

Movies

On Screen • DVD/Video

Ice Cube, the rapper, is taking a detour — into a family film

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Ice Cube, once known mostly for his role in the rap group N.W.A., might not seem like the most logical choice to star in a PG-rated family comedy. But in *Are We There Yet?*, opening tomorrow, Ice Cube spends much of the film on a road trip with two kids (he is trying to impress their mom, who is stuck out of town on a business trip).

Ice Cube made his acting debut in John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* and has continued to gain ground as a movie star with roles in the *Friday* and *Barbershop* franchise.

But how does one of the most controversial rappers end up in a children's movie? Ice Cube says, "If I can be a gangsta rapper and a father, I can be a gangsta rapper and an actor."

Are We There Yet? stars Ice Cube as Nick, a single guy who is not very fond of kids, but very fond of Suzanne (Nia Long). When she ends up working in Vancouver on New Year's Eve, Nick offers to take her 8-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter up from Oregon to join her.

On the ensuing road trip, Nick is thrown into some nightmar-

ish, but funny, situations. "It's everything you ever went through on a road trip, times 10," he says during a press session in Washington, where he is promoting the movie.

Throughout the film, it is obvious that Ice Cube doesn't mind being the butt of a few jokes, and he says that he had fun making the film, despite the physical challenges. (He rides a horse, jams to the ever-irritating "Hamster Dance" song and faces off with a deer.)

A decade ago, it might have been hard to imagine the artist, whose work with N.W.A. was banned from some radio stations and MTV, acting with children in a PG-rated comedy, and Ice Cube said he knows some fans might be surprised by his turn as a leading man in a family film. But, he says, "It's just one movie in a long career, hopefully. If they're let down by this movie, they ain't really fans."

Ice Cube produced *Are We There Yet?* with his production company, Cube Vision Productions. Over the past few years, he has gotten involved in almost every area of film production. He directed and wrote 1998's *The Players Club*, wrote and produced the *Friday* films and produced *Barbershop 2: Back*



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Aleisha Allen, Philip Daniel Bolden (center) and Ice Cube in a scene from "Are We There Yet?"

in Business. Ice Cube has also contributed songs to the soundtracks of his films.

Making the transition from rapping to acting and then on to producing, directing and writing came naturally, he says. After *Boyz n the Hood*, "I kinda just got bit by the acting bug and wanted to not only act, but create my own material 'cause I was always used to doing that."

Cube adds that he is glad he got into production because if he didn't, he would be a "passive artist, waiting for the phone to ring."

"By actually getting in there and getting my hands dirty, I'm able to control my own career a whole lot more than other people," he said.

He has also tried his hand at action films. He starred with Jennifer Lopez (and a 40-foot snake) in *Anaconda*, appeared alongside George Clooney in *Three Kings* and appeared in *Torque* last year as the leader of a biker gang. Ice Cube returns to action films with the lead role in the sequel to *XXX*, coming out in April.

Despite his success on screen, Ice Cube continues to create music. He released a greatest-hits album in 2001, and his first four albums were re-released in 2003 with bonus tracks. He says he plans on dropping a new album by the end of this year.

Does Ice Cube see starring in a family comedy as a compromise to his original image?

"When you're black in America," he says, "you have no choice but to keep it real."

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