

News & Culture

FLYING HIGH *Red Tails* cast (from left)
David Oyelowo, Elijah Kelley, Michael B.
Jordan, Nate Parker, Ne-Yo, Terrence
Howard and Cuba Gooding, Jr.



A Few Good Men

MEET THE CAST OF *RED TAILS*, A TRUE STORY OF THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR II

(BY REGINA R. ROBERTSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK BLANKS)

STYLIST: NONJA MCKENZIE/OPUS BEAUTY; SET DESIGN: ERIC HOLLIS; GROOMING: SAISHA BEECHAM USING KINERASE & INARS FOR TAMU ARTIST AGENCY; GROOMING ASSISTANT: JEMISHA MCFERRIN USING MAC FOR TAMU ARTIST AGENCY; BARBER: LARRY SIMS/BARBOZA AGENCY; MANICURIST: TINA GOLD FOR TAMU ARTIST AGENCY.

In cinema, as in life, the truth lies at the mercy of the storyteller. And with *Red Tails*, in theaters January 20, the storyteller's focus is squarely placed on the Tuskegee Airmen, the elite all-Black squadron that overcame discrimination to become one of the most successful fighting units in World War II. "These soldiers were ready to do it all," says Anthony Hemingway, who was hand-picked by legendary producer George Lucas to direct Lucasfilm's first original production in 17 years. "I connected with their struggles and determination, especially after spending time with them." Soon after signing on for *Red Tails*, the Bronx-born director made it his mission to visit Tuskegee, Alabama, and meet with the brave men whose lives he'd be bringing to the big screen. He also took

special care when shaping his ensemble cast, which includes Terrence Howard, Cuba Gooding, Jr., Nate Parker, David Oyelowo and Ne-Yo. "The actors sat with a handful of the Airmen over a weekend and heard their stories," recalls Hemingway. "I wanted everybody to understand the magnitude of this project." The film, written by Hollywood scribe John Ridley and shot over 50 days in the Czech Republic and Croatia, was a rewarding experience for British actor David Oyelowo: "It's very rare for a film of this scale to be focused on a group of young Black men," he says. "There is no White savior character." Adds actor-musician Ne-Yo: "The masses don't truly know what these cats did against all odds. I hope the respect owed to the Tuskegee Airmen is finally given."