

On Film and TV This Fall: Brian White

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Although we've seen him in numerous films over the years, **Brian White** is starting to hit his stride. From his work on TV to the supporting work he's done on films, the Boston native and son of former Celtic Jo Jo White has worked hard to get bigger and better parts. Earlier this year, White co-starred with wrestler John Cena in the action-packed film, '12 Rounds' and with Channing Tatum in 'Fighting.'

In his latest role, he plays the love interest of Taraji P. Henson's character in **Tyler Perry's 'I Can Do Bad All By Myself,'** which opens Sept. 11.

The film also stars **Tyler Perry, Mary J. Blige, Hope Olaide Wilson, Gladys Knight, Marvin Winans** and **Adam Rodriguez.**

This fall, White will star in a new drama series, 'Men of a Certain Age,' with Ray Romano, Andre Braugher and Scott Bakula.

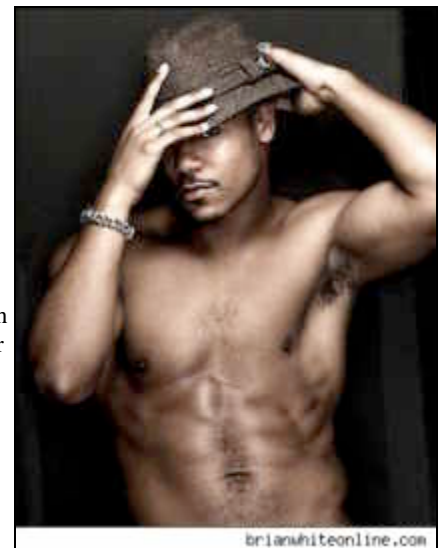
Black Voices recently caught up with White to talk about his role, working with the cast and his upcoming projects.

This is the second time you've worked with Tyler Perry. What attracted you to the film?

Brian White: I worked with Tyler before on 'Daddy's Little Girls.' I'm a huge fan of everything he's accomplished as a writer, the plays, and I'm a huge fan of Taraji P. Henson. I've been trying to create ways to work with her for two or three years now. I make a list of the actors and actresses and producers and directors that I'm a fan of and aspire to work with. Taraji and Tyler are on the top of that list, so that's how that happened.

Take me through the character and why he's such a menace to those around him?

BW: He was written that way. Randy is rotting on the inside. He's unhappy with his life, he's unhappy with the fact that he has four children, he's unhappy with his marriage. He's just unhappy. He's like an anchor or a weight tied around April's neck, Taraji's character. Misery love's company, and that's pretty much who Randy is. He's a guy who's hit bottom in his life. He's never going to see the light of day, and he's holding April down with him 'cause he wants company down there on the bottom. He's providing money so they can stay in the household, but there's no friendship, no real love, it's just a cohabitation. April is temporarily in that condition, and it's not until the kid and Sandino arrive and hold that mirror up to her that she realizes it's not too late for her. She's hasn't married this man, she doesn't have any kids of her own, she's not tied to anything so she can make the choice to change her life.



There's a scene where you flash a tattoo that reads "ATL." Is that yours or is that part of the film?

BW: Everything's part of the film. Randy used to be a police detective, and because of choices he made in his backstory, he's no longer on the force, so now he's deteriorated his life to the point where he's driving a cab. Not that there's anything wrong with driving a cab to all my brothers and sisters out there that drive cabs, it's just that he was a successful police officer, and he threw his life away with alcohol and drugs and bad choices. He lost everything, including his ability to be a good provider for a family home. He just keeps running around with April, being a terrible father and a terrible boyfriend. The tattoo was about his backstory.





There is a scene in the film where Tyler, for marketing purposes, has you in the nude.

BW: Oh, I'm wearing shorts. They inserted a fake butt.

Really?

BW: Yeah, yeah. That's always the case, but I'm wearing a pair of flesh-colored shorts, and they basically overlaid a digital booty. It's all graphics. They turn the shorts into flesh then erase them, then lay over a fake butt... that's a digital butt. (laughs)



I've seen you in a lot of films, and a lot of them have been action-packed. In this film, you have that fight scene with Adam. You always have a fight scene. Is that part of why they cast you, because you're athletic enough to be in these scenes?

BW: You know, I don't know. I definitely hold myself up for the challenge and tell the directors and producers that I like to do my own stunts. And if there's anything I can do as far as adding athleticism to my character, whether it's a movie like 'Fighting,' where there's an actual fistfight or learning how to sign and cook for 'The Family Stone.' I always try to embody the attributes of the character, rehearse myself as an actor for any particular role. It's more physical stuff. I had just come off the movie 'Fighting' and weighed about 215 pounds, Tyler said he wanted me rail thin, so I dropped down to 188 pounds in a two-week period. I shaved my head, stopped cutting my nails, things like that. Randy is not a good guy, and bad things happen to bad people. Bad people should not get away with their crimes, so I was pleased to see what Tyler had in store for Randy, and I wanted to go all the way with it.

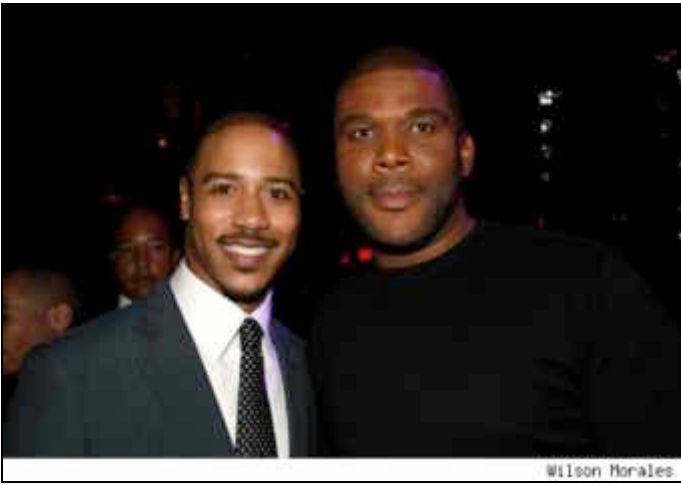
You've been on an episode of 'CSI: Miami.' How was working with Adam Rodriguez in this film?

BW: Adam's the coolest dude. He's like the mayor. Everybody knows Adam Rodriguez. We went out as a cast for dinner a couple times, and everywhere we were going, all over Atlanta, everybody knows this man and everybody loves him. Big hugs, big love for Adam, and I can see why. He's a salt-of-the-earth kind of guy. Real genuine. Very present. Makes you feel like you're the only person in the world when you're having a conversation. I think the ladies are going to love him. He's got the big smile, the puppy dog eyes. I think he makes Sandino fully three-dimensional. He kept saying he didn't want this guy to be too perfect. He managed to make Sandino a real person we love and that we can feel.

In the film, most of your scenes are with Hope, Adam and Taraji, but did you get to interact with the rest of the cast?

BW: Yes, I think the initial cut was about three hours and 15 minutes. There were a lot more scenes we all shot, but within the process of moviemaking, you've got to edit it down to tell the story that Tyler needs to tell to reach his audience. Some of Randy's stuff had to go, but it's an ensemble cast. It's not about me; it's about what's better for the movie. I did get the opportunity to work with Mary J. Blige, and she's just fantastic in this movie. She came to play from day one, not just musically but also on the acting side. I'm really thrilled for her. The clip from the movie that features Mary and Taraji is outstanding, and all the music she did was live, so that was a thrill to be around that day.





So where do you go from here? What's next for you?

BW: I'm currently shooting a series for TNT called 'Men of a Certain Age' with Ray Romano, Andre Braugher and Scott Bakula. We're about four episodes in. The premier is Dec. 8, which is a Tuesday, at 10 p.m. My next film out is called 'The Cabin in the Woods.' Joss Whedon of 'Angel' and 'Buffy' fame is a producer. Drew Goddard, who wrote 'Cloverfield,' is the director. It has Richard Jenkins, last year's Oscar nominee for 'The Visitor,' and Bradley Whitford from 'The West Wing,' an Emmy winner. Then I have my own charity event, called "Helping Hands Charity Weekend." My partner is Roland Williams from the St. Louis Rams. People can find more information about that and support us with some generous donations through our Web site www.helpinghandscharityweekend.com. Keisha Whitaker, Forrest Whitaker's wife, and I have an essay contest for kids ages 13-22 kicking off this Monday called "Words Matter." People can find out about that contest. Hopefully, people can enroll at www.wordsmatternow.org. I've got six films in lead development at my production company. I'm really just trying to elevate my game.

What's your role in 'The Cabin in the Woods'?

BW: I play a character called Truman. We're really hush-hush, because of the non-disclosure agreements we signed. It's a twisted take on the cabin-in-the-woods formula. It's a new take. If anybody's familiar with Joss Whedon, he infuses sci-fi, horror, gore, drama, and comedy into one thing. He assembled a stellar cast of actors, an incredible script and I think it's gonna be a wild ride. It comes out Feb. 5. I am the moral compass of the movie.



I'm hearing rumors that there's gonna be a 'Stomp the Yard 2' in the works. Are you going to be a part of that?

BW: I'm hearing the same rumors. My team is discussing things with the 'Stomp the Yard' team. I'd love to be a part of that. Sylvain White is like a brother to me. He's my business partner. Will Packer and Rob Hardy, who were the producers on the film, assume on the second one I'd do anything for them. I've made three movies with them. It's just a blessing to work with positive brothers who make positive films. If they call me, I will be there with bells on.

Why should anyone see 'I Can Do Bad All By Myself'?

BW: If you're a fan of Taraji P. Henson you're going to get to see everything she does best and probably a whole lot of things you've never seen her do before. That's why I think she's bar none one of the top actresses working today. I think it's exciting when you push and challenge an actress the way Tyler does in this movie. She has a tough role. She's got to make us laugh, make us cry, make us believe her. Taraji is one of the best actresses to pull this off. This is going to be a real crowd pleaser for everybody who loves the cast or Tyler Perry and his brand of filmmaking. All of the above is represented well here.

Before I let you go do you think the Celtics will take it this year?

BW: C'mon man, is that a trick question? My father's a Celtic. I guarantee Celtic victory. You heard it here first. I live in L.A., but I've got no love for the Lakers. It's all about Boston in 2010.

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