

Dante Brown: The 'Won't Back Down' Interview

Born in Chicago on Oct. 6, 1999, Dante Brown's big break came at the tender age of 5 when he beat out 500 other children to be showcased as a dancer, comedian and actor on Oprah's 1st "Amazing Kids" show. A self-taught dancer who learned his moves by watching Michael Jackson, Usher and Chris Brown's Youtube videos, Brown's amazing moves have been compared to that of a young Usher.

Dante can also beatbox, rap, play piano by ear and make beats. With his younger brother, Dusan, he performs as a duo known as "The Brown Boys." The siblings released their first album at 10 and 8, and have opened for such notable acts as the New Boyz, DJ Tha Pope and Trey Songz.

Here, he talks about starring opposite Viola Davis in "Won't Back Down," an inspirational tale of female empowerment about a teacher and a single-mom who join forces to improve a grammar school.

Kam Williams: Hi, Dante, thanks for the interview.

Dante Brown: Oh, no problem, Mr. Williams. Thanks for interviewing me.

KW: What interested you in "Won't Back Down?"

DB: When my agent sent over the sides for my audition on the tape, the project was originally named "Still I Rise." I immediately thought of Maya Angelou's poem and was very interested in getting to know my character more, as well as the story. My name means poetic, so it's ironic that I love poetry, and I was like, "Wow, interesting movie!" [LOL] Then I read the sides and the character was very different than me. But since the movie is a drama, and I love drama, I wanted to nail my audition to make sure I got a callback and be strongly considered for the role. So, it was a combination of all those things that



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

initially interested me in "Won't Back Down." And, oh yeah, for callbacks, I had to read the entire script before auditioning with the director, Mr. Daniel Barnz. By then, I knew that the message would be very powerful and I definitely wanted to be a part of this.

KW: What was it like to work opposite Viola Davis as your mother, and with the rest of such an accomplished cast?

DB: Working with Mrs. Davis... it was a joy! She was funny. She gave me tips and also helped me understand the importance of "being in the scene," so I could hold up to her star quality. She was very approachable and down to earth, so it made working with her

and get to know. As for working with the entire cast, it was like I was playing in the NBA All-Star game. [LOL] It showed me how great things can happen when you apply yourself and believe in yourself. Being in their presence taught me that hard work and dedication pay off and one day I hope to be able to share my on-set experience and knowledge with newcomers. Overall, everyone was really nice and fun to work with and being a part of such a talented cast forced me to bring my A-game, too.

KW: How would you describe your character, Cody?

DB: My character, Cody Alberts, is the son of Nona [played by Viola Davis] and Charles Alberts [played by Mr. Lance Reddick]. Cody has a learning disability and, during a pivotal point in the movie, you'll learn the cause of his learning disorder. He's sort of a quiet kid, gets bullied at school, doesn't have any friends, and the kids pick on him by calling him names and stuff.



Viola Davis and Dante Brown in 'Won't Back Down'

Cody at all, it took a lot of preparation and research to prepare emotionally for my audition and scenes as Cody. But that's what we do as actors and that's the gift God blessed me with, an ability to relate to people, and to actually become the characters I hope to play. Transforming into someone else... I love it!

KW: How would you describe you and your brother, Dusan's, debut CD, "Here Come the Brown Boys?"

DB: Fun! Exciting! Entertaining! Our CD has 11 songs, a little something for everyone. We get calls and messages from family and friends all the time telling us how catchy the songs are, how our friends and cousins enjoy listening on car rides to and from school, and just how proud they are of this project. Kids love it and adults, too. We actually have some dope beats on it and some great lyrics. We love performing songs from our CD and look forward to making more music in the future. We like making the type of music that inspires people. We've

performed at schools and churches. The CD is good, kid-friendly music that can be performed anywhere. Shout out to my parents for executive-producing the album and Mr. Spike Rebel for producing and helping us tremendously with our first project. We look forward to our next album. Oh yeah, and stay tuned for the 8 year-old singing sensation Jayda B's new hit, "I Rock My Tutu." She invited us to collaborate and it's hot! The video should be coming out soon, and the single will be available on iTunes as well.

KW: You have been blessed with many talents. Which is your favorite way to perform: acting, rapping, singing, dancing or playing piano?

ME: That's kind of tough, but I'd have to say acting because it's just so much fun being able to be someone else when auditioning for different roles and then working on set. But most definitely rapping, too. What I enjoy about rapping is being able to express

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very easy. She sort of reminds me of my Mom, so I never felt like I had to act, but simply be her son for the time being, while shooting the movie. Whenever I'd goof around, she'd have no problem with me either, in a nice way, of course. [Chuckles] I still keep in contact with her and will always look at her as an amazing actress that I was privileged to work with

KW: You were named one of the All-Time Amazing Kids by Oprah. Did that make it hard to dumb yourself down to play an academically-challenged child?

DB: No, it didn't make it hard because as an actor I've learned to pull traits and characteristics from friends at school, relatives, by watching YouTube videos, other characters in other movies, etcetera. So, although I'm not like

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEATTLE 2012

THE SKANNER.com

If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Friday October 5

PHINNEY FARMER'S MARKET. There's always a wonderful array of fresh fruits, vegetables and other locally made food as well as several enticing options. Phinney Neighborhood Center Gallery, 6582 Phinney Ave. N.

Saturday October 6

CHILDREN'S AUTHOR LAURA MCGEE KBASNOSKY PRESENTS DRAWING ON FAMILY STORIES AT THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY. We invite children ages 5 to 8 and their families to Drawing on Family Stories. The program is free and open to the public. Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave. 2 - 3 p.m.

Sunday October 7

CROATION CULTURAL ROOTS AND CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES AT CROATIAFEST. Enjoy live performances, cultural displays, hands-on activities, foods and a lively marketplace. Noon - 8 p.m. The Seattle Center, 305 Harrison St.

Tuesday October 9

SCANDINAVIA COMES TO OLD TOWN. Come join

us for the opening of the Classical Tuesday's 2012 - 13 Season: Join Hale Bill & the Bopps. Free or voluntary donation. 7 p.m. Slavonian Hall, 2306 N. 30th St. Old Town Tacoma.

Friday October 12

SAVOR THE TASTE OF FALL WITH THE ABUNDANCE OF ARCADE LIGHTS. Pike Place Markets Arcade Lights, a semi-annual celebration of local artisanal food and beverages. Located in the Market's North Arcade, the event brings together all the right elements for a hearty fall harvest celebration. 7 - 10 p.m.

Saturday October 13

VASHON'S CIDERFEST. The day will be filled with fun events, exhibits and treats for all ages. Free for all families to enjoy. All day long event. Vashon Island Chamber of Commerce, 17141 Vashon Hwy. SW. Vashon, WA