

“Staples Guy” Brendan Bradley talks ‘Doubt’ on CBS, New Media and working with Tyler Perry

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Is traditional media becoming obsolete? Well, I don't know if we're there quite yet. But I think it's safe to say that the Internet is our future. No, this isn't an intro to some Artificial Intelligence mind and body take over special on public access TV- it's a segway to my interview with a pioneer of new media: the incomparable Brendan Bradley. You might have seen this charismatic gent on numerous Staples commercials (he's kind of a big deal, you guys), sporting a red polo and black slacks... and although we dig his memorable outfit, contagious smile, and his knack for pointing us in the right direction when it comes to office supplies, what's next for this star on the rise is just too good not to rave about.

Photo: David Muller

Bradley, who has been a staple (pun intended) in the web series community for quite some time now, is briefly stepping out from behind the creative curtain for some pretty rad TV and Film roles. In addition to starring alongside entertainment legend Ed Asner on a film called *In Vino*, and appearing in Tyler Perry's *The Haves and The Have Nots*, he is also guesting as a nervous, young lawyer alongside *Orange is the New Black*'s Laverne Cox, and Katherine Heigl in CBS' new series *Doubt* slated to hit your screens Feb. 15. Not bad company to have, eh?

Being internationally known for being a spokesperson for a company that spans 26 countries ain't too shabby- but, Bradley doesn't plan on stopping there. You want to talk about trends? He's setting them! The "nicest douchebag on the internet" is totally taking over the internet... and not in a facetious way. The actor and published playwright is transforming new media and has been able to bring together influencers, brands and artists, to create a whole new filmmaking model. Now, that's pretty damn impressive!

From writing and producing, to acting and more, there's really nothing Bradley can't do- if he sets his brilliant mind to it. And we chat about it all! Especially his upcoming characters and the wave of new filmmakers. Let's get to it-

MCKENZIE MORRELL: Can you tell us about *Doubt* and your guest starring role as Hayden?

BRENDAN BRADLEY: Absolutely. *Doubt* is a new show for CBS that will start airing February 15. Right off the bat it is exploring the legal side of police conduct. There's a lot of investigations into ongoing crime and it is following the lawyers that have to balance the fine line between the city and the boys and girls in blue. Hayden is a young man competing for a position at the head law firm.

MM: The addition of Laverne Cox to the show is pretty awesome. It's being hailed as the first ever series to take on that topic of having a transgender actor play a transgender character as a series regular. Do you feel a sense of contribution to such an important issue being showcased on broadcast tv?

BB: These are incredibly inspiring times for actors as we get to be a part of shows that are creating such important dialogue both on and off screen and driving much-needed change. It's fun to step into these roles and let other characters who have previously been overshadowed or underrepresented really stand out and shine.

MM: What a great thing to be a part of! Can you tell us anything else about your character?

BB: Hayden is the silver spoon pick. He goes into the meeting expecting special treatment and gets put in his place. Despite what his privilege is, is he the best candidate for the job? At the end of the day you'll just have to wait and see!

MM: [Laughs] With that said, did you face any unforeseen challenges while kind of delving into this character?

BB: For me, this was a very easy role to step into because I'm used to getting to play kind of the privileged jerks that you want to see get their comeuppance.

MM: An interesting thing to be known for [laughs]. But really, you're no stranger to the limelight and are recognized internationally as the Staples spokesperson. This is a huge company, so many stores worldwide, 26 countries... when landing that gig did you have any idea the massive reach, including the public appearances and the billboards that you'd be featured on?

BB: It definitely has become an evolving campaign which has been extraordinarily exciting to be a part of. It started as just seven commercials which then grew more into a spokesperson role. Billboards were added, and other countries were added. Plus radio! It continued to expand over the last two years.

MM: That's pretty awesome! Please tell me that you've been "Guy" for Halloween since you've been the spokesperson.

BB: [Laughs] I have dressed up as "Guy". I absolutely have my little fake name tag and my red shirt.

MM: That's what I like to hear. Now in addition to that, you're also a recent recurring guest on OWN's *The Haves and the Have Nots*. That episode is set to air in 2017, do have any tidbits you can leave us with regarding that character that you play?

BB: Absolutely. I can't speak a lot into the overall story points but what I can tell you that it is an absolutely singular experience working with Tyler Perry as a director. He runs a completely different production than anyone in Hollywood, which I think is what has led to him being such a prolific and established creator. We shot about seventy pages a day on that set, which for anybody that knows filming, that is a whirlwind. We're basically shooting a feature film every day. That really speaks to his leadership and how tight that entire team is. They really have it down like clockwork. It's a very well-oiled machine and it's just incredibly impressive to be a part of something that's really building a legacy. As we continue to move into digital media where it really does become about content, I think he has his finger on the pulse, as far as being able to keep quality while also maintaining that volume of storytelling.

MM: There's not doubt about that, I mean, as you said Tyler Perry is this huge entity in the entertainment world. What was the biggest thing that you took away while working on that project?

BB: For me, also being a producer and a creator of my own work, I was able to really look at the amount of detail he puts into the things that matter and to not sweat the small stuff. We only get one or two takes of each scene. He trusts his team, he trusts his cinematographers, he trusts his actors, and he is really there as an overall shaping, guiding force for the entire franchise rather than getting lost in the weeds with moment by moment trying to sit there and tweak every little light himself or every little moment himself. I think seeing that kind of broad vision and leadership, really just running that much content at one time, really inspired me. It makes approaching my own work that much more illuminating in the sense of knowing where I can really focus my efforts and my resources rather than getting caught up in 'well not everything's perfect,' or 'not every light is where I want it to be,' or 'not every shot is what I want it to be.'

MM: Yeah. That's definitely an overall picture vs. nitpicking the little things vibe.

BB: Absolutely. But also just choosing your team and trusting everybody to do their job instead of micromanaging.



MM: Of course. That's probably a big problem in the industry, micromanaging. In addition to your international recognition, your upcoming roles on TV, you're a busy guy... you're also a part of the You Tube

BB: Absolutely. That was one of the most fun projects to work on. I think YouTube RED is really making some smart decisions when it comes to getting out there with original series that connect their pre-established creators with their growing audience. I've actually worked with the Fine Brothers many, many times and I'm basically in their phonebook as a Go-To guy, so when they lost a cameo role from a pretty well-known singer/songwriter who couldn't make it for filming due to a schedule conflict, I was right there in the phonebook. I was on set a day later filming the first episode. It was just a great team.

MM: Is that filming pace a shocker to the system?

BB: We moved very, very fast, not Tyler Perry fast, but very fast. Shooting a lot of content really quickly and they really encouraged us to improv and for everybody to really bring their own attitude and energy to the show.

MM: Would you say working with the web series community is much like having a blast in a kid's playground? You know these people for the most part and you're their go to person. Do you feel a familiarity?

BB: I think that being a part of the YouTube community feels a lot like summer camp. In that everybody's got these cool activities going on that they're all gaining their own Merit badges for and you can totally jump into anybody's team. It's a totally open, fun environment where it's very welcoming, it's very community based but almost every year you go back and it's like brand new camp counselors, and brand new kids, and you're then having to quickly re-find your cliques again because every single year more and more brands and networks and especially money starts to enter the space in these new amazing ways. It has that great community grassroots vibe but it's also constantly evolving.

MM: Oh totally. Would you say you gravitate towards new media more than traditional? Your background is well rounded, from web-series creator, to theatrical and film producer, writer, actor and beyond ... why is this kind of an area of great interest to you?

BB: New media has haunted me since the very first time that I heard about the term, right before the writer's strike in 2007 and I was producing a lot of independent theater in NYC. The number one goal in any (pre-*Hamilton*) NY house, whether it was Broadway or a small Black Box, was getting butts in the seats. And especially with a limited medium because it's a limited number of chairs, it becomes very, very difficult to introduce new audiences to new storytelling. What I recognized was that through the Internet we could start broadcasting online these small clips of plays or trailers, or sizzles or scenes and we realized that we were reaching a larger audience than we were capable of reaching in the theater every night. The Internet in a lot of ways is like the Black Box theater of the film industry, of Hollywood. Where you can truly experiment and develop and play and take on controversial and difficult stories and difficult subject matter and it really does become about just connecting with an audience. If it speaks to the audience, you'll succeed, and if it doesn't, you start over and try something else.

MM: That's a great way to look at it. Well said. You have some upcoming projects in the works, what's to come from your writing, producing and acting career in the New Year.

BB: Everybody is interested right now in how to take all of this great success of digital influencers combined with micro-budget filmmaking and bring that into the more long form narrative space. Especially now that we see advertising dollars becoming advertising cents, how do you intelligently integrate brand partners. And so what I've

done is merged all of those worlds in a new filmmaking model that allows the influencers, the brands and the artists, to all connect together on an equal turf to tell long form stories.

MM: That's amazing, we're looking forward to you shining in 2017!

BB: Thank you.

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