

TYRESE

by Sandra Mardenfeld

Nineteen-year-old rising R&B star Tyrese smiles as he watches a fan bebop at the listening station for his self-titled debut album in New York's Virgin Atlantic Megastore. With a mischievous look, Tyrese turns, puts one finger to his pierced lip, and tiptoes behind the unsuspecting aficionado, tapping him on the shoulder.

The fan's eyes widen with disbelief as he pumps Tyrese's hand. "Oh man. Your album's great, man," he says over and over as he moves to let PLAYGIRL photograph his idol. "Nah," Tyrese tells him, as he sheds his shirt, readying himself for the shoot. "Finish listening. We'll wait."

Tyrese Gibson never expected one Coca-Cola commercial to propel him so far. In 1995, when auditioning for the part of a headphone wearing, jingle-singing kid, Tyrese thought the gig would put some cash in his pocket and maybe get him some recognition around his neighborhood, the Watts section of South Central Los Angeles. But that mere 30-seconds led to guest appearances on sitcoms such as *Martin* and *Hanging With Mr. Cooper*, print and TV campaigns for Tommy Hilfiger, a hosting job on MTV and a record deal with RCA.

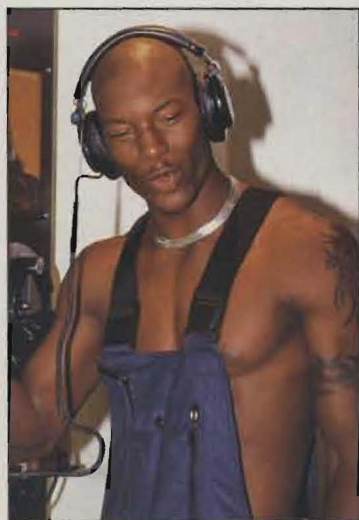
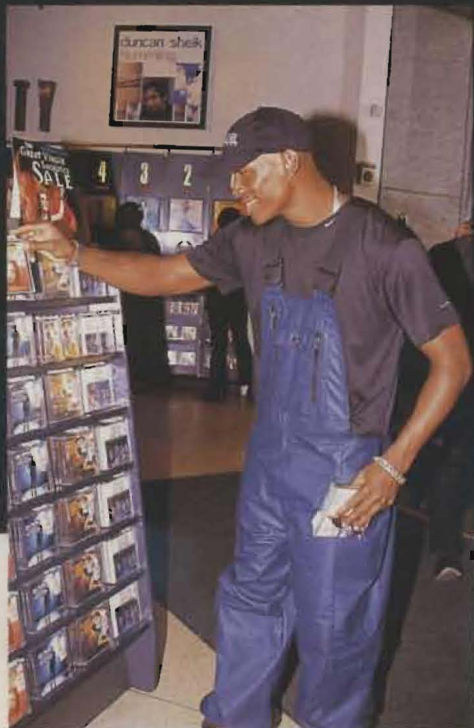
Garbed in sexy leather overalls that reveal his tattoos (he has nine), Tyrese strides around the store picking up CDs. "Natalie Imbruglia," he says after singing a few lines from "Torn," her hit single. "My label mate. That's a great song."

He briefly holds Brandy's *Never Say Never*—a "great album from top to bottom," he says before moving on to Xzibit's *40 Dayz And 40 Nightz*. "When you listen to him rap you just gotta believe him from the tone of his voice," he maintains.

When speaking about music, Tyrese's dark, soulful eyes twinkle with spirit and passion. He's eager to collaborate with artists such as Babyface, Lauryn Hill, Eric Clapton and, surprisingly, Garth Brooks. "I'm a fan. He's the capital of country music and in my eyes there is nobody bigger than Garth Brooks."

"Music is my main thing right now," he continues. "It's my form of expression. Like my tattoos." He points to a Chinese scripted word on his upper arm. "Right here," he says, "this means beautiful, low-class talent. Low class meaning, I'm from the inner city and I

CD SHOPPING WITH THE RISING R&B STAR



TYRESE'S CD PICKS

**Jay-Z,
*Hard Knock Life Vol. 2***

"Hands down, he is
the best lyricist."

***Rush Hour* soundtrack**
"Great music."

**Tyrese,
Tyrese**

"I still can't believe it's
on the shelves."

**Lauryn Hill,
*The Miseducation of
Lauryn Hill***

"She is an example of
bridging the gap
between R&B and hip hop."

**Canibus,
*Can-i-bus***

"This cat is from outta
this world because his
lyrics are out of hand."



had nothing coming up. I wouldn't be who I am, or appreciate the many blessings coming my way if it weren't for being born in the low class."

Tyrese, who began singing at the age of 14 in local talent shows, co-wrote nine of the 12 songs on his album. "I borrow from my experiences," he confesses. "'Nobody Else' is dedicated to my ex-girlfriend. After the Coke commercial, suddenly all these girls wanted to talk to me. 'Nobody Else' is a kind of reassuring song saying I didn't want anybody but her. She just couldn't accept it."

Now single, Tyrese looks for confident, intelligent women. "I love women with asses," he admits. "Really big butts. But nice and toned physically. Like someone I could go jogging with and not worry about seeing any jiggles."

A big flirt, Tyrese loves cuddling while staring into someone's eyes. "I think I'm romantic," he says. "I don't know if people can read that from what I do on television being so hyper and energetic."

For the moment though, Tyrese's career keeps him moving. "I want to make more music, do more modeling and television and someday be on the top 10 list of paid entertainers," he says. "That way I can go back to my community and make every street pole, every piece of grass, every building brand new. That's what I look forward to doing. Then I might be able to sit back and say that I've accomplished something."