



Tip “T.I.” Harris - The “Takers” Interview

Tip “T.I.” Harris is one of his generation’s most captivating speakers and one of the biggest hip-hop artists of all time. Whether they see him conversing with a room full of young people about staying in school and following their dreams, or moving tens of thousands at one of his concerts, audiences are always engrossed by the words of the “King of the South.” In 2008, T.I. delivered his most potent and important LP to date, “Paper Trail,” and his highly-anticipated, seventh studio album, “King Uncaged,” is set to be released this Fall.

T.I.’s second professional love is acting in films, and in this arena he has taken major steps forward in recent years. He made his motion picture debut in 2006 in the Warner Bros. film A.T.L. He also appeared in the hit Universal film American Gangster opposite Denzel Washington, and guest-starred on HBO’s hit series “Entourage” in 2008. T.I. recently signed a three-picture deal with Screen Gems that will have him both acting in and producing movies.

Music and movies are just the leading edge of T.I.’s entertainment conglomerate. He’s also expanding into comedy tours, the nightclub and restaurant scene, talent management, and record producing. Plus, he has launched his own fashion line, Akoo.

Here, he talks about his new movie, Takers, a crime caper about a gang of bank robbers who decide to pull off one last heist before retiring. The film co-stars Zoe Saldana, Chris Brown, Idris Elba, Paul Walker, Michael Ealy and Hayden Christensen.

Kam Williams: Hey, T.I., thanks for the time.

Ti: No problem, how you doing?

On the Q.T. with T.I.

Written by with Kam Williams

KW: I'm great. The last time we spoke was for the premiere of ATL. So, a lot has happened for you since then.

TI: Yeah, right.

KW: First of all, congratulations on your wedding last month. You finally made an honest woman of Tameka. Children's book author Irene Smalls says congrats and wants to know how being married has changed you.

TI: [Chuckles] Man, please, we're here to talk about the movie. It would be wonderful to just talk about the movie.

KW: Well then, what interested you in Takers? It seems like you had a hand in every aspect of this project, from acting to the soundtrack to executive producing

TI: I was just producing, not executive producing. It was an outstanding experience. I had a phenomenal time, and I'm very, very proud of the outcome.

KW: How did you manage to assemble such an accomplished cast? There's not only Oscar-nominees Matt Dillon and Marianne-Jean Baptiste, but Zoe Saldana, Hayden Christensen, Idris Elba, Chris Brown, Paul Walker and Jay Hernandez as well.

TI: I think that the script did most of the work in terms of attracting the talent, because it was so exciting that everybody jumped at the opportunity not only to work together but to be a part of something we felt had so much potential.

KW: And how did working with this ensemble turn out?

TI: Man, it was an honor and a pleasure.

KW: It even has a chase scene with Chris Brown doing some parkour, that French, free-running form of movement popularized in District B-13 and the first James Bond film with Daniel Craig.

TI: Yeah, it definitely reads like a fast-paced, high-energy action flick.

KW: How did you prepare for your role?

TI: I think the first step in preparing for this or any other role involves developing a clear understanding of the script, and then mentally placing yourself in the scenarios of your character.

KW: I see that people are already calling Takers "T.I. 11" and "The T.I. Job," allusions to Ocean's 11 and The Italian Job. How do you feel about that?

TI: I mean, man, I'm just pleased to be talked about in the same breath as the elite of action films. You know what I'm saying? The comparison is an honor all in itself.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles asks, what message do you want audiences to take away from this movie?

TI: That there is no good without bad. That karma is real. And that you can't go through life doing only bad and expect good to come of it.

KW: What type of audience do you expect the movie to attract?

TI: A very diversified one over a broad spectrum.

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KW: What is your favorite dish to cook?

TI: [Laughs] Man, that's a tough question to answer. I try to cook whatever the kids and the family want to eat. Let's see, here... I got a fresh shrimp dish that I prepare fairly well that has become a household favorite. I marinate it in a special parmesan sauce. [Chuckles]

KW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

TI: My reflection. [Laughs] That's another very difficult question...[Pauses to think] I see the man that I've grown to become.

KW: Director/author Hisani Dubose says, "As soon as a rap artist, sports figure or actor becomes well known, everyone says they are a role model for kids. How do you feel about that?"

TI: I feel that we are all one another's examples in life. And if my experiences, past and present, can help guide a young person in the right direction, then so be it.

KW: The Nancy Lovell Question: Why do you love doing what you do?

TI: I'm just a passionate person by nature. So, I have a lot of love for music, and a drive to succeed in general, be it film, be it fashion, or whatever the case may be. I put a lot of myself in all of my work. That passion carries over into each of my endeavors.

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

TI: [LOL] Absolutely! The happiest I've ever been.

KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

TI: Just now, when you asked me if I was happy.

KW: The Tasha Smith question: Are you ever afraid?

TI: Not of anything but God. I think fear is a wasted emotion.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

TI: The Bible.

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What are you listening to on your iPod?

TI: I listen to a lot of old school R&B. I don't get many opportunities to listen to much else right now because we're in the final stages of the recording process.

KW: When will the album be finished?

TI: We're taking the time necessary to dedicate the necessary attention to the marketing and promotion of the movie first. After that, we will completely submerge ourselves into the completion of the album.

KW: If you could have one wish instantly granted, what would that be for?

TI: Just for healthy, productive, successful lives for my children and the rest of my family.

KW: The Ling-Ju Yen question: What is your earliest childhood memory?

TI: The first day of school in kindergarten.

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KW: How would you describe yourself in one word?

TI: Loyal.

KW: The Uduak Oduok question: Who is your favorite clothes designer?

TI: I don't want to sound vain, but that would have to be my own fashion line, Akoo.

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

TI: I don't feel the need to feel guilty about any of my pleasures. [Chuckles]

KW: What has been the happiest moment of your life?

TI: The births of my children.

KW: The Tavis Smiley question: How do you want to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be?

TI: Just as a stand-up guy, man, who put his family first, and who put a lot of passion and sincerity into his work.

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

TI: Nah, nah, nah, I think I've been asked just about everything you can be asked.

KW: The Laz Alonso question: How can your fans help you?

TI: [Laughs] They've already been helping me throughout my career. Their continued love and support is enough for me. The only other thing outside of that is sharing their honest opinion of what could be done better. Keep it real with me, that's all.

KW: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

TI: If you set out trying to follow in my footsteps, you won't achieve what I achieved without doing everything I did wrong, too. So, in order to do everything right and end up in a similar position without also making the mistakes I made, you have to aim higher. You have to endeavor to be better than me. On a daily basis, I'm always pushing and challenging myself to be better.

KW: Well, thanks again for another great interview, T.I., and best of luck with the movie and the album.

TI: Thank you, Kam. It's been an absolute pleasure. Later!

To see a trailer for Takers, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWLiXfH62w0>

To order a copy of T.I.'s new CD, King Uncaged, visit: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B003RDPYEO?ie=UTF8&tag=thslfofire-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B003RDPYEO>