

# Singleton back in Hollywood eye with fast car flick

By Kam Williams  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

John Daniel Singleton was born in South Central, LA on January 6, 1968 to Danny Singleton and Sheila Ward who separated soon after his birth. On the fast track to success, John studied scriptwriting at USC and was signed to write and direct *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) during his sophomore year of college.

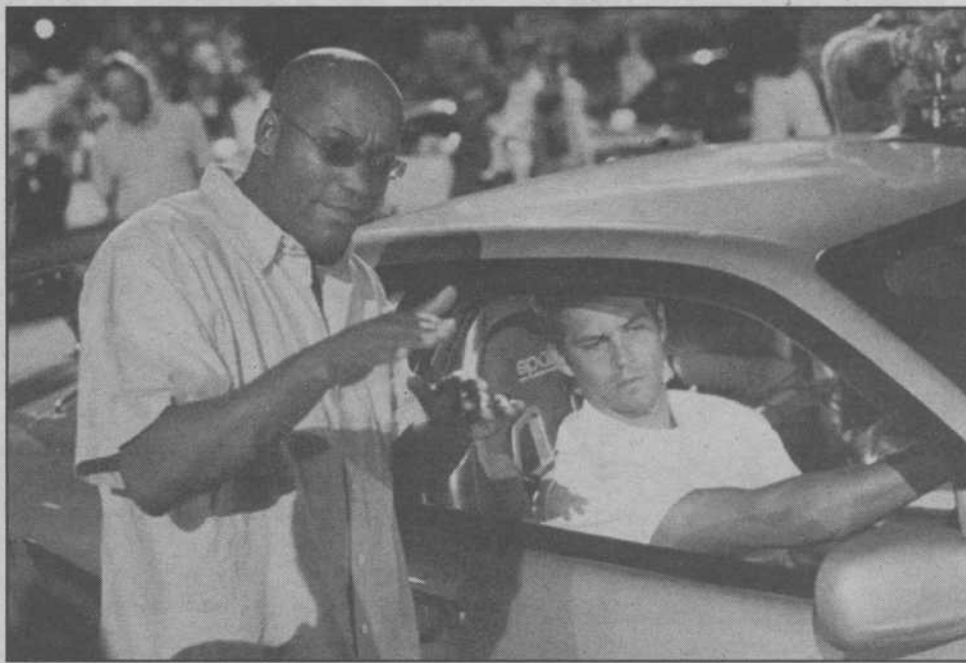
At 24, he became the youngest director ever to be nominated for an Academy Award for that critically-acclaimed slice of ghetto life.

Mr. Singleton has made six movies since, most notably, *Rosewood* (1997), *Shaft* (2000) and *Baby Boy* (2001). His latest film, *2 Fast 2 Furious*, is a sequel of sorts to *The Fast and the Furious*, though he had to try to rekindle the magic sans stars Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez. Here, he talks about his latest and about a couple of his homeys he's made movie with: the late Tupac Shakur, and Tyrese, the Watts-born Tommy Hilfiger model-turned crooner-turned MTV Jams host-turned-actor who made an impressive big screen debut in the title role of *Baby Boy* (2001) and who now stars in *2 Fast 2 Furious*.

**KW:** What challenges did you face in taking on the sequel of such a successful film?

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On the set of "2 Fast 2 Furious": John Singleton used imagery from video games to choreograph some of the visually stunning car scenes in his new movie. Singleton, who's known for his reality-based films, says he doesn't want to be pigeonholed as a director.

We wanted to make these cars really hot and really new. We said we were going to have cool paint jobs and we were going to trick 'em out and get as many sponsors as we could to put as many of the cool things on these cars that the ordinary street kid couldn't afford as possible. So, we basically made cars that would just blow people away when they saw them."

**KW:** How did you approach the action sequences?

**JS:** "One of the things that helped me formulate how I wanted to shoot this movie was watching a lot of Japanese Anime and playing this game on Playstation 2 called Gran Turismo 2. The video games helped me to divorce myself from thinking that there's a set way to shoot car footage."

**KW:** Playing video games is one thing, but how did you figure out how to adapt them into stunt scenes, like cars flying off bridges?

**JS:** "I went to film school, bro. I've been shooting movies for over ten years."

**KW:** But aren't you known more for realistic, slice-of-life flicks?

**JS:** "I don't want anybody to pigeonhole me as a director that does only one type of movie. I may do a film with Harrison Ford or Brad Pitt, but it's still going to have a whole lot of soul behind it, because that's just how I bring it."

**KW:** What makes a car chase exciting?

**JS:** "Danger. If you have a sense of danger, then you really feel like something's in jeopardy. If you don't have a

sense of danger within a car chase, then you just lose it. You have to feel like somebody's going to eat it or get hurt. It's all about tension and rhythm and pace."

**KW:** What kind of car do you drive?

**JS:** "Usually, I drive a big Lexus LX-470, which seats like 8, cause I have my kids in the car. But I have a sexy car for Daddy, though, after this movie. I got me a convertible Mercedes that's being worked on right now. I'm getting it tricked out. It'd gonna look good with cool rims, but I'm not gonna get any turbo boost in it."

**KW:** How responsible do you feel for *2 Fast 2 Furious*?

**JS:** "Hugely responsible. I was responsible for how the film looked, who was in it, and the logistics of how it

would be shot. That's my job as director. The whole picture, the music."

**KW:** How'd you feel about having to do the sequel without Vin?

**JS:** "The cool thing is that I got the job because of my association with Tyrese. When Vin decided he didn't want to do the movie, the head of the studio called me and asked me what I thought about casting Tyrese. I said, 'I think he's going to be a huge star.' And in the next breath the guy asked me if I wanted to direct it. And I said I'd do it, if Tyrese wants to do it. And that's how we ended coming on the movie."

**KW:** But how do you do a *Fast and Furious* sequel without Vin Diesel?

**JS:** "I think I answered that by making the movie. Look at it. Thank God he didn't do the movie, cause now it's even more fresh and new. I wouldn't have had it any other way, even if I'd had a choice."

**KW:** You've been supporting Tyrese for a long time, saying he's going to be a big star. Why so?

**JS:** "Yeah, I've been saying that even before we did *Baby Boy* together and nobody believed me. Then they saw how he put it on and went, 'Whoa!' This time we want to show how funny he could be as opposed to how serious he was in *Baby Boy*. We wanted get across in this picture that he's got this really funny, magnetic personality."

**KW:** You were friends

with Tupac Shakur and gave him his first starring role in *Poetic Justice*. Do you ever think about the fact that his murder is still unsolved?

**JS:** "I try to think about it sometimes, but it really disheartens me, knowing Pac and knowing what he was about. It's really difficult because that's a subject close to my heart. Whenever something happens, you're always thinking what could you have done to prevent the course of events from happening. It's just too much to bear."

**KW:** Do you think the police have done a good job investigating the case?

**JS:** "I don't know. I don't know. I don't think they're trying hard enough."

**KW:** What flicks are you looking forward to seeing this summer?

**JS:** "The Hulk... and... what else is coming out? Oh, *T3* [*Terminator 3*]."

**KW:** Have you ever considered directing a comic book adaptation yourself?

**JS:** "Yeah, I've been trying to explore doing a comic book. I'm really good friends with the head of Marvel Comics, so we're trying to find something for me to do. But we'll see. Everybody who knows me knows that I'm a big comic book fan. I'm at Golden Apple Comics every Wednesday whenever there's new comics out."

**KW:** Have you seen the *Matrix*?

**JS:** "Yeah, I thought it was real cool. I loved my boy Fish [Laurence Fishburne] in the movie."

## Flip Wilson benefactor of new scholarship

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) - Flip Wilson, most famous for dressing in drag as Geraldine, is the benefactor of a new scholarship for black journalism majors at Rutgers University.

John Pavlik, chairman of the journalism and media studies department on Rutgers' New Brunswick campus, said the first recipient of the annual \$23,500 Flip Wilson scholarship will be selected next spring.

The decision will be based in part on a 500-word essay that focuses on some aspect of Wilson's work and its impact on television or comedy, Pavlik said.

Wilson died of liver cancer in 1998. He didn't have a journalism background, but his friend and former publi-

cist Kathleen Fearn-Banks helped persuade him that it was a field where his money could make an impact on the black community after his death.

The comedian then agreed to put a clause in his will that provided funding for annual scholarships at Rutgers and other schools across the nation.

Fearn-Banks, now a communications professor at the University of Washington, said Rutgers will be among the first universities to receive the money.

"Rutgers was selected because it offers the leading journalism program in Flip's home state," she said. Scholarships also will be set up at the University of Washington. (See Wilson, Page 17)



### ALL HER JAZZ

Internationally known jazz vocalist Janis Carter will perform from 8 to 10 p.m. Friday, June 13, in the Wayne Newtom Showroom at the Stardust hotel-casino.

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