

Ruben Blades Talks 'Safe House,' Grammy Controversy, & Politics

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Safe House premiere at the SVA Theater on February 7, 2012 in New York City. (2012 GETTY IMAGES)

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Panamanian actor and musician Ruben Blades says he is excited to be back in [Hollywood](#) with his latest film, "Safe House."

Blades opened up to Fox News Latino about the star-studded thriller, as well as where he stands on current issues stemming from the Grammy controversy to the U.S. presidential election.

Directed by Daniel Espinosa, "Safe House" has an all-star cast that includes [Ryan Reynolds](#) and Blades' friend [Denzel Washington](#).

It was actually Washington, who stars as Toby Frost in the film, who reached out to Blades for this latest role. It is Blades' 32nd film.

After the two worked together in [Spike Lee's](#) "Mo'Better Blues," Blades was itching to work again with Washington, whom he describes as an "intelligent, warm, generous actor."

Blades says his role as Carlos Villar, Toby Frost's friend and confidante,

marked an important time for him as an actor.

In his first official return to film after five years of service in the Panamanian government, Blades embraced leaving the real world for “fantasy.” Blades said it was a relief to “come back to this world (of Hollywood) and make-believe.”

Asked about the recent Grammy controversy surrounding the academy’s decision to eliminate 31 award categories, Blades, a force in the music world, believes the academy needs “to be sensitive to the representation” of art and respect “art for art’s sake.”

The academy's decision drew a firestorm of criticism. A protest rally that will include musicians is scheduled for Sunday outside the Staples Center in Los Angeles, where the 54th Annual Grammy Awards is to take place. Organizers expect musicians, community leaders and music fans to attend.

Latin jazz was among the categories that were eliminated. Carlos Santana was among the many Latino and non-Latino musicians who assailed the move.

Blades believes there could never be “too many awards,” and that the elimination of these categories is not about racism but “ignorance, cultural ignorance.”

While Blades ended his term as Minister of Tourism in 2009, he is “not really planning on,” but “not excluding” a return to public office.

When asked about the upcoming U.S. presidential election, Blades says he hopes “Obama wins because those Republicans scare the heck out of me.”

“I am very surprised, actually, at the apparent division (in the [Republican party](#)) that seems to exist,” Blades says, “because you could not have . . . more different people” in the primary race.

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