

Crystle Stewart and Tasha Smith visit Houston to talk about their brand new show - For Better or Worse

Written by Grace Boateng

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Veteran Actress Tasha Smith and Missouri City, TX native Crystle Stewart came to Houston to promote their new show “For Better or Worse.” You will recognize Tasha Smith as Angela, from Tyler Perry’s “Why Did I Get Married” series. In this new show Tasha reprises her role, opposite Michael Jai White who plays Marcus, as Angela, his wife. Also starring in this sitcom as Leslie will be Houston native Crystle Stewart who was Miss USA 2008.

This will be the third television series to translate from the stage, to the big screen, to the small screen for Tyler Perry (following “House of Payne,” and “Meet the Browns”). “For better or Worse” is both a drama and a comedy that follows the turbulent relationship between Angela and Marcus. This will be the biggest show Tyler Perry has ever produced. Tasha Smith and Crystle Stewart have been making the rounds nationwide discussing the series and took a moment to give me the scoop on what makes Tyler Perry’s latest endeavor a must see.

Crystle Stewart

Grace Boateng (HFT): What was your theatrical experience growing up in Missouri City, Texas. Were you always interested in theater or acting?

Crystle Stewart: Not at all, I was a tomboy growing up. I became interested in theater and acting after my pageant career and reign as Miss USA. I won a scholarship to New York Film academy and chose to go to LA. Upon taking classes I got great feedback from teachers and the rest is history.

HFT: How did you become involved in the project?

C: I was encouraged to introduce myself to Tyler Perry when I spotted him at a restaurant. I told Tyler I really liked and respected his work. During our conversation he told me I had a look he would want for a role he was creating for a new series and wanted for me to be a part of this show. Sometimes in Hollywood you hear that a lot, but it's something about when Tyler Perry says something it sticks with you and he was genuine about what he was saying. The next day I got a call from his casting director and I went in to audition, he saw the tape, and they called and said I got the part.

HFT: What has your experience been in working with Tyler Perry?

C: I have had an absolutely amazing experience working with Tyler Perry. He's been such a wonderful, wonderful man. He's very educated and knowledgeable about his craft, very nice, funny and those are characteristics that you don't really seem to find in most directors and producers. He also allows you to be creative on set. He's just really a good guy and a hard worker. One thing I really like is he doesn't want perfection but he really strives for excellence. He wants us to be the best we can possibly be on this show because he gives us his best.

HFT: Talk to me about the premise of the show and how your character fits in.

C: For Better or For Worse is about the up's and downs of relationships. I think once you watch this show there is at least one character that everyone can relate to. On the show I play a woman who is dating and wants to get married while my boyfriend doesn't. I know there are a lot of men and women that can relate to my characters storyline. There is another couple in the show that is dating as well but this one is the mother of Marcus's son, and Marcus is married to Angela in the show. That creates a drama unto itself since she still wants Marcus. There is also another character, she is a comedian, Coco Brown and she is hilarious and a single mother dating as well. So you hit every aspect of relationships that you can have.

HFT: What is this show saying about black love and relationships and what sets this show apart from what we've seen before?

C: What I like about the show is that all the characters are prosperous so finances are not an issue. So it really digs deep into the foundation of a relationship which is love. That's why you see Marcus and Angela yelling at each other because their love and passion is so deep. So I think it shows that black people can love, can be educated, and can be financially established and love just runs deep within us.

HFT: I know you are very involved in Breast Cancer Education, talk to me about how that came about.

C: A few years ago, I found a lump in my right breast and it struck a nerve with me and I was very nervous. All I heard is, you find a lump you have breast cancer and you're going to die. I mean I just didn't have any knowledge about breast cancer at all, but once I researched it, I went to the doctor, of course, and had it surgically removed and a biopsy to make sure it wasn't a cancerous lump. Fortunately it wasn't, but I was able to educate myself about breast cancer, learning that if you catch it early more than likely you will live a long healthy life. My personal experience drove me closer and I had a few friends and family member that had breast cancer and I see the struggles that they went through. So it's nice for me to learn about it and hopefully educate young women on breast cancer.

Tasha Smith

Grace Boateng (HFT): How does this show's storyline differ from the films and what can audiences expect to see from your characters?

Tasha Smith: In the TV series you get to see a different dimension of Angela & Marcus's relationship. You know, in the movie you see one side of the relationship, they may be fighting and arguing and you never get the reasons why. Plus you absolutely haven't seen them as parents at home raising their children. The kids have been kind of like shadows popping in and out. Here in the series you are going to see them with their children, raising their son, and dealing with the daughter Marcus's character had before him and Angela got together. [You will get to see them] running their businesses and different aspects of their relationship that you may not have seen in the movie. It's just going to be very interesting and it's going to be a more in depth look at their relationship as husband and wife, as parents, and as friends.

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HFT: The chemistry between your character and Michael White's character is magical, dare I say the favorite couple from the movie. What is it about working with each other that just makes it so believable?

T: Well one we used to date so that helps. We're also very good friends and we are very passionate about what we do. I think that adoration and love that we have for each other in real life helps us connect Marcus and Angela because the root of their relationship is their love for each other and we're just a good support system for each other as actors.

HFT: Talk to me about your experiences working with Tyler Perry, what has that creative relationship been between the two of you?

T: A dream come true. It's an absolute dream. I have to tell you, working for Tyler Perry is a blessing. His studio is amazing, his work ethics are amazing, you feel like you are at home, he's so collaborative and creative it's a blessing. I think everyone that has gone down to ATL to work with Tyler Perry whether it was on a TV show or movies, I'm sure they've had nothing but a first class experience.

HFT: This show is a platform to deal with real issues in relationships at the different stages. What do you feel the show saying about black love and relationships?

T: I just think it's really going to give a different outlook on all kinds of relationships. A lot of the

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circumstances that they deal with on the show are universal it's not just a black thing. You have Marcus and Angela who have been married for 13 years dealing with the whole blended family thing, raising their children and dealing with the babies' momma, and I don't think that's just a black thing. I think there are some white babies' mommas out there too.

HFT: Now you have a program dedicated to the art of theater and training actors called the Tasha Smith Actors Workshop (TSAW).

T: Yes, T-SAW is my acting school that I have had for over ten years. And one of my former students happens to be one of my co-stars now who is Kiki Haynes that plays the Keisha character.

From what these ladies have shared with me about the premise of the show I will be tuning in for the premiere this Friday November 25 on TBS. If you would like to know more about what Crystle Stewart you can find her on Facebook. You will find Tasha Smith on the cover of Essence magazine this December and look for her new unisex fragrance in specialty stores.{jcomments on}