

Bianca Ryan, winner of America's Got Talent, to star in feature film "We Be Kings"

Bianca Ryan, the 11 year old singer who won America's Got Talent and took the country by storm at age 11, is set to star in the feature film "We Be Kings" alongside Magic Slim, the legendary Chicago bluesman.

Bianca is 17 now, and attending an arts school in Philadelphia. Magic Slim, who is 74, lost a finger in a Mississippi delta cotton gin when he was 13 years old and promptly quit the piano and took up the guitar, and is now widely recognized as one of the last of the great Chicago bluesmen alongside Buddy Guy and B. B. King.

Also starring in the film is guitarist and singer Quinn Sullivan, who at 12 years old is touring the country and opening for bluesman Buddy Guy. Sullivan is already being compared to legends Eric Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughn, displaying a level of virtuosity at the guitar rarely seen. That a twelve year old is opening for Buddy Guy is unprecedented.

Other supporting cast will be Pryce Watkins, a 14 year old Atlanta rapper, and Grana Louise, a Chicago blues-singing institution.

The film is being financed via the Kickstarter.com crowd source financing site, where fans have the options to back the film for various reward levels. Kickstarter is a fascinating story in itself, a site artists of all persuasion have discovered and organized backing for projects like films, recording sessions, board games, publications, even inventions such as the "smelly robot".

For as little as \$1, fans can "back" the project and artist of their choice and join an exclusive community that receives project updates, newsletters, and live video streams of the project as it unfolds. Watching the Kickstarter raise take place is like watching a horse race, and

everyone gets to follow their favorite jockey. The difference might be that you're the jockey, and you're in the saddle riding your own horse. At higher reward levels an autographed DVD of the film can be purchased, or the CD, or a limited edition movie poster, also signed by the cast, even a limited edition guitar made exclusively for the film.

For filmmakers, the Kickstarter site is manna from heaven. Instead of soliciting investors they can appeal directly to the fans and give them a package of rewards that parallels the value of their contribution. In short, its commerce, but the difference is a huge new freedom for the artist who sidesteps traditional bottlenecks and goes direct to the fan.

And for the movie industry, some call it "old media", its more bad news for the major studios who are simply unable to service the tiny niches that a vast sea of artists, taking advantage of the internet, are discovering and appealing to. For the fans of a particular stream in Montana and a particular hue of rainbow trout caught in that stream? Well there's probably someone on Kickstarter making a documentary on it, usually for impossibly low amounts of money, that you can back and follow and win an autographed pair of waders. Major studios making homogenized blockbusters that attempt to appeal to everyone with shock and awe and end up appealing to no one, are in trouble. The lowly consumers, who seek choice and that particular product that entertains them, are the winners.

We Be Kings is a family oriented movie musical that attempts to appeal to young and old. Bianca Ryan and Quinn Sullivan, still teenagers, will be cast alongside Magic Slim, at 74 still taking the stage for a three set night, with the last set often beginning at 2:30 am. And many say that Magic still has not reached his prime, he keeps getting better and better. Imagine a Buena Vista Social Club on a grits and tween-tweeted diet.

Whereas an older blues legend like Magic Slim might not be omnipresent in the new social media, the much younger members of the cast have a ubiquitous presence on Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter, engaging fans directly and capable of spreading the word on a vast and

immediate basis. Much older blues fans will benefit from a product largely created by a tween generation that is backing their fans, and in the process enfranchising their elders. A crossover potential impossible to imagine just ten years ago, but now the new norm.

The movie story tells the saga of I Be King, to be played by Magic Slim, and his wife Lilly, who run their own little juke joint Lilly's Lounge and Disco in Moon, Mississippi, population 452. Lilly dies, and I Be King, unable to stand the loneliness and memories, takes off in his truck, heading north, playing in K Mart parking lots, in front of schools at lunch hour, anything to earn a buck for gas and food money. The TWIST to the story is that the ghost of Lilly is riding shotgun, right next to him, giving him directions and bugging him, enjoying a laugh, just like old times. He thinks talking to a ghost, or angel, whatever you want to call it, might qualify him as crazy, but he enjoys the company.

Problem is he heads too far north and gets into trouble outside Hibbing, Minnesota (that's right Bob Dylan's home town), slips in a blizzard and can't/won't get up, and decides to die. "Sorry we ain't ready for you yet" Lilly tells him. "Can't a man die without bein bugged?" he asks? " Nope. Doesn't work that way. You got work to do, time to get famous" she tells him.

Notwithstanding the fact that he's freezing to death, he has a good laugh about this, having played 50 years in total anonymity. But nearby two metal heads get kicked out of their band, that would be Layla, played by Bianca Ryan, and Dustin, played by Quinn Sullivan. With a little ghostly magic Lilly guides them to I Be King in the snow, they help him into his van, and the next morning as payback they demand he give them a ride south. They are effectively running away with I Be, in Dustin's case from an orphanage and in Layla's case from an abusive stepfather. I Be will have none of it, but a frozen fish Dustin has in his backpack and a \$50 bill seems to seal the deal. After all, a man's gotta eat.

As they head south, gigging from town to town, Lilly the angel will gently engineer events until they finally play at a junior high school in Cairo,

Illinois, and cause a sensation. A precocious blogger/student, played by Atlanta rapper sensation Pryce Watkins, puts a video of the performance he shoots with his phone up on the internet, the song viralizes and gets people dancing worldwide.

The world starts to descend on Moon. Japanese tourists buses with blues fans, Hollywood hustlers, network anchor people, the media, all waiting outside Lilly's Lounge and Disco.

But who is this band exactly and, furthermore, where are they? Do they really exist?

So as not to spoil the ending, lets just say they're heading to Lilly's Lounge and Disco for their rendezvous with destiny. Maybe...

We Be Kings will be shot on location in Chicago, Illinois, and on Rt. 61 and points south along the Mississippi River.

The film will feature blues standards that Magic Slim has performed for years, as well as original songs by Bianca Ryan, Quinn Sullivan, and Pryce Watkins.

The film is being financed via crowd source financing site

Kickstarter.com, the project link is <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/search?utf8=&term=We+Be+Kings>.