

1. When did you know you wanted to become an actor? Was there a cathartic moment when you absolutely knew acting was right for you?

I grew up in a small town in Michigan. I wanted to be a dinosaur when I grew up until I discovered acting. After my first role in Kindergarten as The Biggest Billy Goat in The Three Billygoat's Gruff, I was hooked for life. I didn't know much about acting, but I knew that was what I wanted to do!

2. You majored in music and song composition at Michigan State University, not theater. Do you feel getting a degree in theater is important to a career in Los Angeles? How have you learned the craft of acting?

I believe that living an enriched life should be the top priority for all of us. A fulfilling life should include a fulfilling career, but not be limited to it. However, as an actor, *living an enriched life is part of the craft*. I am so thankful that I was able to get a college education in a field other than acting. It has broadened the scope through which I see the world and hopefully through which the world sees me too! I don't think that having a college degree would make or break anyone's chance of getting a role in Hollywood. As long as you are right for a part, I don't think they care. However, having a degree shows that you have follow through and a wealth of experience to draw from.

3. How/when did you make the decision to move to Los Angeles to pursue acting, and can you describe the transition? Did things go smoothly for you right away? Is there anything you would have done differently?

After graduating from MSU, I taught music in Lansing for a couple of years. I moved to Los Angeles knowing only one guy there. I worked various jobs as a vitamin salesman, a data entry guy at Gold's Gym in Venice, and even wore a fuzzy pink costume and waved at people anonymously to get them to shop at Pink Dot. I was a courier for a commercial production company as well, but after an on-the-job motorcycle crash that laid me up for several months, I decided it was time to move on. It took me a year and a half to get my first agent and another year or so to book my first gig. So I wouldn't say it was a smooth transition. Then again, if it were easy, I would have missed out on all those experiences that I can draw upon now.

4. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge for an actor new to Los Angeles?

I think the greatest initial challenge for most folks that come out here, me included, is dealing with that overwhelming feeling of isolation and insignificance. LA is so spread out and the gates of the industry are pretty well guarded out here. It is designed to make you feel powerless and break your spirit.

5. What are your goals as an actor? Do you have any role models?

My goal as an actor is to inspire my audiences like my acting heroes did for me. As well as the many acting teachers and coaches that I have had the privilege to know and work with, I am also forever grateful to the artists that speak to me from the screen: Anthony Hopkins, Tommy Lee Jones, Robert Duvall, Paul Newman, Kevin Spacey, Susan Serrandon, and Meryl Streep to name a few. Their performances have inspired and influenced my life.

6. *George of the Jungle 2* was your first major film role. What were the biggest challenges you had to overcome as you stepped into the role of “movie star”?

The biggest challenge was convincing and inspiring confidence in the folks around me that I could handle leading a big budget picture. My biggest supporter on the George team was producer Jordan Kerner. His belief in me from the very first audition and his conviction for the project convinced everyone from the studio on down to rally behind us. It wasn't until later in retrospect, mercifully, that it struck me how terrifying it was to shoulder those responsibilities and expectations.

7. Did your career goals or expectations change as a result of that experience?

Of course! I thought it was going to be easy street from that point on! I figured that my biggest challenge would be sifting through a mountain of offers to pick out the best ones. HA!! Well, I'm wiser now.

8. What was the most challenging part of bringing to life a cartoon character? How did you prepare to play the role?

I loved the challenge of playing a cartoon. He has to have all of those impossible qualities we expect from such a colorful character, but he must also have an equally vivid emotional life so that we can relate to him and feel what he feels.

I have heard a lot of criticism about how my performance was a rip off of Brendan Frasier's (Disney's original *George of the Jungle*). As much as I love Brendan, most of my preparation was done at the primate house at the zoo. I also spent a lot of time with coaches to make George's stilted broken English sound organic and alive.

9. Are you sick of talking about *George of the Jungle 2* ?

Not at all! I hope I never get sick of talking about it. It was one of the most exciting times in my life.

10. While you no doubt trained very hard during the shooting, you had to have been in great shape before you even auditioned. What motivates you to keep yourself in top physical condition, and what impact has this had on your life and your acting career?

When I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade I made a bicep pose during quiet time. Sue Brown yelled “Hey, look at Chris's muscle!” Discovering this new way to get attention (not to mention a detention for interrupting quiet time, but I digress) I started to work out to develop my body. At seven, I was already fascinated by the notion that we can change and develop who we are by our will and effort. When I was nine, I saw a picture of Arnold Schwarzenegger in a book store. This was way before Conan. I was drawn to it like a moth to the bug zapper. I got my first weight set that year. If it weren't for the widespread drug use necessary to compete, I may have pursued a career in bodybuilding.

11. In addition to acting, you're also a writer and an inventor. Amidst the insanity of showbiz in LA, how do you find balance in your life?

I love all of it. The writing and the music and the different ventures and adventures are the balancing forces in my life. If my life was limited to getting the next gig, I would go insane in a very short time. My agents go insane for me, and I love them for it.

12. The actors' life has ups and downs. How do you cope with rejection?

I'd like to know the answer to that one too!! Nobody likes to be rejected. We all want to belong. The fear of rejection is the fear of death. Really!! It evolved from the fear of being outcast from our tribe, which in

prehistoric times, was a death sentence. It always stings no matter if it's professional, personal or some other form of rejection even though we now know intellectually that we will probably survive it. I don't have the answer to this, but a good place to start is to never hand your self esteem over to anyone. Also, keep a circle of friends and family close that love and support you unconditionally.

13. Doing a Google search as I prepared to write these questions, I found numerous "celebrity photos" from appearances you've made hosting charity events and such. What's it like being a celebrity?

I'm not convinced that I am truly qualified to answer that question, but I have had some great opportunities because of the work I have done. It is an amazing feeling to think you have had an impact on another life. I have so much fun with my Special Olympics guys its crazy. They are so alive and in the moment – they remind me how to live. They constantly make me laugh and they're completely excited about working out. I think about them when I need inspiration in my workouts.

I got involved with The Elizabeth Glazier Pediatric Aids Foundation because it rallies millions of dollars every year to help children living with HIV and AIDS. When I think about the opportunities I had as a healthy kid, it really makes me want to make a difference for young people who aren't as lucky.

14. What do you love about acting?

I love discovering all the different people inside of me and getting to know them. It has been a great life lesson that whenever someone really gets under my skin, I think of how I would play that person as a character. Once you really start to see what makes people tick, you realize that we are all really very similar.