



The Outkast rapper takes another stab at acting and, for the first time since *Be Cool*, shows off his immense comedic talents, talk of his missed opportunities, his desire to keep his personal life personal and a near bear-related disaster.

SHAKEFIRE: You had to compete a lot with big personalities. Is it a consideration when you look at a role, whom you will be playing with?

ANDRE BENJAMIN: Oh, yeah for sure. I have to make sure, when reading the script or checking out the character, I have to make sure it's something I'll be able to dive into completely. Kinda let everything else go for 2 or 3 months. And so you're looking at who's in the film and you take into consideration "what have their other films done, do you like their films?" And I'm a big Will Ferrell fan...and I love silly movies. And so I watched his movies and we had actually just left Talladega Nights and I called my agent and was like "Aw man, I wish I could be in a film like this." You try to team up with people you like to work with and then people you learn from. So I have a lot of people on the list that I'd love to work with. And it helps me out too, cause I've only done like one comedy before this one which was the John Travolta movie *Be Cool*.

SF: Coming from music, do you feel that you are cut more slack in acting?

AB: No, I think we're judged more. Because people come into the theater expecting bad. It's not like "let me just go see this movie," **they're** like "oh, my God, another entertainer going to the movies." A lot of people think it's blasphemy to do it.

SF: You seem to choose your roles carefully. The biggest role-decision that come to mind is turning down *Dreamgirls*. What was the reasoning behind that?

AB: We had just finished *Idlewild* and it was another period piece and they wanted me to play a piano player and I just felt like I was kinda beating the same horse. So I was like "let me not do that." I don't wanna just play music roles. I think people expect me to do it. I get a lot of offers for biopics for musicians and I think I have to pick the right one or two...maybe, cause you can't do a whole bunch of bio picks.

SF: Speaking of biopics, there have been long gestating rumors of you playing Jim Hendrix. Is there any news to that?

AB: No news. I'd really love to play it. It gets down to rights. Rights to music. If you can't get rights to music then nobody will be able to do it. And maybe one day the Hendrix family will see it's time for a Hendrix movie. I think it really is (time for a Hendrix movie). I think right now it's just we're in a whole time of everything is perfect, everything is in your face, everything is accessible. And I think it's time to go away from that in a way in that everything is Youtubed, everything is behind the scenes. Even in my movie contracts, I don't do behind the scenes cause I think it takes away from the magic. I want people to just go and see it. I don't want to see how you got into character. I think we've been stripped in all the imagination. I think to see a Hendrix film, whatever director's chosen would have to put you in that world. It's not a movie about drugs but that was the times and so I think to go to a Hendrix film you would have to almost be in the experience. But the only reason I said drugs is because I think the way it should be seen is as if you were in the Experience or if you saw it through those eyes, during that time. It wasn't all about drugs. He actually had a lot of great points. People don't know about Hendrix. He was a wildman on stage but he definitely wasn't that in real life. I think just getting deep into him, what made the music is what would be great right now. Cause I think everything's kinda perfect and Hendrix definitely wasn't perfect but it was perfect because it wasn't perfect, it was right on time. He didn't have the greatest voice in the world but you believed it.

SF: Is that why you keep a low profile in your personal life just to add more to your music and movies?

AB: It's not like a personal choice like I'm trying to create this mysterious character. When you



become an entertainer, you actually do give up parts of your life, if not all and so you learn not to talk about relationships and all that kinda stuff. Really, that gets lame. You have whole magazines devoted to who's dating who, who's gotten fatter and who's gotten skinnier. It's kinda disgusting in a way. Paparazzi gotten way out of hand. You have a whole career of people who that...of course they get paid and we want to see everybody have a way to pay their bills but if it's at the cost of damaging someone else's life. I don't know if that's too cool. We're in a celebrity obsessed world right now and I try to as normal as possible. I actually find joy in washing clothes.

SF: Did you have a lot of fun with the 70's aspect of Semi-Pro?

AB: Yeah, it was all fantasy. You don't get a chance to do that unless you're dressing up for Halloween or something like that or you're on stage playing a certain character. A lot of 70's clothes are outrageous, well; they worked for fashion back then but really couldn't go anywhere right now so you only get one or two chances in life doing it so I felt greater doing it. You actually feel different wearing the tighter pants, stacked shoes. You walk different, you walk tough.

SF: What about that glitter seahorse costume?

AB: Yeah, that was uncomfortable, for me and the character. We hated to do that but it was fun, it was a lot of fun. Even (my character) Clarence didn't like that cause we play basketball. Like what are we doing in these costumes.

SF: Was it difficult working with a bear? I heard there were a few accidents.

AB: I guess they didn't consider that the bear wouldn't recognize its trainer because he had on Woody (Harrelson)'s wig. So he smelled his trainer, he knew something was right but something wasn't right about his hair so the bear kept swiping at his head, trying to take it off. He got on the man and ripped the wig off. It almost got scary because it looked like he was really about to get hurt. He got scratched up a bit but he was alright.

EXTRA:

SF: Who do you look up to in the industry?

AB: Mos Def. He's amazing. He's actually one of my idols when it comes to people from my generation that are doing the film thing. I take what he does seriously. We're trying to do a movie together. We don't know what movie it'll be but we just thought "man, me, you and a movie together...it'll be something." So we're trying to figure it out.

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