

A close-up photograph of Ludacris wearing a black graduation cap with a pink tassel and a black graduation gown with white stoles. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression, his hands clasped in front of him holding a tassel. The background is dark.

# Ludacris

Keepin'  
It Busy

In *The  
Red  
Light  
District*

Interview By  
Anthony Q. Casasnovas

**2004** marked a busy year for everybody's favorite Looney Tune of hip-hop. Besides kickin' off the year with the success of his late 2003 release, *Chicken-N-Beer* — which featured the still hot single, "Stand Up" — Luda's been branching out and taking care of business with releases from his fellow Disturbing The Peace members, such as Shawna, I-20 and Chingy; droppin' his seemingly never-ending stream of hot collabs with the likes of fellow ATLians Coe-Lo Green and Usher; designing a slammin' ride for the MTV VMAs; winning a BET "Viewer's Choice" award; making appearances in a few upcoming films; readying new artists for upcoming R&B and rock releases; and putting an end to rumors that placed fellow Dirty Southerner T.I. and Luda at the center of a heated rap feud. Somehow, Luda still managed to find time to tour, handle his non-profit organization — the Ludacris Foundation, and lace enough tracks to drop his fifth full-length CD, *The Red Light District*.

Featuring the hot jump-off single, "Get Back," along with cameos from the likes of Nas, Doug E. Fresh (both of whom appear on the throw-back-styled cut, "Virgo"), Sleepy Brown, Nate Dogg and many others, the disc promises to find Luda exploring new territory and sharing more of his personal life. With Bill O'Reilly's recent scandal, we're sure Luda's going to have the last laugh on his former political foe. We got to chat it up with Luda shortly before the release of *The Red Light District* and got the dirt on all aspects of his incredibly busy life.



**"I never set any limitations on anything that I do. I mean, I do like to focus, but I always find myself venturing out and imagining big things."**

**BLACK BEAT:** What's up, Luda?  
**LUDACRIS:** Nuthin' much [man], just keepin' busy as always.

**You won a BET award this year. How'd that go down?**

Yeah, I won it for my verse on "Yeah!" with Lil Jon and Usher. It was BET's "Viewer's Choice" award. I was very happy about that.

**And that was really your first major award?**

Yep, that was my first major award!

**People are still sleepin' on Ludacris? Man, I can't believe that!**

[Laughs] I know, right!

**Didn't you even design a Saturn for the MTV VMAs? They could show you a little love!**

He"" yeah! MTV did that with a lot of different artists and they asked us to design a car. So, they came to me about the idea and I just did it — not for an award, but because I thought it was a hot idea.

**What was the first thing on your list to put on the car?**

First thing on my list? Well, I just wanted it to be different. One of the first things I said was to have a TV on the gas tank. I ain't never seen a television on people's gas tanks before!

**Obviously, you'd like to win anything and everything if possible. But if you had a choice, what award would you like to win at this point in time?**

I really wanted to win MTV's "Video Of the Year" for "Stand Up," but that didn't happen. I guess I'd just really like to be recognized as one of the guys with the best videos, so any video award would be good for me.

**How much input do you have in your videos?**

A lot of input, man. I always have a lot of creative ideas that I tell the directors, so we can work hand-in-hand with it.

**Speaking of your work in videos, do you see yourself**

# Ludacris

continued

## doing any more film or TV roles?

Yeah, I just did a film called *Crash* that's comin' out soon. Also, a movie called *Hustle & Flow* that John Singleton produced. We did that in Memphis, Tennessee. The *Crash* movie was in L.A. and it basically focuses in on racial discrimination in present-day Los Angeles, California. A lot of different actors and actresses [are in it], from Sandra Bullock and Brendan Fraser, to Don Cheadle, Larenz Tate and Loretta Devine. So that should be a good movie comin' soon.

## Do you see yourself ever doin' more than just acting — maybe some writing and directing?

Definitely, man! I never set any limitations on anything that I do. I mean, I do like to focus, but I always find myself venturing out and imagining big things.

## Disturbing The Peace is holdin' it down all over the place these days. You guys are currently reppin' ATL, Chi-Town and St. Louis. Plan on branchin' out anywhere else?

Yeah, I mean, we always lookin' for new talent [man]. However, it's not like we're targeting any one particular city; we just look for talent, period. We move around different cities each and every day. So, it's kinda like going to the mall — you never know what you're lookin' for until you see it, man.

## Your girl Shawna's single, "Shake Dat Sh\*t" seemed to blow up everywhere this year — even gettin' crazy spins here in New York City. How'd you hook up with her?

I hooked up with Shawna 'cause my manager used to know her when she was in that group Infamous Syndicate [out of Chicago]. He intro-

duced me to her and once I heard her rap, man, it was a done deal. I thought she was very talented and I still think she is. I think she's the best female in the game and that's how it went down.

## What's it like havin' a girl as part of your crew?

It's great having a girl in your crew. It's versatility; whenever we need a female to do something that shows the other side, we use her.

## Does she keep all you crazy DTP dudes in check at all?

[Laughs] Nah, nah. Everyone has their own space and their own boundaries, so she don't keep anybody in check — just like we don't keep her in check. [Laughs] We're all respectful of each other's space, man.

## Speaking of personal space, I read that you keep a pretty spotless tour bus in order to maintain an image of professionalism.

Yeah, pretty much. [Laughs] But I got people who do that for me.

## So you got maids workin' on the tour bus?

[Laughs] Yeah, I got people who clean up the bus.

I'm not the cleanest individual in the world, but you know, I appreciate the compliment. I don't know who the hell said that sh\*t though!

## Take that bit of info up with MTV!

[Laughs] I might have to!

## In addition to your various hip-hop related projects, the word on the street is that you're also dippin' into some R&B and rock artists...

Those are some of the things in the works, man. We got an R&B singer by the name of Bobby Vee who should be comin' up, and a girl by the name of Sharissa. We're also workin' with a rock group, but that's not all the way done yet.

## What was with all that beef and drama with T.I. that people kept on reporting?

Nah, there was a misunderstanding. But he and I sat down like two men [and handled it.] It was stupid, what it was over. But yeah, there's no problem, no beef.

## So it's all squashed?

Yeah, well there

wasn't really even any beef to begin with, so there really wasn't anything to squash. It was just a misunderstanding and miscommunication.

## Luda, you've been a busy man, indeed! But with all that behind you now, what are you comin' with on *The Red Light District*?

Sh\*t! Just another chapter in the life of Luda, man! Reinvent myself by trying to go that extra step, trying to do some more things as far as being creative, new and innovative is concerned. There are some melodies on there where I'm actually harmonizing. I don't wanna say singing — but some songs like that. Gettin' deeper into my personal life, 'cause you always leave people waitin' for something. There's just more subject matter, more versatility. Lil Jon, The Neptunes, Timbaland, Organized Noize are all some of the people that did beats on this album and I think it's just gonna be another great album that people just wanna go out and get. It's just progress and getting better lyrically and metaphorically [song-wise], everything.

## So we ain't gonna hear no R&B tracks with Luda singing?!

[Laughs] You never know man, just gonna have to cop the album! •

Amidst a frantic schedule that has included movie roles (i.e., the forthcoming *Crash* and *Hustle & Flow*), overseeing Disturbing The Peace members' solo releases (i.e., Shawna, Chingy and I-20), droppin' smash collabs (i.e., Usher's "Yeah!") and holdin' down his non-profit organization (the Ludacris Foundation), Luda even made time to get his crank call on for Comedy Central's *Crank Yankers*.

