

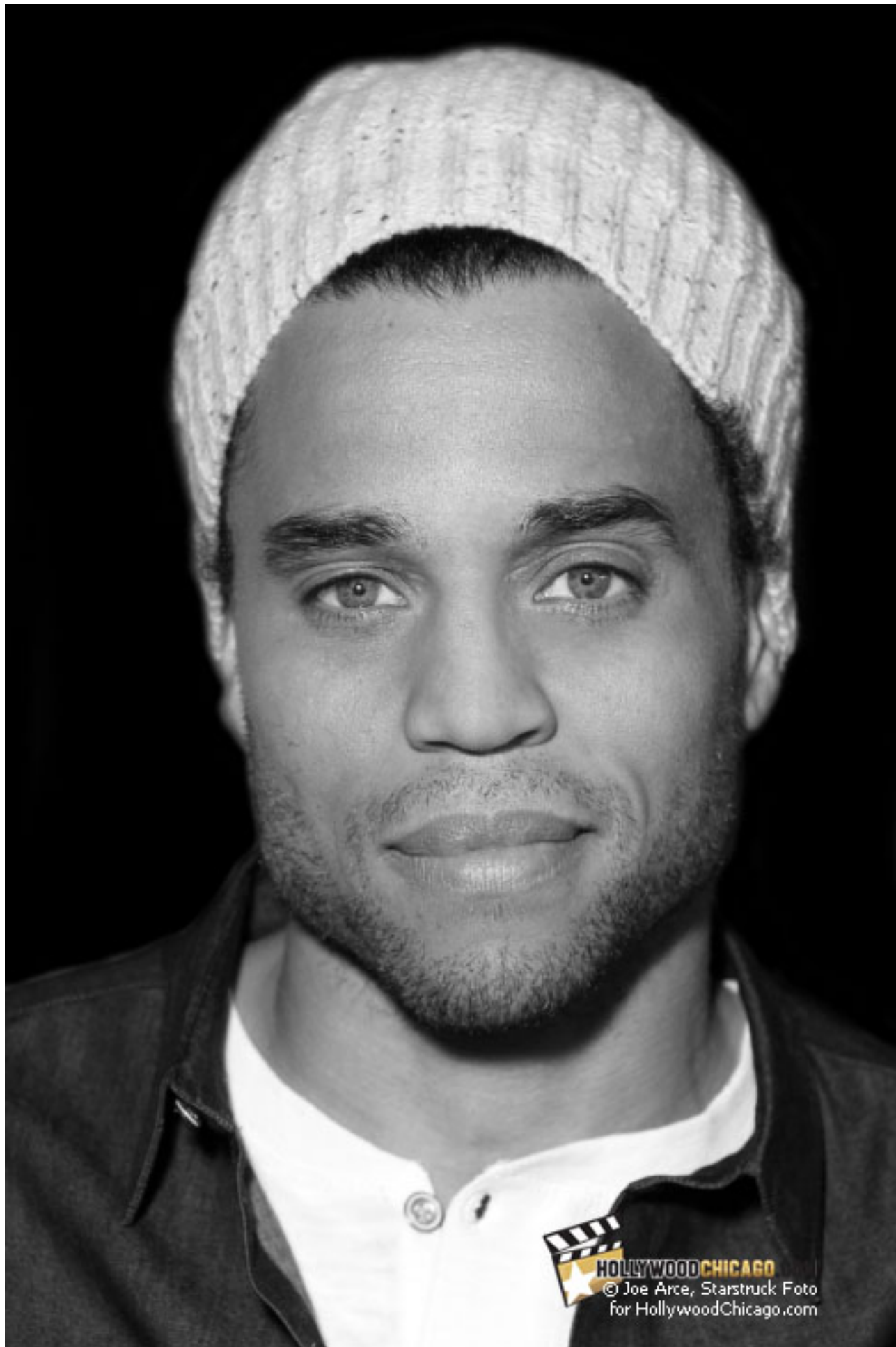
## Interview: Co-Stars Michael Ealy, Regina Hall Tell ‘About Last Night’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 11, 2014 - 1:47pm

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CHICAGO – The path to this year’s remake of the 1986 film “About Last Night” starts right here in Chicago, based on the original 1974 stage version, “Sexual Perversity in Chicago” by David Mamet. Two co-stars in the remake – Michael Ealy and Regina Hall – visited the source city to talk about their version.

After working mostly on stage in the late 1990s, Michael Ealy broke out in a big way (see the story below) in the popular “Barbershop” (2002). This led to steady work with roles in “2 Fast 2 Furious” (2003), “Never Die Alone” (2004) and the pivotal part as “Tea Cake” in the Oprah Winfrey produced 2005 TV movie of the classic novel “Their Eyes Were Watching God” by Zora Neal Hurston. Recently, he was featured in “Think Like a Man” (2012) and “Last Vegas” (2013). Ealy takes on the role of Danny in “About Last Night,” played in the 1986 version by Rob Lowe.



Michael Ealy on the Red Carpet in Chicago, January 29th, 2014, for ‘About Last Night’

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

Regina Hall is known for her roles in two huge film franchises – the “Scary Movie” spoofs and “The Best Man”/”The Best Man Holiday” films. She was also recently in “Think Like a Man” and the remake of “Death at a Funeral” (2010). In “About Last Night,” she plays Joan, opposite to comedian Kevin Hart as Bernie.

HollywoodChicago.com talked to both actors in their recent promotional swing through Chicago in late January. Besides talking about their film, both performers offered some interesting takes on their careers and show business in general.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is of course an adaptation of ‘About Last Night,’ which in turn was an adaptation of David Mamet’s play ‘Sexual Perversity in Chicago’ – which opened here in 1974. What flavors did director Steve Pink want to glean out of the original stage play and the 1986 original film version?

**Michael Ealy:** That’s probably a better question for Steve. [laughs] My assumption would be the boisterous nature of the Bernie character [Kevin Hart]. That kind of brash, in-your-face confidence, I think Steve got that again. Kevin was just all of that. And also the poignancy of the relationship between Danny and Debbie, and how real it is. It’s not a romanticized relationship.

The character of Danny falls out of love, and questions whether he was even in love, he’s just not sure. We don’t see that often in the movies. This film is more about the minutiae of Danny’s life that contributes to the demise of their relationship.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Regina, speaking of Kevin Hart, your character was assigned to keep up with the rhythms of his motormouth character. At what point in the rehearsal/pre-production did you connect to that rhythm, and what was the key to getting there?

**Regina Hall:** It wasn't as much about keeping up with Kevin so much, as it was creating my character of Joan. I think the screenwriter Leslye Headland really set up who Joan was on paper, and how she maneuvered through a room. That's summed up when Bernie has that scene with Danny, when he tells him that Joan 'gets' him. I think they actually matched each other's rhythm. Kevin and I found that as we worked together, and worked off each other. It grew from there.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Michael, how did you and Joy Bryant [Debbie] develop the chemistry necessary to make your on-screen relationship believable? What do you think did it for you, and how did you keep going there through the production process?

**Ealy:** Every time I do a film with a relationship, I get that chemistry question. I feel that chemistry is something you can plan or rehearse. It's about the actors you cast. If you have two people who bring their 'A' game and really understand the craft and the material, then the chemistry will be there. It starts on the page – if the connection is valid, and you build the foundation from the script, then the rest will be there.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is for both of you. We all grow up with a certain sense of morality, and this film has a lot of sex talk, swearing and physical gymnastics in it. Even as you create a character that does all this stuff, what is the hardest thing to say or do in a film like this that you had to get over to concentrate on the character?

**Ealy:** Be fearless.

**Hall:** My mother cringed when she watched it.

**Ealy:** Mine probably will as well. [laughs]

**Hall:** That means we did our job.

**Ealy:** I always prep my Mom. I say, 'get a ticket, but you don't have to see it.' It's totally her choice. When I chose this career, I didn't do it because I like to play things safe. You can't choose acting – the most insecure, unstable profession out there – if you're not fearless. If you say yes to a movie based on a play called, 'Sexual Perversity in Chicago,' most likely it's not going to be 'PG-13.' You build it from the inside out, and you just go.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In the first film, the characters portrayed by Rob Lowe and Demi Moore were much younger than the characters that you both play in the remake. In the 28 years since the first film, do you think your characters are equivalent in maturity to the younger characters in the earlier film, just because relationships have changed in 2014?

**Hall:** For this script, I think the age difference adds another layer and a bit more complexity for these times. Women have evolved, and the women in our film have their professional lives together. We're looking at a time in life when you are an adult, and you don't need to apologize for what you do, but you may not have all the wisdom in those actions. There is a misconception that when you're in your thirties, you know it all. And the truth is, you don't. It's interesting in our film to see them realize that they don't know it all.



Regina Hall on the Red Carpet in Chicago, January 29th, 2014, for 'About Last Night'

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Let's go to a few career questions. Regina, you have been associated with the Wayans Brothers since the first 'Scary Movie' film. Since that began your career as a comic actress, what have you learned through the Wayans that has evolved your comedy sense?

**Hall:** I never think in terms of category, I approach every character the same way, whether comedic or dramatic. When I auditioned for the first time for the Wayans, I didn't think about how big or broad the comedy was, just that there was something real. I build comedy in character, because I like to ground things in truth. There are people in this world that are broad and crazy, so just rely on the character.

Keenan Ivory Wayans gives you a great atmosphere to trust yourself. He was encouraging when something worked – was vocal when it didn't – but mostly he is supportive. That's why so many great comic actors came from him.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Michael, you had a pivotal role in a notable TV movie, an adaptation of the legendary novel 'Their Eyes Were Watching God' by Zora Neale Hurston. What did you learn about your own identity by portraying the character of 'Tea Cake,' a man from a different time in a different America?

**Ealy:** Tea Cake is more of an ideal than he is a man. I think Zora Neale Hurston did that on purpose, because in the book and film he's not perfect, but he is perfect for the character of Janie [Halle Berry in the film], in that he enters her life when she most needs him. Janie then gains the self confidence she needs to survive in the world, and Zora then offered it was time for him to go. I thought that was quite poignant. It was about the journey of Janie, and she finally found peace.



**HollywoodChicago.com:** Did you find parallels in the understanding of that work of art in your own life?



Ealy, Hall & Producer Will Packer of ‘About Last Night’  
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

**Ealy:** I haven’t talked about this much, but my father passed away a year and a half ago. It kind of helped me understand purpose, and why we’re all here. It happened at a time when I also got married, taking the next step in my life. It was like his job was done, and it was time for him to go. I had 39 years with him, and here I am now taking on manhood myself. It was like God said it was time for him to go.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is a question I ask a lot, because I think it defines the show business path. At what point in your careers, did you turn around – whether on a stage, TV or film setting – and say to yourself, ‘how did I get here’?

**Ealy:** That’s easy for me. I moved to Los Angeles in the fall of 2001, on a bit of a whim, after I auditioned for ‘Barbershop,’ simply because the director Tim Early had complimented my choices in that audition – I didn’t even have the part yet. After that audition, 12 days later I was an L.A. resident, I turned it around that fast. I did it so fast, that about a week into it, I had a panic attack. Because as I was driving in Los Angeles, I saw all these billboards with all the guys who were huge stars, and how was I going to compete with that? One month later, I got the part in ‘Barbershop.’

In the following fall, 2002, ‘Barbershop’ was completed, and there I was on a billboard. I didn’t even have to wait one year after having that panic attack until I was there. You can’t tell me that I didn’t make the right decision, and was extremely blessed. That was the moment.

**Hall:** While I was shooting ‘Scary Movie 2,’ I got an offer to do a show, and with no rehearsal I went to do it. The two people I did the scene with was Robert Downey Jr. and Sting. As I was doing it, I said to myself, ‘I love Sting, I love Robert Downey Jr.’ [laughs] I went back to my dressing room, and almost had a panic attack myself, because I thought I didn’t know what I was doing, and they thought I didn’t know what I was doing. After everything was finished, Robert Downey Jr. came up to me and said, ‘You’re good.’ That was the moment, and it meant a lot.

*‘About Last Night’ opens everywhere February 14th. Featuring Michael Ealy, Regina Hall, Kevin Hart, Joy Bryant, Paula Patton and Christopher McDonald. Screenplay by Leslye Headland. Directed by Steve Pink. Rated “R”*



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**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 5:22am):**

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