

Cube on XXX State of the Union

Written by Robert ID500

Friday, 03 December 2004 05:45 -

Ice Cube

It's late afternoon in Marina Del Rey, California, on the set of "XXX: State of the Union" and Ice Cube has spent the past six hours shooting what will ultimately last only a few seconds: a scene where his character, strapped to a harness, is yanked up a two-story tunnel.

As he rests while the crew sets up for yet another take, the rapper/actor's stone face suggests he's annoyed, but he's just staying in character. Inside, Cube's grinning like he's back in the "Barbershop" with Cedric.

"It's been fun just being a part of a movie this big," Cube says between takes. "It's a \$118 million movie. I'm a kid in a candy store right now."

A little while later, when Cube crawls into a shed made to look like the inside of a tank, a trace of that excitement creeps out.

"This is a scene on an aircraft carrier where I actually take a tank and catapult it into another tank and knock it over the side, which is a cool stunt," he says proudly. "Me and the tank getting shot at and delivering blows back!"

For Cube, this is a dream role. He's done "Torque" and "Anaconda," but this is his first time shooting a bona fide big-budget action movie.

"When I saw the trailer for the first "XXX," I was like, "Damn, that should've been me," " Cube recalls. "I was a big fan of that movie. So when they asked me to be a part of this one, I jumped at it."

Cube replaces Vin Diesel, who top-lined the first "XXX" but — as he did with "The Fast and the Furious" — chose not to return for the sequel. The producers, hoping to establish a franchise, have since decided each film will feature a different XXX agent with diverse skills.

"He's a pure military-type cat," Cube says of his character, Darius Stone. "A bad seed [but a]

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good soldier. He don't really like authority too much. He's basically skilled in all kinds of combat, black ops type of deal."

In "XXX: State of the Union," directed by Lee Tamahori, best known for 2002's "Die Another Day" and 2001's "Along Came a Spider," Samuel L. Jackson reprises his role of NSA recruiter Augustus Gibbons, who finds himself in need of another renegade agent.

After tracking down an outsider from his old unit (Cube's Darius) and freeing him from military prison, Jackson's Augustus drafts the agent to track a dangerous military splinter group conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. Willem Dafoe, who frightened moviegoers as the Green Goblin in "Spider-Man," plays the enemy leader.

"The first "XXX," to me, the action was incredible, but the story was just all right," Cube muses. "We're not trying to diss nobody, but I think we've got a better story. And better villains. I just think the caliber of actors, the story and the action is just taking it to the next level."

"State of the Union" also has not just Cube, but another rapper making his biggest movie to date — Xzibit. The two West Coast MCs met years ago through a mutual pal, producer Sir Jinx, and have been friends ever since. "I'm trying to get my ride pimped," Cube jokes.

Xzibit plays an old friend who lends Darius a hand in his mission. "He's a part of my junkyard army, my army in the "hood," says Cube, who predicts a bright big-screen future for X to the Z. "He's got the charisma to pull it off."

Cube has been shooting "State of the Union" since the summer and spent several months training for the role.

"Not only working out, but training with some of the SEAL guys, some of the dudes who do this for a living," he explains, looking buff in his black uniform. "I've done a few of these military-type deals, like with "Three Kings," so it's a chance to jump back into that."

The military training has been paying off more than ever with "State of the Union" as Cube has been doing several of his own stunts. During one particularly intense week, he shot a foot chase scene on the roof of a prison and then jumped off the side of an aircraft carrier.

"That wasn't easy," he says. "But it's been fun. That's what I signed up to do."

"XXX: State of the Union" releases April 29, 2005 thru Columbia Pictures. [Source](#)