

WILL SMITH

- Ranked as the most bankable star worldwide by Forbes
- Rapper, songwriter, actor, producer



Will Smith, a rapper, songwriter, actor and producer was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1968. Smith began rapping at age 12, emulating heroes like Grandmaster Flash but tingeing his rhymes with a comedic element that would later become his trademark. At 16, Smith met a DJ at a party by the name of Jeff Townes. The pair became friends, and the duo DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince was born. The Fresh Prince rapped about teenage preoccupations in a clean, curse-free style that middle America found safe and entertaining. The pair's first single, "Girls Ain't Nothing But Trouble," was a hit in 1986. Their 1987 debut album, Rock the House, hit the Billboard Top 200, and made Smith a millionaire before the age of 18.

Topics

Drawing on his experiences with fledgling stardom, NBC signed Smith to headline "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air", a successful sitcom that ran for six seasons. Smith's first step into superstardom came with the film, Bad Boys (1995). The high-budget cop movie saw him team up with comic Martin Lawrence, breaking away from the black-cop-white-cop formula that had been so successful for Beverly Hills Cop and the Lethal Weapon series. The two black leads proved an instant success and Smith-playing the smooth lady killer to Lawrence's clown-was established as leading man material. Smith next took on the epic sci-fi flick Independence Day (1996), a role that confirmed him as a major player in Hollywood and the go-to guy for summer blockbusters.

The 2001 biopic "Ali", based on boxing legend Muhammad Ali, gave Smith the opportunity to regain his big-screen swagger. His turn as the charismatic boxing great saw Smith put in the performance of his life, training and disciplining himself to extraordinary lengths to do justice to the athleticism-and ego-of the titular character. The film underwhelmed at the box office despite a record-breaking opening day, but Smith's performance was strong enough to garner him his first Academy Award nomination. Smith then took on the dual role of actor and producer for Hancock (2008), in which he played an alcoholic anti-superhero, and for Seven Pounds (2008), about a man who sets out to change the lives of seven people. He also helped produce two more films released that year, Lakeview Terrace and The Secret Life of Bees.

Smith leans politically liberal and has made donations to the presidential campaigns of Barack Obama. As of 2015, his net worth was estimated to be \$250 million.