

Katt Williams: The 'Father Figures' Interview

By **Kam Williams**
For *The Skanner News*

Legendary stand-up comedian, actor and rapper Katt Williams has enjoyed an impressive career seeded with thousands of stage shows in sold-out arenas, a laundry list of starring roles on the small screen and memorable performances in major box office hits. The film "Father Figures" marks the eagerly-anticipated rebirth of this beloved and beleaguered comedian with seemingly more than nine lives.

Katt guarantees his stand-up show audiences an experience that will stimulate further conversation after his curtain closes. Look for articulate, quick-witted dialogue featuring names like Trump and Cosby that is rooted in evergreen conversations about politics, race relations and police brutality — all a mere mirror reflection of the American cultural landscape.

Born on Sept. 2, 1971 in Cincinnati, Ohio, Katt grew up in Dayton. Strong-willed and self-motivated even as a young man, he became emancipated at 13 and relocated on his own to Florida where he worked as a door-to-door salesman.

Not long thereafter, he took his first shot at first stand-up, thrilling a crowd with a five-minute improv routine, much to his surprise. That's when Katt, having searched his entire adolescence for a sense of purpose, found fulfillment in making people smiles.

Encouraged by his early success, Williams committed himself to fine-tuning his God-given talent — a unique comedic delivery audiences had not yet witnessed — by performing his routines in clubs all over the country. By 1999,

he had become established in the pantheon of great African American comedians that also includes Eddie Murphy, Martin Lawrence, Dave Chapelle and Chris Rock.

After cultivating a loyal fan base, he made a smooth transition to TV and film, making a scene-stealing big screen debut playing "Money Mike" in "Friday After Next." Here, the comeback kid talks about acting opposite Ed Helms, Owen Wilson, Ving Rhames, Glenn Close, J.K. Simmons and Christopher Walken in the new ensemble comedy, *Father Figures*.

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Kam Williams: Hey Katt.

Katt Williams: Hello, Kam.

KW: I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Katt: Oh, thank you. I appreciate it.

KW: What interested you in "Father Figures"?

Katt: When I read the script, I instantly understood that it was somehow funny and yet also touching. It really felt like something substantial. The only question was whether it would be cast correctly. Then, when you hear it's going to be Owen Wilson, Ed Helms, Glenn Close, J.K. Simmons, Christopher Walken, Terry Bradshaw and Ving Rhames, it's like, "Wait a minute! This is exactly what I was hoping for. So, I was "in" all through the process.

KW: Once again, you've managed to have the most memorable scenes in a movie, even in a support role.

Katt: Thank you, Kam. I'm always trying to wring as much, comedically, out of a performance as I possibly can. This role was different because it called for the exercise of a different muscle. It wasn't just about, "More! More! More! More!" This film called for me to start with absolute constraint, to start at 0 and gradually accelerate from there. I appreciate the acting lesson within it.

KW: What would you say is the message of "Father Figures"?

Katt: It's twofold. On the most basic level, it's about not judging a book by its cover. That all close friends start out as strangers. That's the beauty of the situation we're in on this planet. We have the opportunity every day to meet someone we didn't know who might become an integral part of our life that really matters. The second message is that we all have holes in our souls, and that we'll be better people when we figure out how to fix those holes. So, it's also about people trying to be more complete. And that's a wonderful story to tell any time of year, but especially during the holiday season.

KW: Was there a meaningful spiritual compo-



Katt Williams says 'Father Figures' was a funny yet also touching story

nent to your childhood?

Katt: I've always felt that way. I've sensed, at my best moments, that I was being led. So, I know that sort of protection exists. I also know that there are some people who are much more in tune with the universe than the rest of us. and their lives are evidence of that.

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

Katt: I can remember thinking, at the age of 3,

that I invented the concept of lying. By a brilliant thought process, I figured that I could fib and avoid the repercussions for something I had done, because lying meant that it never happened. However, by the time I was 5, I came to hate lying and to think of it as the worst thing in the world. That's my earliest memory. Weird, but true!

KW: The Morris Chestnut question: Was there any particular moment

in your childhood that inspired you to become the person you are today?

Katt: No, I could only envision myself doing something that was important to people. But years later, when comedy came into my life, I was so ready for it.

I had already watched the great comics. It had just never occurred to me that that was something I could be doing, too.

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ence after a showing.

Directed by James Franco, "The Disaster Artist" is a hilarious buddy comedy chronicling Tommy and Greg's misadventures during the making of "The Room." Adapted from Greg Sestero's memoir of the same name, the film co-stars Franco's brother Dave as Greg, and boasts an A-list ensemble that includes Seth Rogen, Zac Efron, Sharon Stone, Melanie

Griffith, Charlene Yi, Alison Brie, Bob Odenkirk, and Hannibal Buress, the stand-up comic credited with torpedoing Bill Cosby's career.

Good sports Greg Sestero and Tommy Wiseau make cameo appearances in this sidesplitting tribute to utter ineptitude. And be sure to catch the closing credits featuring scenes from the original side-by-side with reenactments from this inspired spoof.

Oxymoronic Oscar-quality acting

that's simultaneously godawful!

Excellent ★★★★★

Rated R for sexuality, nudity and pervasive profanity

Running time: 104 minutes

Production Company: Good Universe / New Line Cinema / Ramona Films

Distributor: A24

To see a trailer for "The Disaster Artist," visit: TheSkanner.com.

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