

Wayans Bros
The Little Man Interview
with Kam Williams

Marlon, Shawn and Keenen in the House

Marlon, Shawn and Keenen Ivory Wayans hail from a family with ten kids, seven of whom are in showbiz. Writer/director/actor Keenen, 48, is probably best known as the creator of In Fox-TV's In Living Color, the comedy series which launched the careers of Jim Carrey, J-Lo, Marlon and Jamie Foxx, to name a few. The comedy team of Marlon, 33, and Shawn, 35, will always be associated with Scary Movie and their WB hit sitcom, The Wayans Bros. But then there's brother Damon (My Wife and Kids), sister Kim (In the House), brother Dwayne (a composer), sister Nadia (I'm Gonna Get You Sucka). The multi-talented clan also features cousin Craig (a scriptwriter), nephews Damon, Jr. (My Wife and Kids), Michael (My Wife and Kids) and Damien (Little Man), and niece Cara (My Wife and Kids). Here, Keenen, Marlon and Shawn talk about their new picture Little Man, and share what it was like collaborating again for the first time since White Chicks.



KW: Was it challenging playing such a short person?

Marlon: It was kind of hard, first of all, because I'm 6'2", not 2'6". Then, on top of that, I had to play a baby, too. That was asking a lot. All that, and I couldn't use my body, just my head. And when I'm acting, and supposed to be driving in a car, I'm really sitting on a box. I'm not in a car. And when I'm running, it's not really me running. It's somebody else running. I may as well have had my head chopped off and just had that come to the set so my body could be home sleeping.

KW: What was it like having to perform against a blank green screen?

Marlon: It was just me and, like, some green background. I felt like I was working with Shrek's skin all over the damn place. I had nobody to talk to, so I just thank God for developing my imagination when I was young, since none of my brothers would play with me because I was so damn annoying.

KW: How was it different directing your brothers this time around?

Keenen: The two of them are together in the movie when you see the film, but when we shot the movie, they never shot a scene together. Marlon had the most difficult job because he was isolated on the green screen. He had to physically match everything that Linden [body double Linden Porco] did with his head. He came up with a very clever way of using a swivel chair that enabled him to keep his head still and move his body in a fluid way.

KW: What did you think of Marlon's performance?

Keenen: He really did a brilliant job. Marlon, Damon and Jim Carrey are the three people that I think could play a character like this, a human cartoon that you still connect to. You don't lose him in the cartoon. You still relate to him as a human being. Those are the only three guys I know who have that kind of talent.

KW: How about Shawn's?

Keenen: I think that Shawn actually had the most fun, because he got to work with Kerry [Washington], Spoon [John Witherspoon], Molly [Shannon] and David Alan Grier. So, he got to work with all the funny people, plus he got to work with Linden. Linden made it easy, because he's such a lovable kid. He made it easy for Shawn to want this little kid, because he really had a cute little baby in front of him. So, his performance is genuine.

KW: How would you describe your character?

Shawn: Darryl is a young man who has reached that point in life where he really wants to have kids. He really wants to have that responsibility and that camaraderie that you share with children. So, he's really excited about that next level in life. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm about having babies is not matched by his bank account which can't really accommodate kids at this particular time with his wife. But that doesn't stop him from trying. So, he wants to be a dad, and he will be one.

KW: Was it hard to generate chemistry not really having each other to work off of as you shot your scenes?

Shawn: The chemistry was still there, surprisingly, through Keenen, because he knew what it was that I did, and then Marlon would match the scene with what it was that he was doing. So, I shot most of my stuff first with his body double, and then Marlon would watch what I did and then ad-lib what he would normally ad-lib if we were both doing the scene together. It was an interesting process. It was different. I missed having him on the set with me at the same time because we have a blast doing it. But this turned out really good.

KW: Do you two see yourselves as similar to a classic comedy team like Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello?

Marlon: Me and Shawn are kinda like Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, but we're not white. Or older, yet. Who knows what we'll become when we get older. But we're going to be grumpy old black men. I know it. We were born a comedy team. We're twins, but I just so happened to come out late. Of course, he came out prettier, because he came out on time, and I came out a little shriveled up and funny-looking, but it's all good.

KW: What's it like being directed by your big brother?

Marlon: I didn't want to get in his way, because I didn't want to get a spanking. Sometimes Keenen would give me a look like, "You want to get the hell off the set?" And I'm like, "Okay."

Shawn: Keenen likes to do what is written first, or close to what's written. Most of the time, Keenen is cool, he'll let you play. You'll come up with something, and then he'll come up with something, and it just becomes this whole other thing. He's always trying to elevate the material, trying to take it up ten notches from what it was when you read it. That's the blessing of working with Mr. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Although sometimes he's like, "That's my line. Keep it like that or you're going to change the story structure."

Keenen: I always shoot one to page, so that we have it as guide, and then it's improv on top of improv, and everybody gets to play. You never make people stick to the script.

KW: What makes it to the screen, more of the original script or the improv?

Keenen: I think the spontaneity is where you get the best stuff. What I do require of people is that they really understand their character, so that what they improvise is in context to make sure we don't just get a lot of random stuff. We do a lot of work on who their character is and what

they're all about. And then once they understand that, then they're free to go.

KW: Is it fun for siblings to get to work together so often?

Marlon: Yeah, I'd go to work everyday and it's not like work, it's fun. I mean, it is work, but I like doing it. I'm happy, because I love working with my brothers. I do. It could be a challenge, but when you overcome that challenge and look at the filmography of the movies that we've done together, I'm damn proud. It's just amazing what we've been able to accomplish.

KW: How did you come to cast Kerry Washington opposite Shawn?

Keenen: This was her first lead comedic role. She kinda came in saying, "Okay, this isn't really what I do, but I want to do it." She was exactly what we needed. She brought integrity to the role, and just a wonderful charm, and an authority, because she sort of wears the pants in the house.

KW: How was it working with Saturday Night Live alums like Tracy Morgan and Molly Shannon?

Shawn: Tracy Morgan was a blast. Not only is he a blast, but he's great in the movie. This is the funniest I've ever seen him, not just because it's my movie, but because he got to do what it is that he actually does, and we really helped to support that. We just let him feel free. He's a really talented dude, and he kept us laughing the whole shoot. So, we were glad to have him and were happy that he came aboard. And this was the first time I ever met Molly. I had always been a fan of hers since SNL. She did one of my favorite sketches, where she was playing the cliché female comic who was bombing, doing "Don't get me started!" Me and my brothers always loved her. We been trying to work with her for awhile. Finally, one of our wishes has come true. She does great work in the scene. It's a funny scene.

KW: Are you happy with the final cut?

Keenen: For me as a director, this was probably the most unique film. It really called upon all of my experience, because I'd never done a full effects film before. But I've used some effects in all the films that I've done, so all of that stuff felt like preparation for this film which made it one of the most gratifying experiences for me.

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