

Jamie unchained

Written by Kam Williams, Film Review



Academy Award-winning actor, talented Grammy Award-winning musical artist and comedian Jamie Foxx is one of Hollywood's rare, elite multi-faceted performers. He was last seen in *Horrible Bosses* and also recently lent his vocal talents to the popular animated adventure *RIO*, as a canary named 'Nico.'

Meanwhile, Jamie recently executive produced a sketch comedy series called "In the Flow with Affion Crockett" as well as "Thunder Soul," a documentary chronicling the achievements of Houston's Kashmere High School Stage Band.

In addition to his outstanding work in film, Foxx has enjoyed a thriving career in music. In December 2010, he released his fourth album, "Best Night of My Life," featuring Drake, Justin Timberlake, Rick Ross, T.I., and other artists. In January 2010, Foxx and T-Pain's record breaking #1 song "Blame It" off of his previous album, "Intuition," won "Best R&B performance by a duo/group with vocals" at the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards.

In 2010, Foxx delivered a hilarious cameo appearance in "Due Date," and appeared in the hit romantic comedy "Valentine's Day." The year before, he starred opposite Gerard Butler in Overture Films' dramatic thriller "Law Abiding Citizen."

Jamie demonstrated his affinity and respect for fictional portrayals with "The Soloist" in which he played Nathaniel Anthony Ayer, a real-life musical prodigy who developed schizophrenia and dropped out of Julliard, becoming a homeless musician who wanders the streets of Los Angeles. Prior to that, he played the leader of a counter-terrorist team in "The Kingdom."

In December 2006, Foxx was seen in the critically acclaimed screen adaptation of the Broadway musical, "Dreamgirls." That came on the heels of his Best Actor Academy Award-winning performance as the legendary Ray Charles in "Ray."

His big-screen break came back in 1999 when Oliver Stone cast him as star quarterback Willie Beamen in "Any Given Sunday." The versatile thespian's additional film credits include "Ali", "Miami Vice", "Jarhead", "Stealth", "Bait", "Booty Call", "The Truth about Cats and Dogs", "The Great White Hype", and an Oscar-nominated supporting role in "Collateral."

Jamie first rose to fame as a comedian, from which he initiated a potent career trajectory of ambitious projects. After spending time on the comedy circuit, he joined Keenan Ivory Wayans,

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Jim Carrey, Damon Wayans and Tommy Davidson in the landmark Fox sketch comedy series, "In Living Color," creating some of the show's funniest and most memorable moments. In 1996, he launched his own series, "The Jamie Foxx Show," on the WB Network.

Here, he talks about playing the title role of slave-turned-bounty hunter Django opposite Christoph Waltz, Samuel L. Jackson, Kerry Washington and Leonardo DiCaprio in Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained.



Kam Williams: Hi Jamie, thanks so much for the time. I'm honored to have another opportunity to interview you.

Jamie Foxx: [Playfully clears his throat, before answering in a very refined tone] Why thank you. [Chuckles. Then, speaks in his normal voice] What's happening with it, Kam?

KW: I suppose I should start by asking if you'd like to comment on the recent shootings in Connecticut?

JF: I got two daughters, man, and all I want people to do is to mourn the loss of these precious kids and their teachers and to pray that their families heal.

KW: What interested you in Django Unchained?

JF: Quentin Tarantino... Leonardo DiCaprio... Samuel L. Jackson... Christoph Waltz... Kerry Washington... Oh, man! It was like an all-star team. What's funny is that I didn't know anything about Django, and I was hearing all this buzz and then I saw online how the biggest actor in the world, Will Smith, was going to work with Quentin Tarantino. And I was like, "Damn! There's another project I didn't know nothing about." But luckily, I somehow got a chance to meet Quentin and read the script which I thought was brilliant. Next thing you know, I was in a room talking with him about trying to make it happen.

KW: Did you have any reservations?

JF: I didn't have a knee-jerk reaction like some people did to the language and the violence. My stepfather was a history teacher at Lincoln High School in Dallas. So, I was already familiar with the N-word and the brutality of slavery. What I was drawn to was the love story between Django and Broomhilda and how he defends and gets the girl in the end. I thought it was just an amazing and courageous project.

KW: Children's book author Irene Smalls says: In this film you turn the docile stupid black man myth on its head. You also portray the enduring love of a black man for his woman.

JF: Most definitely! When you see the slave who's been chained and whipped with no way out, and he finally catches up to this, some people call that revenge. But I say, "No, it's righting a wrong at that time." You've been wronged for so long, and here's your karma personified, standing in this funny blue suit. And on the end of that suit is your maker. You've never seen that in a movie before, at least not when it comes to slavery. Ordinarily, when the slave gets a chance to hold the whip or the gun, they start singing a hymn or doing the speech about "If I do this, I'll be as bad as you." We come out with a mix-tape, and that's it. But with Quentin Tarantino, it's just like a regular Western. The bad guy has to pay, and the good guy gets his woman.

KW: Have you seen the film with a black audience? Were people talking back at the screen?

JF: Yeah, they were yelling like crazy.



KW: Irene also says: In both your stage name and your career choices you've paid homage to great black artists who have come before you. Is this film another acknowledgement of that

legacy?

JF: Absolutely! I know this might sound strange, but some of the people I actually studied for this film were a little more contemporary. Of course, I started with the original film Django and Clint Eastwood's The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, but I also watched Wesley Snipes in New Jack City, and Denzel Washington in Glory and A Soldier's Story. Those performances moved me in a way that I cannot explain. So, you're seeing me tip my hat to those guys in this film.

KW: Film student Jamaal Green says: Jamie, you are such a talent in so many areas, it seems like there isn't anything you can't do. Is there any chance that directing will be something you may try next?

JF: We're doing a directing thing with Canon and Ron Howard, a special where we have people send in pictures. I would also like to direct some comedies with people like Chris Tucker, Kevin Hart and Mike Epps, and go to work with them on some fun stuff.

KW: Nick Antoine was wondering whether you're ever going to get around to doing Skank Robbers, that long-rumored film **based on the characters Wanda and Sheneneh that you and Martin Lawrence played on In Living Color?**

JF: No, that's not going to happen.

KW: This question is from your co-star Kerry Washington: If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

JF: Wow! If I were an animal, I would be an eagle.

KW: The Melissa Harris-Perry question: How did your first big heartbreak impact who you are as a person?

JF: Guys don't adapt as well as women do to getting their heart broken for the first time. It's tragic. I really wanted to be in love, get married, have kids and buy a wood-paneled station wagon for the family. But it didn't work out, and, boy, it wrecked it!

KW: Would you mind coming up with a Jamie Foxx question I could ask other celebrities when I interview them?

JF: Hmm... [Thinks] If you only had 24 hours to live, what would you do? Would you do the bad stuff, you never got a chance to do, or would you do good stuff to make sure you make it into heaven?

KW: Great question! Thanks! Harriet Pakula-Teweles says: You have so much fun singing. What would be your dream band, if you could select the members from any group?

JF: My dream band? Jesus Christ! I would start with Prince, and then Questlove and Buddy Rich on the drums, Rick James on the bass, and Herbie Hancock on the piano. The horn section would be Miles Davis on lead trumpet, with Wynton and Branford Marsalis. I'd have Santana on lead guitar and Sheila E. doing percussion. My hype man would be Jerome [Benton] from The Time, and my singing group would be New Edition. There it is!

KW: Great band! Thanks again for the time, Jamie, and best of luck with the film.

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JF: Thanks, Kam.