

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**QUEEN LATIFAH, STAR OF CBS' *THE EQUALIZER*, TALKS NECESSITY OF A FRESH SPIN ON THE FRANCHISE IN MAY EMMY MAGAZINE**

(LOS ANGELES — May 6, 2022) — With a legacy in hip-hop music and hit films and an Emmy Award under her belt, Queen Latifah was not an obvious candidate for a starring role in the CBS reboot of *The Equalizer* — but it has turned out to be ideal. Amid the action drama's second season, *emmy* talks to Latifah and the show's producers about their fresh take on the hit series about a former intelligence agent who helps people in need with nowhere else to turn. The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy is on newsstands now.

While Latifah is now an A-list actress, her rise to the top wasn't always easy. In the early days "... all of the scripts that I was receiving were some variation on Queen Latifah the rapper," she explains. "People had this idea of what I was. They kept sending me bad versions of me; and I was like, 'I don't need to play me. I *am* me, you know?' I wanted to do something completely the opposite of what people expected so I could show what I'm capable of."

Latifah has learned to trust her gut when it comes to her career. "My gut is God telling me what to do," she says. The strategy has paid off in *The Equalizer*. In addition to her starring role, Latifah also serves as an executive producer. In its freshman season, the series ranked first in total viewers among new broadcast shows, with a weekly audience of nearly 11 million, and it has remained a Top 5 broadcast series in its second season.

When pitched the series, Latifah immediately signed on. "The 'yes' was out of my mouth before I could even think about what I was saying or signing up for," she says. "The whole idea of *The Equalizer* was very tantalizing to me. Being a fan of the original show as well as the films, I was like, 'Hell, yeah!' I'll say yes, and then I'll let the powers that be work out all the other stuff. Then we'll start getting creative about it."

In "**The Blessings of Yes**," executive producer Debra Martin Chase explains that she was looking to cast a woman as the show's central character; but it "required a certain type of woman—someone who is tough and believable with the action, but whose heart and vulnerability you believe, too." Keeping the spirit of the previous series and film was important to Queen Latifah; she knew she had big shoes to fill, but she also wanted to put a fresh spin on the franchise. "It was really about trying to develop something that made you forget about those two—in a good way—by giving you a different version people could connect to."

To give her character Robyn McCall a timelier tone, Latifah turned to family. "I did call a couple of relatives who sort of do what she does [law enforcement]. These

waters run a little deep in my family.” Her dad, Lancelot Owens, used to work for the Newark, New Jersey, police department. “I needed to make this character make sense, and I wanted to know what kind of pressures people like her face. I wanted to know what it was like to have a family while you’re going out there in the world to extract justice, even possibly killing someone.”

The show regularly tackles tough topics, including Asian hate, corrupt cops and immigration. “It was always intended to be a ‘ripped-from-the-headlines’ show,” says Latifah. “If it was up to me, we’d go even further than we do. Some of these issues are very tough, but very realistic to our times.”

Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:

- Despite being in the sixth decade of a career that spans more than 90 roles on television and in film, Michael Keaton is still as relatable as ever. In “**The Remarkable Regular Guy**,” the prolific actor talks to *emmy* about his award-winning role in Hulu’s *Dopesick*, which exposes the opioid crisis in the late ‘90s, and shares his personal connection to addiction.
- In “**Now and 5Eva**,” *emmy* talks to the producers and casts of *Girls5eva* about season two of Peacock’s hit comedy series starring Sara Bareilles, Busy Philipps, Renée Elise Goldsberry and Paula Pell that follows a one-hit-wonder girl group who reunite after 20 years to pursue their musical dreams.
- For Jabez Olsson, editing *The Beatles: Get Back* was a four-year affair. In “**Band of Brothers**,” Olsson shares his passion for helping to set the record straight about the Fab Four while bringing previously unseen footage to light in Peter Jackson’s documentary series streaming on Disney+.

About *emmy*

Emmy, the official publication of the Television Academy, goes behind the scenes of the industry for a unique insider’s view. It showcases the scope of television and profiles the people who make TV happen, from the stars of top shows to the pros behind the cameras, covering programming trends and advances in technology. Honored consistently for excellence, *emmy* is a six-time Maggie Award winner as Best Trade Publication in Communications or the Arts and has collected 52 Maggies from the Western Publishing Association. *Emmy* is published 12 times per year, and is available on selected newsstands and at [TelevisionAcademy.com](https://www.televisionacademy.com) for single print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

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