



Shakefire sat down with Brandon T. Jackson and Naturi Naughton, stars of the upcoming comedy, Lottery Ticket. Brandon plays Benny, the best friend of lucky lottery ticket winner Kevin (Bow Wow). Naturi plays Stacie who is Kevin's friend as well but wishes it were something more than just that. They talk to us about what it was like on the set along with how the film is so much more than just another comedy.

Shakefire: How was working together?

Brandon T. Jackson: It was fun. We had a good time. Our chemistry in real life is like our chemistry in film.

SF: Did you know each other before?

Naturi Naughton: No.

BTJ: No, we didn't. Well...

NN: But I did know of you. Did you know who I was?

BTJ: Of course I knew who you were. I studied you.

NN: I looked you up and you did good work.

BTJ: That's why we have this ongoing banter, this tennis match. It's good for comedy. We have great chemistry in the film. If you look at it, it's kinda like, I don't know, that guy you want to slap and kiss at the same time.

SF: Did that every happen on set?

NN: It...it...well...

BTJ: Did ya'll see the film? So ya'll saw when I tried to kiss her? That was not scripted.

NN: It's so quick you probably didn't notice it in the film. In real life, he really got in there and I was like, "you're crazy."

BTJ: No, but they took that take.

NN: No, yeah, it was not part of the scene. It was funny. He's very spontaneous and that's what's great about working with a comedian. It actually keeps me on my toes because wow, the stuff Brandon would come up with in a scene is just, to me, is just natural talent and ability to take something that's already great, a great script, and enhance it and make it even more funny and more real, just make it natural and that's what he would. That is what I admire and it makes me feel like, "okay, I got to keep my self on," because I've never worked with a comedian before or really anything like this. So Lottery Ticket was definitely a different experience because I've only done Fame, which was a musical and I was focused on the music, and Notorius, which was this hardcore rapping role, so it's definitely different working with such great comedians.

BTJ: It's fun though because we do comedies. You know, Percy Jackson, I was funny in that movie but I wasn't a comedian, I was somewhat serious. But this film, it was like a spring break, like everybody just having fun. It didn't feel like we were filming. Everybody, like Bow would just do his thing. Everybody got this cool chemistry. And Mike Epps [laughs], ya'll see him with that pimp wig? He was taking a shot at Katt a little bit. That was a little shot at Katt Williams.

SF: Did shooting in Atlanta help you with the film at all?

BTJ: Yeah, we were shooting the movie with some real...like, we didn't know whether the extras



were the extras of the hood or not, like, “who’s this guy?” I was trying to figure out what’s going on.

NN: Shooting Atlanta was pretty authentic I think. It kept us focused on just the story which wasn’t necessarily based in Atlanta but was about being in the projects and just being around people who really either lived there or been through that or connected with the story. It kept us more in tuned with what we had to do as actors with being authentic.

BTJ: Remember the rooftop with me and Bow Wow? That was all improved. That was just real life. I was just trying to tell people about how I felt about people in the hood. I’m a black man who grew up in the suburbs in the hood so to see how you can come up and live a certain way and then go back, because I didn’t get rid of my hood friends so my boys come over to the house and are like, “dang, you got ketchup AND mustard? Ya’ll are living it up!” So it’s like, when you see that, I was telling people how I really felt about society, through Benny’s characters. Great way to hide so I won’t get jacked [laughs]. I really wanted to expressed...you know, I got my character from – it’s going to sound so corny – but from Aladin. Remember Aladin was a streetrat and he wanted more and he could see the kingdom over. Like, we could see the skyline over and that’s why that rooftop was so powerful because you see the roof but you can see back. Right over there, it’s right across the street but we’re bound to this one block. I’m like yo, we’re sick of the government, this and that, telling us what we got to do.

SF: Naturi, You’ve done Fame and Notorius, why did you decide to do a comedy?

NN: Wow, well Lottery Ticket kinda came to me while I was in LA and I had a semi-relationship with Eric White. Basically, he had been following my career since 3LW and he was a video director and we had worked together way back in the day. He contacted me and I tested for it and it was one of those things that came together organically. It wasn’t like, “my next movie’s going to be a comedy because I want to do a comedy.” It wasn’t like that at all. It was working with good people and felling that I was going to be appreciated in that group of people. It was more organic. And then I realized when I read the script that this is pretty funny and found out who was going to do it I wanted to be involved because it wasn’t just a comedy. It was a comedy I felt that was going to make us think about what we should be doing with our money or how we should be giving back to our communities and I like that premise.

SF: So do you feel connected to your character?

NN: I did. Stacie was very attractive because she’s the home girl. I’m from East Orange, New Jersey and I’m the home girl who wants to get an education and wants more as well. She’s kinda like love on the low low and I’ve been in that situation too, being overlooked as the girl who’s just the home girl but really she wants to be more. That’s hard too so I think that that story was very organic for me to get in to.

SF: Going with that message of giving back, for some people, the kind of money you make is like lottery winnings. Is there anything you do—

BTJ: I have a school in Detroit called the Brandon Jackson School of Arts. It’s still being...we got to get some new computers. Naw, cause the government isn’t going to give us it.

SF: A whole school?

BTJ: My dad owns a church so we took half the church and made it into a school. I’m really trying to build it to be what it’s supposed to be. We got about 200 students. It’s a charter school where you can learn different skills like how to edit and do music production. We have a little studio booth and they can go in there and make their own CDs and different things. It’s cool though. There are some afterschool programs we do too, like a mentorship program. There’s 70,000 dropouts in the city of Detroit and kids are just waking up, eat some cornflakes, and stay in the streets. And that’s what I do as far as that.

SF: What’s the age range for that?



BTJ: It's 19 through 23 because it's for dropouts too. For some reason we don't have a license for underage kids, but I don't know why. I got to figure that out.

SF: And how long has it been around?

BTJ: Just for 2 years so it's still growing big time. Last year we had 150 students and we plan to get maybe 200 this year. It's a cool little spot.

SF: What made you decide on your initiative?

BTJ: I've always been a class clown and had all the good times. Somehow I managed to have 72 absences and graduate with a great grade point average. That's how I am [laughs]. My senior year they told my parents your son might not graduate and I was like, "what are you talking about, I have a 3.4." They're like, "you have 72 absences" and my dad was like, "what?" So I was that guy that could not go to school and make the grade.

SF: And you went where?

BTJ: West Bloomfield, Michigan.

SF: No, no in your 72 absences.

BTJ: [laughs] Oh, I was at home asleep because I already knew I was going to be a comedian.

NN: That's funny. I was a total opposite but good for you; I'm glad that worked out.

SF: It's said that when people find out that you're about to gain a great deal of money, they change. Have you experienced this at all in your careers?

BTJ: I'm experiencing that now because people...

NN: They think you got money.

BTJ: I'm starting to get some money [laughs]

NN: I'm glad you are baby. I'm so glad you are.

BTJ: I'm joking. I did Big Mama's House 3 and it was a blessing.

NN: Lottery Ticket was a blessing for me too. I made money I'm just not on your level [laughs]

BTJ: You don't really start making money until people start knowing your name. It isn't ridiculous but people do change.

SF: What's your favorite scene in the film?

NN: Let me think, what is my favorite scene? My favorite scene is probably the scene when Bow Wow's character Kevin confesses his love to me. And after all this time of me sitting around being that supportive girl, being your best friend, when you knew that there was something going on. Then we kind of kiss and make up essentially. But it's not for personal reasons but that's my favorite scene. Don't get it twisted. I just enjoyed the scene because it shows vulnerability on both sides. I think that's the first time you really get to see Stacie is just floored and her heart just sinks when she realizes that he feels the same way. And the same for him to be able get up the nerve to admit that he wants to be with a girl like her after all these years of being friends. I think vulnerability is so attractive in a scene to me and when you get a chance to connect with someone on a one-to-one level, it's the most intimate moment that you can have in filmmaking and I think that that's what's beautiful about the scene just seeing that honesty.

BTJ: I like the church scene. I like the church scene and the rooftop. Those are my two favorite



scenes. I don't think I'm that funny in this film. I think I'm alright. I like the fact that I got the chance to do a dramatic scene. That's pretty cool. Yeah, I like the church scene; it's funny to me.

SF: What can people take from this movie, aside from being funny?

BTJ: That it has a great underlying message and is a mirror on society on what young people in the projects could be thinking or are thinking. I try to do my best to be true to what's real.

NN: They should also take away, of course the comedy aspect of it, but also the side of it that makes you think about what we can do. Also hard work. I think that one thing that the movie talks about, and my character wants to remind Kevin, you can achieve your dreams even if you don't win the lottery. A lot of people think you have to have like rapper money or be a crazy millionaire. Everybody's not going to have that and there are so many people, and we need to shine on that example as well, that are going to maybe not win the lottery and still make it and have dreams. Like Kevin who wants to start his own shoe company, I'm always like, you can still do that. It's about drive and motivation. But if you do get the fortune of getting that money, it's knowing how to use it, what to do, how to give back, where to go first to make some of those dreams realized. I think that's important to showcase in this movie that you can't get clouded by the fame and oh, I got girls on me now and I'm living the life. I can buy whatever I want. But that doesn't grant you happiness.

BTJ: Our generation is sedated with reality shows and it's not what it is. It's not the substance of what it used to be in the day. My parents are old school so I see through all that Snookie and all that other stuff they keep putting on TV.

NN: We're both kinda old school with the same kind of values.

BTJ: I just can't take this generation. It's annoying. I can't take us being in the hood anymore in Black films. The thing about Tyler Perry at least he has you in the islands and stuff. That's why I did that speech; we got to get out of the hood. Community is different from hood. People mistake community and hood for two different things. We're still with the community but we need a different setting. I can't see one more movie in the hood. I'll write it. I can't do it no more; I'll write it. I'm sick of seeing the same, "These guys in the hood." It's like no, we got to move out and do something else. That's what I love about Tyler. But it has to be showing the younger generation too.

SF: We keep talking about messages such as giving back to the community, but what about how Mr. Washington had the hardest punch and that's how Kevin was absolved of everything that was going on.

NN: I think that "hardest punch" is a literal thing. I think that Mr. Washington's character is what gave Kevin the courage to even stand up with everything that was going on with Lorenzo trying to steal the ticket and money, Mr. Washington's history and what he had been through losing his fame and wanting to be a big time boxer and never quite making it but had money and kinda lost it. Now he's living in the projects and never goes outside. I think that his will to come out for Kevin and punch him [Lorenzo], it wasn't just about the hardest punch ending everything. I mean it's a movie, you take that into consideration. If you think symbolically, he saw himself in Kevin and it gave him the will and power to get his moment which was to free himself from all the drama he was going through. And then Kevin, I think was inspired by Mr. Washington's realizing, "wow, there is something I can do." The fact that he came out and helped him in that moment of, I guess, trial and having issues meant a lot. I think it was deeper than just that moment. I think it was about the whole big picture about seeing himself in Kevin.

BTJ: This movie has a great overcoming underlying tone to it about overcoming your obstacles and things you can hold inside you for years like Mr. Washington was waiting for that one moment and he got it. He felt it in the film. It was underlying oppression. That's why Benny's mad all the time. If you ever feel stuck in a situation and you just want to get out and that's what this whole thing is about. You can't stress that enough.



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