



## Morgan Freeman on Portraying Nelson Mandela

LOS ANGELES (Reuters)—Nelson Mandela is portrayed by Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman in the new movie "Invictus."

Freeman said he was asked by the 91-year-old former South African president to portray him in the Clint Eastwood-directed film that debuts on Friday and also stars Matt Damon.

"I said to him, 'If I'm going to play you, I'm going to have to have access to you. I'm going to have to be close enough to hold your hand,'" Freeman told reporters recently.

The Academy Award winner for his role in Eastwood's boxing drama "Million Dollar Baby" has portrayed many characters over the years, a slave-turned-abolitionist leader, a fictional U.S. president, and even "God" in "Evan Almighty," but rarely one who is alive and important to so many people as Mandela.

The elder statesman of African politics was jailed for 27 years due to his militant work to end apartheid in South Africa before being released in 1990 and going on to become the president of his country four years later. In 1993, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Invictus" tells of how Mandela brought the 1995 Rugby World Cup Championship to his nation, utilizing the South African team around which to rally his countrymen and

ease racial tensions between black and white citizens.

The word invictus is Latin for "unconquered" or "unconquerable" and is the title of a poem by Englishman William Ernest Henley, published in 1875.

Freeman, wearing his hat as a producer,

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—Morgan Freeman

worked for years to bring the tale to the big screen.

"I didn't have any agenda, as it were, in playing the role other than to bring it as close to reality as I possibly could," Freeman said. "The biggest challenge I had, of course, was to sound like him."

The actor said that if he and the world leader

were in the same area, he would try to meet with Mandela, share a meal, or sit backstage with him before a speech. Most importantly, he would hold Mandela's hand.

"I find that if I hold your hand, I get your energy, it transfers, and I have a sense of how you feel," he said. "That's important to me trying to become another person."

Damon portrays Francois Pienaar, the captain of the nation's mostly-white Springboks rugby team that was once reviled by the black majority. Mandela taps Pienaar in his efforts to unite the races.

The actor said he had six months to muscle up for the role in the rugged world of rugby, and people familiar with the hefty athlete may have to suspend their disbelief when watching "Invictus."

Indeed, Damon got a big surprise when he first met Pienaar at the player's home.

"I just remember I rang the doorbell and he opened the door and I looked up at him, and the first thing I ever said to Francois Pienaar in my life was, 'I look much bigger on film,'" Damon said.

Despite the obvious differences in stature and size of the actors compared to their real-life counterparts, under Eastwood's direction "Invictus" is winning strong reviews and Oscar buzz.



BEING MANDELA: Actor Morgan Freeman (L) and Nelson Mandela at a benefit in 2007. Freeman portrays Mandela in the new Clint Eastwood directed film PASCAL LE SEGRETAIR/GETTY IMAGES



LOUNGE SINGER: Chase Masterson plays a jazz singer in the new indie film "Yesterday Was a Lie." BRIAN GRIFFITH/HELICON ARTS

## Moody Indie Mixes Sci-Fi and Noir

### Movie Review: 'Yesterday Was a Lie'

By JOE BENDEL

The concepts of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung prove surprisingly conducive to post-modern science fiction in writer-director-editor James Kerwin's genre-bending indie "Yesterday Was a Lie."

Hoyle might look like a private detective and she certainly drinks like one. She appears to be working on a case involving John Dudas, a supposedly mentally disturbed scientist. Hoyle's investigation takes her to a smoky nightclub where she strikes up a fast friendship with the unnamed torch singer. Again, there seems to be much more to Hoyle's relationship with both the singer and her quarry than she initially acknowledges. As the audience quickly suspects, looks can be deceiving and the nature of reality is decidedly slippery in "Yesterday."

What follows defies easy summarization and would be fraught with spoilers. Indeed, "Yesterday" heads into strange territory where physics and metaphysics collide. Informed by

Jungian [Carl Jung] theories of anima [true inner self] and shadow selves, T.S. Eliot's poetry, as well as nonlinear interpretations of time, "Yesterday" definitely goes for "Matrix" style mind games. To give an idea where it is coming from, Hoyle has a cat named Schrödinger.

In truth, most "Matrix" devotees will probably find "Yesterday" too moody and lacking in the requisite special effects. It is actually a rather talky film—but in the right way—bantering about some pretty heavy notions. Those who enjoy the stylish film noir look will also find Jason Cochard's dramatic black-and-white cinematography sufficiently entertaining in its own right. Kristopher Carter's effective-jazz-influenced score further reinforces that smoky-noir atmosphere with its cool late night sounds.

Fans who have misspent a lot of time in science fiction conventions will probably geek out when they take a gander at the film's cast. For obvious reasons, producer Chase Masterson became a Trekker favorite as Leeta on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." She is also an appealing jazz vocalist who demonstrates a pleasingly sultry delivery of romantic standards (like Ray Noble's "The Very Thought of You") as "the singer." Also highly significant

for fanboys is the appearance of Peter Mayhew of "Star Wars" fame—though utterly unrecognizable outside of his Chewbacca makeup—as "the dead man."

In addition to nice vocal chops, Masterson has an engaging screen presence that dominates the picture. While Kipleigh Brown is admirably earnest as the protagonist Hoyle, she cannot match Masterson's star wattage. Still, the colorful supporting cast is also great fun to hear and watch chewing on Kerwin's meaty dialogue, particularly Warren Davis (creator of the Q\*bert arcade game) as Hoyle's Jungian analyst.

It is quite impressive to see how much Kerwin was able to throw into the relatively brief hour and a half running time. Beautifully produced, it all looks and sounds great. The abundance of ambiguity might be understandably frustrating to some, but overall, "Yesterday" is easily one of the more rewarding indie genre films, which deserves more attention (and a New York engagement).

Bendel blogs on jazz and cultural issues at [jbspins.blogspot.com](http://jbspins.blogspot.com) and coordinated the Jazz Foundation of America's instrument donation campaign for musicians displaced by Hurricane Katrina.



SACHA BARON COHEN SUED

Ayman Abu Aita, a Palestinian shopkeeper, is suing Sacha Baron Cohen in a \$10 million lawsuit for libel, in District of Columbia federal court, according to the AP. Abu Aita was portrayed as a Muslim terrorist in Cohen's comedy "Bruno."

Aita denies having any association with the terrorist group and claims he never signed a release form to be in the movie.

David Letterman and his production company, Worldwide Pants, have also been named in the suit. Cohen explained on the Letterman show that the interview with Aita was held in a secret location arranged by Aita with the help of a CIA agent.

Aita's version is a little different, however. He says the interview was set up by Cohen in a hotel.

By Katy Mantyk, Epoch Times Staff



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