

# Mamoudou Athie: The “Patti Cake\$” Interview

By Kam Williams  
For The Skanner News

**M**amoudou Athie is set to play opposite Brie Larson in her directorial debut, Unicorn Store. He also can be seen in the recurring role of Grandmaster Flash in “The Get Down,” a Netflix series created by Baz Luhrmann.

Mamoudou recently starred opposite Stockard Channing in “Me & Mean Margaret,” a pilot for an NBC sitcom. On the big screen, he appeared alongside Emma Watson and Tom Hanks in The Circle, a suspense thriller based on Dave Eggers’ novel of the same name.

Mamoudou received critical acclaim for his stage debut at New York’s Lincoln Center Theater opposite Diane Lane and Tony Shalhoub in The Mystery of Love and Sex. Here, the graduate of the Yale School of Drama discusses his new film, Patti Cake\$, an overcoming-the-odds saga revolving around a Rubenesque, white rapper’s (Danielle Macdonald) quest for superstardom.

thanks for the interview.

**Mamoudou Athie:** Thank you, Kam.

**KW:** What interested you in Patti Cake\$?

**MA:** In a nutshell, the script, the director and the character, particularly meeting Jeremy [writer/director Jeremy Jasper]. I had a sense he was going to make something special. I initially had reservations about my character, Basterd, but I just couldn’t get it out of my mind. And the script is one of a kind, yet also familiar in a personal way. Had me laughing aloud as well.

**KW:** How would you describe the film in 25 words or less?

**MA:** It’s a glorious underdog story with wit, charm, and verve about the illest rapper in Dirty Jerz [aka New Jersey], Killa P [played by Danielle Macdonald] with no holds barred stunts, high octane high speed car chases, and superheroes galore. And we have 300 million Instagram and Twitter followers.

Basterd? Did you base him on anybody?

**MA:** Not on any one particular person. I took something of a dim sum approach to him. He’s a mix of some people I grew up around, Jeremy’s thoughts and influences, for sure, and Mickey Theis, a classmate of mine from YSD [Yale School of Drama]. He’s one of the most beautifully sensitive actors I’ve ever worked with.

**KW:** What message do you think people will take away from the film?

**MA:** Go mother-[bleep]-ing hard!

**KW:** Were you surprised by the performance of your co-star, Danielle Macdonald?

**MA:** Nah, I knew she’d totally slay it after I heard her first track. But when I heard that first track, yes – I was surprised. That was amazing!

**KW:** The music maven Heather Covington question: What was the last song you listened to?

**MA:** May’ve been “Stunt Queen” by Bloc Party or Arcade Fire’s “Infinite Content.”



Mamoudou Athie

**KW:** Ling-Ju Yen asks: What is your earliest childhood memory?

**MA:** I don’t know. It’s kind of a medley, but what sticks out the most is going to the park and zoo with my family and my holographic Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle TV. It was half an inch

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**Kam Williams:** Hi Mamoudou,

**KW:** How did you approach playing

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