

Canyon News

December 26, 2010

On the Industry

Exclusive With "Psych" Star James Roday

By Tommy Garrett

HOLLYWOOD—Handsome and talented actor James Roday is best known as Shawn Spencer in the USA Network original series "Psych," which has recently been renewed for its sixth season, and he has also directed several of the episodes. Last year, James starred in Red Dog Squadron's acclaimed, world premiere production of "Extinction," which moved from Los Angeles to an Off Broadway run at the Cherry Lane Theatre. Also for Red Dog, he performed in "Sexual Perversity in Chicago," and he wrote and directed "Sustenance," which starred Amanda Detmer and Brad Raider. New York theater credits include "The Three Sisters," "Twelfth Night: A Respectable Wedding," and "Severity's Mistress." Roday starred in Wim Wenders' "Don't Come Knocking, Rolling Kansas" directed by Thomas Haden Church, and the Warner Bros. film adaptation of "The Dukes of Hazzard," as Billy Prickett. In addition to acting and directing, Roday co-wrote both the first and second season finales of "Psych" as well as other episodes in later seasons.

Q-James - Do you enjoy directing as much as acting?

A-"I do but it's a completely different animal. I love actors and am inspired by watching their discoveries. Because I have some context for the discipline, I find myself engulfed in the process, often appreciating another actors' work so much that I forget to assess the bigger picture. In addition, this is the first time I've directed material (in any medium) that I haven't written myself. There is an obvious expectation and sense of duty to service the play but it is supplemented by an obligation to service another vision aside from your own. That's something new. Finally, acting can bring immediate gratification; that is to say one can have a single line or a single scene in a play, or on camera and nailing it means success. Directing is more accumulative; you're responsible for the actors and everything around them in every scene."

Q-Do you like stage and theatre work over the television genre?

A-"Again, very different animals. There is nothing like live theatre. I'll say that. As a culture, it predates the discovery of fire. Whether you're acting or directing, there is an element of purity with theatre that is impossible to achieve in film or television because the camera is there. Theatre requires a relationship between performer and audience. It's a special relationship. On the flip side, you can make a lot of mistakes on TV and nobody ever knows. It's a medium full of Mulligans. Both collaborations can be very rich but, all things being equal, theatre is skydiving without a parachute. That is a tough sensation to top."

Q-What has been the most difficult part of putting this project together for the L.A. stage?

A-"Well, we're getting better at producing theater with each show we mount. It's never easy because while you can't spit in any direction without hitting an actor or a technician in LA, it's not a theatre town. There are some really good companies here trying to change that culture but it's an uphill climb that I suspect will only get steeper."

"Equity waiver theatre doesn't pay the bills pure and simple. In fact it doesn't even pay 'a' bill, that's not one single bill. So you're in need of lovers of the game. We're lucky in that we've managed to build a small but ridiculously talent-rich stable of artists who are willing to shuffle their schedules and lifestyles not once but every time we produce a show. I think the fact that it is not easy makes it exponentially more satisfying. That and the fact that all egos get checked at the door. Everyone is assembled for the right reason and that generally lends itself to better work, unless of course the material is sub par. So that's the other hard part, finding the play."

Q-Can we expect you to be directing more theatre work as well as TV in the future?

A-"Absolutely."



Canyon News

January 2, 2011

On the Industry

Exclusive With "Psych" Star Maggie Lawson

By Tommy Garrett

HOLLYWOOD—Actress Maggie Lawson has a rich history in television and in films, but has now tackled her biggest fears by going on the Los Angeles stage in the theatre performance of "greedy." Perhaps having "Psych" costar James Roday as her director makes the daunting task a bit more appealing and exhilarating. Roday is well known as one of the most classically trained actors in Hollywood, but he's also well respected on-and-off-Broadway for his superb directorial skills. "I'm not as nervous as I would be going on stage if I didn't have James directing me. We are all in very good hands," said Lawson.

Maggie stars as Juliet in the USA Network original series "Psych." She was born and raised in Louisville, Ky., but has lost her southern accent through training. We laughed about my accent during the interview, which was a true pleasure. Lawson started appearing in local community and dinner theater when she was 8 years old. She became a youth journalist for the local FOX station before moving to Los Angeles. The actress's television credits are numerous and include series regular roles on "Crumbs; It's All Relative," "Inside Schwartz" and "Spellbound," and she was a guest-star and had recurring appearances on "E.R.," "Tru Calling," "Party of Five," "Smallville" and "Felicity." Other credits include the lifetime mini series "Crimes of Fashion" and the TV movie "Model Behavior." Lawson's film credits include roles in "Cheats," "Winter Break," "Pleasantville" and "Nice Guys Sleep Alone."

In discussing what she likes most about her role as Kiera in "greedy," Lawson responds, "She is certainly like no other character I've ever played, Tommy. She is the opposite of most of my characters. But I love a challenge and this is so exciting to sink my teeth in for a chance. She smokes, I never smoked. So I had to go to one of those stores that sell the vapor smoking cigarettes so that I could learn how to smoke for the role, but not actually be smoking real cigarettes."



Roday offers his stars a chance to be themselves, create and mold their characters. The maverick director, who also stars with Lawson has been inspiring to her. "I don't think that anyone could make me or any of us feel so comfortable as James does. He's so amazing as a director, he is now getting back to his roots and theatre is what he loves. I enjoy being a part of creating Kiera, a new character the audience will get to see up close and personal very soon. Whenever I look over and James is there guiding us through rehearsals, I feel so much better," said Maggie.

"This is going to be an exciting project. Transitioning from my character on 'Psych' to this totally different person for this role has been a bit frightening but even more exciting than I can describe," said the actress. "James is there being supportive and he encourages me to grow in the role we are creating. He makes sure that the actor is a part of the process. Perhaps that's why he's such a great actor himself, he wears both hats very well."

"greedy" opens on Saturday, January 8. For details go to reddogsquadron.com.