

## Berlin: Tammy Davis Talks Hip-Hop Dance Battles



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Don't be fooled by the name, Tammy Davis (<http://variety.com/t/tammy-davis/>) is a man's man known for tough-guy roles in such films as "What Became of the Broken Hearted" and on New Zealand TV, playing Munter in "Outrageous Fortune." Similarly, being programmed in the Generation X youth section at Berlin should not be taken as a sign that "Born to Dance" is a watered-down, Kiwi version of "High School Musical." Rather, Davis, who moves from acting to directing, has conjured up a full-blooded and highly entertaining Maori interpretation of the hip-hop dance battle genre.

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How did "Born to Dance" happen?

It fell into my lap. The producers (<http://variety411.com/us/los-angeles/producers/>) were looking to do a New Zealand version of a dance film and by the time it got to me it had been completely revised. What particularly drew me, however, was the story about a young boy clinging to his dreams. New Zealand has put dance on screen before, but not this caliber.

### **New Zealand cinema is known for local dramas or its contributions to Hollywood blockbusters like “Avatar.” What were the challenges here?**

With Parris Goebbel (“Step Up: All In”) as choreographer, I was able to concentrate on the other aspects, such as bringing out the characters and making sure that all the dance has relevance to the story. We had to shoot the dance sequences in three weeks, out of a six-week production.

### **That’s tough for a first film.**

I must have been only 6 or 7 when I first went on a film set. I got the bug then. My (half) brother (Julian Arahanga) starred in “Once Were Warriors,” his dad was a producer and I did lighting, gripping, art department anything. That’s not typical of the NZ industry, but I liked making \$25 an hour rather than \$7. In various ways I’ve been in the industry 32 years. And so I took all that experience to directing. I’d learned how long it takes to set up a particular shot, and knew when to put the pressure on, and when not to.

### **It is not your first time in Berlin.**

Previously I had my first short, “Ebony Society,” in the Generation section, which did win best short and best script in NZ and best short at Flickerfest. And I was here also with the Talent Campus.

### **What’s next for you?**

More writing and directing. “Ebony Society” resonated everywhere it was shown, so I’m now writing the feature version. I have Final Draft and am plodding away. And shooting commercials to make money.

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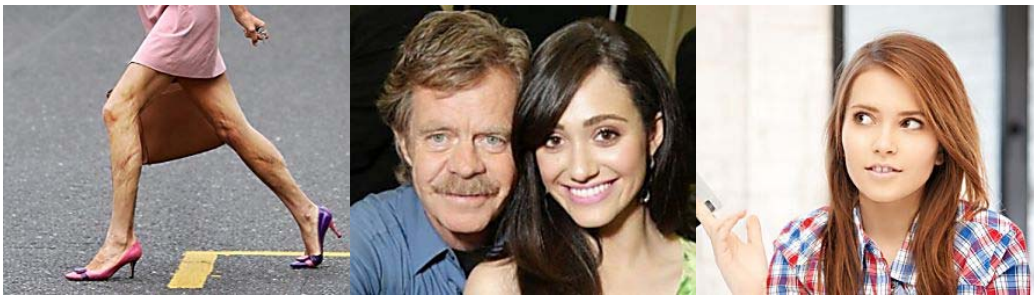
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