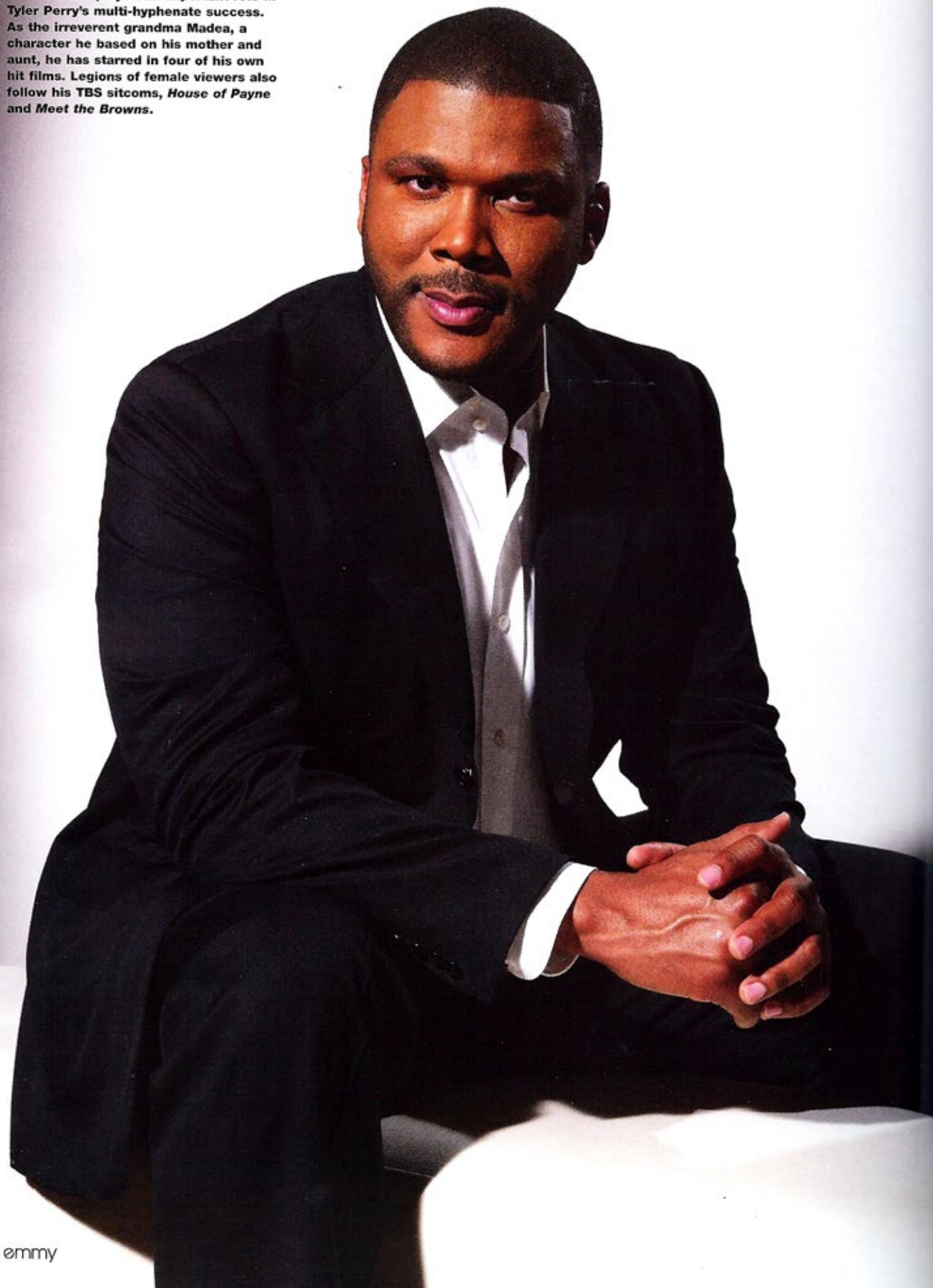


**LADIES' MAN:**

Women have played an important role in Tyler Perry's multi-hyphenate success. As the irreverent grandma Madea, a character he based on his mother and aunt, he has starred in four of his own hit films. Legions of female viewers also follow his TBS sitcoms, *House of Payne* and *Meet the Browns*.



# big time

Thinking big and acting boldly are trademark moves for Tyler Perry. He writes, produces, directs and performs — and backs his own projects to bring them to life. He's launched a studio, broken ratings records and inspired unheard-of series orders (100 episodes, anyone?). So what's his next big thing? A TV network, of course.

BY RONDA RACHA PENRICE

**W**hen Tyler Perry unveiled his Atlanta production studios last October, the guests included Oprah Winfrey, Will Smith, Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Gladys Knight, Hank Aaron and Congressman John Lewis. With a dream list like that, it's fitting that visitors to Tyler Perry Studios encounter a cascading glass wall fountain in the entryway, etched with these words: A Place Where Even Dreams Believe.

One of eight structures, "the Dream Building" is the heart and soul of Tyler Perry Studios. Set on twenty-eight acres, a few miles from Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, the complex is cocooned in an African-American enclave skirting the city's edge. One of a handful of studios in history owned by an African American and, so far, the most successful, it proudly employs 300. And it is here that Perry — who parlayed and lost his life savings to stage his first play in 1992 — pursues his many projects in theater, television and film.

A senior citizens' residence is the closest neighbor, which is also fitting, given that Perry — who'll turn forty this year — has endeared himself to his core audience of African-American women churchgoers as the irreverent Madea, a pistol-toting grandma who tells it like it *t-i-is*.

On display in his executive office are large black-and-white images of television's black past — Flip Wilson, whose alter ego Geraldine from *The Flip Wilson Show* came well before Madea, made-for-TV film icon Cicely Tyson and sitcom kings Bill Cosby and Redd Foxx — no doubt reminding and inspiring Perry to keep pushing television's boundaries.

With his rising status in both film and television, Perry could well be the new Cosby, Wilson and Foxx. In the past four years, he has written and produced seven successful films (four opened at number one), directed six of them and starred in four as the irascible Madea.

On television, he's hit the Nielsen lottery. When TBS launched *Tyler Perry's House of Payne* in June 2007, a record 5.2 million and 5.8 million viewers tuned in for the two-