

Anthony Mackie

Contributed by Chris Yandek
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Anthony Mackie in the movie Crossover with Wayne Brady.

Interview Conducted August 30, 2006 Actor Anthony Mackie got his break in 2002 when he got a role in Eminem's movie 8 Mile. In the last four years he has been in The Manchurian Candidate alongside Denzel Washington, Freedomland with Samuel L. Jackson, and in the Academy Award winning Best Picture Film Million Dollar Baby starring Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman. His latest role is in the street basketball movie Crossover alongside Wayne Brady.

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{audio}http://thesportsinterview.com/mp3/AnthonyMackie.mp3{/audio}

Chris Yandek: First off how are you?

"How you doing my man? Thanks for having me on."

CY: Tell me how you ended being part of the movie Crossover and what you thought of the project when you were offered it.

AM: "Well, I met with the director Preston Whitmore out in Los Angeles about a few months before and they had called me and told me that they wanted me to take a look at the script. They asked me what I thought. When I met with Preston, I was very excited about the project because I feel kids today don't have enough people to look up to or enough people to look at and see themselves. When I read it I was very excited at the possibility of doing something different and fun."

CY: You play Tech who in the film is Noah Cruise's best friend. Your character has smaller ambitions than his friend. He wants to win an underground street ball game against a rival. Why is winning a street ball game so important to your character?

AM: "Like most things in life you need somebody to be your antagonist to make you work harder. The thing about Tech is that he has had so many shortcomings in life that this one thing he knows he can be great at and he knows he can win. He needs that victory for his self-confidence. He needs his friend to just help him out with that."

CY: Is your character Tech like you in any way?

AM: "Without a doubt. We have a lot in common. That was one of the reasons I was so drawn to the project. Growing up in New Orleans, it wasn't like I had options to make it out of the city. One of the things that helped me out was acting and another thing was engineering. I took my two courses and got out of the city as quickly as possible."

CY: What did you like about the movie and how did it affect you?

AM: "Well, I loved the way the movie was made. I feel like the basketball sequences and the movie was shot in a way I have never seen a basketball movie shot before. I was really happy about that. I brought my 15 year old nephew to the movie, and he said it really made him feel like there are so many ways to make it out of the neighborhood. It's not NBA or bust. He said you should use basketball to make it to college or make your life better than just banking on the NBA. That was something. I was glad that he felt that way."

CY: What cast member did you learn the most from?

AM: "I learned a great deal from Wayne Brady. I feel like he has thousands of hours and years of experience. He really just opened himself up and became a good friend of mine."

CY: What was it like to work with Wayne Brady?

AM: "It was a lot of fun. Wayne is a prankster. Every day was just like something completely different and something new. He always kept the set light and always made sure we were on our cues."

CY: Did you play any basketball or any other sports growing up?

AM: "Well, I didn't play basketball. That was my brother's sport. I played football, baseball, and I was on the little league pool team. We shot pool."

CY: Did you have any basketball training or practice for the film?

AM: "Yeah. We played basketball three hours in the morning and three hours of shooting every day. We did a month of basketball camp before the movie. The basketball coach and supervisor was on set every day. We were forced to play basketball. Every time they yelled cut in between an action we were dribbling the ball somewhere."

CY: Your first movie role was in Eminem's 8 Mile. How far do you think you have come since that role?

AM: "Well, when I got 8 Mile it was originally a week and four lines that I was supposed to be in Detroit. Subsequently the role grew as I got there, but I think it's a huge upgrade to being Tech in my own movie."

CY: How did it feel to have the role as Shawrelle Berry in the Academy Award Winning boxing movie Million Dollar Baby and work aside Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman?

AM: "It was great man because they are just cool old dudes. The thing about it is that if you go in and work hard and you do your thing, they really respect that and play along with you. It's not like you have to deal with egos or attitudes or something like that because they have been doing this so long that they just come in, do their job, and go home. Clint isn't working more than ten hours. You gotta get it in fast."

CY: You also have another role in a sports related movie We Are Marshall, which is about the aftermath of the plane crash that killed the Marshall University football team in 1970. Tell me about your role in the film and what it was like to work with Matthew McConaughey.

AM: "I play Nate Ruffin, who is the young man at the university. He really worked hand in hand with the president to bring the football team back. He was hurt so he didn't go to East Carolina. He was one of the five returning players to survive the crash. Working with McConaughey, it was cool man. McConaughey is a real good cat. I don't know about that Miami Beach philandering, but he was a stand up cat. We had a good time. He really brought it all to the plate. I think it's going to show in this movie because he did some really good work."

CY: You have a role in Dreamgirls, which stars Beyonce Knowles, Jamie Foxx, and Eddie Murphy. Tell me about your role in the film, thoughts on the project, and what it was like working with all of them.

"I was not in Dreamgirls. I was supposed to be in Dreamgirls, but it all came and went. I know all of them and was around the set a lot. It seems like it's going to be a great movie. I am very excited about it."

Finally, what is the ultimate thing you want to do acting wise and where do you think you will be in five years?

"Well, the ultimate thing I want to do is start producing and starring in my own feature films. Give other actors an opportunity to tell the stories they want to do and tell them as a producer. In five years, I see myself focusing on quality supporting acting roles, really good lead roles, and doing more theater in New York."

The movie Crossover is available on DVD and includes a commentary with director Preston A. Whitmore and Wesley Jonathan. You can purchase a copy and find more information about the DVD and movie at www.sonypictures.com/homevideo/crossover