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HOT MILFs CLUB: NEW SCHOOL • ERIK DAVIES • BETTIE PAGE

• YOAV

ERIK DAVIES



Stephanie Ann Davies (Sophie) and Erik Davies (Trajan)

Perhaps you've heard his smooth voice tempt you to hit McDonald's or subconsciously convince you to join the Armed Forces among his extensive voice-over work. Or perhaps he just reminds you of a heroin addict you once saw on an older episode of E.R. But we guaran-damn-tee you've never seen (or heard) him in anything quite like this!

In case you haven't noticed, movies focused around potheads have been steadily making their way into the mainstream in a big way. From the unintended-to-be parody *Reefer Madness*, *Easy Rider* and of course *Up in Smoke* to more current faves like *Harold and Kumar* and *Pineapple Express*, it's become the norm to see such cinematic masterpieces heavily publicized through major media outlets and scoring big at the box office.

Almost all of them, for the most part, consist of some kind of stoner-related story where the characters get baked and become involved in some cockamamie scheme and hilarity ensues.

High Society: A Pot Boiler, is in a stoner realm of its own. Taking a cue from Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, *Half-Baked* and Seinfeldian theology, *High Society: A Pot Boiler* centers around three male roommates and their infatuation with all things bong, bombs and boobs, and certainly doesn't do the legalization movement any favors... but sure scores in the entertainment factor. *SKUNK* had a chance to chat about this uber-funny gem with the star and co-creator— Erik Davies.

THE BIG QUESTION, WAS ALL OR ANY OF THE WEED INHALED IN THE MOVIE, REAL?

In light of the volume depicted in the film, we knew that there was no way in hell that we were going to get anything done, considering the closed-off environment as well as all of the second-hand smoke, we would have just fallen apart and been in comas after a while. So we kept it in the realm of every other type of smokeable, under the sun, with the exception of real bud. It's kinda like the whole "what were they snorting in *Scarface*?" thing and Pacino will never tell.

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR THE FILM COME FROM?

It was originally my brother, Kristian's idea. We've made little home movies since we were kids. About three years ago we worked on a short film together, and he was just reinvigorated and re-inspired by that effort and... immediately banged out this script. It was originally a mini-series for crying out loud! It was like 250 pages and we had to really scale that to a 130-page shooting script. But it was originally his idea

and then we sort of developed it together and had a lot of laughs creating this thing.

SO IT WASN'T SOME LATE-NIGHT INGENIOUS IDEA THAT WE ALL USUALLY GET WHEN FRIED?

[Laughs] Well, I'll say it's definitely based, in certain aspects of it, on exaggerations of real people, bastardized variations of real people and real events. Yeah, there was a smattering of truth in there with the fiction.

ARE YOU OR THE REST OF THE CAST, STONERS?

I would say we have all smoked. I wouldn't categorize any of us as total burners or burnouts. And that was actually one of Kristian's goals with this, specifically with the Trajan character. He didn't want to write him as sort of a slow drawl, dirty, dread-haired sort of stereotype stoner, he really wanted to just make him a little more clean-cut, a little more intelligent in a way.

YOUR CHARACTER (TRAJAN) TEETERED BETWEEN A CHILDISH NUISANCE AND A BONAFIDE ASSHOLE. THE OTHER MALE CHARACTERS; GAVIN, YAKOB AND ATAYSOUAY ALSO HAD VERY DISTINCT PERSONALITIES. WERE THEY MODELED AFTER SPECIFIC PEOPLE?

Trajan, Yakob and Gavin were all sort of based on real people and then certain aspects of it, it was very loosely based. And others, there were literally lines taken from real life. So yeah there was a basis of real people from those three guys. And the girls too, particularly the Sophie (Stephanie Ann Davies) character.

THROUGHOUT ALL THE TARANTION-ISH INTERACTIONS, THERE'RE CANDID MOMENTS OF UNCONTROLLABLE LAUGHTER AND STUPID "MOTHER" JOKES, MUCH OF WHICH SEEMED AUTHENTIC. WERE THESE MOMENTS PLANNED, OR IMPROV THAT JUST WENT WITH THE SCENE?

I say it was a mix of both. The actor who played Gavin, Pete Alton, he's an hysterical person in real life, he has a lot of just great timing and improbability so there were some lines here and there of improv but none of them spun out of control. But there was definitely real laughter mixed in with the scripted moment.

HOW MUCH OF THE SCRIPT WAS AD-LIBBED?

Not a whole lot. It ended up being lines here and there, 2 or 3 lines, but for the most part it was scripted.

THE ENDING WAS PERHAPS THE MOST AWKWARD LOVE SCENE I'VE SEEN IN ANY STONER MOVIE. HOW WERE YOU ALL ABLE TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE THROUGHOUT THE PORCH SCENE?

[Laughs] It was about 20-25 days including a few days off of principle shooting and then we began working the editing and about 4 months later we had about 4 or 5 days of really intense reshoots. That whole ending was actually a new ending that was developed in that "in-between" period because we wanted to just sort of take it in a different direction than what the original ending was and

really just kind of spin it out of control where one of them has the wild hook-up and the other is just completely incompetent. But

yeah, keeping it under control during that, yeah it involved a lot of careful editing. We were definitely cracking up a fair amount.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GOING FROM A STINT ON E.R. TO THIS?

I guess [the two roles] vaguely had something in common in that they were both druggies, except the E.R. character was a heroin user and dealer. I don't think I took much



from that, it was such a small role, maybe 5 or 7 lines. [The] Trajan character was definitely the most text I ever had to memorize in any theatre piece or film that I've done.

I lived in New York for about 7 years, and while I was there I mostly did a lot of theatre and theatre training and I had some bit parts here and there, and a lot of TV. I moved out to LA about 4 years ago and things really slowed then to a crawl. So that was why we took the opportunity to develop this thing, just to create your own opportunity.

MILLER DAUREY (ATATSOUAY) ALSO HAS AN APPEARANCE ON E.R. DO YOU GUYS SWAP STORIES ABOUT ANTHONY EDWARDS? MAYBE TALK ABOUT HOW AWESOME REVENGE OF THE NERDS IS?

I've never actually seen Miller's clip from E.R. so I don't know who he interacted with. And the scene I had in E.R., the portion of the story took place in New York, not at that Chicago hospital. It was

one of the nurses from E.R. [that] had this side story where she goes to New York and she's trying to hunt down her junkie sister and then they hook up with cops from Third Watch and that's when they bump into my junkie character on the street. So I never had any interaction with any of those E.R. actors.

SO YOU HAVEN'T HIT HIM UP FOR TIPS FROM WHEN HE PLAYED A STONER IN FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH.

No, I unfortunately didn't get to meet him.

JEREMIAH (YAKOB) HAS QUITE AN EXTENSIVE RESUME, FROM A YOUNG INDIAN BOY IN NATURAL BORN KILLERS TO A YOUNG INDIAN BOY IN FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS. BUT HE DIDN'T PLAY A YOUNG INDIAN BOY IN THIS MOVIE.

HOW DID HE GET INVOLVED?

I went to a sort of "audition technique" school with him, this was back in 2005, and we became friends. And then, it was the next year, in '06, where we were finishing up the script and we had this idea to cast him in a role where we thought he would be funny at, especially because it's completely unlike anything else that he's done to date, which is typically playing roles where he has to be Native American... So we thought it would be fun to play with this part where it wasn't required that he be Native American for it.

[It's] likely he'll never play a part quite like that again.

In truth the only one we cold-cast, that we didn't know in advance, was Tiffany Michael, who played Svetlana. Everyone else that was in this film was either a friend of mine or a friend of Kristian's.

THE CHOICE OF MUSIC WAS AN UNORTHODOX ONE, ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVE NATURE.

The portions of the music that was sort of like Break-Beat, trip-hopish Didgeridoo stuff was a band that I knew of when I was living in New York called Didjworks – it's actually a one-man project. And then the pure score that was written for the film, Bobby Tahouri, really great score composer, he actually works with [Academy/Grammy/Golden Globe winner] Hans Zimmer, has for a number of years, Stephanie has actually known Bobby for like maybe 10 years or so... He said he was always anxious to work on something with her. So it came up and he came on board and we were just completely thrilled with what he did.

STONER MOVIES AND MARIJUANA USE IN FILM ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY MORE ACCEPTED INTO THE MAINSTREAM – A FAR CRY FROM BACK IN THE DAYS OF CHEECH AND CHONG.

We finished post-production in June [of '08] after a very long period of editing this thing, and it's interesting because the timing kind of coincides with a few interesting articles that came out in Time Magazine, MSNBC and CNN [where] they were talking about this kind of film and [that] marijuana in film has become more just sort of socially acceptable. I guess public view in general of it has become a little more lax over the years with portraying it in films and not having the sort of hang-ups.

And another interesting observation, which I do agree with in some of these articles, is that they're saying that cigarette smoking has really sort of been faded out of a lot of mainstream films over the years because of what the dangers are portrayed with that and they think it's not particularly classy to show it anymore. And drinking as well. There was this interesting comment about how drinking has been faded out because it's closely related now with drunk-driving and spousal abuse and, it just doesn't have the sort of easy-going drunk, sort of connotations to it anymore... So I guess with those kinds of things it sort of opened the door perhaps a little bit more to social acceptance of weed in film.

WHAT'S BEEN THE REACTION TO THE FILM SO FAR?

It's been mixed. I mean we've gotten the kind of reactions from the audience that this is NOT meant for that we felt we would get. Sort of



Erik Davies and Stephanie Ann Davies

the older generation, the older people that don't enjoy this kind of humor, have had that kind of response to it... 'there's nothing of merit in here. It's all profanity...' There was someone that said 'this is ridiculous. It's like a *Reefer Madness* expose. All it does is portray the ills of marijuana and nothing good about it...' and all that shit. So there's been a little bit of that.

But the audience that it has been meant for, college-age males, age 17 – 30 males, have really been digging it, have been laughing, have been getting back to us and saying they really enjoying it. So that's been cool, it's really been cool to hear that.

WHEN SHOULD WE EXPECT TO SEE THIS MOVIE IN THEATRES?

Well, we're working with a little PR firm right now, we've been with them for a few months and we're just trying to drum up some buzz on it. We've had some small reviews in on-line periodicals here and there. There is a small distribution company that expressed an interest in it. We'll see if it actually comes to fruition. But to hear that is really cool.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE DAVIES BROTHERS?

It's pretty much going full-steam on this until hopefully we actually can get it out

there... It's certainly been an enormous amount of work to do this thing and we know we're not going to try and jump into another project next. I'd certainly love to be able to focus on acting for a while and Stephanie too. I think Kristian might go back to doing some writing.

SO NO HIGH SOCIETY 2: ATAYSOUAY STRIKES BACK?

[Laughs] Well, you know what, we can probably go back to that original script and pull out another 3 or 4 stories and expand on them and make it a mini-series and take it to Showtime.

HOW MUCH WEED GOES INTO A TULIP JOINT?

Oh my god... a whole lot. I wouldn't be surprised if you'd burn through like a half an eighth or most of an eighth, I don't know. It's an enormous waste of weed.

HAS ANYONE EVER CONFUSED THIS MOVIE WITH THE 1956 BING CROSBY/GRACE KELLY HIGH SOCIETY?

That was actually one of the things where we were doing research to see if the title conflicted with pre-existing titles and we did come up with a few of them, the 1956 film being one of them. But we figure if we keep "A pot boiler" attached to it at all times then there won't be any confusion.

DID KRISTIAN EVER TRY TO SQUEEZE IN ANY INFO ABOUT HIS AWARD-WINNING BOOK INTO YOUR CHARACTER'S CLIFF CLAVEN-ESQUE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE?

Well, actually, if you look for it, towards the end, when he's sort of ignoring everyone and Ataysouay is having his way with the room, Trajan's actually reading "The Orientalists". We kind of slipped that in just for shits and giggles.

YOU MENTION KRISTIAN'S POSSIBLE RETURN TO WRITING. WAS HE CONCERNED ABOUT A MOVIE LIKE THIS HURTING HIS CREDIBILITY?

Well we definitely tried not to bring to the attention of those who bought "The Orientalists" that we knew we were doing this movie, because obviously it's a very, very different crowd who bought his book versus those who would enjoy this movie. So I don't think there's ever been any overlap. I don't think he was concerned.

DO YOU HAVE TO GET HIGH TO APPRECIATE THIS MOVIE?

I know there are people who have watched it sober and people who have watched it high and both have said they've enjoyed it. So I guess it's up to the viewer if they want to kick back with a beer or a joint or watch it with neither.