

Features

Frank Lucas: Made In America

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The life of a true American gangster doesn't end with booming music and thunderous applause. Any real gangster that's made its way into the system and profited has had their share of ups and downs. But for **Frank Lucas** – the reality is a stark contrast for anyone who gets a chance to sit with him and not in front of a moviescreen.

After being an internationally known distributor of narcotics and a boss, being over the Mafia, **Lucas** bypassed conventional American means – college, wife with a picket fence and a good paying job. He stuck his feet in the ground and maneuvered in the concrete jungle of New York City. Now, on a gloomy Friday evening, **Frank Lucas** – the man larger than life – is something that anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps should see. The down-home boy, even though wheelchair bound, is able to command the attention of a room. His booming Southern tinge voice silences everyone in the room when he handles business doing a phone interview with **MTV**.

The gangster and the gentleman displays a charm that even had **Denzel** commenting, "He'll have you working for him in a second." And as **HipHopDX** sits down with **Frank Lucas** the man, his steely eyes still grip anyone who looks and hopefully this interview will shed some light on his path from Harlem to Hollywood, his thoughts about family and warns kids about the harsh realities of street life.

HipHopDX: Your story is a compelling one, but what made you want to turn it into a movie?

Frank Lucas:

This magazine article in August 2002 was written about me and Hollywood come knocking on my door and I responded. I responded to them and they wanted to make the movie and I said, "Okay." They didn't pay us nothing of what they should've paid us. I didn't have a lawyer or nothing like that. I ain't have no money. It was like I am now, hmph... broker than ma'fucka – get what I'm saying? I jumped into it and here we are.

DX: The reality of it all is that you were able to get a product of deadly means to a lot of people. Were you looking at all of this like a business, as it came off in the movie? Or was it the money?

Frank Lucas:

Of course I wanted to make money, there's no secret with that. I didn't give a shit what society thought about that, I wanted to make some money and it's something that I'm real remorseful about now. I wish that I never did it, but I did it and the foregone conclusion was that I wanted to live like **Donald Trump**; I was getting tired of picking cotton, tobacco and kissin' other people's ass for a buck... I wanted to make my own money. I started that and it turned out real well for me. It was really good for me until that hammer came down. When that hammer came down then I was... I was fucked... put it that way.

DX: How have you been able to make the transition from dealing with cats on the block to studio execs in Hollywood?

Frank Lucas:

That's a good question. Going to Hollywood is a whole different spectacle than being on the block. Being on the block and going to Hollywood – there's no comparison. You have to want to go to Hollywood. Being on the block, you have to look around for the police, you scared that they're going to knock you down. You have to watch out for people trying to put a shot in your ass. All the above – everyone is going to want a piece of your ass, one way or the other, so you have to be *real* careful; you have to be super careful of what you're doing. There ain't no way in the hell that you going to be in the streets without being feared for something. Hollywood is a different thing altogether. You ain't got to worry 'bout nothing. You ain't got to worry about nothing happening to you. You get there and you ridin' around in first class. They give you 24/7 limo service. You can get whatever you want... you can put it on your credit card/ [Laughs]

DX: When I talked to your son, Frank Lucas, Jr., he said that rappers have to change their name to be gangster and that he doesn't since he's your son. Do you feel that rappers have the right to mention your name in songs and only know about you from the streets?

Frank Lucas: I don't know the name of [his album] either, do you know the name of it?

DX: Birthright...

Frank Lucas: Okay, he's trying to tell all them guys that he's the original and that he should have the "birthright." I ain't talked to him, but I know what he's doing.

DX: How do you feel about other rappers using your name in their songs?

Frank Lucas: There ain't nothing that I can do about it... it's public domain. It's something that you can't control, so you just move on to the next step. Ain't no use in worrying about it.

DX: In the movie, there's a scene where your wife buys you an expensive fur to wear to an Ali fight and that brought in unwarranted heat from the police...

Frank Lucas:

[Excited] That's the difference between me and him [Denzel Washington] – my wife knew why I threw that fuckin' thing in the fireplace [Laughs]... because it got me burnt. That wasn't then, it was a few months ago when I noticed that I had made big time. The coat was \$100,000 and the hat was \$25,000 – I had never wore it - not one time. What happened was that all the big shots, all the guys in the games – in August – came out of the joint in Georgia, in long mink coats. In *Georgia*, in *August* – they came out in these things [Laughs]... When we went to the [Joe Frazier fight in the Madison Square Garden] and here I come in the damn chinchilla – blew they fuckin' minds. I blew them out of the water! But I should've never did that, been that damn stupid... For 14 years, they didn't know my name, but they know it now. **Frank Matthews** is a superstar, I mean, he's a true superstar. He left out of here with \$25 million dollars and went to Africa. I mean, he wasn't as rich as me [laughs], but he made a lot of money.

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