

RISING HOLLYWOOD STAR RAYAN LAWRENCE REFLECTS ON HIT CABLE SERIES AND THE INFLUENCE OF 50 CENT

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NNPA NEWSWIRE — Rayan Lawrence, plays K-9 in the hit Starz show *BMF* (Black Mafia Family). The series tells the true story of how the Flenory brothers (Demetrius “Big Meech” Flenory and Terry “Southwest Tee” Flenory) fought their way out of poverty and the war on drugs in Detroit to become

cultural and hip-hop game changers.

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By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent
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Rayan Lawrence doesn't let his success make him arrogant.

Lawrence, who plays K-9 in the hit Starz show *BMF* (Black Mafia Family), is just enjoying his newfound fame as the show's new lead character.

Lawrence told the *Washington Informer*, "I love this, it's so cool."

"Back in New York, I went to a fashion show, and everyone there loves K-9. Because of what we're doing with the character, everyone loves me."

BMF tells the true story of how the Flenory brothers — Demetrius "Big Meech" Flenory and Terry "Southwest Tee" Flenory — fought their way out of poverty and the war on drugs in Detroit to become cultural and hip-hop game changers.

As the Flenory brothers build a national empire, their pursuit of the American Dream is tied in with themes of family, faith, and loyalty.

Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, a business and hip-hop mogul, is the executive producer of the hit show. Starz just announced that it has signed on for a third season of *BMF*.

The aspect of family creates a great attraction for Lawrence, he asserted.

"I was raised to value family, so it's been amazing to be a part of this," Lawrence said. "And to work with 50 Cent again. I worked with him on 'Power,' and I've been so excited to meet him.

LaLa Anthony, Mo'Nique, Steve Harris, and others also appear on BMF.

But playing the role of K-9, a ruthless gang leader aligned with Big Meech, counts as Lawrence's biggest role to date.

In the past, he has appeared as a guest on shows like Ironside, FBI, and Magnum P.I.

He said that when he was a guest on Blue Bloods, he learned a lot from the famous actor Tom Selleck.

But he also gives credit to actor and director Shiek Mahmud-Bey, who has made a name for himself onscreen and teaches actors like Lawrence through his "Char'Actors" company and "Shiek Studios."

New York, Detroit, Arkansas, and Atlanta are all now home to Shiek Studios.

Later this year, Shiek Studios will add Shiek University, a school where people can learn how to be a director.

Lawrence said, "Shiek is my guy."

"We've worked together for many years. When we worked on a movie together, I found him very interesting," Lawrence said.

"A director told me about Shiek, so I looked him up and thought, 'Oh, I get it.' I wanted to be a part of what he was doing, and I love the way he does his job. He helped me with auditions and gave me advice on BMF."

Lawrence said Mahmud-Bey taught him to be true to the characters he portrays.

"I learned a lot from what he taught me," Lawrence added.

"Be honest and sure of yourself, and be present, ready to listen and answer. That's what he said to me."

That advice worked out well.

Lawrence said he was moved to learn more about the history of slavery while he was making the movie "Underground."

Before the movie, Lawrence said he stayed away from those stories because they were traumatizing.

During the 2016 presidential election, Underground was being filmed.

Lawrence recalled that they filmed a pivotal scene on the day that Donald Trump was elected president.

"One of the most important scenes was shot on the day Donald Trump was elected," Lawrence said. "We had a scene about the right to vote. It was very dramatic, and we were in Atlanta. I played an abolitionist, and I must tell you that in the scene we shot that day, I really did throw some punches. There was so much tension."

Lawrence's first job was as a model, but he said he was bored.

He said he enjoyed acting better than being a model because as a model, "all I did was take pictures all day."

"I started looking into characters to figure out how they thought, and I love the process," Lawrence asserted. "After all these years, I still love the process, including going to auditions."

BMF is filmed in Detroit, but Lawrence said he hasn't had a chance to see much of the Motor City yet.

He said, "We filmed here, and we stayed at the Motor City Casino Hotel."

"It's a great and unique experience, but I've seen run-down houses where you can buy a house for \$900, but no one seems to take advantage of that," Lawrence said.

"It's sad because there are many things that could be done."

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