount pulled off one of the biggest coups of the year when "Chappelle's Show" surpassed "Friends" and "Sex and the City" to become the top-selling TV title of the year with \$4.5 million in DVD sales!

Despite most people's misconception that Charlie is a new comer, this is simply not the case. He has been on this journey for 16 years, working with actors such as Eddie Murphy, Danny Aiello, Halle Berry, Vanessa Williams, and Angela Basset. He has been featured in several films, including Chris Rock's Hip Hop Parody *CB4*, Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* & *Mo' Betta Blues*, Eddie Murphy's *Harlem Nights* & *Vampire In Brooklyn*, for which Charlie was also credited as a writer. His other writing credits include a remake of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* for Imagine, and *Paper Soldiers* for Rockafella Films (JAY-Z). Most recently, he has finished writing *Death Do Us Part* for Eddie Murphy and Dreamworks, which Steven Spielberg bought upon first sight.

Charlie has appeared on Jimmy Kimmel Live and is currently on a national comedy tour (The "I'm Rich Biatch" comedy tour featuring Chappelle's Show cast members, Donell Rawlings and Bill Burr). He has done interviews for the May 2004 GQ, Complex Magazine, Time Out NY, and FHM magazine. Entertainment Weekly has listed him as one of the "Hottest People to Watch This Summer" on their June 2004 "The Must List".

You can next catch Charlie in Director Malcolm Lee's *Roll Bounce*. This past holiday season Charlie was immortalized in the new "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" video game.

Sit back and watch. This is just the beginning...

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Jeff Byrd (Director)

A native of Brooklyn, Jeff Byrd is a protégé of Spike Lee. Jeff started his film career by working on several of Lee's films including *Mo' Better Blues*, *Malcolm X*, and *Jungle Fever*. Spike actually loaned Jeff the equipment to make his first music video. Now, over ten years later, Jeff has directed a myriad of R&B and hip-hop music videos, television, film, and commercials.

After doing many music videos, Jeff crossed over into film with his award winning short *Breakdown*. After claiming the first place prize at the Acapulco Black Film Festival, Jeff grabbed that attention of television networks and film executives. After the success of his short film, Jeff went on to write, produce, and direct his first feature film *Book Of Love...The Definitive Reason Men Are Dogs*. Co-written with Eric George, the film screened with glowing reviews at Slam Dance Film Festival and was acquired by BET Pictures for distribution. With an amazingly low budget, Jeff was able to deliver an amazing cast including heavyweights, Richard T Jones, Treach, Robin Givens, Salli Richardson, and Mari Marrow. With the success of *Book Of Love* Jeff was given the opportunity to direct the Showtime Networks' original film *Seventeen Again* starring, Tia and Tamara Mowry. The film went on to win a "Parent Choice Award" and "The Best Work In Progress Award" at the Acapulco Film Festival.

Now on a roll, Jeff went to direct his second independent film, *Final Breakdown*, based on his award-winning short. Again, with a low budget Jeff was able to attract major actors like Regina King, Blair Underwood, and Craig Sheffer to his film. Jeff's third feature film, *Jasper, Texas*, the compelling story of the Texas town that was turned upside down by the 1998 dragging of a black man, received rave reviews. *Jasper, Texas* stars Academy Award Winners Lou Gossett Jr. and

Jon Voight. The film debuted on Showtime in June 2003, the 5th anniversary of the killing and has since been nominated for a 2004 NAACP Image Award.

On top of doing over 20 music videos, three feature films, and an award winning short film, Jeff has directed four episodes of the critically acclaimed television series "Soul Food." With several projects in development, Jeff Byrd is dedicated to bringing new stories of Black America to life.

Wayne Conley (Writer)

Wayne Conley was born in New York City. He was raised in New York and New Jersey. He graduated from high school in Teaneck, New Jersey and attended college at the University of Maryland College Park where he majored in English.

Darryl Taja (Producer)

Darryl Taja recently started Epidemic Pictures and Management. Darryl's development slate currently includes *Slay The Bully* at New Line Cinema, *Set It Off 2* at New Line Cinema, *32 and Single* at Universal Pictures and *Say Uncle* at Fox Searchlight.

Currently Darryl is also in pre-production on two projects, *Cabrini Gardens* which he co-wrote and will produce and *The Girl Guide to Hunting and Fishing* which he will produce with Odd Lot Entertainment for Warner Independent Pictures.

Before launching Epidemic, Darryl was senior VP at Catch 23 Entertainment.

Mike Drake (Executive Producer)

Mike Drake recently won the Emmy and received a Golden Globe nomination for the HBO film *Something The Lord Made*. His most recent credits include the Paramount Pictures film *Against The Ropes* starring Meg Ryan, as well as *Driven*

starring Sylvester Stallone and *The Whole Nine Yards* starring Bruce Willis and Matthew Perry for Warner Brothers and Franchise Pictures.

Robert McLachlan (Director of Photography)

Born in San Francisco but raised in Vancouver, Canada, Robert McLachlan is the son of an artist and avid photography enthusiast. "I grew up around images," McLachlan recalls. "Probably the best piece of advice that my father gave to me was that it really didn't matter what I did in life as long as it was something I loved. I loved photography, but I wasn't sure there was a way to make a living at it!"

While attending university in Vancouver, a short documentary that McLachlan photographed gained enough attention that companies came to him to shoot their industrial films. With a fellow film student, McLachlan formed a small company to produce these industrial films as well as TV commercials and documentaries.

In the late 1980s, the filmmaker came to realize he was spending too much of his life as a businessman and not enough time doing what he loved -- photography. So he left most of the business to his partner and ventured out to create images. McLachlan received his first small break shooting the adventure series *Beach Combers* and then applied his newly found aquatic experience to the CBS telefilm "Adrift." That, in turn, led the cinematographer to the Stephen J. Cannell ABC series "The Commish" and then to Fox's series "Strange Luck" which caught the eye of "The X-Files" creator, Chris Carter.

Carter invited McLachlan to join the team of "Millennium" during which time he met "X-Files" scribes Glen Morgan and James Wong. McLachlan formed a tightly knit relationship with the duo, who brought him along to shoot his first studio

feature, the hit *Final Destination*.

In 2001, McLachlan shot Morgan and Wong's, *The One* starring Jet Li. He recently photographed *Cursed* an anamorphic Werewolf movie for Dimension with Wes Craven, and A 24P HD pilot with John Woo as well as, the Musical, "Once Upon A Mattress" in 24P HD for Touchstone/ABC.

Kalina Ivanov (Production Designer)

Kalina Ivanov was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. Together with her family she escaped to the United States in 1979. Ivanov is a graduate of both NYU Design and NYU Film School.

Prior to that she was the visual consultant to Jonathan Demme's *The Manchurian Candidate*. Her collaboration with Mr. Demme goes back to his *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Ivanov has lend her talents as a production designer to such films as Boaz Yakin's *Uptown Girls*, John Polson's *Swimfan*, Paul Auster's *Lulu on the Bridge*, Wayne Wang's *Smoke*, Malcolm Lee's *The Best Man*, Ernest Dickerson's *Monday Night Mayhem*, Gina Prince-Bytewood's *Disappearing Acts*, Kevin Spacey's *The Big Kahuna*, Nancy Savoca's *Household Saints* and many others.

In addition Ivanov was a storyboard artist for Barry Levenson's *Sleepers*, Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer* and *Quiz Show*, Forest Whitaker's *Waiting to Exhale*, Robert Benton's *Billy Bathgate*, Jodie Foster's *Home for the Holidays* and many others.

Ivanov has been the recipient of many awards for her designs and her art work has toured the USA on a special exhibition organized by Lincoln Center. She was also a faculty member of NYU's Design Department where she taught Art Direction for four years.

Jeff Cooper (Editor)

Jeff Cooper may have started editing in high school, but his film career started in 1989. His first editing job was apprentice editor on the low budget film titled *Megaville* starring Billy Zane (*The Phantom*, *Titanic*). Cooper was very fortunate: the editor that he trained under was Peitro Scalia (*JFK*, *GI Jane*, *Gladiator*, *Black Hawk Down*).

In June of 1990, he moved to Brooklyn, NY, home to Spike Lee 's Forty Acres and A Mule Filmworks. There, he worked as an Apprentice editor for Spike Lee on Levi's 501 and AT&T commercials, as well as the film *Jungle Fever*. In 1991 Lee asked Cooper to edit a music video. He jumped at the opportunity. After many, many, long nights and hours working on Lee's films, Cooper climbed the ranks to become a 2nd Assistant Editor on the film *Malcolm X*, and then Assistant Editor on *Brooklyn* and *Clockers*.

After 5 years of working with Spike Lee, and editing music videos for various directors such as Jeff W. Byrd, Tim Story, and Hype Williams, Cooper flew to Los Angeles in 1997 to edit a short film, *Breakdown*, directed by Jeff W. Byrd and starring Vanessa Williams ("Melrose Place," "Soul Food"). The film tied for first place in the HBO/NYC short film contest at the 1998 Acapulco Black Film Festival. In 1998 Cooper and Byrd teamed-up again on Byrd's feature debut *Book of Love-The Definitive Reason Why Men are Dogs*, which was purchased in 1999 by Artisan Entertainment and later by BET Films.

In 1999 the two Jeff's got together again on their second feature, a film for Showtime networks titled *Seventeen Again*, which was a favorite at the 2000 Acapulco Film Festival and won The African Heritage Network "Best Work in Progress" Award.

In 2003 Cooper edited the Showtime Original Movie *Jasper Texas* with Jeff Byrd taking the helm as director. The film stars Academy Award winner Jon Voight (*Ali*, *Tomb Raider*) and Academy Award winner Louis Gossett, Jr. (*An Officer and a Gentleman*), Joe Morton (*What Lies Beneath*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *Lone Star*) and Bokeem Woodbine (*The Big Hit*, *The Rock*). The dramatic movie chronicles the events that took place following one of the most horrific racially motivated hate crimes of the post-Civil Rights era.

Rita McGhee (Costume Designer)

Rita McGhee is one of Hollywood's hottest and experienced Costume Designers. She was raised on the beautiful island of Guam. Rita has a great appreciation for culture, style, and world travel, which was cultivated by trips throughout Asia, Europe and the surrounding Islands. Her life experiences have enriched her ability to bring a certain reality to the characters on screen. She has a passion for style, excitement and filmmaking.

Rita received her Bachelor's Degree from Howard University in Washington D.C. Her first film as a costumer was Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*. Her work in television began on the comedy sketch show, "In living Color." She's also designed music videos, commercials and print media. To date, Rita has worked with some of the Industry's finest actors including, Denzel Washington, Laurence Fishbourne, Angela Basset & Derek Luke, as well as some of the best Director's and Producers; Jeff Byrd, John Singleton, Michael Shultz, Stan Lathan, Keenen Ivory Wayans, and Mike Drake (Emmy Award Winning Producer) to name a few.

Whenever Rita is called upon to deliver her great sense of style and leadership to a project, she always brings a creative brilliance that leaves Director's praising her uncanny ability to materialize their vision.

Rita believes in communicating with the Producers to maintain the bottom line of the budget. She proves to be a valuable asset to productions for her extensive

knowledge in character research from period pieces to current fashion trends. She is able to tell a story with the clothes, and create a comfortable atmosphere for the actors to feel good in their wardrobe. Her talent has been noted in Variety and other publications for the movie *Biker Boyz*, as well as several other films she has designed. Rita has a great attitude and terrific eye for fashion; she is simply a brilliant Costume Designer.

Marcus Miller (Composer)

Marcus Miller, winner of the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Jazz Album of 2001, was born in Brooklyn in 1959 and raised in Jamaica, New York. He came from a musical family and was influenced early on by his father, a church organist and choir director, as well as his musical extended family (which included the extraordinary Wynton Kelly, jazz pianist for Miles Davis during the late fifties and early sixties). He displayed an early affinity for all types of music. By the age of thirteen he was already proficient on the clarinet, piano, and bass guitar and had begun composing music. The bass guitar, however, was his love and by the age of fifteen, he was working regularly in New York City with various bands. Soon thereafter, he was playing bass and writing music for flutist Bobbi Humphrey and keyboardist Lonnie Liston Smith.

Miller spent the next few years as a top New York studio musician, working with Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Grover Washington Jr., Bob James and David Sanborn, among others. He has appeared as a bassist on over 400 records including recordings by artists as diverse as Joe Sample, McCoy Tyner, Mariah Carey, Bill Withers, Elton John, Bryan Ferry, Frank Sinatra and LL Cool J.

In 1981, he joined his boyhood idol Miles Davis and spent two years on the road with the fabled jazzman. "He didn't settle for anything mediocre," Miller recalls. "And this helped me develop my style. I learned from him that you have to be honest about who you are and what you do. If you follow that, you won't have problems."

Miller subsequently turned his attention to producing, his first major production being David Sanborn's "Voyeur," which earned Sanborn a Grammy and turned out to be the beginning of a career-long partnership with the alto saxman. Miller later produced various other top selling albums for Sanborn, including "Close Up," "Upfront" and the 2000 Grammy winner "Inside."

For more than twenty years, Miller has also enjoyed a musical relationship with R&B legend Luther Vandross. "We met in '79 in Roberta Flack's band and instantly connected because we were both so serious about music," Miller recalls. Over the years, Miller has contributed countless hits to Vandross' repertoire both as a producer and writer. Those songs include "Till My Baby Comes Home," "It's Over Now," "Any Love," "I'm Only Human" and "The Power of Love," which won the 1991 Grammy for R&B Song of the Year.

In 1986, Miller collaborated again with Miles Davis, producing the landmark "Tutu" album, the first of Davis' three albums he would produce. He's also produced Al Jarreau, the Crusaders, Wayne Shorter, Take 6, Chaka Khan and Kenny Garrett, among others, and is currently in the studio working again with Luther Vandross.

After spending many years as a producer and session musician, Miller focused on his solo career in late 1993 with the release of "The Sun Don't Lie." 1995's "Tales" found Miller re-imagining the landscape of Black music and its evolution over the past three decades. After years of touring and in response to Miller fans' pleas, "Live & More" was released in 1997.

"M2" ("M-squared"), his first release on his own label, 3 Deuces Records, won the 2001 Grammy for Best Contemporary Jazz Album and was selected by Jazziz as one of the 10 Best CD's of the Year. Miller followed up "M2" with "The Ozell Tapes: The Official Bootleg", a live double CD. "The Ozell Tapes" is Miller's

compilation of the best of his 2002 tour dates. Miller has also produced a revolutionary music album melding classical opera with modern jazz with operatic tenor and famed vocal coach Kenn Hicks entitled "Avanti" for Decca Records/Universal Classics. In addition to 3 Deuces, Miller also owns Hannibal Recording Studios in beautiful Santa Monica, California.

In the past several years, Miller has also turned his attention to film scoring. His work as a composer includes films such as *House Party* (Martin Lawrence), *Boomerang* (Eddie Murphy, Halle Berry) and *Head of State* (Chris Rock, Bernie Mac). A lesser known fact is that Marcus wrote and produced the old school hit, "Da Butt" for Spike Lee's *School Daze* soundtrack. Miller further surprised people by composing and performing the score to E.B. White's *The Trumpet of the Swan*. "I loved getting the opportunity to use jazz to tell a story to kids. Children have much more sophisticated ears than people give them credit for. You really don't have to play down to them. Just keep the music real."

"I like to keep things balanced, combining R&B, jazz, funk and movie stuff to help reflect what's happening in our world. I just try to keep challenging myself to continue to grow and get better."