



## RENAISSANCE MAN RECASTING HOLLYWOOD

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Ask The Asylum's Director of Talent, Gerald Webb, about what he's most proud of during his decade in the film industry. You'll find that it's difficult to pin down an answer. From Charles Dutton, Dennis Haysbert, Ming Na, Harold Perrineau, and Oscar-winners Shirley Jones and Marlee Matlin... there's literally a host of actors that Webb brought to The Asylum through years of cultivating relationships, and it's easy to see why. Webb carries an actor's charm and confidence. With a mix of clarity of focus, and honest-to-goodness humility, Webb is that rare exception of a straight shooter, and a man that really loves the work of Hollywood.

Those relationships have been gold for both Webb and The Asylum.

Blink, and you might have missed the company's quiet expansion. Bonafide hits like the outrageous *Sharknado*, and *Mega Shark vs Mecha Shark*, have The Asylum rapidly bursting through its huge multi-building Burbank soundstage.

The Asylum is changing. And while Gerald Webb knows that he has been a big part of that, he credits the versatility of owners David Michael Latt, David Rimawi, and Paul Bales for defying expectations, and placing him, a character actor, into a position that has redefined his career.

We peeked in on a sound session for the upcoming *Mercenaries*, The Asylum's ambitious female-led spin on *The Expendables*, and Gerald flashed just a hint of pride. Casting stars is Gerald's specialty, and Vivica A. Fox, Cynthia Rothrock, Zoe Bell, Brigitte Nielsen, and Kristanna Loken are just another in a series of choices that continue to elevate the company beyond its C-movie roots. We walked through halls of 'mockbuster' posters as the credits evolved from has-been porn stars, to genuinely credible actors, when Gerald admitted the accomplishment that he, and The Asylum founders, are actually most proud ~ **They're diversifying genre cinema.**



## *On the Rise Profiles*

Here are some surprising facts. Between 2010 and 2012, The Asylum's 'star name' diversity was up an astounding 380%. In fact, their casting overall got a lot more hip. Webb took a close look at how the company cast gender, ethnicity, and age, and started suggesting changes. The Asylum's on-screen representation of American diversity jumped from the typical 20-30% mix that you normally find in Hollywood, to a more reflective 60-70%.

While Hollywood struggles with Victorian-era racial and gender hiring practices, The Asylum has been tearing through perception barriers like, well, a Sharknado.

So how did a New Jersey DJ and friend to the legendary Jam Master Jay become the secret ingredient for casting The Asylum's success?

*"About four years ago, a director who I know, Christopher Ray, was directing a film for The Asylum. He asked me to come to sit in on the casting process to make sure that we get good people. I was maintaining a relationship with a director who I respected and liked working with, and who was also a friend."*

*"I came in and worked for about a month helping to cast this film. By the time we got ready to shoot, I had a nice size role in the film, and the producers of the film basically came to me and said that they have another film ready to shoot in about two weeks. You did such a good job, do you just want to cast it?"*

*"I went home and was kind of like, wait a minute, Is this going to kill my acting career because I'm not available? I created all of these scenarios that this was going to be a bad thing. Fortunately, I said just do it. As an actor who was financially struggling at the time, this was a steady paycheck. I looked at it as an opportunity to work with filmmakers and learn more about the overall filmmaking process behind the scenes and producing."*

*"If I have auditions set up, that means I have to make phone calls to reschedule people. I'll figure it out. I'll deal with the problem when there's actually a problem instead of creating a problem that keeps me from taking on an opportunity."*

Gerald's open-eyed philosophy for embracing such opportunities hasn't steered him wrong. Early in his career, his hustle was impressive enough to capture the attention of industry giants Pioneer, and legendary DJ, Jam Master Jay. Gerald developed a technique that allowed turntablists to mimic the sounds of scratching with CDs and effect processors. That technique impressed Pioneer such, that they made Gerald the national DJ for the company and consulted with him for the next 5 years on everything from marketing to product designs, many of which are still popular today. *"I couldn't be doing any of this today without any of that"*, Gerald admits.



*"Whatever happens as I go on and do bigger things, I won't be able to do it without the experience that I've learned here at The Asylum. It's really important to me that you pay attention. You know that sometimes that you might not be doing exactly what you want to do, but there's something there to learn. You never know how that will help you in the future. It really is a cumulative effect."*

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And Gerald embraces, cumulatively, all of his work. From b-movie disaster movie to highly visible roles on shows like Law and Order, or It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Gerald is motivated as an actor because he genuinely loves it.

*"You have to love what you do. You may want a specific result, but you have to love the process. It was a great lesson for me to learn. There's no mountaintop so enjoy climbing. If you think that all of a sudden, you'll be walking the red carpet and life will be amazing, no, it may be better or not be, but you have to love what you do or eventually it's going to be hollow. You can surround yourself with money and fame it will wear thin, so you have to love what you do."*

Still, passion alone isn't what keeps him employed. As powerful as Gerald's work ethic, equally so is his constant drive for excellence from himself, and from those around him. As film-going audiences demand diversity, Gerald fills roles in The Asylum's features by instituting that writers remove racial traits from screenplays, allowing him to find the best actors – regardless of gender or color – for the roles.

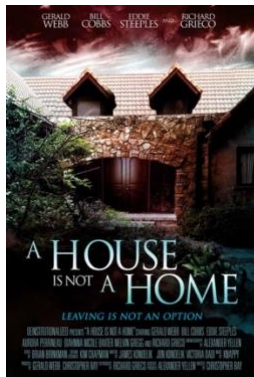
Setting that template was a tough battle, but ultimately rewarding. The key, Gerald says, is filling the roles with the best talent.

### On diversity in casting:

*"The first thing you can do is be amazing at what you do. You can't just be good in this industry. The truth is that majority of good actors are perpetually unemployed. If I see 100 people for a role, there's generally 1 person who is excellent. There will probably anywhere from 3-4 very good people on a bad day. On a good day, 8-10 very good people. Then there'll be 30 or more good people. Then there will be a bunch who aren't ready."*

*"The problem is when it comes to decision making time, I send 3 people to my decision makers. The EXCELLENT person is definitely in the game. Then I have these very good people where there may be 5-10 of them? I may only send 2 of those people, so even being very good, you may not be in the game. So that's just in general. That gets exacerbated when it comes to diversity. When it comes to women, and ethnicities, and people with disabilities, or even seniors."*

*"You just have to be excellent at what you do to be in the conversation because if you're not, it's too easy to get lost. It's so arbitrary how casts are put together. People can be objected to and not get a job for 5 million reasons that have nothing to do with what they did on tape or on camera. You have to give yourself every little advantage that you can. You have to come in and be ridiculously prepared. In anything you do, there's no excuse not to be prepared. It doesn't mean the minimal level of preparation. It means be over prepared."*



True to form, Gerald has been expanding his list of impressive credits beyond The Asylum. Recently stepping outside of the comfort of casting, Gerald is abuzz, producing and starring in his critically acclaimed horror feature, *A House is Not a Home*. Re-teaming with longtime friend, director Christopher Ray, *A House is Not a Home* provides something different in the psychological horror space. A troubled African American family attempts to salvage their bond with a fresh start in a new home. Something a lot darker than marital drama looms, and it's up to patriarch Ben Williams (Weber) to save his loved ones from a supernatural terror. A little Stephen King's *Rose Red*, a dash of *The Conjuring*, and no small homage to *The Amityville Horror*, and Gerald hopes to surprise horror fans with the acting debut of Harold Perrineau's daughter, Aurora Perrineau, as well as a surprise dramatic turn for comedic actor Eddie Steeples as a Voodoo priest.

# On the Rise Profiles

The Dove Award winning, *On Angels Wings*, (which Gerald also starred and produced), premieres on the family friendly UpTV (Uplift TV) on June 28th at 8pm, starring Webb, Robin Givens, Reginald Veljohnson, and Bill Cobbs.



Although Gerald has been busy producing, that doesn't mean that his days of creating content with The Asylum are over. The company enters uncharted territory this fall with it's first serialized television show on the SyFy Channel. Zombies never die, and if you're a fan of *World War Z* or *The Walking Dead*, Gerald's banking that casting Kellita Smith (the *Bernie Mac Show*) as a lead in the upcoming *Z-Nation*, Asylum's 13-episode ensemble drama, will take a bite out of your horror cravings. In the meantime, *Mercenaries* premieres worldwide at the San Diego Comic-Con at 6:30 pm on Saturday, July 26th.



Also, proving to be one of the most accessible entertainers in the industry, you can find Gerald online at: <http://www.GeraldWebb.com> [@geraldwebb](https://twitter.com/geraldwebb) on twitter or [@theGeraldWebb](https://www.facebook.com/theGeraldWebb) on Facebook.

The Author, Shola Akinnuso is a Los Angeles based video editor and animation junkie. Follow his work at [@blackbanditsho](https://twitter.com/blackbanditsho).

## About On The Rise Profiles:

On the Rise Profiles was created by Kiera Adams to display the accomplishments of individuals on the brink of mega success. These successful people have stories to tell on how they got where they are. They have words of encouragement to share.

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