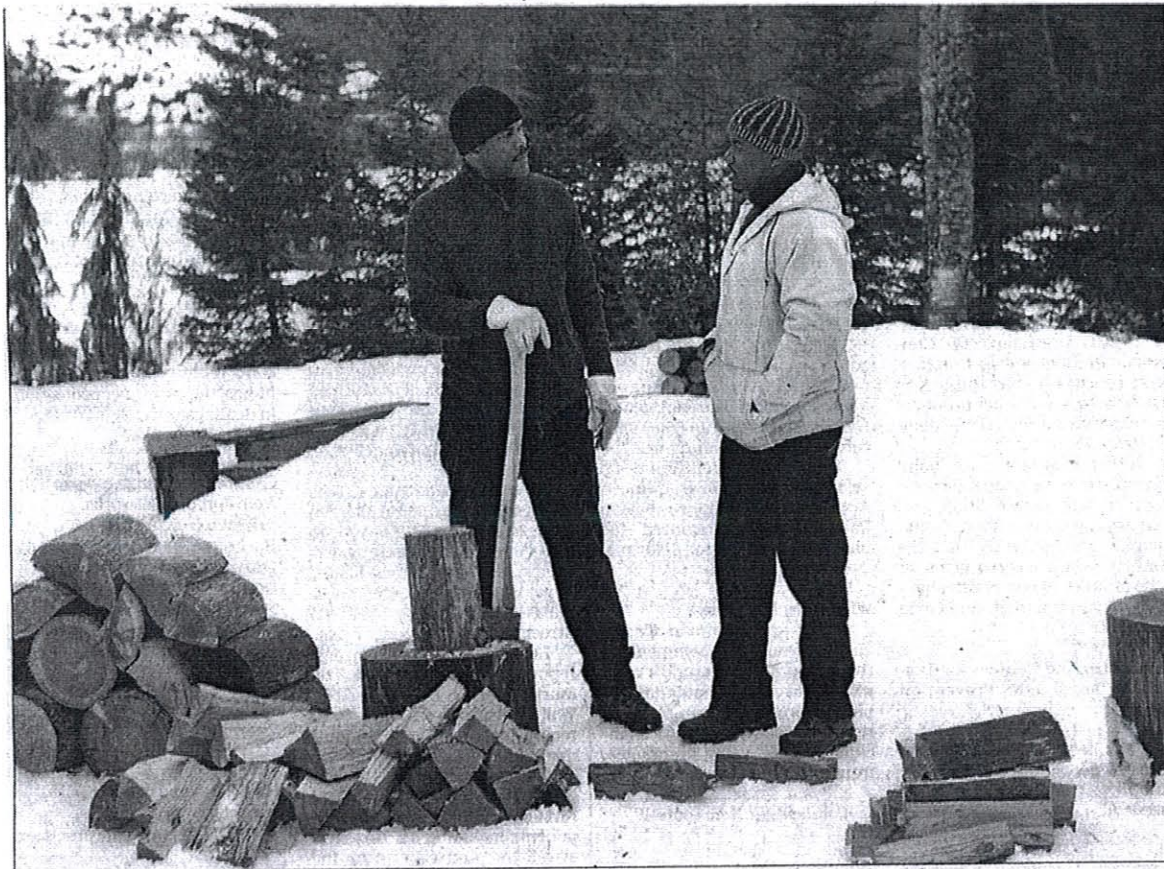


Los Angeles Times

BUSINESS

Monday, October 22, 2007

latimes.com/business



ALFEO DIXON/Lions Gate

GLOBAL AMBITIONS: Tyler Perry, left, and Michael J. White in "Tyler Perry's Why Did I Get Married?" which has brought in nearly \$40 million at the box office in only two weeks of release. Perry sees the international market as a key factor in growing his brand.

MOVIES

Perry aims to go over well abroad

Writer-actor-director wants to shatter the stereotype that African American-themed films don't click overseas.

By LORENZA MUÑOZ
Times Staff Writer

Tyler Perry debunked the Hollywood myth that movies and television shows about family, relationships and God were too narrow and folksy to resonate with a large audience.

His latest film, "Tyler Perry's Why Did I Get Married?" has pulled in nearly \$40 million in only two weeks and outdid such films as George Clooney's "Michael Clayton" in its opening weekend.

But can Perry take on the rest of the world? The Atlanta-based writer-actor-director wants to build an international following, shattering a Hollywood stereotype that African American-



BARRY WETCHER/Warner Bros. Pictures



STEPHEN VAUGHAN/Touchstone Pictures

STARS: Actors Will Smith, left, and Denzel Washington have found success with international audiences. "We are challenging the status quo," says Charles King, Tyler Perry's agent.

themed movies have little currency abroad.

He's taking a page from the global success stories of such stars as Will Smith and Denzel Washington and the gospel-inspired play "Mama I Want to Sing!" which has toured the

world for more than a decade.

Today, Smith is one of the world's most popular stars, grossing hundreds of millions of dollars here and abroad not only from action films but dramas such as "The Pursuit of Happiness."

"We are challenging the status quo," said Charles King, Perry's agent at the William Morris Agency. "We do not believe that there is not an international audience for Tyler's movies."

Several major studios are now courting Perry, promising to push him internationally. These offers are particularly appealing because his current distributor, Lions Gate, has had a disappointing track record abroad.

Only two of Perry's four movies have opened internationally. The films, released in such countries as Poland, Iceland, South Africa and Brazil, grossed a pittance there.

Lions Gate declined to discuss its international plans for Perry. Perry declined an interview request.

But taking a place on the world stage is no small endeavor and does not depend entirely on a studio's distribution muscle. Stars must work overtime giving countless publicity interviews in new territories with newspapers, TV shows and magazines, not to

[See Perry, Page C5]