Anthony Mackie: The 'Pain & Gain' Interview

Celebrity Interview

by Kam Williams

Born in New Orleans on September 23, 1979, Anthony Mackie attended the Julliard School of Drama. He was discovered after receiving rave reviews for playing Tupac Shakur in the off-Broadway play "Up Against the Wind."

Immediately following, Mackie made an auspicious film debut as Eminem's nemesis, Papa Doc, in Curtis Hanson's "8 Mile." His performance caught the attention of Spike Lee, who subsequently cast him in "Sucker Free City" and "She Hate Me." He also appeared in Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby" as well as in Jonathan Demme's "The Manchurian Candidate."

Mackie had five features on movie screens in 2006. In addition to "We Are Marshall," he starred in "Half Nelson," with Ryan Gosling, adapted from director Ryan Fleck's Sundance-winning short "Gowanus Brooklyn;" in Preston Whitmore's "Crossover;" in Frank E. Flowers ensemble crime drama "Haven," opposite Orlando Bloom and Bill Paxton; and in the film adaptation of Richard Price's "Freedomland," starring Samuel L. Jackson.

Besides an impressive film career, the gap-toothed thespian has performed both on and off Broadway, making his Broadway debut as the stuttering nephew, Sylvester, alongside Whoopi Goldberg in August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." Next he was seen as the lead in Regina King's modern retelling of Chekov's "The Seagull," in Stephen Belber's "McReele," and in the Pulitzer Prize-winning "A Soldier's Play."

More recently, Mackie participated in the Kennedy Center's presentation of "August Wilson's 20th Century." As one of more than 30 renowned stars of stage and screen, he performed in three readings of Wilson's cycle of ten plays chronicling the African-American experience, each set in a different decade of the 20th century. A true aficionado of live theatre, he hopes to return to the stage soon.

In 2009, he played Sgt. JT Sanborn on the big screen in Kathryn Bigelow's "The Hurt Locker," a film which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. That same year, he reprised his role as Tupac Shakur in "Notorious," the biopic of Notorious B.I.G.

In 2010, he took a break from film to return to Broadway where he starred in "A Beheading in Spokane." He subsequently returned to Hollywood to appear opposite Kerry Washington in "Night Catches Us." Then he appeared in "The Adjustment Bureau" and "Real Steel." Last year, he made several movies, including "Man on a Ledge," "10 Years" and "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter."

2013 is proving very productive for Mackie, with the horror thriller "Vipaka," the coming of age drama "The Inevitable Defeat of Mister and Pete," the crime thriller "Runner, Runner" and "Bolden" being among his offerings. Here, he talks about his new movie, "Pain & Gain," a fact-based crime comedy co-starring Dwayne Johnson and Mark Wahlberg.

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Kam Williams: Hi Anthony, thanks for another interview.

Anthony Mackie: What's going on, my man?

KW: Nothing much, brother. What an impressive resume you've compiled for someone so young: The Hurt Locker, The Manchurian Candidate, Notorious, We Are Marshall, Half Nelson, 8 Mile, American Violet, The Adjustment Bureau, Gangster Squad, Night Catches Us, etcetera, etcetera...

AM: Thanks a lot, Kam. I've been very fortunate to land all the projects that I've done. I have a great team of people working with me.

KW: So, what interested you in Pain & Gain?

AM: It was the script. I was really psyched about Michael [director Michael Bay] doing a story with three-dimensional characters like these who you could real delve into to see what makes them tick.

KW: A Michael Bay flick with both that trademark action as well as some complex character development. It felt almost like I was watching a new genre of film.

AM: That's what made me so happy about it. When he explained to me what he was trying to do with this movie, it was something that I felt was right up my alley and that I wanted to be a part of.

KW: I have a lot of questions sent in to you by readers. Editor/Legist Patricia Turnier asks: How would you describe your character, Adrian? Are you anything like him in real life?

AM: [Chuckles] That's funny! No, I'm not anything like him at all. The thing that I enjoyed about doing Adrian was that he never backed down. He admired Daniel [played by Mark Wahlberg] so much and just wanted his friend to succeed. And he also wanted to achieve The American Dream.

Pain & Gain

KW: I saw you on several talk shows over the last couple of weeks, and between being pumped up from the weightlifting and the way you trash-talked like you were shot out of a cannon, you seemed almost like a different person, or as if you were still in character.

AM: [LOL] I really enjoyed this character and talking about him. I'm lucky because I get to do projects I like and believe in. And it's exciting to see people react positively to your work, to something you've invested so much time and so much of yourself into.

KW: How much time did you devote to the exercise regimen to get yourself in such great shape?

A.M: About four months. I worked out for six weeks before we started shooting, and then every day on location. To get in shape like that involves a whole lifestyle change. It's not just going to the gym. It's also eating and sleeping differently, and spending your time differently.

KW: I heard that you and Mark Wahlberg even trained together.

AM: Yeah, we worked out together every day, once we arrived on set. I think that's why we subsequently became such good friends. He appreciated the fact that I wasn't taking this opportunity lightly, since he's not the type of person who takes the stature he's achieved for granted. He's a leader and a hard worker. He liked my dedication to the project which was reflected in how I accompanied him daily to the gym to push it as hard as we could.

KW: Harriet Pakula-Teweles says: Thanks for the wonderful performance in A Behanding in Spokane.

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C O M M U N I T Y C A L E N D A R

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Thursday May 2

EXPLORE PUGET SOUND, IN DEPTH FREE PUBLIC SEMINAR SERIES. Join Tim Walsh, a geologist with the Geologic Hazards Section of Washington DNR to found out why this happens and what can be done to change it .Presentation to begin at 7 p.m. Rosehill Community Center, 304 Lincoln Ave. Mukilteo.

Saturday May 4

TRAIN RE-ENACTMENT. Volunteers who run the Washington State History Museum's model railroad exhibit reenact actual schedules of 1950s Tacoma Railroad. Free with admission. 11 a.m. 1911 Pacific Ave. Tacoma.

MAY DAY CELEBRATION HONORING THE LIFE OF CLARA FRASIER: The original Socialist Feminist. Throughout her five decades in Seattle Frasier focused on teaching young radicals and women's liberations how to stand together to fight discrimination and exploitation. 7:30 p.m. at New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. S. Louisiana Gumbo Feast available at 6 p.m. Door donation $3. Dinner donation $10. For more info call 206-722-2453.

Sunday May 5

VOLUNTEER PARK SPRING RESTORATION PARTY. The public is encouraged to join the Volunteer Park Trust for a spring spruce-up. 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Gather in Volunteer Park at the Black Sun Sculpture across from the Asian Museum.

THE DEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY INVITES THE PUBLIC TO CELEBRATE CHILDREN'S DAY. Crafts and stories. Join us for crafts, bilingual stories with storytellers Tonia and Xiomara, and a dance performance by Rimawaynina Cumbe. For ages 3 to 10 Free. 2 – 3:30 p.m. Columbia Branch Library, 4721 Rainier Ave. S.

Saturday May 11

5TH ANNUAL FLOWER FEST: More than 40 tents are set up on the cobblestones of Pike Place to accommodate farmers bountiful eye-dazzling flower displays. 10 a.m. 93 Pike St.

SEATTLE CENTER FESTAL SPIRIT OF WEST AFRICA HIGHLIGHTS THE INFLUENCES OF WEST AFRICAN CULTURES IN MUSIC, DANCE AND MORE. The annual festival expands this year to include artists and performers. Noon – 8 p.m. An art workshop and an Africa – Seattle fashion show will add to the fun and enjoyment. Admission is free. Seattle Center Armory.

Sunday May 5

MOTHER'S DAY 5K FUN RUN/WALK. Relax and enjoy a healthy start to your Mother's Day with a 5k fun run/walk. All are welcome to attend this FREE