

Interview: Need For Speed With ‘Fast Five’ Star Tyrese Gibson

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CHICAGO – The familiar character actor Tyrese Gibson is on a roll. The singer, author and actor has recurring roles in two big film franchises, including the portrayal of Roman Pearce in “Fast Five,” set to release on Blu-Ray and DVD on Oct. 4, 2011.

Gibson also portrays Robert Epps in all three Transformers movies, including this summer’s “Transformers: Dark of the Moon.” He is R&B singer of note as well, having released five albums, including this year’s “Open Invitation.” And if that weren’t enough, the prolific Mr. G. also currently has a New York Times Bestseller book on the charts, “How to Get Out of Your Own Way.”



Tyrese Gibson (right) as Roman Pearce and Ludacris as Tej in ‘Fast Five’
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

HollywoodChicago.com sat down with Tyrese Gibson a couple weeks ago and talked about the “Fast Five” Blu-Ray DVD release and all of his other media projects.

HollywoodChicago.com: Fast Five is a classic heist movie. How did the ‘gang’ that was doing the heist bond as a group before you started or during filming?

Tyrese Gibson: The first day I hung out with Vin [Diesel] was the first day of filming, in particular. One of the ‘48 Laws of Power’ is to never outshine the master. I know him and Paul Walker are the stars of the franchise. The mentality for me was it wasn’t about being in every scene, but I do want to play my part, add to the mission and sprinkle my energy through the franchise in all the spots I’m suppose to be in.

I’ve never been the competitive type, I have a saying ‘I don’t compete, I win.’ Going in to it that is my mentality, we’re much better getting along and collaborating, because it’s not about us, it’s about the fans who show up and enjoy us in this movie. I brought that energy to the

set, and we were all good.

HollywoodChicago.com: In films like ‘Fast Five’ and the Transformers series, where so many elaborate stunts, camera moves and post production effects to be put in place, what do you observe about the role of the director that is different than movies you’ve done without the effects and what are those differences?

Gibson: It is different. John Singleton, Clint Eastwood and Lee Daniels are actor’s directors. They are into character arc and character development. When you want to do a film like that, those are the folks you go to. But when you want to do a big action movie that’s fun, with a high level of escapism, you go to Michael Bay and Steven Spielberg. The movie is suppose to be fun and it’s catering to a specific audience. These films serve their purpose – popcorn, fun, teeny-bopper madness.

HollywoodChicago.com: I read you had to fly between the Fast Five set and the Transformers set to get both of the films done. What was the difference between those two sets, both in how the directors were creating the mood and the overall atmosphere of each?

Gibson: First, I couldn’t believe that they allowed me to do both at the same time, everybody was cool and accommodating. It was one of the best summers of my life, though, an all-time movie high. For me, what ended up happening I never wanted the cast, crew or director to feel like one or the other films were more important than the other. I specifically would not come to the set of Transformers talking about scenes I’d shot on ‘Fast Five.’

The difference in the directors were very extreme. I look at Justin Lin of ‘Fast Five’ as a Zen master. How is it possible to have a cast with all the egos, success and everything else all in one movie? But at no point did any of us not know what was going on. It was then possible to develop a character arc – a beginning, middle and an end – for each of the characters in the movie. That was just great and forward thinking of Justin Lin and writer Chris Morgan.

As far as Michael Bay, he is most aggressive towards himself, and the cast and crew, because he has very high expectations of everyone. So many directors are artsy-fartsy, and get consumed with the creative aspect of what they’re doing, and get behind schedule while working on a movie. Amongst all those A-list directors like the Michael Bays of the world, they’ve got an internal competition going on – who can shoot the biggest movies, with the biggest budgets, in the smallest amount of time. It becomes about capturing the magic, anchoring it with the greatest story we can, but we’ve got to get it done. When we go from one set to another on a Michael Bay movie, people are running, driving fast, everything is in motion. I appreciate Michael Bay and his process, because he gets sh*t done.

HollywoodChicago.com: t this point in your career, how do you determine what film projects will be the best for you and keep your career going? Do you picture yourself doing a more intimate film like ‘Baby Boy’ again?



Actor, Singer & Author Tyrese Gibson in Chicago, September 15th, 2011
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Gibson: One of my next projects, which my company just secured, are the life rights and the life story of Teddy Pendergass. Just like what Jamie Foxx did with Ray Charles, I spent a lot of time, and a lot of special, intimate moments with Teddy Pendergass. I was at his wedding, and I was one of the pallbearers at his funeral. He said to me that there is nobody else in this world that he wanted to bring ‘who I am and what I am as a musician to film.’ I will take on this role humbly and respectfully, and I’m hoping to do right by him, his family and legacy.

HollywoodChicago.com: You recently released a book, ‘How to Get Out of Your Own Way,’ which was an extension of a blog piece called ‘The Love Circle.’ What motivated the Love Circle and how did that extend into the idea for doing the book?

Gibson: The Love Circle wasn't necessarily a blog, it was more of a concept that I created. It was a community of fans that I had that I got together through this voicemail service called, 'Say Now.' This is a company that allows you to leave a voicemail, press pound, and this energy would go out – in my case – to over 700,000 fans. Basically, you're able to promote, advertise or make mention of anything you want and it goes directly to the fans in their voicemail box on their mobile phones.

What I ended up doing was making it much more spiritual – motivational, inspirational and insightful – giving people a heads-up to try and create a shift in their world in whatever capacity I could. Being a public figure has responsibility, that's what it is. Not to be doing dumb sh*t day after day, because they'll say, he's doing it, why don't I?

I hired somebody to type out these voicemails, and that became about 45% of the content of my book, now a New York Times bestseller. We took all the messages, puzzled them and put them all together. Whatever I wanted to add, I just flushed the thought out.

HollywoodChicago.com: What has been the reaction so far?

Gibson: There are a lot of public figures who are so contained and concerned about putting their own truth and realities out there. That's not who I am, I believe in transparency. I'm not the biggest star in the world, and not the most wealthy, I'm just me. In this book, I wanted to give people permission to want better for themselves. They want something bad, but they don't know what the hell they're doing and they have no sense of direction. They have no idea how to get to what they're after. I look at my book as a roadmap about what's around the corner before you get there.

“Fast Five” releases on Blu-Ray and DVD October 4th. Featuring Vin Diesel, Paul Walker, Jordana Brewster, Dwayne Johnson, Ludacris and Tyrese Gibson. Screenplay by Chris Morgan, directed by Justin Lin. Tyrese Gibson's “Open Invitation” and “How to Get Out of Your Own Way” are available wherever CDs, downloads and books are sold.



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