

## 'Shots Fired' Music Supervisor Jabari Ali Talks Growing up in the Heart of Crenshaw to Mentorship, 'Training Day' and much more!

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***Super music supervisor, Jabari Ali heads the music department on FOX series "Shots Fired." (Photo Credit: Paragon Film Music)***

*Crenshaw High Alumnus inspires youth to use art, athleticism, and education as a means to their dreams.*

On a sunny afternoon, I met Jabari Ali for lunch at acclaimed soul food eatery Dulan's On Crenshaw to discuss his journey to Hollywood. Local residents went about their day, ordering,

conversing, all the while, not knowing they were among one Crenshaw... who has produced some of the best music for fan-favorite television s'

Jabari Ali is a film and television music supervisor and h industry, for nearly two decades. As the head of Par hometown hero whose credits include blockbuster Member", "Any Given Sunday", "Barbershop 2", "B Vegas." He most recently lead the is currently lea acclaimed 10-hour TV movie, "Shots Fired" on FC created by Gina Prince-Bythewood and Reggie F

Ali has achieved success in Hollywood; however, career, but talk about his roots and the mentors

While ordering his favorite dish, it was nostalgic ar neighborhood and journey from Crenshaw to Holly personally," he states. He's done several things for Ma achievement breakfasts and lunches. I remember former we sent twenty kids and families to the inauguration, Dulan s cooking."

Ali is one of L.A.'s own to thrive in the music and film industry, while staying grounded.

A fellow Crenshaw and California State University Northridge (CSUN) Alumnus, with a degree in Pan African Studies, Ali feels his love for music is attributed to his family's relationship with different musical genres.

"My dad was a blues connoisseur and my grandmother was from Trinidad. I grew up listening to West Indian music and jazz from my grandfather, who was from the South. When I got to elementary school, I played the upright string base, that was my introduction into music more or less reading and understanding it," he states.

Although he credits his parents to being the inspiration to his craft, growing up in a community filled with elements of athleticism and gangs, music wasn't so much at the forefront for many young Black men.

Music wasn't the dominant thing for a young Black man growing up in the community to do. The dominant thing for a young Black male was sports. I played football; my parents put me in everything to keep me busy. My first love was baseball; however, it ended up being football that paid for my education. Being at Crenshaw and a student athlete was probably some of the best times of my life," he reveals.

Ali wouldn't consider himself to be a hometown hero, but more of a 'Willie West' akin to the iconic Crenshaw Basketball and Baseball coach, Willie E. West, Jr. "The legendary Willie West, former principal, Ms. Boutte would be a hometown hero," he shares. "She taught me how to do geometry; I would've never been able to go to college and become successful. Coach Major Dennis was my Dean, teacher, baseball coach and friend. He was a powerful mentor. Seeing that, it taught me that one day, I wanted to help young people," he states.

It was these types of relationships that Ali developed over the years, that attests to his success and the person he is today. "Mentorship is definitely necessary; "each one, teach one" is a powerful African-American proverb," he acknowledges.



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There is an influx of social and economic growth in the neighborhood; however, for years, South Los Angeles has had its bad elements, such as drugs and gang infestation, etc. However, Ali was fortunate enough to escape those trappings by being influenced by people who cared.

"Being a young Black boy and growing up in an urban war zone is very challenging. Overall, parents have to step up. I think one of the reasons young Black boys tend to go the gang route, is because it's something that they are missing. I was fortunate enough to have football, my teammates became my brothers. That's the beauty of extracurricular activities, it puts you in an environment that holds you accountable, said Ali.

Ali pushes for education, athleticism in the community, because he feels there is a lot of great talent in this District.

"Crenshaw gets a bad reputation; it's a beautiful community and I would not take the people or energy back. There was so much support for me coming up. My teachers were amazing, they cared and went the extra mile. Ms. Boutte was a motivator. I remember my graduation class was 600 to 700. You don't see classes like that anymore. Schools then, were 85% African American, if not higher. I would say 70% of my teachers were Black. The Crenshaw family was strong."

Every homecoming, he returns to his alma mater to visit the classrooms. "We do an alumni election and talk to the students," he reveals.

I always had a passion for art, music and dance. As a football player, you would think I wouldn't be into that, but I had a dance group with some of the members on my team.

Ali switches gears, transitioning from education and football to the next chapter of his life; that is becoming a film & television music supervisor. "I always had a passion for filmmaking. It was one of those things, like 'life after sport', I wanted to do something more artistic," he explains.

He began researching his favorite films, focusing on the credits. "I grew up in a time were there wasn't social media, nothing was coming at you a thousand miles per hour. All the information was there, you just had to research to get it," Ali acknowledges.

Becoming a music supervisor was the end goal for Ali. He was persistent in applying to film and television production companies, faxing resumes and calling continuously. "I was straightforward. It was a testament of dedication that I wanted to be great," he accounts for his drive.

He recalls supervisors at that time being represented by big agencies. Ali, again was mentored by a seasoned music supervisor, John Houlihan who helped him live out his dream and soon partnered together. He took music and publishing courses at UCLA Extension, enhancing his skills while managing producers and got his big break when one of his professor's recruited him to lend his expertise on big budget film "Save The Last Dance".

He has licensed several songs off of the film. "I was told if you follow the money, you can understand the industry a lot better. The studio pays you to create songs for a scene; there is a creative and financial side to it ... I chose the latter," he shares. Ali has worked on "Get Rich or Die Tryin", "ATL", "Malibu's Most Wanted" and a variety of A-list films.

"I wanted to carve my niche in an area where I didn't see a lot of Black people," he said.

Houlihan introduced Ali to director, Antoine Fuqua, leading to him working on "Training Day" and "Brooklyn's Finest." Establishing a relationship with Fuqua, Ali became a music consultant for "Training Day."

"My first music supervisor position, that was all me, was "Waist Deep"; that's how I met Reggie and Gina, we've worked together ever since." He also worked with Swizz Beatz in "Biker Boyz."

"I licensed a song called "Sad News", a tribute song that Swizz Beatz did with Scarface for "Shots Fired", things come full circle, he adds. Ali has collaborated with BJ The Chicago Kid, Aloe Blacc, Nas, Anthony Hamilton, E-40, and Antonique Smith and many others on the FOX series.

Ali is responsible for 'provoking change' in the music selection for the series. The soundtrack fits the tone as it merges the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter Movements.

"We had to come up with a way where music supported the narrative, as well as rely on musicians and producers who had a certain type of activism. Our vision was to create top 40 music that would provoke change and allow music to be a storyteller, that is what Reggie and Gina decided upon from day one," he said.

Ali was up for consideration for an Emmy award in the Outstanding Music Supervision category. "It feels great, I'm honored and more excited about what the narrative of 'Shots Fired' will continue to do for communities across the country. I think it truly challenges the perspective and it has opened a lot of conversations about the Sandra Blands, Trayvon Martins, and Philando Castiles," he states.

"Social media is good, but it's important to build human-to-human connection; that's where your network comes from. Your network is your net worth. I would encourage young people to go to college, because that is where you can establish a network and become disciplined," he concludes.

Lastly, Ali prides himself on being a doer, referencing his faith, "its already been written, it's a matter of you getting it done."

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