

Jackson rumors surprise to Depp

NEW YORK (AP) - Johnny Depp, star of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," says he didn't base his Willy Wonka character on Michael Jackson - and is surprised that some people see a resemblance.

Depp's demure voice, pasty complexion, perfectly bobbed locks, neo-Victorian garb and androgynous air seem to present a reflection of pop singer Jackson, recently acquitted on child-molestation charges.

"A few people have mentioned it, and it kind of took me by surprise. I really didn't expect that," Depp told reporters recently, according to AP Radio. "Michael Jackson was not a sort of ingredient or inspiration for the character at all."

Depp said he based the way Wonka speaks on children's show hosts he remembers from his childhood. "How odd it was the way that they spoke," the 42-year-old actor said. "That bizarre, musical cadence to their speech pattern."

As for the bob, Depp said he figured Wonka had been a recluse for so long, he wouldn't know what a modern haircut looks like.

"I just did this sort of strange, almost like a Brian Jones kind of bob and supershort bangs. His line of reference would be very, very dated," Depp said.

"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," Tim Burton's wildly imaginative take on Roald Dahl's beloved children's book, took in \$56.2 million on its opening weekend in American theaters.



DUDE, YOU'RE GETTING THE DELLS

The Dells showed no sign of slowing down during a show Saturday at the Cannery Hotel-Casino in North Las Vegas. The long-running group performed during a concert that also included fellow show biz veterans Rose Royce and the Dramatics.

Terrence Howard getting his due in Hollywood

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

When not taking a break from his busy schedule to get a lap dance from Beyonce, which he describes as, "putting her rear end in my face, pulling on my hair, my head," Terrence Howard has been dividing his time among family, music and moviemaking.

Last month, during the filming of the BET Awards, he was pulled out of the audience and up onto the stage by the devout Christian pop diva who proceeded to treat him to such an eye-popping, three-minute tease that he was literally left with blood-shot eyes.

Professionally, the past 12 months have proven to be a breakout period for the gifted actor. After appearing in Ray last fall, in 2005 he received critical acclaim for his performances in a couple of made-for-TV movies, "Lackawanna Blues" and "Their Eyes Were Watching God."

Next, Terrence turned in an Oscar-worthy performance in "Crash" as a Black man humiliated by a racist cop during a profile stop. In his new release, "Hustle & Flow," he plays a pimp who wants to be a rap star. This picture is generating even more buzz, having won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

KW: What made you decide to do this film?

TH: "I just went and talked to a whole lot of people living in Memphis and to some people involved in that lifestyle. I tried to understand where they were coming from and what were some of their lost dreams. That's what the film is really about. It's not necessarily about the pimps and the prostitutes, but about people trying to find their lost dreams."

KW: A few years ago you told me that you were moving away from playing this sort of character.

TH: "Yeah, that was around the time of Hart's War."

KW: "Assuming a pimp qualifies, what's changed for you?"

TH: "I didn't realize that part of being an actor is playing a variety of roles in life. An individual can choose what role he's going to play in life, but an actor has to be open to playing all of them. Even things that he's morally opposed to. That's where the challenge comes in. That's when you're really acting."

KW: How would you describe your pimp character's relationship with the three young women in his life?

TH: "They were like family to him, like sisters. You know how you might be best friends with one sister, while you can't stand another, but you all are dependent on each

other? And some are harder to deal with than others, or duller thinking? But all of them proved to be smarter than DJay."

KW: John Singleton produced "Hustle and Flow." Was he there on the set?

TH: "Every day. But Craig [writer and director Craig Brewer] literally directed every moment of that film. I applaud John because he stepped back and allowed Craig to do his thing."

KW: Did you re-write your lines at all?

TH: "No, this character I had no insight on, or very little insight on. So, I had to trust where the director was going with it."

KW: Were you there at Sundance when the picture won the Audience Award?

TH: "I was there to see the first screening, but I was off working when it won the Audience Award."

KW: How was it received by the audience?

TH: "Like a newborn baby. Everybody just loved the child. I didn't see one frown. It was really wonderful receiving love from everybody."

KW: Seems like your performances in both this and "Crash" are generating early Oscar buzz.

TH: "Wow! I hope I could win. That would be fun."

KW: Do you think these movies will be remembered at the end of the year?

TH: "I hope so. I hope so, man."

KW: Speaking of being remembered, I still get goose bumps whenever I think of your grandmother, Minnie Gentry's performance on Broadway in "Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death," which I saw in the '70s. She brought down the house with that moving monologue that closed the show.

TH: "Yes, indeed. I was there. Yeah, I kind of think

I'm just carrying on. That's what we do as children and grandchildren. We carry on the hopes and the desires of those who came before us. I feel that everything that's happening to me is happening to me through Minnie."

KW: What made you settle in Philadelphia, since you normally think of Hollywood actors living in L.A.?

TH: "Well, I was born and raised in Cleveland, but my wife was from Philly. I wanted to get back to where people were real, where a smile is a smile, not a trick pulled out of a sleeve."

KW: Are you playing music anywhere soon?

TH: "They're trying to get me to do an album now. So, I think I'll start by playing some small art houses and coffee shops, and try to build an audience for that dream."

KW: Do you still have an

interest in science, too?

TH: "Yes, I do. I'm planning to take some classes next year, to re-educate myself, because I haven't been in school in 14 or 15 years, and there have been so many advances in the field."

KW: Do you think your kids will follow you into acting?

TH: "I'm sure all of them will, to some degree. I'm going to make that available for them, because every father has the responsibility of teaching his children his trade. So, yeah, I think both of my daughters will, and my son."

KW: Which of your roles have you enjoyed the most?

TH: "The one I'm doing right now, 'Get Rich or Die Tryin',' with Jim Sheridan."

KW: Why so?

TH: "Because he's such a (See Interview, Page 9)

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