



Ice Cube's "Are We Done Yet?"

In the 80s, O'Shea Jackson, better known as Ice Cube, was the original-badass-gangsta-rapper-with-an-incendiary-attitude-straight out of Compton.

In the 2000s, Ice Cube became... a comedic film star?

As strange as it may sound, that's the wisely lucrative path chosen by the former member of one of the most notorious rap groups ever, N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude). He founded his own movie production company, Cube Vision, and soon hit it big by catering to an African American audience that rarely saw itself represented accurately on the big screen.

Economically produced flicks such as "Friday" (1995) and "Barbershop 2: Back in Business" (2004) consolidated Cube's business acumen and had Hollywood taking notice. His acting roles also expanded, appearing in high-profile movies such as "Three Kings," with George Clooney, and "Anaconda," with Jennifer López. He even took a daring, but ultimately ill-conceived, shot at establishing an action adventure franchise by starring in "xXx: State of the Union," the Vin Diesel-less sequel to Vin Diesel's successful "xXx" (2002).

Then, in 2005, it happened. A low-budget comedy produced by and starring Ice Cube, "Are We There Yet?" turned out to be one of the year's surprise hits, earning close to \$100 million between the U.S. and international markets. The movie, with no high-profile stars (Nia Long plays his love interest) presented the thespian rapper taking some hellish tykes on a trip to reunite with the mother he's in love with.

On April 6, 2007, Ice Cube, as Nick Persons, returned in the sequel "Are We Done Yet?" (Revolution Studios/Columbia Pictures) as it opened nationwide.

With almost 30 films to his name, did this father of four feel it was time to act, well, fatherly in the movies?

"I have been a father since I began in this business so, no, that was not the motivation," Cube admits one morning at the plush Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Brickell Key. He is surprisingly small, and not quite the thug one would've imagined based on his previous musical notoriety. He also has four kids, ages 20, 16, 13 and 6.

"I realized that, at a certain point, you have to reconnect with your audience, because of the new generations that are coming, and to have a career that lasts 30 or 40 years, you need for them to know you. In my 20 years in music and film, I had never done anything for my youngest public. They have always had to watch movies of mine that maybe they shouldn't have. So, it was time to do something for them and look towards the future."

And that future included a sequel to Nick Persons' trials and tribulations in becoming a stepfather. In "Are We Done Yet?" Cube's character, now married, decides to move his new wife and her children to the country. The couple falls in love with an old, seemingly charming house that soon enough turns out to be a



money pit.

Cube had finished shooting “xXx: State of the Union” (2005), when he received a script that had been kicking around for some time, a new take on an old Cary Grant comedy, 1948’s “Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House.” In this version, Grant buys an old house and soon discovers that he’s way in over his head.

“I had received the script for ‘Mr. Blandings,’ and there was interest in us doing it,” continues the 37-year-old Cube. “But I was having trouble with calling the movie ‘Mr. Blandings,’ because I felt that nobody remembered the original. I thought it should be something like ‘Dream House.’ And we were going to make it as a comedy for adults.”

Until someone saw the opportunity of morphing Mr. Blandings into Mr. Persons.

“I don’t know whose idea it was, but somebody said ‘you know what? Why don’t we do the second part of ‘Are We There Yet?’ and adapt this story to Nick’s.’ And it was eerie to see how well that movie fit in with what we wanted to do,” remembers Cube. “We changed the names of the characters and the story began to take shape.”

Cube’s career also continues to shape nicely. He’s coming out with two albums, and in May begins to shoot a “dramedy” titled “First Sunday.” And yes, he may not be done yet with Nick Persons. There may be another movie if “Are We Done Yet?” strikes gold.