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Omar Epps Talks 'Raising Kanan' Season 2, The Powerverse & His Favorite Roles

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Omar Epps attends the Starz television series "Power Book III: Raising Kanan" season 2 premiere at the Bowery Hotel on Monday, Aug. 8, 2022, in New York. (Photo by Charles Sykes/Invision/AP)

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Since actor Omar Epps's breakout role in Juice premiered in theaters over 30 years ago he's left his mark in the world of film and television. As season two of Power Book III: Raising Kanan gets ready to hit Starz on August 14, Epps spoke to Cheddar News about the series and some of his beloved roles.

Though Raising Kanan is a prequel show to Power, it has been able to stand on its own. Epps, who stars as Detective Malcolm Howard, helped deliver on what were high expectations from fans of the original show.

Among the shows in the Powerverse where do you think Raising Kanan ranks?

Epps: That's unfair. I'm going to give you a perfect analogy. That's like asking any boxer if they think another boxer can beat them. I akin that to sports. No football team is walking on the field thinking the other team can beat them. We're in the arts so it's all subjective. I just love our show. I love the other Power shows as well — respect to them. I'm just in love with our show. I'm just in love with Raising Kanan.

One of the unique things about the Powerverse is how the storylines connect across the shows. Can we expect to see more of those links from Raising Kanan to the O.G. Power series this upcoming season?

A bit. I don't know if they're going to cross-pollinate like I've been wondering. It might be cool to see Ghost and Tommy as little kids in Raising Kanan, but I don't know if that's something they would do because that might be too easy. But this is the origin story and that's what attracted me to this show. We know the end result of Kanan being this heinous evil human being, but he once was this awkward teenager trying to figure out life, like we all were when we were that age. So how does that trajectory happen? How does this innocent, cute little kid become this murderous individual? I think the audience is really interested in seeing how one becomes that.

You starred in The Wood, a Black classic, back in 1999 and now Showtime has picked that up and will turn it into a comedy series. What are your thoughts on that?

Epps: All power to them. I hope it's successful. Rick Famuyiwa, that was his first film that he wrote and directed. He's super talented. It's just amazing to have been a part of so many different projects that people still revere. As an artist, you want to transcend time because one day we're going to have our date and not be here. Knock on wood, I'm still around. But this whole new generation, like my kids, their friend groups are like, we just saw your dad's movie Juice or The Wood and they're really into it. That's a beautiful thing. That's not what I do it for. it's just part of the blessing that comes along that hopefully I'm on the right path, and I'm working at such a high level with such high-level people that those things are able to happen.

One of those shows that I loved you in — and I hate that it was cut so short — was Shooter. I thought that was a great show that spun off into a series from an already-great movie. What happened?

Epps: That was all backdoor politics. It had nothing to do with the numbers. Me and Ryan [Phillippe] had a great time. We were like kids in a candy store. We used to laugh every day we showed up to work, like, 'We're kids again!' We just get to run and jump, push, punch. You know, stuff that little boys do. It was like playing in the playground in the sandbox. I had a great, great time on that show. I have a lot of respect for John Hlavin, who's a showrunner on there. And like I said, Ryan and I got cool and had a great time on that show. That was just the backdoor politics.

Spoiler Alert

There were a lot of implications from the shooting scene in the last episode of Raising Kanan: Season 1 and I think a lot of us were surprised to see you laying up in the hospital bed. How does Howard reconcile with his son? Is reconciliation even possible after something so devastating?

Epps: That's the fun part about Season 2. I'm not saying this facetiously, you have to find out. Howard has to find out. He doesn't know if reconciliation is even possible because he's not exactly sure if this kid is his biological son. He just knows that he shot him, and he knows that's Raq's son, and he knows how Raq is. So, it's like this trifecta thing that Howard is dealing with at the top of season 2, which is he's fighting cancer, he apparently might have a son that he never knew about, and that kid shot him.

He's dealing with a lot emotionally but externally, he's still trying to exude that machismo and that sense of control because that's his identity. Whether it's in the department or whether it's in the streets, that's what makes him. But internally, he's going through a very vulnerable stage that he's never been through before because he's being faced with his mortality. It'll be fun for the audience because he's figuring out in real-time as the audience is watching.

We asked Omar to make some tough decisions about his favorite roles.

This or That:

Juice or Higher Learning

Epps: Man. I've got to say Juice because there's nothing like the first.

The Wood or Love & Basketball

Epps: Ugh, man. That's a hard one. For me, I would say The Wood. There was that brotherhood. We kind of hadn't seen that brotherhood between three Black men who were supportive of one another and picked each other up when they needed to. I'm a Black man, so I related to that more.

House or Shooter:

Epps: I've got to go with House. Those were some of the best times of my life. I grew so much as an artist. It was such a pleasure to work with Hugh Laurie — the whole cast. David Shores has become a good friend, who created the show. [Executive producer] Katie Jacobs, I just have such fond memories. And it was so hard. That was one of my most challenging roles so every day just showing up, I felt like I was getting better and better. I was mastering my craft. And no one saw that coming from me. No one saw me being in a medical show. Still, to this day, people are like, 'How do you say that [medical] word?' and I'm like, 'Well, I don't get paid to say that anymore so I don't know.'

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