

One on One With the Oscar Winning Actress: Regina King

Written by Kam Williams

Sunday, 31 March 2019 00:00



Regina King was born on January 15, 1971 in Los Angeles. “Regina” is from the Latin word meaning “queen” while her surname has its own obvious regal significance. So, her aristocratic airs should come as no surprise. This classy lady got her start in show-biz after studying acting with Betty Bridges, mom of Todd Bridges of “Different Strokes” fame.

After 10 years of classes, Regina landed a recurring role as “Brenda” on the TV-sitcom “227.” Next, she appeared in blaxploits like *Boyz N the Hood*, *Poetic Justice*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* and *Friday*.

She found a break-out role as Cuba Gooding Jr.’s wife in *Jerry Maguire*. Since then, she has often been cast as the romantic lead, whether as Will Smith’s spouse in *Enemy of the State*, as Eddie Murphy’s in *Daddy Day Care*

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, or as the object of Chris Rock's affection in *Down to Earth*

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In *Ray*, Regina King finally gets to play the “other woman,” holding her own opposite Jamie Foxx as Ray Charles' feisty back-up singer/scorned mistress Margie Hendricks. The film called on Ms. King to exhibit the full range of her talents, a challenge she more than met in a most impressive outing.

[The interview below was conducted in 2004. Since then, Mrs. King obtained an Oscar this year as a supporting actress for the movie If Beale Street Could Talk likewise for the Golden Globe and Emmys since 2016].

Kam Williams (KW): How did you decide how to play Margie Hendricks?

Regina King (RK): Unfortunately, there weren't a lot of pictures or videos of her, so I couldn't really get her body movements down. I had to rely on the information that Ray [Charles] and a lot of the band members had given Taylor [writer/director Taylor Hackford]. When you hear her voice on the records, it's so strong and powerful, so I kind of just went on that and a prayer.

KW: The movie implies that the song “Hit the Road, Jack” had to do with her relationship with Ray [Charles]. Was that accurate or artistic license?

RK: I think that was artistic license. I mean, that's the difference between real life and movies. That's what makes movies, movies. In Taylor's case, he really uses the music to help tell the story. For example, the song “What'd I Say”—the way it played out in the movie is not really how it came to be, but the film made it more dynamic.

KW: You usually play the wife. What was it like being the mistress for a change?

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RK: It was so much fun. When I auditioned for the role, they actually thought I had come to read for the part of Della [Ray Charles' wife]. I sat down and Taylor [Hackford] was telling me about Della's character, and I said, "No! Do I have to read for Della [Charles]?" He asked me who I wanted to read for and I said, "Margie [Hendricks], of course!"

KW: Had you gotten sick of being typecast?

RK: Don't get me wrong. I would not change my resume for anything. I guess it's really a compliment in a way that people constantly want you to play a certain type of role. But I leapt at the opportunity to not be the wife.

KW: Which is your favorite scene in the film?

RK: There are so many great moments in the film. The one that stands out for me is when young Ray [Charles] begins to trust his other senses, when he finds the cricket. I love that scene. That stands out the most.

KW: How did you summon up the depth of emotion you exhibit in the painful moment where your character tells Ray [Charles] she's pregnant?

RK: I can't really say I called on any similar situation, it was just heart-wrenching enough for me to know that another woman could have been in this situation. It was even sad simply reading it. The idea that you're pregnant with this man's child and you know in your heart that he's not going to be accepting of it, that alone was painful, especially knowing she wanted to be more than a mistress whenever they were on the road.

KW: What did you think of the completed picture?

RK: It was so emotional. Kerry [co-star Kerry Washington] and I broke down crying at the end of the screening. When we were shooting it, we knew that we were doing something special. But

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seeing it, I just feel blessed to be a part of the experience. I thought that it really captured Ray [Charles], and that's all Ray had asked, that the picture tells the truth.

Filmography

Year Title

1991 *Boyz n the Hood*

1993 *Poetic Justice*

1995 *Higher Learning*

1995 *Friday*

1996 *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*

1996 *Jerry Maguire*

1998 *Rituals*

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1998 *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*
1998 *Enemy of the State*
1998 *Mighty Joe Young*
1999 *Love and Action in Chicago*
2001 *Down to Earth*
2002 *Truth Be Told*
2003 *Daddy Day Care*
2003 *Legally Blonde 2*
2004 *A Cinderella Story*
2004 *Ray*
2005 *Miss Congeniality 2*
2006 *The Ant Bully*
2007 *Year of the Dog*
2007 *This Christmas*
2010 *Our Family Wedding*
2013 *Let the Church Say Amen*
2014 *Planes: Fire & Rescue*
2018 *If Beale Street Could Talk*

About the author of this interview: Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications around the U.S., Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada, and the Caribbean. He is a member of the *New York Film Critics Online*, the *NACCP Image Awards Nominating Committee*, and *Rotten Tomatoes*. He is a contributor to *TheLoop21.com*, *eurweb.com* and so on. He is also a columnist for our webmag www.megadiversities.com. One of his interviews made the cover of *Heart and Soul* magazine last fall. One of Kam Williams' interviews with Spike Lee is included in the 2002 book entitled *Spike Lee: Interviews (Conversations with filmmakers)*. This book collects the best interviews of Lee. Some of Kam Williams' articles are translated into Chinese, French and Spanish. In 2008, he was Voted Most Outstanding Journalist of the Decade by the *Disilgold Soul Literary Review*. In addition, he has been honored at the U.N. (for BMORENEWS GLOBAL FORUM ON

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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT) on June 15th 2012 by the Foundation for the Support of the United Nations (FSUN). Williams is an erudite Attorney who holds a BA in Black Studies from Cornell University, an MA in English from Brown University, an M.B.A. from The Wharton School, and a J.D. from Boston University. Recently, he was featured on this website:

<http://www.caribbeanlifeneews.com/stories/2015>

. Kam Williams is a member of the Bar in NJ, NY, CT, PA, MA & US Supreme Court bars. He lives in Princeton, (New Jersey) with his wife and son. Kam Williams can be reached at

kwilliams@megadiversities.com

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