



Production Notes

Why just fly when you can soar with soul? Take a ride on the *Soul Plane*.

After a humiliating and horrific experience on a commercial flight, Nashawn Wade (KEVIN HART) sues and is awarded a \$100 million settlement. Determined to make good with his newfound wealth he decides to create the airline of his dreams. With the help of his cousin Muggsy (METHOD MAN), Nashawn creates NWA Airlines, the first full-service carrier designed to cater to the urban traveler.

A one-of-a-kind airliner, NWA's metallic purple and chrome-colored plane comes complete with a hot onboard dance club, live DJs and funky music, its own sassy security crew (including MO'NIQUE), sexy flight attendants (including SOFIA VERGARA), a bathroom attendant named Johnny (D.L. HUGHLEY), and a first class section where the Cristal flows like the flightpath – non-stop.

Departing on its maiden voyage out of Los Angeles, NWA flight #O-69 leaves the ground en route to New York City with a full passenger roster and Capitan Mack (SNOOP DOGG) behind the controls in the tricked-out cockpit. The passengers include Nashawn's furious ex-girlfriend, Giselle (K.D. AUBERT), as well as Elvis Hunkee (TOM ARNOLD), his girlfriend, Barbara (MISSI PYLE), and his two kids (RYAN PINKSTON and ARIELLE KEBBEL). As the onboard party gets more outrageous, the customers get wilder, and chaos reigns throughout the aircraft, Nashawn is forced to land the plane himself and save his airline. With the help of Muggsy, his crew, and Mr. Hunkee, Nashawn brings the plane down in a climax that gives "flying the friendly skies" a whole new meaning.

MGM Pictures presents *Soul Plane* starring Tom Arnold, Kevin Hart, Method Man, K.D. Aubert, Godfrey, Brian Hooks, D.L. Hughley, Arielle Kebbel, Mo'nique, Ryan Pinkston, Missi Pyle, Sommore, Sofia Vergara, Gary Anthony Williams, John Witherspoon, and Snoop Dogg as Captain Mack. In addition to the cast the film also boasts numerous cameos, including NBA star Karl Malone, rappers Lil John and The Ying Yang Twins, Big Boy, MTV Veejay La La, and music video director Chris Robinson. *Soul Plane* was directed by Jessy Terrero from a screenplay by Bo Zenga & Chuck Wilson. The film was produced by David Scott Rubin and Terrero and executive produced by Paul Hall and Bo Zenga. *Soul Plane*'s team of behind-the-scenes talent includes director of photography Jonathan Sela, production designer Robb Buono, editor Mark R. Miller, costume designer Shawn Barton, and music supervisor Melodee Sutton, with music by The RZA.

THE SOUL PLANE PASSENGERS

Soul Plane is a comic film built around one general premise: what if you created an urban airline and filled it with the most outrageous characters possible?

The answer: You get one wild ride!

After making a name for himself in the world of music videos, director Jessy Terrero makes his feature film debut with *Soul Plane*. "When I read the script, I thought it was hysterical," says Terrero. "In terms of comedy, nothing was off limits and everyone was fair game. That gave us the opportunity to get as crazy as we wanted with the humor, and I knew it would be a lot of fun." Terrero quickly climbed on board to help shape the feature and take up his position as captain; he really helped pulled the project together, give it focus, and help it get off the ground.

With so many roles in the script, the filmmakers' attention quickly turned to casting. "When we first started casting it was tough," says Terrero. "The comedy in the script was really wild in some places, and many of the actors and comedians were hesitant about committing to the project because they were unsure what kind of movie we were trying to make." When the actors actually met with Terrero, however, those with reservations quickly saw the passion he had for the project and understood what

he was going for; Terrero let them in on the joke, and they really liked the punch lines. One by one, the actors, comedians, and music stars in the project signed on.

The first actor Terrero went after was rapper Snoop Dogg, with whom he had collaborated on several music videos. “I was shooting a video with Snoop Dogg when I agreed to direct the film,” says Terrero. “I was really excited and told him I was going to direct a movie that was kind of an urban take on *Airplane!*. The first thing he said was ‘Jessy, I want to fly that plane.’ A few months later we were in Brazil working together and he again said to me, ‘Jessy, I’m flying that plane,’ so I knew he was serious. I went to the studio and told them I had found our pilot; I knew he had a great comedic sensibility and was really passionate about being involved in the project, and that was enough for me.”

For Snoop Dogg, playing Captain Mack (NWA’s not-so-qualified pilot) was not an option – it was a necessity. “I told Jessy many times there was only one captain for his plane,” says Snoop Dogg. “When he called me to do this film, I said, ‘I’m your Captain Mack with the sack so lay your head back and enjoy the ride.’”

Hired by Nashawn’s cousin Muggsy (Method Man) to fly NWA’s inaugural voyage, Mack shows up 20 minutes before departure looking more like a hip street character than an airline pilot. “Captain Mack is new to the flying game and the only training he’s had is a pilot class taken at Pelican Bay State Penitentiary,” says Snoop Dogg. “It was either get a G.E.D. or get a pilot’s license, so basically Mack is just trying to get the plane to N.Y.C. safely and make sure everything is beautiful while we coast.”

“Snoop Dogg does a great job in the film,” says Terrero. “He’s known for his music and his rap skills, but he’s also got great coming timing and a super sense of humor. Audiences will love him in this film.”

With Snoop Dogg flying the *Soul Plane*, Terrero went to East Coast rapper Method Man to play the role of Muggsy, Nashawn’s cousin.

“Muggsy always has some sort of scam going on,” says Terrero. “He’s a fun kid who doesn’t take anything seriously and is always looking for the easy way out. That makes for a wonderful dynamic between Muggsy and Nashawn [Kevin Hart], who is trying to buckle down and be straight up.

“It’s been great to watch the growth and dedication Method Man has put into this project,” continues Terrero. “He brought so much to his character that it ended up being much bigger than we initially anticipated.”

For Method Man, working under Terrero allowed him to bring his own special flavor into the mix. “I’ve only done music videos with Jessy, but when it came time for him to give us some actual direction, I was like, ‘Wow, he is really on his job.’ He used to be an actor, so he speaks in a way that makes it very easy to understand what he wants.

“Working with Jessy was also great,” he continues, “because as long as we stuck to the schematics of what the scene was about, he would let us fly off the handle and improv lines. Genuine slang keeps it real because it’s got to taste right when it comes out your mouth.”

Muggsy wouldn’t have a job if it wasn’t for his cousin, NWA’s creator Nashawn Wade. For the filmmakers, finding an actor to play Nashawn resulted in the casting of relative newcomer Kevin Hart. “We saw a ton of actors for the role,” recalls Terrero. “But we were getting a little frustrated. Then casting director Sheila Jaffe brought Kevin to my attention, telling me he was going to be a star. I agreed to have him come in for an audition, and his take on the character was amazing. The minute he walked out the door we all agreed that finally, he was our guy.”

Nashawn creates the airline after winning a \$100 million lawsuit and deciding to change his life for the better once and for all. “Nashawn is basically a guy that’s been running away from things all his life,” says Kevin Hart. “He’s kind of a slacker, but he decides to start his own airline to show people how to run one. He takes it very seriously – but the people he surrounds himself with don’t necessarily make it easy.”

“Nashawn really wants to prove to everyone he can follow through on something,” says Terrero. “Unfortunately he can’t seem to catch a break and is constantly putting out fires caused by his crew and employees. This makes for great comedy because when things go wrong you really empathize with the character.”

For Hart, working with many of his favorite comedians was an experience he would not soon forget. “There were some days I wasn’t scheduled to work but I’d come

to set to watch everyone else,” he says. “Everyone in this cast has great comedic timing. I really learned so much from them and had a great time doing it.”

“Kevin brought the magic everyday and has an undeniable dynamic screen presence,” says Terrero. “No matter what we threw at him, he always held his own and consistently delivered one great comedic moment after another. Many people still didn’t know who Kevin Hart was when we started shooting, but everyone will soon discover the depth and range of his comedic talents.”

There are many colorful characters aboard the *Soul Plane*, including the Hunkees – Mr. Hunkee, played by Tom Arnold, along with his girlfriend and two kids.

Speaking about his character, Arnold says, “Mr. Hunkee is a great dad. He really loves his kids but is recently divorced and has a young new girlfriend the kids really don’t like. We are returning from a family vacation when our flight is cancelled and we’re offered tickets on NWA instead, which Hunkee mistakenly thinks stands for Northwest Airlines.”

“Tom was perfect for the part,” says Terrero. “He is a funny guy who plays the fish-out-of-water character very well. We were able to team him with Missi Pyle, whose subtle comedic style complimented Tom’s high-energy, frantic nature. Ryan Pinkston and Arielle Kebbel also do a wonderful job as Hunkee’s kids. The Hunkees inspire a lot of great comedy in the film.”

Before any passengers get on the plane they have to go through NWA airport security. Paying very little attention to what’s going through those checkpoints are security attendants Jamiqua and Shaniece, played by Mo’Nique and Loni Love.

“Jamiqua does security for NWA by checking the passengers with her wand as they come into the terminal,” explains Mo’Nique. “If a fine looking man comes walking through, a strip search might also be necessary. Jamiqua loves her job, but she’s really not that good at it because when she’s in a conversation with her home girl Shaniece she don’t give a damn. She’s loud, wild and crazy, but she has a big heart.”

Keeping flight #O-69 bumping and thumping are Blanca, Tamika and Flame; a trio of flight attendants played by Sofia Vergara, Angell Conwell and Gary Anthony Williams. Wearing sexy purple micro-mini outfits, NWA’s female flight attendants patrol the aisles of the plane’s very distinctive cabins.

Sofia Vergara really enjoyed her flight aboard the *Soul Plane*. “I hosted a travel show for many years and have always been fascinated with the job of a flight attendant,” says Vergara. “Blanca’s very lucky because she gets to work in first class where it is very luxurious and the passengers are very easy to please.”

Summing up the *Soul Plane* cast, Terrero says, “One of my biggest obsessions in casting was audience goodwill. The movies that always seem to do well are filled with actors who make audiences smile when they come onscreen. This is the common thread that runs through the entire cast of *Soul Plane*. We have a huge ensemble cast, all of whom are uniquely funny – it’s pretty much a guarantee that in almost every scene there is someone who will make audiences laugh.”

GETTING SOUL PLANE TO FLY

For debut feature director Terrero, first-day jitters quickly faded once the cameras began to roll on a scene that featured comedic veteran D.L Hughley. “Since this was my debut, I was a little nervous coming into the first day of shooting,” admits Terrero. “I didn’t know how Hughley was going to relate to me and listen to my creative ideas. I have to thank him because he was so reassuring and turned out to be such a calming presence, which really helped me get through the first week of the film.”

Terrero’s transition from music videos to film was one he had been preparing for a long time. “Many of my music videos have been narratives,” he says, “and I always incorporated some sort of dialogue in them so I could do a little coverage and work with actors. The hardest thing in making the leap to features is that in a music video, the song itself can save you as a director because it’s all about the concept. With features, you are really trying to pull out performances from actors.”

With much of the film taking place in an airport and onboard a plane, the filmmakers faced the challenge of finding practical locations that could double for the airport and the *Soul Plane* itself. “It’s impossible to shoot in the main terminals of airports because of security restrictions,” says Terrero. “We had to find a location to double for LAX, and we were able to do this very successfully at the Anaheim

Convention Center. It was the first time a production had used the location to double as an airport, but several films have gone there since and done the same.”

Principle photography commenced on June 23, 2003, and the filmmakers, cast and crew were all impressed with the purple-and-chrome plane that would become NWA’s flight #O-69.

“The plane is going to knock people out,” says Kevin Hart. “The cockpit is hysterical, with its bumping stereo system, headrests and X-Box. They really went big with the look of the plane, and it provided all of us a great backdrop to work with.”

“Our plane is hip-hop,” laughs director Terrero. “It has everything hip-hop culture embraces, but I also wanted to make a film that was more about class. Most of the jokes in the film are about class, so we really fought hard to make each of the plane’s cabins distinctively different.”

Terrero brought production designer Robb Buono onboard the project, with whom he’d worked on music videos. A celebrated video production designer, Buono has created unforgettable images for many of today’s top hip-hop artists, including Puff Daddy, 50 Cent, Missy Elliot and Snoop Dogg.

“Buono is a genius,” says Terrero. “He is the reason Puff Daddy and a lot of hip-hop artists look as cool as they do. Robb is passionate about what he does and was my only choice for *Soul Plane*.”

“When the project was green-lit, Jessy called me to meet with the studio,” says Buono. “I was in Miami doing a video, but I jumped on a plane and started doing rough shorthand sketches of each set. Jessy told me to imagine if Puffy owned a plane, what would it look like?”

Buono began creating the centerpiece of *Soul Plane*, an aircraft that would provide an urban traveler with all of the comforts and eccentric style missing on conventional airlines. “The initial challenge was how to take the interior of a normal aircraft and give it a stylish feel while still keeping it looking like an airplane,” says Buono. “I knew from conversations with Jessy that a lot of the humor in the film would derive from the plane itself, so I really wanted the sections of the plane to be completely different in their design and feel. We used the interior of a 747 plane and took it apart into different sections, beginning with first class.

“I really wanted first class to be slick and pleasing to the eye,” he continues, “so we built oversized custom white leather seats with the NWA logo embroidered on them. We chromed the seats because our mantra for the film was ‘When in doubt, chrome it out.’ We also put in a beautiful chandelier, which was a nice complement to the bar the first class passengers can enjoy with their ticket.”

“The interior of the plane was amazing and makes the film even more exciting because you never know what you are going to see next,” says Kevin Hart. “I was happy to come to work everyday just because of the amazing job they did on the sets.”

In *Soul Plane*, Nashawn spends all his money on the upper class cabins; by the time he gets to the back of the plane he is forced to cut some corners. The result is a low class cabin that offers...well, it doesn't offer much.

“In the script, low class was described as cramped and congested, a hodgepodge of old airline and car seats,” says Buono. “What I added to the mix was a New York subway look, complete with actual handles from subway cars and coin operated lockers to store carry-on luggage.”

Off the plane, another big challenge for Buono was creating the unique atmosphere of the airport, a place full of urban passengers getting ready and waiting to depart Los Angeles. “We wanted storefronts to reflect the latest in hip-hop culture,” says Terrero. “It was designed to be a place people would want to hang out in, even if they weren't flying.”

In keeping with the color palate for the film, designer Shawn Barton worked closely with Buono bringing to life the many colorful costumes on the *Soul Plane*. “During preproduction we were informed what colors were going to be in the film: purple, purple and more purple,” says Barton. “I designed the wardrobe to coordinate with the colors of the set so they would enhance Buono's beautiful work.”

Terrero was pleased to bring Barton on to design the film's wardrobe. “Shawn's done great work on a number of films and was someone who understood the world I was trying to portray,” says Terrero. “When you deal with a hip-hop audience, fashion is a big statement. If you don't come correct, they will immediately call you out on it.”

“Jessy and I have been friends for a long time, which has enabled us to develop a unspoken artistic shorthand,” says Barton. “Since many of the actors wore the same

wardrobe for the entire film, the first thing I did was put together a bunch of sketches of each character's individual look. Creatively it's my favorite way to work because it allows me to really go out there and push the envelope a bit, which is so important in costuming urban films."

Among the memorable wardrobe pieces in the film are the sexy outfits worn by the NWA flight attendants. "Their look came from a combination of different ideas I had from traveling and flying all over the world," says Barton. "Jessy wanted something really hot and sexy, but still functional for someone working on an airplane. We came up with a very short purple one-piece miniskirt outfit with a plunging open collar and combined it with some really hot knee-length leather boots."

When principle photography wrapped on December 10th, cast and crew alike felt they had shared in a magnificent comedic journey. "If you've been through an airport or on an airplane lately, it's certainly not the most pleasurable experience," says Terrero. "Flying has definitely changed. But this film let's you have fun in an airplane for 90 minutes. It has a very youthful vibe and a definite irreverence to its humor. I've never laughed so hard on a movie set, and you can feel that in the heart and the soul of the film. I hope that everyone who sees this film gets as much enjoyment out of it as we got in making it."