

Vin Diesel: The “xXx: Return of Xander Cage” Interview

By Kam Williams
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Vin Diesel

A native of New York City, Vin Diesel is one of Hollywood’s hottest movie stars. In addition to his huge box-office success, Vin is a prominent producer and filmmaker and has been honored with both a Hands and Footprint Ceremony at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre as well as a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Furious 7, which he starred in and produced, grossed more than \$1.5 billion in worldwide box-office and is the #1 grossing film in China’s history. In 2013, he starred in and produced the box-office smash hit Fast & Furious 6, which grossed almost \$800 million worldwide.

He is also set to star in the highly-anticipated “The Fate of the Furious,” which will be in theaters on April 14th and in Disney’s “Guardians of the Galaxy 2,” which will be released in May. Here, Vin talks about reprising the title role in “xXx: Return of Xander Cage.”

Kam Williams: Hey Vin, thanks for the time.

Vin Diesel: Yo, Kam, what’s up?

KW: Not much. You know, I was just talking to my brother

who mentioned that he taught your nephew Tyler who graduated from Brooklyn Friends School last year. He said he’s a great kid that everybody loved.

VD: Oh, that’s so dope! Small world, Kam.

KW: He said that they’re all big fans of yours, too. You did sequels to “Pitch Black” and “The Fast and the Furious,” but previously declined when it came to the “xXx” franchise. What made you finally decide to reprise the role of Xander Cage?

VD: The reason I declined in 2002 was sort of a silly reason. The studio had promised me that I was going to be able to direct Hannibal, and they wanted me to do “xXx 2” before “Hannibal.” But the script

wasn’t strong enough for me to do that. It had become something other than “xXx.” It was more like “Three Days of the Condor” without the fun of “xXx.” But, in truth, a large part of my decision was based on my feeling that I had been promised that I would be able to direct Hannibal the Conqueror. After I produced the fourth “Fast and Furious” film, and saw the success of that, I was inspired and challenged by the idea of creating these sagas, these franchises. It took about another seven years to get it right. So, it was about 2009 when I made the decision to do it, and it took from that time ‘til now to realize it.

KW: Well, it was worth the wait, because it really brings you back to the original “xXx”

in terms of the special effects and the stunts. I also love how the dialogue is laced with all those double entendres reminiscent of 007.

VD: [Laughs] Totally! It is America’s answer to James Bond, for sure.

KW: It even has a bevy of beauties in Deepika Padukone, Ruby Rose, Nina Dobrev, Hermione Corfeld and more, “xXx”’s equivalent of Bond girls.

VD: I remember when we were in production, there were some articles written saying that this was the best cast ever assembled. It’s so eclectic. The women are so strong and formidable and beautiful. They kick ass in their own right. And then it’s novel and cool that this is a multi-cultural, global cast from different film markets from all over the world. It marks the start of Hollywood venturing beyond the confines of Hollywood to recruit talent. We now have a global audience. It is no longer the case that we’re just making movies for America. Now, we’re making movies for the world. So, why not invite celebrated talent from those respective markets into your global film?

KW: And they all mesh seam-

lessly, here. I’ve seen my share of movies with international casts where there’s no chemistry.

VD: That’s fair to say, Kam.

KW: But you’ve pulled it off successfully.

VD: Yeah, it’s exciting. Thank you.

KW: Vin, what would you say was your biggest challenge in returning to the role of “xXx”?

VD: Time! these other studios can get very Mafia. Universal never wanted me to make this movie. They would just love to keep the golden goose at Universal, and just keep turning out their billion-dollar franchise, from my being the brainchild of it, to then going on set and producing and acting in it. So, it really was a matter of time where I had one little window of opportunity at the beginning of 2016 where I could go make the movie. And we just went for it! To be 100 percent honest, that how Hollywood is nowadays. Most people don’t realize that. These studios can be very proprietary.

KW: Really? I had no idea. I thought the studio system ended back in the ‘40s.

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