

# THE IMAGE MAKER

HIP-HOP CASTING  
DIRECTOR SHATTERS  
THE BEAUTY MYTH

**P**EOPLE USUALLY PRAISE THE DIRECTOR FOR A GOOD VIDEO. But how dope would the finished product have been if nobody were in it? Casting agents like Amhalise Mbolo are responsible for getting the folks you see doing the jitterbug in Lauryn Hill's "Doo Wop (That Thing)" video or posing provocatively on a Calvin Klein placard. Finding that person with the "right look" often depends on the type of gig she's working on, but the former model says she likes taking chances. "I mostly cast people I meet on the street," admits Mbolo, who also provided Jay-Z with the shorties for his now-classic "Hard Knock Life" clip. "I love giving regular kids an opportunity."

Since launching Amhalise Casting agency two years ago, the 25-year-old people shopper has quietly racked up jobs for artists such as Nas, Redman and Method Man, Maxwell and Macy Gray, as well as for Ford, Levi's and UPS advertisements. Despite her current success, Mbolo admits that she still has to deal with some of the politics of her industry. "It's very hard as a person of color to be [told] what Black is," she explains. "Why do all hip-hop videos have to have a guy drinking a forty?"

According to Mbolo, African Americans have worked too hard in the entertainment industry to have to deal with such stereotypes. The young agent hopes that by hiring individuals who visually defy outdated conventions, she can make a difference. "There are those that do this for the money," she says. "But I'm just glad to be able to put people on that I feel are beautiful."

—ELON D. JOHNSON

