

Lionel Richie Is Producing A Sammy Davis Jr. Biopic



Lionel Richie is co-producing a biopic about the late Sammy Davis Jr. with Mike Menchel and Lorenzo di Bonaventura. The movie is based on the 1965 memoir, *Yes I Can: The Story Of Sammy Davis Jr.*, written by Davis, Burt Boyar and his wife Jane. Davis grew up in the world of entertainment because both of his parents were vaudeville performers. At age 7 he co-starred in the 1933 21-minute film *Rufus Jones For President* with Ethel Waters.

By the '50's Davis was starring on Broadway in *Mr. Wonderful* and in the '60's he had his own TV show and became a member of Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack of famous actors. He made several movies during the '60's including the original *Ocean's 11* and became a headlining act in Vegas at the Frontier Casino. Davis was not immune to the segregation at the time even though he was a top act and he was forbidden to stay at the casino or have a dressing room. Later in his career, he refused to work at segregated venues. Davis was a supporter of civil rights and participated in the March On Washington and was a supporter of Jesse Jackson's PUSH organization. Davis and his wife Altovise were the first African-Americans invited to spend the night at the White House courtesy of then-president Richard Nixon.

Davis died in 1990 after a 6-month battle with throat cancer but his legacy is all over pop culture. Eddie Murphy and Tommy Davidson are just two of the comedians to impersonate him and he has been mentioned numerous movies and TV shows. Don Cheadle portrayed him in *The Rat Pack* and Amy Winehouse sang about him in her song "Me and Mr. Jones."

The upcoming unnamed film has the support of Davis' heirs and Richie added, "It's an honor for me to bring the life of one of my idols and friends to the screen. I'm so grateful to be working closely with the Davis family on this and couldn't be happier to be moving forward on this passion project."