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Papa Shango haunts The Godfather

By [JOHN POWELL](#) -- SLAM! Wrestling

Papa Shango. Kama, the supreme fighting machine. Kama Mustaffa. Whew! World Wrestling Federation superstar



The Godfather follows his "ho's" to the ring at Skydome in April, 1999. (Sun Photo - Greg Henkenhaf)

Charles Wright has gone through more identities than Ethan Hunt in Mission Impossible. Wasting away in the mid-card ranks as both Mustaffas, Wright has at last found a persona that's put him back into the spotlight as the Papa Shango character once did. Portraying the WWF's wrestling pimp complete with scantily-clad women (his "ho's") accompanying him to the ring, Wright is having one hell of a good time as The Godfather.

"Actually, take the pimp out and Charles Wright is The Godfather. That is me. That is my personality. That's how I act all the time. Most people call me Big Silly and that's me," said the 6'6', 320-pound heavyweight.

Trucking out what many perceive to be a blatant stereotype on prime time television draws a healthy helping of criticism. There are those who are offended by The Godfather saying the gimmick perpetuates negative images of black men. How does Wright respond to his detractors? "Turn the TV off and don't watch it" is his vehement reply. He's having a blast and those who don't understand that are taking professional wrestling way too seriously.

"I am strictly entertainment, man. I am there to entertain the people. I like doing it. The people seem to enjoy it. There are a lot worse things out there than the old Godfather having fun and not hurting anybody."

Wright first came to prominence in the World Wrestling Federation in 1992 as the diabolical voodoo magic man, Papa Shango. Dressed in tattered robes, a top hat and his face painted like a skull, Shango cast an ominous cloud over the federation. Ceremonial dust blown out of the palm of his hands blinded opponents. Unearthly smoke and fire poured out of the human skull he brought to the ring. Although, the coolest feat was when Shango cast a spell on The Ultimate Warrior causing a strange black liquid to pour out of eyes. It looked great on camera even if it was only liquid molasses or some such thing.

Buried for years, the corpse of Papa Shango awoke from his unholy slumber recently during the "Higher Power" storyline which had everyone guessing. It was natural for the name Papa Shango to come up in conversation. According to Wright though, at no time did the WWF chat with him about resurrecting Shango. The last time that happened was when he joined The Nation Of Domination. Wright became Kama Mustaffa but originally he was supposed to return as Papa Shango. The bookers didn't think the voodoo man would be a good fit for The Nation so Mustaffa was created. Still, Shango's shadow hangs over Wright.

"There's been talk and stuff like that but as of right now don't look for Papa Shango to make a return any time too soon. And you heard that from the Godfather," declared Wright, who is called "Bear" by friends in his hometown of Las Vegas where he is in the process of opening some "sports-type" bars.

One would assume that being shrouded in mystery and participating in elaborate special effects would beat the pimp gimmick hands down. Nope. For Wright there's no comparing the two.

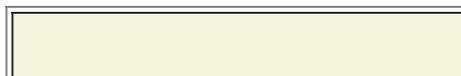
"Let me see, dress up like a voodoo man, put paint on your face, act like a jungle idiot or walk out with beautiful women? Come on, man! Which one would you choose?"

Ah, those beautiful women. Where do they come from? At first, Wright himself used to get into town the night before a show and tour local strip clubs on his own scouting for them. As the gimmick got over, the hunt became easier and easier. Wright now has help in finding the right women for the job. Local promoters do most of the work. It isn't all fun and games either. Now and then, they can be quite a group to manage on their own.

"Imagine having about thirty wives all in the same room at the same time and the type of problems you have to deal with. Name it, man. You have every problem in the world from, 'I don't want to wear this colour' to 'I don't want to do this' or 'I don't want to do that'," Wright laughs loudly. "Hey, I don't say 'pimpin' ain't easy' just because it's a catch phrase, if you know what I'm saying. These girls are a handful, man."

Wright got his start in wrestling about ten years ago. He wasn't "doing too much" with his life and people had always told him that he should be a professional wrestler because of his size and physique. Browsing through wrestling magazines he spotted an ad for Larry Sharpe's Monster Factory, a wrestling school in New Jersey. Wright trained there but in retrospect he wouldn't recommend the school to would-be grapplers because of the quality of training he got in return for his money.

Wright toured Japan



and Germany and also worked in the CWF and USWA. He

 **Wright as Papa Shango.**

remembers literally starving in the USWA, eating potatoes for breakfast, lunch and supper. He didn't wrestle in front of big USWA crowds though he did learn a lot about his craft there. Wright's first title win since joining the WWF in '92 was in April of this year. He beat Goldust for the Intercontinental belt on a Monday Night RAW broadcast with The Pimp Drop only to lose it in May to Jeff Jarrett.

The Godfather isn't bitter about not having a long title run.

"Hey, many people don't even get it, brother. Does the Godfather need gold? I don't think so. It was good to have but I don't think the gimmick needs it and I don't think it does much for the belt," said Wright truthfully. "I'm telling you, there's a lot of guys in the WWF who would change places with me in a minute. I think I have one of the best jobs in wrestling right now."

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