

# Actor Michael Ealy: Preparation, opportunity, risks part of the success equation

## 20-year veteran actor chats with Humanities students at Dillard

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NEW ORLEANS (March 4, 2022) – Actor Michael Ealy attributed his success to preparation, embracing opportunities and taking risks during a DU “industry talk back” Feb. 19 in Georges Auditorium.

The 20-year veteran actor, who was last year’s DU commencement speaker, returned to Dillard this semester to speak with students in the School of Humanities. About 30 majors from theater, mass communication and film attended.

The group gave him a standing ovation after he shared his progression and growth in his craft, from college to waiting on tables and acting lessons to appearing in several off-Broadway productions in the late 1990s. Then came his big break in 2002 in “Barbershop,” reprising the role in “Barbershop 2” two years later.

The audience applauded in acknowledgement when Ealy mentioned others of his works, including “Think Like a Man,” “Love Jones” and “For Colored Girls.” To date, the 48-year-old has acted in 31 films, including “2 Fast 2 Furious.” He’s been in 18 television series, including starring as Dorian the android in “Almost Human” on Fox, and featured in three music videos with Mariah Carey, Beyoncé and John Legend.

Ealy currently stars in “The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window,” now streaming on Netflix. His thriller “The Devil You Know,” which he executive-produced with co-star Michael Epps, will premiere this spring.

Ealy described how he was offered the part of reformed felon Ricky Nash in “Barbershop” after actor/singer Tyrese Gibson turned it down.

“I made sure I knew my character and studied for hours to prepare for the role,” he said. “My preparation paid off, and I was happy to be cast in the film.”

He said actors have to be vulnerable and get comfortable with being uncomfortable. For example, for his role in “Their Eyes Were Watching God,” Ealy said he portrayed a person who had rabies.

“I drank raw eggs to simulate the foam that drips from the mouth of dogs with rabies,” he recalled.

The actor acknowledged taking risks is part and parcel of achieving one’s dreams, calling it a “huge risk” to move to Los Angeles after auditioning for “Barbershop.”

Ealy said he enjoys making films, but doesn’t let his work dictate who he is.

“My work doesn’t define me,” he said. Rather, he said, his work inspires and challenges him to grow.

Acting is a challenging job, and aspiring actors need to know what is required to be a great. Ealy said students should take acting classes to become fully immersed in their craft. Even so, he suggested students complete their degree even if they want to act because it provides stability.

Ealy, born Michael Brown in Washington D.C., earned his bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Maryland. If acting hadn’t worked out, Ealy said, he planned go to graduate school and become an English scholar.