



Interview with Hinton Battle

The only living 3-time Tony Award winning male performer
(other than Zero Mostel, and he's dead.)

by Jeremy Baumann, email: jeremy@aheadofschedule.net

I'm here with dancer, actor, singer, choreographer, writer, producer and fashion model Hinton Battle at his palatial estate north of the Hollywood Hills being served a decadent Sunday brunch by his obedient and well dressed staff. I must compliment Gustov on his fritters and Jevés on knowing just when to refill our mimosas and when not to interrupt.

JEREMY - What would you like to talk about?

HINTON - I dunno.

Hinton didn't seem to have much to say at the start of the interview so I decided to try the psychological approach and talk to him through a puppet which might set him at ease. Having no puppet handy, I decided to talk to his black labrador, Tama, while Hinton answered for her. Or did he?

JEREMY - Tama, how would you say hinton is as a master?

TAMA - good.

JEREMY - does he feed you well?

TAMA - Excellent.

JEREMY - How would you feel about company? He's spoken of getting another dog.

TAMA - I think it's a bunch of crap he's throwing around.

JEREMY - a cat maybe?

TAMA - I like cats, they taste like chicken.

JEREMY - How old are you?

TAMA - Two, three... I don't pay much attention.

JEREMY - How is the race factor - being a Black labrador as opposed to a caucasian labrador? Do you think there's a difference between being a black dog versus an asian dog or mottled or mixed dog?

TAMA - As long as you have a black owner, you're fine.

JEREMY - How's the food here?

TAMA - I told you it's great, what are you fucking deaf?

JEREMY - I notice you've rather long, thin feet. Do those work well for you?

TAMA - Well, they work fine considering I don't do much with them, I pretty much just sit around, eat, then I go for my walk. Thank you for asking.

JEREMY - Tell me about your day.

TAMA - I get up with Hinton in the morning then as soon as Hinton's out of the bed, I jump in the bed when he's out of the room, but he'll never notice it. Then when he comes home, I crawl in the corner and hide in the basement. So that's my day.

JEREMY - What did you think of meeting my dogs in the desert?

TAMA - I was scared shitless, that mom dog you have- that big ass german shephard - she wanted to kiiiiiiiiiiii me!

JEREMY - Well you'll be happy to know I have a pitbull who will love you next time you come to visit.

TAMA - So long as she doesn't sniff my butt, we'll get along fine.

JEREMY - Do you have any questions for us?

TAMA - Yeh - when are you gonna feed me?

TAMA - Yeh - when are you going to feed me?

TAMA - Oh - when are you gonna see me.

JEREMY - Eventually. Thank you, Tama Battle.

TAMA - Whatever, give me the fucking food.

JEREMY - Ok Hinton, let's see, where to start?

HINTON - Don't ask me how fucking old I am!

JEREMY - So Hinton, how old are you?

HINTON - Old enough to be your mother.

JEREMY - What does the G. stand for in Hinton G. Battle?

HINTON - (Laughing cuz I've been asking him that for many years) - It stands for 'G.'

JEREMY - Here's my first real question for you... you've starred in back to back Broadway smashes for over a decade, you've choreographed the Oscars, been featured on the Oscars, you've become the only living man on earth with three Antoinette Perry (Tony) Awards, you've been featured in....

HINTON - Blah blah blah, what's the fucking question already?

JEREMY - Don't interrupt! You've choreographed many music videos, dance troupes, you were a protege of Balanchine - (he gives me a look like he's going to kill me) - all the great...

HINTON - SHUT UP!

JEREMY - Hush or I'll tell everyone you've SLEPT with all the greats.

HINTON - Hmmm....

JEREMY - The question is this - what you're PROBABLY best known for is being the brother of the infamous opera singer Kathleen Battle, how do you feel about that?

HINTON - (Laughing his ass off cuz they're not related). And that bitch still won't send me a check! I'm so upset with her. I saw her on the street, she acted like she didn't know me.

JEREMY - Were you separated at birth?

HINTON - No, we're still together.

JEREMY - It's the first thing everyone says when they see your headshot on the wall "Hinton Battle who's that?" And they're usually with some theatre expert who proclaims confidently "THAT, my friend, is Kathleen Battle's brother. He does theatre. He's very good." Then the first person nods like they don't wanna seem dumb that they don't know who Kathleen is.

HINTON - That really happens?

JEREMY - at least eight, ten times a day. It happens pretty often, actually.

JEREMY - Whatcha working on these days?

HINTON - Working now on a one man show, shopping it around, working on taking it to Broadway. HBO bought the rights to ten minutes of it from the Colorado Springs Comedy Fest.

JEREMY - You're working on some smaller projects while you're shopping the bigger stuff around?

HINTON - I am? Oh yeh! Feeding my dog, washing the kitchen floor, that sorta stuff?

JEREMY - You were just working on something on the computer, no?

HINTON - I can't talk about that right now. I could but...

JEREMY - I know, you'd have to kill me and everyone who reads it afterwards. What can you talk about? OK, what's your favorite show you've ever done?

HINTON - DREAMGIRLS. I did it for about three months. I replaced (can't make out the name, he was mumbling).

JEREMY - Yeh, I heard about his drug addiction problem.

HINTON - I didn't say that! We were a lot younger then....



One of several Hirschfeld's of Mr. Battle

JEREMY - I don't even know who we're talking about, but it sounds like I hit the nail on the head with that one! OK, why was it your favorite show?

HINTON - I liked the show, it was a good show, I liked working with Michael Bennett. He was cool. I liked the show, I like everything about it - the music, Michael, I liked the character I played: James Thunder Early. I liked the cast, it was a young cast which is nice, everyone's around the same age. Normally there are a lotta older people or younger people or only two of you are around the same age.

JEREMY - Did you ever work with Michael Bennett again after that? Before that?

HINTON - No, it was the only thing we ever worked on together.

JEREMY - Do you think you liked it because you were only on it briefly so it didn't have a chance to become routine or stale?

HINTON - No, I liked it because I liked the role. It was a great role, it was the kind of role that was just wild. When they were doing the Los Angeles version of the show, they held auditions and I went in to audition for the role. They offered me the show but they offered me another part. They didn't see me as that wild, womanizing, sex driving, gospel sorta sounding, James Brown, Michael Jackson kind of character.

JEREMY - So they offered you the role of the window washer instead?

HINTON - They offered me the role of... what was it? Ummm... I think it was CC, the brother to Effie. Just wasn't my cup of tea so I didn't take it. Took another job which was a lot more fun.

JEREMY - Least favorite job?

HINTON - LEAST FAVORITE! (laughs) You know that one - "That Damn Kid."

JEREMY - But that's where we first met and became friends, that must be worth something?

-- He didn't hear me as he's busy laughing. He's referring to a show called "The Tap Dance Kid" which Alfonso Ribiero from Silver Spoons/Prince of Bel Air starred as the original kid in and was replaced eventually by Savion Glover, tap dancer extraordinaire--

HINTON - That damn kid. OHHHHHH That DAMN kid, THAT damn kid, that damn KID. However you say it, I hated it. (still laughing).

JEREMY - Problems with management or cast?

HINTON - just a big mess. How many people are gonna read this?

JEREMY - Lots probably, I'll link it around to the search engines so people can find it if they want to...

HINTON - "Tap Dance Kid." It was a struggle all the way. Just a big ol struggle all the way. They were gonna close the show up and I went to everybody and said "look, let's all take a pay cut and make the show run cuz either we run or we have no jobs so I convinced em all to take pay cuts and we ran for awhile but then it was just one long haul after another, that's all. But some good things came out of it and I've since retired from tap dancing.

-- The show ran for a few years on Broadway and won three or four Tony awards--

JEREMY - Started and ended your tap dancing career?

HINTON - I said yeh, enuf of this! Good things came out of it though, Alfonso, Barbara Montgomery, Savion, Dawn Lewis, Gayle, she tours a lot, all those people are working, doing tv shows, touring a lot.

JEREMY - Between tv shows, movies, choreography, dancing, singing... do you have a particular thing you like doing? Do you like doing em ALL in one show?

HINTON - That's a tough one.

JEREMY - Depends on the situation?

HINTON - Lemmee put it this way: every show I've ever done that I didn't write/produce, whatever, has been someone else's dream and vision of something... it's other people's ideas and you're slotted in a slot and it's fun, and I'd give it a 110 percent, but it was never really coming from me. But now what I've been doing with the one man show and "the jazz bakery" and more club dates is I'm doing what I want to do, singing the music I want to sing. It's what I want to do, I'm not saying what I was doing before wasn't great or not fun, but I enjoy what I'm doing now a lot more. I worked with some great people and I enjoyed working with them but you're still fulfilling someone else's dreams. You may be starring in a nice role on Broadway and you're getting a nice check every week but ultimately it's not your creation, it's not your baby.

--Long pause, I can't think of anything to ask, he's petting his dog---

JEREMY - Tell us about those heavy checks, what's the most money you've ever made?

HINTON - (Laughs) per minute? Give me that calculator.

JEREMY - What laws have you broken in your life?

HINTON - Me? Have I broken any laws?

---More long pauses, I'm realizing it's not easy to interview old friends---

JEREMY - Geez, what would you ask yourself?

HINTON - What would I...? "How do I look?"

HINTON - What would I...? "How do I look?"

HINTON - WHAT WOULD I... HOW DO I LOOK?

JEREMY - OK, How do you look?

HINTON - GREAT!!!

JEREMY - FABULOUS!!!

JEREMY - Who are the greatest dancers out there? Who was your favorite to dance with or that you would've liked to have danced with?

HINTON - DAMN.

JEREMY - I remember you saying that Baryshnikov wasn't that great, that he was just a big star.

HINTON - I said that?!

JEREMY - You did!

HINTON - I.... naw...

JEREMY - You once said that there's a big difference between the greatest talents out there and the ones who are the most well known which I believe is very true.

HINTON - That IS true.

JEREMY - And thusly you bagged on Mick-Ale.

HINTON - Baryshnikov is good, he's real good. He's excellent. I said that?

JEREMY - We were watching a tape or a show he was on and I was going" DAMN he's amazing, that shit's not possible." You said "he's not that great."

HINTON - I was just jealous.

--We crack up for awhile--

HINTON - I was just jealous he was doing it and I wasn't.

JEREMY - I believed you cuz you used to do all the same shit, I figured you knew the deal. You used to do gran jetes over my head and I'm 5'8" (that's a leaping split to anyone who doesn't know and probably misspelled to those who do).

HINTON - Nope. Jealous.

JEREMY - Long boring story break.

HINTON - Here we go.

JEREMY - Do you remember when you, Delo (actor/dancer Michael Delorenzo) and I went to the Chinese Mann Theatre to see that movie with Mick-Ale (Baryshnikov) and Greg (gregory hines)?

HINTON - Yeh, White Knights?

JEREMY - That's it...

HINTON - And you told those gang members to shut up cuz they were talking too loud?

JEREMY - Yeh. That's another story. Anyway, there was a scene where Gregory and Mick-ale (I'm pronouncing it that way just to piss hinton off) have a bet that Baryshnikov can't do eleven turns. After the movie when we're walking out I was going on about how it looked as if it wasn't cut and that he really pulled off 11 clean turns and stepped out of it. I was buggin cuz the most I ever pulled off in my life... when the stars were aligned and the wind was blowing the right was maybe six, probably 5... and a quarter... then fell on my head afterward. So I'm making a big deal out of all these turns he did and this is turning into a really long, boring story, isn't it?

HINTON - (Patiently) Go ahead...

JEREMY - So 11 clean turns, not cut, I'm goin' on about it and you and Delo look at each other like what's the big fuckin' deal and Delo says something about what's the big deal, he was in dance shoes on a wood floor? I said I suppose he could do eleven turns and he said to you "you wanna do em or should I?" You said to him "you" and he gets in position and whips off 11 turns in high top sneakers on concrete in the middle of the crowds leaving the theatre.

HINTON - Yeh.

JEREMY - I suppose there's no response to that. Just a long boring story.

HINTON - Mmmmm Hm.

--We bust up--

JEREMY - So you goin' to the ball game on Sunday?

HINTON - I was then jealous of Delo after he did that. I kicked him.

JEREMY - What happened to him?

HINTON - Delo? He's on NY Undercover, he's working.



Hinton and Delo agree - cats taste like chicken

JEREMY - Is he on the "I hate them" list?

HINTON - I hate them list? What's that?

JEREMY - I don't know, I'm just trying to find dirt to make this thing interesting! OK, who do you really hate?

HINTON - Who do I really hate?

JEREMY - Yeh, let's spice this thing up!

HINTON - I can't say stuff like that, I work in this business.

JEREMY - I promise I won't tell anyone. I won't put it in the interview. No one reads this anyway.

HINTON - Don't go there, bitch.

JEREMY - OK, here's what we'll do... I'll ask really risqué questions and you either say "don't put that in at all," "no comment," or give me an answer, k?

HINTON - Alright.

JEREMY - Michael Jackson.

HINTON - What about him?

JEREMY - He asked you to come visit him at his house in California and you said "what the fuck would I wanna go to his house for?"

HINTON - He did?

JEREMY - Yeh, during the Tap Dance Kid, when you and Alfonso did the pepsi commercials and he invited the kids and you to his house.

HINTON - I don't think he was so interested in me coming out to his house.

JEREMY - He was just trying to make it look safe for the kids to come out?

HINTON - Maybe. He wasn't looking at MYYYYYY face when he invited me to his house.

JEREMY - Should we put this in or not?

HINTON - I don't know, I don't care, you use your judgement

JEREMY - I dunno, some of the questions I ask for these things I better start bouncing off my lawyer

HINTON - Are they scathing interviews?

JEREMY - Not necessarily, but they're starting to get a lot of traffic. I've done three already in which people called me afterward and wanted me to take em off cuz they're afraid they said the wrong things

HINTON - Really? Why?

JEREMY - Oh, man, now you're gonna get me in trouble. Ok, one of em was this british kinda rock star guy who said some pretty candid things about other rockers and was afraid it was going to ruin his career or something.

HINTON - Well I don't have a career right now, so? I'm trying to rebuild a new one!

JEREMY - Ok, then I'll ask the dirt... when that stuff came out about Michael Jackson and the little kids, you and other folks we know who worked with him said it was no big deal, everyone in the biz has known that he's been into little kids forever.

HINTON - Who? I said that?

JEREMY - Yeh! Not just you, lotta dancers I know. You know.

HINTON - Omigod!

JEREMY - Didn't you do your first broadway show with him?

HINTON - no!

JEREMY - The Wiz?

HINTON - No, he did the movie. I played the scarecrow in the broadway show

HINTON - No, he did the movie. I played the scarecrow in the Broadway show.

HINTON - No, he did the movie, I played the scarecrow in the Broadway show.

JEREMY - I'm gonna haveta fire my research people. Who did you do the wiz with?

HINTON - Ted Ross, Didi Bridgewater, Trevor Haynes, Arthur Dushields, who else... ummmm Stephanie Mills....

JEREMY - Yeh! She was the one sleeping with the little boys!

HINTON - Oh, ok. I see what you're doing.

JEREMY - what'd you do after the wiz?

HINTON - I danced with dzryduhahlum, I had a bad injury...

JEREMY - Wait, say names slowly so I get em right .

HINTON - Spell em?

JEREMY - Just say em slowly.

HINTON - Ok - Daaaaaaance Theeeeeaaatrrre of Hamrrrrrleeeeeem.

JEREMY - I thought you said Desiree DuHarlem.

HINTON - They should change the name, that sounds good - Desiree Du Harlem, it has a ring. So I danced with Dance Theatre of Harlem for awhile, solo ballet, I was a soloist then left and worked with Bob Fosse in Dancin' - that was cool.

JEREMY - I'm trying to think of questions that up and coming dancers, young kids, those inspired sort of people would want me to ask. Those who find this interview might wanna know about people like Bob Fosse, Balanchine and all.

HINTON - Like in what context?

JEREMY - I dunno, picture twelve year old girls in Ohio who's life is dance, they're hoping to get to NY one day and they wanna know about those old legends, Michael Peters... He was a sweetheart, wasn't he?

HINTON - Michael Peters? He was tough.

JEREMY - He really was that character in the Beat It video? (he was the choreographer and lead dancer in the white leathers and sunglasses).

HINTON - Yeh, he was tough, he'd pull a knife out on you. He was really tough. My advice is learn it all, learn everything a dancer can learn - you won't be able to do it all, but you've gotta try cuz the wind blows different directions and who knows what direction it's gonna blow next and if you're not ready to go that direction you're gonna get lost in the wind.

JEREMY - And learn to use a computer in case you ever have a bad injury.

HINTON - Right and get a bachelor's degree in fine arts in something.

JEREMY - In Gold Digging...

HINTON - And husband hunting...

JEREMY - So Bob Fosse. He's dead?

HINTON - Dead.

JEREMY - Michael Bennett?

HINTON - Dead.

JEREMY - Michael Peters?

HINTON - Dead.

JEREMY - Michael Jackson?

HINTON - Ummm.....

--We both crack up--

HINTON - You're bad. You are soooo bad. I'm gonna tell your mom.

JEREMY - She knows.

HINTON - Oh, damn!

JEREMY - How would you rate me as a roommate? (we shared a couple of apartments together).

HINTON - You were fine, you were great, it was cool. All we did was eat and go to the gym! That's all we fucking did.

JEREMY: We were young and fit and had lots of hair.

JEREMY - We were young and fit and had lots of hair.

HINTON - You were fit, I was starting to pork it out there.

JEREMY - Yeh, you were.

HINTON - Thanks a lot, great encouragement! You coulda said "no! you weren't that big!"

JEREMY - You only got big after we were in that big penthouse on Franklin...

HINTON - Labrea Towers.

JEREMY - I'll haveta attach a coupla pictures of you with this interview...

HINTON - NO!!! Oh God.

JEREMY - The one with the spaghetti hanging out of your mouth.

HINTON - Don't do it. I think I'm getting pretty thin now.



Hinton discovered Price Club!



Sorry, Battleman, I couldn't resist

JEREMY - You're doing three spin classes in one day! One is a enuf for a month and you're doing two - three a day (spin classes are aerobics classes you do while on a new high tech exercise bicycle so in addition to the aerobic movements, you're dying from the bicycle - they're a killer!)

HINTON - Good, I just did enough for three months.

JEREMY - Who else can we dish on?

HINTON - Don't do that. Don't go there...

JEREMY - Madonna?

HINTON - Leave her alone!

JEREMY - Fine. You win. More boring questions.... what do you think about Gregory Hines' statement that Savion Glover (star of Bring on Da' Noise, Bring on Da' Funk, now playing on B'way - he won a tony for it) is the greatest tap dancer who ever lived or ever will live?

HINTON - That's a big... that's quite a strong statement.

JEREMY - I just made it up, sounds good though, doesn't it?

HINTON - HA!

JEREMY - No, I think he really did say that.

HINTON - That's quite a strong statement, there're a lot of great tap dancers out there. Don't get me wrong, Savion's excellent, he's brilliant, he's very good, but that's like saying that Baryshnikov is the greatest dancer who ever lived or ever will, you can't say that, that's crazy.

JEREMY - Right, cuz there's Gudonov and Nuryev, also.

HINTON - Right! And Tama.

JEREMY - Tama Du Harlem.

HINTON - Tama the Wonder Dog. Savion is very good. Is this a boring interview?

JEREMY - I'll cut out the boring parts.

JEREMY - I'll cut out the boring parts.

JEREMY - Who do you find interesting?

HINTON - Me!

JEREMY - What about you?

HINTON - I'm BORED!

JEREMY - OK, even when that Battle-Mania thing was going on, every cab we ever got into in NY the cab driver was asking for your autograph, people on the street... even in L.A. people were asking for your autograph (which is unusual for Broadway stars), you never had that big attitude, ego thing going on. Why not?

HINTON - Well what is that? What is that big ego stuff? If you've gotta get such a big head to inflate your ego that much you better find a good psychiatrist and do some homework on yourself.

JEREMY - Did you ever get to a point where you ever stopped and said "why am I acting this way?" Ever have to do a check and say I'm acting like a big ego? Or did you never get there?

HINTON - I think it's healthy to have some ego, but some people you meet, work with, whatever you gotta just stop and go Whhhhoooooooooaaaa.....

JEREMY - So how is Debbie these days? (Debbie Allen)

HINTON -People actin' like there stuff is gold tipped or somethin'

JEREMY - So how is Debbie these days?

HINTON - ... I don't.... Debbie? What about her? Ohhhh.... fuck you.

JEREMY - Never liked that woman.

HINTON - No?

JEREMY - I met that woman so many times and she's still, I don't know, I think you can at least put on the act of being nice to people, I'll give her the benefit of the doubt, I know what it's like meeting lots of people and she meets a lot more than me...

HINTON - I don't know, I've known her all my life, almost all of it. I like her.

JEREMY - Favorite thing about her?

HINTON - She doesn't put any limits on herself. I find that pretty amazing and what she doesn't know, she finds out. I find that pretty amazing.

JEREMY - Sounds like you before Tap Dance Kid.

HINTON - Why do you say that?

JEREMY - OK, tell everyone the story of you before the show - it's all tap dancing, you won a Tony for it, you got rave reviews for your tap dancing, exactly how many years had you been tapping before the show?

HINTON - How many years? Ummmm let me think.... was it five? Maybe ten..... no... it was NONE.

JEREMY - But they didn't know that you didn't know, did they?

HINTON - No. I called an old friend up and she taught me this easy little step and I made it look goooooood.

JEREMY - They assumed cuz you had done so much dance, were so established - that you were THE HINTON BATTLE and done so many shows that naturally you could tap.

HINTON - It was that old black thang. He MUST be able to tap.

JEREMY - And they asked you to audition and you did...

HINTON - I did, I had to audition with Danny Daniels, the choreographer on the show...

JEREMY - He still alive?

HINTON - I don't know. It was just him and me in a room for about three hours.

JEREMY - How did you learn to tap so quickly for the show?

HINTON - Cuz I knew every week I would get a check.

JEREMY - That's quite an incentive

HINTON - It is, it works every time.

JEREMY - Favorite people? Favorite people to work with? Hang out with?

HINTON - I like all the people I've met through you...

JEREMY - People readers would know? Anita Baker?

HINTON - She was really nice, I didn't work with her that much...

JEREMY - Tracy Ullman.

HINTON - She's great, does lotsa characters, dances, she does it all - accents, she's great... Whoopi Goldberg is great... who else did I introduce you to? Sean Young...

JEREMY - I wanted you to hook me up with her, remember that?

HINTON - She's married, man!

JEREMY - That wasn't what you pointed out when I asked about her, you said she was nuts.

HINTON - Ummmm. We did that show Stardust, she wanted to do a musical, she did Hollywood Comes to Broadway

JEREMY - She wasn't bad in Stardust

HINTON - No, she was great, she worked real hard and made it happen.

JEREMY - I did a sound system for James Woods around the time he was stalking her, she was stalking him? Whatever. Some interesting characters in Hollywood, huh? Different than NY, huh?

HINTON - The whole vibe is different, the whole living thing is different.

[... click here for part two and more pics...](#)



The Hinton Battle Interview... continued

JEREMY - Prefer living in N.Y. to L.A.?

HINTON - I don't know if I could get used to living in ny again, the whole pace, I mean, we was hustlin' all the time, day to day. I don't know if I could do that again - it's a hard life, nonstop hard life - traffic noise, the whole thing.

JEREMY - I used to do a coupla' gymnastics classes, coupla' karate classes, coupla' dance classes a day WHILE I was working full time, while I was...

HINTON - Sounds familiar.

JEREMY - Now I'm wondering HOW THE HELL DID I DO ALL THAT?

HINTON - Here it's like - I did my class today, I'm good. Phew. Wondering why that damn belly won't go away. I did my class, why isn't it gone?

JEREMY - Hard to have a dog in ny.

HINTON - I had one, though. Tama #1. (a dalmation)

-- We talk about dogs for awhile--

JEREMY - So, you've won a lot of awards, what was it like winning your first Tony? Was it like - oh, great, no big deal?

HINTON - I didn't expect to win it.

JEREMY - Do you remember who you were up against?

HINTON - 42nd street, pirates of penzance... another one and something else...

JEREMY - No wonder you won. It was for Sophisticated Ladies, right?

HINTON - Yeah, there was a lot of controversy around it.

JEREMY - Why?

HINTON - You just want dirt, my God.

JEREMY - Well, people who read interviews wanna' learn something, they're cheering me on for dirt and stuff of interest, like going to a car race, people just wanna see a crash.

HINTON - Shit. It was a lotta shit between me and Greg Burge...

--- For anyone who doesn't know and cares, greg is the black dancer in A Chorus Line, The Movie. He's incredible, rent it if you haven't! ---

JEREMY - Why? Which of you was going to be nominated or both?

HINTON - Yeah. When I was nominated and he wasn't that they made a mistake... it was really ugly, it was really bad...

JEREMY - What they got you guys mixed up? That black thing again?

HINTON - It was a very stressful time and when the people from the nominating committee came to see the show, I was doing Gregory Hines' role cuz he was out, so I wasn't even doing my own role some of the time so they would have to come back. Some of the time I was doing my role, sometimes I was doing Hines' role, it was a lot of pressure and back stabbing stuff, it was really stupid stuff.

JEREMY - Sounds like the high desert.

HINTON - We were young, just a lot of stupid stuff.



Hinton featured in G.Q. and Jeremy with lots of hair

JEREMY - Were you guys able to overcome it?

HINTON - Well, I never really got into it.

JEREMY - Were you able to be friends after it? Were you friends before it?

HINTON - We've known each other forever, since the wiz. We were paired off together, people try to get rivalries going and get shit busy and that competition, healthy competition kinda stuff, but I never got into it. At some point you start to believe stuff, I had a very small role and he had a much larger role so when I won it was very unexpected.

JEREMY - Was this before or after "Dancin'?"

HINTON - This was after Dancin'.

JEREMY - I remember being a kid in NY and walking through the theatre district seeing the posters for dancin' and looking at the names and seeing

JEREMY - I remember being a kid in NY and walking through the theater district and seeing the posters for Dancin' and looking at the names and seeing

JEREMY - I remember going to NY and walking through the streets, seeing the posters for GIBBY and looking at the names and seeing Hinton Battle and wondering if it was a real name. What a strange thing we'd end up best friends for almost half my life.

HINTON - When will it be half?

JEREMY - Hmmmm.... next year? Next year we'll have been friends for 17 years and I'll be 35. Tempis be fugeting. Damn.

HINTON - Damn.

--

JEREMY - What does the G. stand for in Hinton G. Battle?

HINTON - You asked me that.

JEREMY - You didn't answer.

HINTON - Stands for G. - here's a funny thing, when I signed a record deal once, there were a lot of people in the waiting room someone announced 'will the band HINTON BATTLE please come in.'

JEREMY - Strange name for a strange man. ---

JEREMY - What do you see for your retirement years? Your old age?

HINTON - getting older.

JEREMY - So you're now 24, what do you see for the next ten years (he's actually in his mid-late 30's)?

HINTON - Getting older. Doing my own projects, producing and directing more.

--We have to take a break for a few cuz Tama came over and starting french kissing him so Hinton's wiping his tongue off on a napkin and then Tama did it again--

JEREMY - Even if I won the lottery and had millions I'd still wanna start businesses I liked, what would you be doing?

HINTON - Maybe a few businesses, I've planned on opening stores and stuff in the past, shows- there are quite a few shows I would like to produce. Write scripts, develop scripts... People are really going to find this interesting?

JEREMY - People who are really into dance might. The thing I like about the interviews I'm doing is that they're all on this sort of a level, very personal, just talking kinda stuff, if any dancers read this and want to ask specifics we didn't get into then they can email me and I can call you - it's great that way, the internet, people can participate and tell me I'm a dummy cuz I didn't ask you stuff they wanna know about. Can't do that with Dancing Magazine. Then I can call you and we can add more to it!

What does the G stand for in Hinton G. Battle? Everyone asks me that.

HINTON - It stands for G.

JEREMY - What are the boring questions they normally ask you in interviews?

HINTON - I dont' know, I try to put them out of my mind.

JEREMY - I hear that a lot. People always get the same boring questions.

HINTON - How long you been dancing, how long, how long this, how long that, they keep it clean.

JEREMY - This might be interesting, maybe not.

HINTON - What?

JEREMY - I'll try to make it clear - when someone is truly outstanding at something, most people are truly great at one thing at least - me, the only thing I was truly extraordinary at was rolling skating, one of the best in ny at the central park slolam course which might mean I was one of the best in the world at my peak - with you it's dance. The question relates to the fact that people don't usually ask questions like - how does it feel knowing you're one of the best in the world at something. Do you take pride in it or is it just work... do you ever think stuff like "man, I'm the only person on the entire planet with three tony awards for performing on broadway?" Does it ever wig you out?



“We spent a lot of time at the gym”

HINTON - No.

JEREMY - next question....

-We laugh for awhile and he tries to throw his dog at me-

HINTON - This is gonna sound horrible!!!

JEREMY - Really, I know people don't ask you stuff that way. Maybe it takes a friend to ask embarassing stuff like this. I feel awkward asking, do you want to answer it?

want to answer it?

want to answer it:

HINTON - I'll try, take it out if it sounds stupid though.

JEREMY - Deal.

HINTON - I'm.... uhhh, I'm, uhhh... I'm, I'm I'm

JEREMY - That didn't sound stupid at all. OK, next question: how long have you been dancing?

HINTON - I'm flattered, I'm honored. I mean, that I have em, it's great - to be recognized for the work I did on those shows, it's not just the Tonys, it's the NAACP award, the Fred Astaire awards, all of em, they're like a stamp, a stamp of theatrical approval I guess. It's like recognition of those productions and my contribution...

JEREMY - Were you aware of it when you won the third one -were you thinking that if you won you'd be only the second man in history and the only living man with three? I don't mean to make a big deal out of the question, but it is a pretty big deal.

HINTON - Yeh, actually I was aware of it but only because someone mentioned it to me on the way to the show.

JEREMY - The cab driver?

HINTON - The limo driver, actually. No, it was a drunk homeless man - he said "if uuuuuuuu win that mmmmmmmmmmm mmmister badoo - if you winnn daaaaaa thing thing thing..... threeeeeeeeeee MIIIISSSSSTERRRRR BADDOOOOO, THREEEEEEEEE THREEEEEEEEE AAAANTOINETTE. THREEEEE!!!!!!"

JEREMY - I'm gonna start taking sound bites off these interviews so people can click and hear you - that's what I'm going to put off yours. So do you use the tonys for bricks - bricks and board shelves for your records and eight track tapes?

HINTON - No, they're in a box in storage somewhere in NY. When I tell people that they freak, tell me I gotta get em out here and put em in a glass case.

JEREMY - Other awards you were as jazzed to get?

HINTON - Any of em - anytime someone takes the time to look at your work and say you deserve this thing, it an honor. NAACP, Fred Astaire, they're all great, cuz you know... they don't have to. They can check you out and go "we saw you in that.... ummmm, no." Granted each one has it's own level of how people relate to them, but to be the recipient of any of em... it's great.

JEREMY - People are prolly gonna bag on me for not talking more about the greats who aren't around anymore - Michael Peters?

HINTON - Peters, Peters, He used to cus me out all the time "YA LAZY! WHAT AREYA DOING?! YA LAZY!" Peters. Man. Michael Peters. Bob Fosse... the worst story about Fosse was that I'd just done Tap Dance Kid and I was pretty burnt out from the show - it was a real hell, hellish experience, Tap Dance Kid, and Bob called me up about doing a show called "Big Deal" and ummmm, I told him I couldn't do it cuz I was just too burnt out and it was going into rehearsals in two weeks so I passed on it, all I wanted to do was rest, I was thinking I won't be any good, all that crap, thinking I don't wanna do ANYTHING.

JEREMY - You wanted to go spend all your money.

HINTON - I just wanted to go away for awhile and recuperate and I always regretted it cuz that was the last show he ever did. Always regretted it.

JEREMY - Michael Peters. You keep saying he was tough, how so?

HINTON - He'd cuss you out in a minute "you look like... SHHHHHIT!" That was the great thing about Michael. You knew if you were cutting it. He didn't bullshit you. It was good cuz you knew you wouldn't go onstage looking like a giant grape or something. I appreciated that, it wasn't always easy to take, but I appreciated it cuz you knew where you stood. If he ever said you was kickin' it, you knew you was kickin' it, you were reeeeaally doin' it! If you were ok, you knew it was ok, but if you was suckin' it, you KNEW you sucked. Flat out, he told you. But you always knew you could trust him. Cuz of that I really looooved working with him. We came in and redid Dreamgirls, we rechoreographed it, made it a lot more dancy, more dancing, back bends and splits and holding onto the mike and doing splits, we did all that. That man tried to KILL ME! he put my pelvis in a new position! He had it on TOP of my head!

JEREMY - Most people across the US who don't see a lot of Broadway shows know him best from the Beat It video, what else would they know him from?

HINTON - He did a lot of music videos, Lionel Ritchie, he did everybody's music videos, after Dreamgirls he came to Hollywood and started doing commercials and stuff, he directed the commercial for Tap Dance Kid, did you know that?

JEREMY - No, I didn't.

JEREMY - So what else? We've been friends 15 or 16 years why do you think we're still friends?

HINTON - Cuz we're good people.

JEREMY - That's true.

HINTON - And I'm not afraid to say it. We've had our falling outs but it's been... we're friends, we're friends. I'd do anything for you except give you money and you'd probably do anything for me except give me money and...

JEREMY - Naw, I lend you money I just need...

HINTON - Papers signed, notarization...

JEREMY - No! You know what I need when I lend it to you...

HINTON - ON TIME! you need it back ON TIME!

JEREMY - That's the thing cuz I was pullin' it from credit cards or whatever...

HINTON - Yeh, so then I'm borrowing money to give you yours back on time. Yeh, it's cool, though. When you get tired of Joshua Tree where will you go?

JEREMY - I have no idea.

HINTON - See, that's a friend.

JEREMY - What? someone who would tell me to stay there?

HINTON - Yeh. Stay there til you know where to go and when you come to l.a., you know - where do you go?

JEREMY - To Rolf's house? (Rolf is another old friend of ours)

HINTON - Who's Rolf? Is this over yet?

JEREMY - No, there's a few more minutes to go on the tape, we've gotta run it out, sorry.

HINTON - Not as much as people readin' this shit.

JEREMY - What does the G. stand for?

HINTON - (Smiles)

JEREMY - Great moments in broadway shows you've done?

HINTON - Dancin' was great - non-stop dancing, it was work. Oxygen on both wings for the dancers. Did it on broadway then toured it, then here in l.a. I did that tour for a long time!

JEREMY - If anyone has any bootlegs of it, I wanna see it. Funniest thing that ever happened in a show that wasn't supposed to?

HINTON - She's gonna kill me, this kid.... a very heavy young girl... during Tap Dance Kid this little girl in the show, she missed her queue...

JEREMY - She always missed her queue.

HINTON - No, this time she missed it really bad, we said the line like four times for her to enter - and she was BIIIIIGGG and HEAVY - and we heard this noise in the wings like a scream and then noises like a big elephant stomping and we were looking toward the wings waiting for her and then we saw her like, throwing a tantrum stomping around in the wings and we're like looking out at three thousand people in the audience.

JEREMY - What happened?

HINTON - Not much.

JEREMY - She has such a beautiful voice that girl.

HINTON - Yeh, she does. Martine Allard. A-lard.

JEREMY - Big girl.

HINTON - Yes.

JEREMY - She's gonna kill us if she ever sees this!

HINTON - Yes. She will.

JEREMY - Anyone who wants to hear a TREMENDOUS voice, buy the soundtrack to Tap Dance Kid, you can still find it in bigger record stores and listen to her voice on "four strikes against me." She had the flu when they recorded it, too so she wasn't even going for her highest notes if you ever hear it, you won't believe that. You also won't believe that she was a child! She sounded like Jennifer Holiday!

HINTON - She was only 13 when they recorded it. She and Jennifer Holiday were friends.

JEREMY - I remember when they made a big press deal about the two of them going out to dinner, like the Diva and the young soon to be Diva and the limo practically died under the weight of them.

HINTON - No comment.

JEREMY - How many soundtracks have you sung on?

JEREMY - How many soundtracks have you sung on?



JEREMY - How many soundtrack albums have you sung on?

HINTON - Whoa... Miss Saigon, Tap Dance Kid, the Wiz, Sophisticated Ladies... only four.

JEREMY - Do you like the way you sound on them or do you think "oh, Broadway showtunes?"

HINTON - "Oh, Broadway showtunes."

JEREMY - You had a seven record deal with Quest (Quincy Jones' old record label) and unfortunately Quincy Jones sold to Warner who only kept the big names, did I get that right?

HINTON - Yeh.

JEREMY - It's a shame - Louise says you have one the best voices she's ever heard.

HINTON - Reaaaaally? That's cool.

JEREMY - She can't understand why you're not presently doing the same movies as Denzel Washington and have albums all over the place cuz she thinks you're incredibly handsome, talented...

HINTON - (Laughing) She HAS a boyfriend. I've been in NY, I've been doing theatre so I haven't really been out here trying to do the whole Hollywood thing. So I just moved out here what, maybe two or three years ago and I'm just starting with that whole thing, we'll see how it goes.

JEREMY - The magic of Hollywood, sign with CAA, no William Morris, right?

HINTON - Yeh, William Morris.

JEREMY - And never be heard from again.

HINTON - (Laughs) Yeh, then I was with APA, that was interesting - they signed me and then the main guy died.

KIRK (Hinton's brother) - That's not good.

JEREMY - Then you signed with a small agency and started working every day.

HINTON - Go with the underdog.

JEREMY - What do you think of the desert or Joshua tree in particular.

HINTON - People actually live out there?

JEREMY - So I've heard.

HINTON - It's beautiful, it's beautiful... it takes a minute to get used to it if you're from the city but you definitely feel as though you're in with something that's untangible.

JEREMY - You were actually thinking of buying a house out here.

HINTON - I still am.

JEREMY - Cuz why?

HINTON - Cuz it's a good place to chill.

JEREMY - How much chilling do you think is good for a person.

HINTON - Until the quiet becomes too loud.

JEREMY - That happens very quickly sometimes...

HINTON - Then it's time to leave.

JEREMY - When do you think of coming to the desert? Is it when the city gets too much...

HINTON - When I wanna be able to look up and see the sky. You just want to get away from people and tons of cars and telephone poles.

JEREMY - We have lots of telephone poles...

HINTON - I guess you don't notice them cuz there's too much air and space.

JEREMY - I find it hard to believe that people actually live in LA in an apartment on a busy intersection and never leave the city - they don't even know the open space of the desert is a few hours away... have you turned other people onto the magic of our area?

HINTON - Yeh, absolutely. and my dog loves it.



Hinton, Hassoun, Dule, Martine and Savion Glover

JEREMY - Where should we end this interview?

HINTON - About two miles back. Isn't that tape about to run out? It looked awhile ago as if th...

- The tape ran out -

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