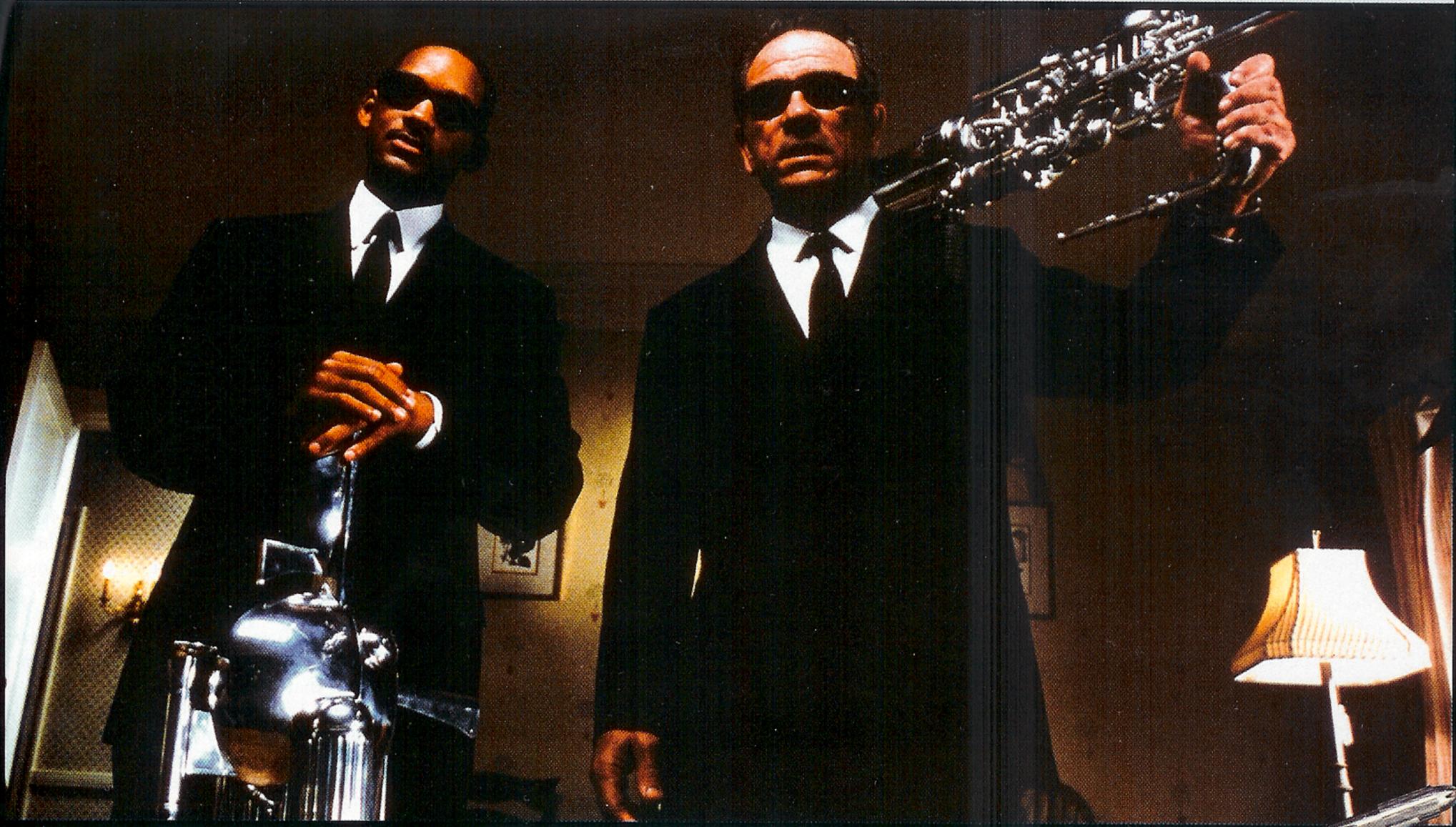


“We hang out at the same RAP CLUBS & STUFF like that” TOMMY LEE JONES



# ALIENS, SMITH & JONES

The besuited chalk and cheese of Hollywood return. **Samantha Altea** chats to **Tommy Lee Jones** and **Will Smith** about being back in black

**SFX:** So, *Men In Black 2*. How do you make it fresh?

**Smith:** “For the most part what I tried to do was pretend like it’s not a sequel, it’s a new movie. I used the same energy that I put into every other film that I’m working on. I didn’t try to consider, ‘Okay, we’re trying to live up to the first film.’ I just wanted to go in and create something that’s new, funny and energetic and that folks would laugh at.”

**Jones:** “Same thing, exact same thing, just like that.” (Dry laugh)

**Spider-Man** took so much money. How tough will it be to top that in your opening weekend?

**Smith:** “It’s hard to top that *Spider-Man* number, you know. We’re not really expecting to do that. It’s a different kind of weekend. There’s a lot more movies out there, and for a lot of reasons we won’t get that number.”

**Jones:** “Yes, we will...”

**Smith:** “Oh, okay. What he said.”

**Jones:** “*Spider-Man*’s not that funny.”

**Are you two close?**

**Jones:** “Yeah, we hang out a lot at the same rap clubs and stuff like that.”

**Smith:** “The rodeo arena, yeah.”

**How do you feel this movie will play to an audience?**

**Jones:** “I’ve never seen an audience react to the movie. But this is what I find so surprising about our director, Barry Sonnenfeld. Things that I thought would be of no significance, things that I thought were off-handed, things that I thought were just a passing whim in my head as we were performing turn out to be huge laughs. So it’s surprising, you know. The little things we do mean a lot. And the other thing that’s surprising is the

momentum. People start laughing early and it builds like an avalanche. It’s probably a good thing that I wasn’t aware of that, or I would probably have tried to start an avalanche and then stopped one.”

**If you could erase one memory, what would it be?**

**Smith:** “It would probably be the other night, you know, when we were both drinking and things happened, and Tommy, I just want to apologise to you in front of everyone...” (Laughter)

**Jones:** “Same thing... I’m real sorry, Will. That wasn’t the real me. I’ll make it up to you.”

**So at what stage did you realise that there was a danger of being upstaged by a talking dog?**

**Jones:** “Oh, that dog never had a chance.”

**Smith:** “I am a comedy whore. I want people laughing, I want people walking out of the theatre saying ‘That was hilarious’, whether it’s a talking dog or a CG worm, or whatever. However I can get that laugh, I want people cracking up. We realised that every time that dog opened his mouth it was just hilarious. There’s something about that contact with those aliens that just makes it funny, it makes it hilarious. And I’ll take it however it comes.”

**Jones:** “You really think the dog’s a threat?”

**Have you both come into contact with fans who wear the iconic MIB black? How do you feel about that?**

**Smith:** “That’s something that happens after we do

our wardrobe and we do our glasses. For me it’s really a selfish internal process. I always want to make sure I look good and I really wasn’t thinking about how people would react. Then, after the first film, you’d see people like newscasters, who would do the entire newscast and then put the sunglasses on. What happens is that when entertainment bridges the gap between entertainment and news, that’s when those iconic leaps start to happen. And you know, you always get those fans that take it that step too far and wear the suit all the time and are there, you know, at the movie theatre in the glasses and all that. It’s always interesting to see what the kids are wearing on Halloween. When the first *Men In Black* came out there were tons of black suits and dark glasses. It always makes you feel good when it has that kind of reverberation.”

**Do you believe in aliens?**

**Jones:** “I think that the theme of alienation is very close to every person on Earth.”

**How was it working again with Sonnenfeld? *Wild Wild West* wasn’t so well received...**

**Smith:** “Oh, no, Barry’s my man, you know. We have a wonderful working relationship. You know, making a movie is trying to line up a series of small miracles. Sometimes you line ‘em up a little better than others. But in my mind, *Wild Wild West*, the concept didn’t catch on, and the concept didn’t really work for a world audience, but I didn’t feel that there was any reflection on the chemistry of Barry and I.”

**This is very different to your last films, *Rules Of Engagement* and *Ali*. What goes on in your head when you have to choose between a serious movie and a comedy?**

**Jones:** “Nothing at all goes on in my head! (Laughs) I’m always happy to have a job. And I’m especially happy to have this one. I really did like the first movie and working for Barry Sonnenfeld, with Will Smith, have been the happiest days of my young working life. There’s not a lot going on in my mind. I will say I’ve not had a lot of comedy come my way as a performer and to work on *Men In Black* and to see people laugh as a result of the work and then have a chance to do it again is a privilege. Comedy is difficult and I’ve had a chance to work with the best, and learn a lot about it and reap the benefits as an actor. Watching an audience of people howl with laughter as a result of the work you’ve done with friends is a privilege. It must be what a doctor feels like when he sees his patient get well.”

**Smith:** “I try to find a project that’s as different as possible from the last film I performed in. I enjoy being able to go from *Ali*, to *Men In Black 2*, to rap music. I like to be able to test the boundaries. You know, how far will an audience be willing to go with me? How bizarre a character, or how grand a leap will the audience be willing to make with me? That’s generally the consideration. Then of course there’s the team, making a movie is about the team. Probably my first consideration is ‘Who am I working with?’”

**Will there be a *Men In Black 3*?**

**Jones:** “I hope so.”  
**Smith:** “It would be great if people laugh enough at this one and go to the movie theatre enough times. It would be really great to wear that black suit again.” **SFX**

“I am a COMEDY WHORE!” WILL SMITH