

# AIR HEADS

THESE ACTORS AREN'T JUST THE STARS OF *RED TAILS*—GEORGE LUCAS' HIGH-FLYING FILM ABOUT WWII'S TUSKEGEE AIRMEN—THEY'RE AIMING (AND GUNNING) FOR A SEAT IN HOLLYWOOD'S FIRST CLASS. HERE, THEY GIVE A VIEW FROM ABOVE THE CLOUDS

KEITH MURPHY | ERIK IAN

## 1 | NATE PARKER, 32

Parker kicks back as the Airmen's squad leader Marty "Easy" Julian.  
**Story To Tell:** "It took the dedication of George Lucas to tell their story. There are enough powerful people of color in Hollywood to make these stories happen. But as long as we are waiting for someone else to come along and tell our stories, there's always going to be that lag."  
**Air Time:** *The Great Debaters* actor will be hitting the big screen alongside Richard Gere and Susan Sarandon in the 2012 financial thriller *Arbitrage*.

## 2 | DAVID OYELOWO, 35

Oyelowo plays two-fisted firebrand Joe "Lightning" Little.  
**Big Shots:** "You cannot put stunt people in these planes and expect them to do what the Tuskegee Airmen did. Their missions were so insanely dangerous, and yet they never lost a bomber and they lost relatively few pilots. We can never tell their stories enough."  
**Air Time:** *The Rise of the Planet of the Apes* bad man has nabbed blockbuster roles in the Steven Spielberg-directed *Lincoln* (2012) and the Tom Cruise crime thriller *One Shot* (2013).

## 3 | ELIJAH KELLEY, 25

Kelley kills 'em as good-natured daredevil Samuel "Suicide" George.  
**All Worked Up:** "After I did *Hairspray* I was like, 'Nope, I can't do anything that's not bigger.' And George [Lucas] was like, 'Listen, most directors don't even care. If you are good in a bad film, you are still good. But if you are bad in a good film, you're bad. Just work.'"  
**Air Time:** Kelley's happy feet have been tapped for the lead role in the upcoming *Sammy Davis, Jr.* biopic.

## 4 | TRISTAN WILDS, 22

Wilds plays Ray "Ray Gun" Gannon, Tuskegee's youngest airman.  
**Backstory:** "We had to learn everything about the Airmen and their era. We were allowed to love and fight for our country; but for a lot of Black people, it felt like our country didn't love us back."  
**Air Time:** Stick-up kid Michael from HBO's *The Wire* can now be seen as the affable Dixon in the reboot of the '90s teen soap staple *90210*.

## 5 | MICHAEL B. JORDAN, 24

Jordan portrays Maurice "Bumps" Wilson, a book-smart pilot who's ready to die for his country.  
**Star Wars:** "We basically went to boot camp for three weeks before we shot the movie in Prague, [Czech Republic]. That brotherhood is like hazing in a fraternity. There were a lot of practical jokes, from taking toilet paper out of the porta potty to using all the hot water [laughs]. Nobody was safe, but we had a great time."  
**Air Time:** *The Wire* alum and former *Friday Night Lights* quarterback is set to appear in the supernatural drama *Chronicle* (2012).

FROM LEFT: NATE PARKER, DAVID OYELOWO, ELIJAH KELLEY, TRISTAN WILDS AND MICHAEL B. JORDAN



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