Red Carpet: Hot Film ‘Precious’ Premieres at 2009 Chicago International Film Festival

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CHICAGO – Backed by industry giants Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, the new film “Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire,” had a red carpet premiere at the Chicago International Film Festival on October 14th.

Walking the red carpet was the transcendent star of Precious, Gabby Sidibe, who portrays the title character. Accompanying her was the director Lee Daniels, an extraordinary creative force of nature.

Also partaking of the film and walking the carpet, the exceptional Chicago character actress Irma P. Hall (”Soul Food,” “The Ladykillers”) and the star of another festival film, the radiant Jossie Thacker.

HollywoodChicago was there, and elicited the following interplay from the participants.

Gabby Sidibe, star of “Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire”

'Precious' Star: Gabby Sidibe at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 14, 2009.
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago: Your character often dreamed of a better life. What was your favorite fantasy sequence in the film to do?

Gabby Sidibe: I think my favorite fantasy scene was the dance number. It took half a day to do it. They built a stage and everything, it looked like a video and it was so amazing. To prepare for it I listened to Beyoncé all day. The dancer guy in the scene, who happened to be my roommate, we had so much fun. And Mo'Nique [who portrayed Precious' mother] was giving me dance tips, it was just bananas.

HC: So does today's red carpet equal those fantasy moments?

GS: (thinks about it) Ah, Yeah (laughs), sure it does.

Lee Daniels, Director of "Precious"

NOTE: I did a complete interview with Lee Daniels earlier in the day, to appear when the film releases November 6th. At the session, he challenged me to go deep with my questions, thus explaining my follow-up.

Lee Daniels, Director of ‘Precious,’ at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 14, 2009.
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago: What question are you dying for someone to ask you and how would you answer it?

Lee Daniels: Oh, here we go. (To a companion) Baby, I told you about this one.

I think what I’m never asked is about the scene regarding the lesbians in the film. Which I really wasn’t able to hit on because there are so many subject matters in the film – obesity, literacy, self-image and physical-sexual-verbal abuse – what we don’t talk about is how African Americans and people of a certain economic component feel about homosexuality.

I feel the reason is that most of the people who are statistically diagnosed right now with HIV are black American women. It is because so many black men are on the “down-low” and they refuse to be honest. And honesty will set you free.

I believe society and the church have forced the African American man to not be honest. And it’s killing our women.

And that is the question I never get asked, and now you have asked it.

Chicago Actress Irma P. Hall, Star of “Soul Food,” “The Ladykillers”

Chicago Actress Irma P. Hall at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 14, 2009.
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: How did you hold up with all those boys [Tom Hanks, Marlon Wayons, J.K. Simmons, Joel and Ethan Coen] in the film, 'The Ladykillers?'

Irma P. Hall: Just like any boys, they just needed a good whipping (laughs). I know women like Marva. That's one good thing about being my age, the women that I portray, I've known them.

HC: How was it working with Tom Hanks?

IPH: Wonderful. I learned a lot of things. And I learned to do what I do. He said to me, just do what you do, don't worry about them.

Jossie Thacker, Star of 'Mississippi Damned'

Mississippi Damned premieres at the Chicago International Film Festival on October 16th.

Jossie Thacker at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 14, 2009.
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago: Give me a quick summary of 'Mississippi Damned.'

Jossie Thacker: It's a story written and directed by Tina Mabry, based on her true-life story. It is the story of three children, and the stories are told through their parent's eyes. I play one of the mom characters [Charlie]. Tina basically takes a look at the generational curses that have been upon this family – physical abuse, alcoholism – everything you can think of, she has dealt with in her family.

We follow the children's lives, and she tells the story as if she's basically looking in the mirror and saying, 'are you going to make some changes or are you forever going to be damned in Mississippi?' It's a choice.

HC: What element of your character did you most connect to?

JT: I'm from Harlem, we're both from the 'hood. We both came from limited resources. I was surprised on how much in common we had, it was scary in fact. So it was very easy to connect to her on a basic level. It wasn't that hard for me.

The Chicago International Film Festival runs until October 22th. Click here for details. *[13]*

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