



# Robert Hoffman

## Steps Up

words by Evan Fowler, photo by Robert Todd Williamson

**"M**ake yourself memorable," says Robert Hoffman, as he posts PunchRobert.com stickers around the Fox studio lot, what he calls "a little grass roots marketing" for his website. The dancer turned actor stars in the upcoming film *Step Up 2 the Streets*. Despite his recent success, Hoffman doesn't seem the type to dwell on his accomplishments. He's always searching for the next opportunity, even if he has to create it himself.

Hoffman began his career before he could speak, "As soon as I understood what movement to music was, it was all I could think about." Growing up in Alabama didn't exactly offer a wide range of options for an aspiring contemporary dancer, but after training in tap, jazz, and five years in a classical ballet company, he danced his way to Los Angeles, "I was really lucky to be able to start working as soon as I got here," he admits. But even a good start isn't enough to ride on for long, so he took matters into his own hands and began dancing at Carnival, a monthly performance "where choreographers and dancers come together to put up pieces for the pure art of it."

Carnival, his first home away from home, also became his first platform to the big screen. In 2004, the producer of *You Got Served* happened to be in the crowd and asked, "Who's that kid walking around like he owns the place?" Two days later, he not only had the role, he began choreographing for the film. After winning an American Choreography Award for his work, he auditioned for MTV's *Wild 'n Out*. A man of many talents, Hoffman had to dance, rap, and imitate celebrities to land the part, "That was one of the most fun jobs of my career. You run around for three hours, act as crazy as you want, do what you want, say what you want, and they tape it and sell it as a hit show on MTV."

It was his "crazy" attitude and restless ambition that took him from the small screen to an even smaller one, "A lot of people chase the traditional audience, getting in a film or onto a TV show," he explains. "It occurred to me early on, why chase that dream and kiss a bunch of people's asses when you can get a world-wide audience right then and there -- as long as you have something to offer." Now the creative force behind a plethora of YouTube classics like "Urban Ninja" and "Dancer Face," Hoffman is in control of his own reality. His specialty being "sketch mixed with public antics." "What's the coolest, funniest thing I could do?" he asks himself aloud, then quickly answers, "I gotta be a Ninja, scare the hell out of people and then dash off like I'm gonna do something brave." If it's memorable he wants, it's memorable he's got!

He'll have to put his dance shoes away and his internet empire on hold this spring while starring opposite Ashley Tisdale in the film *They Came From Upstairs*, a family-comedy-adventure, in which "aliens invade Earth and shoot me with a mind control device." Not one to settle for less, he boldly proclaims, "[Dancing] will always be a part of my life. Doing dance jobs doesn't make you a dancer. Moving to music, that's being a dancer."

For advice on breaking into dance, check out his "long-winded" advice column on PunchRobert.com. As for acting, he admits, "You gotta find your own process. There's a whole upside down, nonsensical world of how to make it as an actor. But more than anything, don't wait on other people to make it happen for you. Do it yourself!" ■

Groomer: Brenda Green, Margaret Maldonado Agency

Stylist: Justin Ducoty, Exclusive Artists

Clothing: Necklaces - Robert's Own; Henley-Johan by J. Lindberg available @ Saks Fifth Ave; Dress Shirt and Sweater-Hyden Yon