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PLAYING WITH HOUSE MONEY: An Interview with Actor STEVE EASTIN

By BRIAN KIRST

While doing background research for an essay on the cult favorite NIGHT WARNING [a.k.a. Butcher, Baker, Nightmare Maker] (1982) for the book HIDDEN HORROR, I was lucky enough to stumble upon the website of veteran actor Steve Eastin. Eastin had brought a sense of honesty and calm authority to the role of Coach Landers in this slasher project. Historically speaking, Landers was, also, an important role as it is one of the few positive gay characters in the genre oeuvre. Luckily, Eastin was eager to talk about this project with me and, nicely, also provided insights into other highlights of his very generous catalog, as well.

Growing up in Colorado, Eastin was an early bloomer, artistically, earning his Equity card at the age of 16 due to his participation in a musical directed by the legendary Michael Bennett. A stint teaching at the University of Arizona led him to the set of JOE KIDD (1972) and his SAG card. Shortly afterwards, Eastin arrived in LA where he soon made a mark in television (CHIPS, HILL STREET BLUES, WONDER WOMAN, LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE, THE A-TEAM, L.A. LAW, T.J. HOOKER) and film. Cinematically, he has provided recognizable enthusiasm in such films as A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE (1985), THE HIDDEN (1987), AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (1999), and ALL THINGS FALL APART (2011), in which he plays another athletic figurehead.

Naturally, the first part of our conversation focuses on NIGHT WARNING, with Eastin sharing fabulous anecdotes about working with director William Asher (BEACH BLANKET BINGO, BEWITCHED) and his eclectic co-stars — Susan Tyrell, Bo Svenson, Bill Paxton, and former teen idol Jimmy McNichol — as well as delightful information about his adventures as Tyrell's roommate, his mentorship of McNichol and Paxton and the friction that Svenson caused on the set of the film.

But, it is as we chat about his involvement in such high profile projects as FIELD OF DREAMS (1989), CON AIR (1997), CATCH ME IF YOU CAN (2002), MATCHSTICK MEN (2003), A MAN APART (2003), THE BLACK DAHLIA (2006), and UP IN THE AIR (2009) that Eastin's true humility, generosity and love of life comes to the fore. Happily, at this writing, Eastin is incredibly active with his acting school [www.eastinstudio.com] and still gracing such television shows as IN PLAIN SIGHT and films like LOCKER 13 with his very distinctive and ingratiating style.

SC: Steve, NIGHT WARNING contains one of your first major roles. But the part, a gay high school coach, was pretty unique for that time period. Did you have any hesitation about taking the role?

Eastin: Well, actually, it never even occurred to me. I'm straight, but I'm not homophobic. I've never been homophobic. I was in the theatre when I was a kid. I had a lot of gay friends who were dancers. You know, they actually did a study where

they showed gay porn to three control groups. One group was full of straight men. Another group consisted of straight men that were homophobic and one group was gay. And the straight men that were homophobic were by far the most aroused by what they saw. I find that very interesting.



SC: It's incredibly interesting!

Eastin: Yeah, yeah! It's ironic because my dad is a coach. He's actually in the NCAA Coaching Hall of Fame... And I called him. I said, "Hey, Dad, I got good news and I got bad news!" He says, "Well, what's the good news?" "I've just got the biggest part that I've had up to date in a movie. And I play a coach." Then he says, "What's the bad news?" I go, "I'm gay!" My father is a small town guy from the plains. There's about 30 seconds of silence and he responded. It was just perfect. He says, "Well, Steven. You know your mother and I have always trusted you." I don't know exactly what that means, but it was a pretty funny response.

SC: How did you go about working with William Asher, the director? I read he had a rough childhood, so it seems the plight of Billy Lynch, the main character, would be something he could relate to.

Eastin: I never got drift of that. He was a veteran. He was married to Elizabeth Montgomery. He was a pretty powerful television director. I never had any inkling that he had a bad childhood. He was a little irritable because there were people on the film who were giving him a hard time. It was low budget and it was kind of rushed and stuff. He was very gracious to me. We had a good relationship.

SC: Did you spend a lot of time creating a background for Coach Landers?

Eastin: You know, I don't work that way. That's interesting that you asked that question, because there is a whole new school of thought about acting. It's called "Choiceless Awareness". With that technique, you just empty out your own persona and accept the circumstances. Its basic principle is that everyone that has ever lived inside of you — gay, straight, man, woman — they're all in our DNA. So, I just had the feelings that the guy would have. I found it interesting that he was in a gym, in a locker room with a lot of naked boys, but he wasn't a pervert of any kind. He was a gay man, who was in a relationship, and he just loved coaching kid's basketball.

SC: That's probably why the role has resonated with people so much.

Eastin: Charles Conrad, the guy that I studied with for five years, who was my primary teacher — I actually took over for him in 1991, I teach out here, as well — he said something that really applies to this: "You never play a farmer like a farmer. You play it like a guy who happens to own a farm." So, it never occurred to me to do any kind of clichéd thing. I did want to have a nice satin jacket and I almost got in a fight with Bo Svenson. He didn't think it was right. And I said, "Well, you pick your wardrobe, I'll pick mine!" We didn't have a very good relationship on this. Not many people did. He was a bit of a bully... I don't know if he was just trying to stay in character or what.

SC: It's compelling to me that Carlson is not only homophobic, but racist, as well.

He's really an out and out evil man.

Eastin: He's an asshole.

SC: But Jimmy McNichol's character almost seems out of his time period. He is so non-plussed by and supportive of Coach Landers' homosexuality. It's a contemporary reaction.

Eastin: Yeah. He's a much evolved kid!

SC: Was there any talk about those circumstances with Asher or McNichol?

Eastin: No... I had a really good relationship with Jimmy. He kind of looked up to me, like maybe a father figure. I had been acting for awhile and he was still pretty new. He was a pretty big star, because he got a big break with his sister, Kristy. And I think it probably has to do with the fact that I've been around coaching all my life. I don't know if it was nature or nurture, but we just hit it off. Plus when you work with Susan Tyrell — she kind of sets the tone. She's otherworldly. She's amazing.

SC: Do you have stories of working with her?

Eastin: Well, I lived with her. We weren't a couple. She had a house down in Hancock Park. That's how I ended up with the role. They were trying to find this character, the Coach Landers character. I knew the casting director. I knew Susan was

doing it. So the casting director said, "Do you want to come in and read the actors, off camera, in the audition process?" Of course, at that point, I always had my ears ticked up for anything that will get me close to some work — so, I said absolutely. I read all these guys over a period of about five days and finally I said why don't you let me audition? I guess they had seen enough of my work while I was reading the other guys that they said OK. When I did it, my heart got involved, so I got a chance to work with Susan... She was pretty legendary. She was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress award for *FAT CITY*, one of Jeff Bridges' first films. But she had some pretty eclectic action in Hancock Park. I met all kinds of people there. Tom Baker, who was Jim Morrison's best friend, for instance. He also overdosed at a very young age, but he was around. All these Warhol actors, and I'm just kind of a kid from the desert, you know. [laughs] But again, I got along with folks pretty good. So we had a really nice situation doing that film... When did *BUTCHER, BAKER* come out?

SC: It's listed on IMDb as 1982.

Eastin: From what I understand, there were two producers on it. They got in a big fight. It was finished like three years before it ever appeared.

SC: Do you recall when you actually filmed it?

Eastin: I can give you, probably, a good sense of it. It was probably '78 or '79.

SC: Wow. Did you ever think that you would be talking about this over 30 years later?

Eastin: I didn't. I kind of kept my eyes in the front of my head. I always move forward. Looking back, I can now see how it would have resonance to the Gay and Lesbian community. And I always thought it was a hell of a good little movie, all things considered. I did have some kind of inkling when two guys came by, a year-and-a-half ago, and interviewed me for some kind of documentary. They were very interested in my character. They told me this is kind of respected in the gay community as kind of the first time they had a positive role model in a film. I take great pride in that, because every time I even start to think about Matthew Shepard, I want to start killing fucking rednecks! You know what I mean?! To me it's so interesting, too, because I think that people that act out and commit hate crimes are basically bullies. I have never been able to tolerate bullies. It's another reason I think I responded in such a realistic way to Bo Svenson. He was really full of himself and pushed people around. I don't allow that. I take as much pride in the fact that I could have done that — whatever little thing I did for the gay community — as I do in being in *FIELD OF DREAMS*, which is a legendary film that changed people's lives. I definitely take as much pride in having done *BUTCHER, BAKER* as having done *FIELD OF DREAMS*.

SC: I guess both films have changed people's lives and changed perceptions. It's amazing that you not only get one, but a couple.

Eastin: Then, I did a third one. [laughs] So it's kind of a trilogy. There's *UP IN THE AIR*. I have a character in *UP IN THE AIR* that I played that they ran on the Academy Awards a couple of times. It was a guy who made people feel like their own father had gotten fired. *UP IN THE AIR* is a very smart movie and you sound like a smart kid, so you should check it out.



Steve Eastin in FIELD OF DREAMS

SC: UP IN THE AIR was an important project for George Clooney. You've worked with a lot of young Turks though. Bill Paxton...

Eastin: It's like dropping a rock in a pond — the ripples just go out in all directions! Bill Paxton is also from Tucson. I didn't know that, but after we did *NIGHT WARNING*, I was living in a really shitty apartment over in Beachwood Canyon and he called me and asked if he could come see me. I said, "Sure, Bill!" So he came in, and he was just heartbroken because he didn't think he was going to make it in show business. And he was looking at me like someone who HAD made it in show business and I was trying to tell him, 'Hey, man. I'm holding onto my ass with both hands too.' He was crying — and now it's turned around and he's one of the biggest male stars in films. [laughs] I haven't talked to him since that time that he came to my apartment!

SC: You also did some work on NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2, which was considered a much bigger film in the whole slasher genre.

Eastin: Yeah, I've never even seen that all the way through. I just improvised a couple of funny lines. I just brought Mark Patton, who played the main kid in that, home after his night on the town. I told 'em to keep him on a short leash. That was that. Jack Sholder directed that. And he also directed me in *BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT* (1990), with James Earl Jones. Then he also directed me in *THE HIDDEN...* When he saw me on the Academy Awards for *UP IN THE AIR*, he called me. He said, "It's Jack Sholder. If I would have known you were this good of an actor, I would have used you a lot more!" It was pretty funny. But, it's all good, man! I'm playing with house money. I never forget every day how lucky I am! I wanted to do this, and I got to do it!

SC: A CHANGE OF SEASONS (1980) was another earlier project of yours. Shirley MacLaine, Bo Derek, Anthony Hopkins... That is quite a cast there, as well.

Eastin: That was another wild one. I'm hitting on

Bo Derek in a bar scene and I wind up decking Anthony Hopkins!... I went out to Malibu for the wrap party of *A CHANGE OF SEASONS*. Wrap parties are kind of funny things. Everyone is tired, physically, and you've already been together so much. It's a celebration, but it doesn't last very long... people kind of drift off. So I got down there kind of late. There were probably about seven people there and one of them was Anthony. He was sitting at a table, by himself. So I just went over and sat down. We chatted and he is just a really forthright, really intuitive individual. He had had a little round with the bottle, as a lot of people do, and that was the first film he had done since he had gotten sober. He went to the Royal Academy of the Dramatic Arts and they kicked him out, after one year, and told him that he should go back to Wales and be a miner. They said he didn't have any talent. It's in his autobiography.

SC: I bet that drama teacher is kicking himself now.

Eastin: Most drama teachers are just frustrated actors. They have a little bit of power and... But, you have some gems, too! My daughter had a guy who was amazing. She played Emily in *OUR TOWN* her senior year. I got to tell you, there is a theatre seat in Naperville, IL with a lot of snot on it! She made me cry so hard. It was beautiful. That guy was so altruistic. He did a great job. That's a great discussion, too, though. What is the best way to get to be the most honest in the moment, so that it is the most powerful? It's a wonderful study. What is the best way to go about it? It has



Steve Eastin and Bo Svenson in NIGHT WARNING

a lot to do with left brain, right brain. It has to do with developing your ability to experience powerful emotion. It's not what you think. No matter what you're thinking, it's not that. You just have to get really quiet so you can feel. It's really fascinating. I wrote an article about it that was published, nationally, in *Backstage Magazine*. It's called 'Something To Not Think About'. If you go on the *Backstage* website, and type that in, it should come up. I think you'll get a kick out of it!

SC: Do you have any recollections about the USA TV-movie, NIGHTMARE ON THE 13TH FLOOR (1990)? That had another terrific cast, including Louise Fletcher and John Karan.

Eastin: Yeah, I was one of the leads in that. I was the doorman. I got a bullet in my forehead. That was kind of fun!

SC: Michele Greene, the lead, was huge on L.A. LAW at the time.

Eastin: [laughs] I just remember what a great body Michele Greene had! Man, it was stunning. Fucking stunning!

SC: That's interesting because that wasn't how Hollywood framed her. She was generally cast as the smart, industrious second banana type.

Eastin: Yeah, but she was packing! She was like Natalie Wood with a little 18-inch waist and perfect figure. She was like that.

SC: Well, you've definitely had a lot of cult film action going on your career!

Eastin: [laughs loudly]

SC: It's awesome, man!

Eastin: Yeah, sure! I was in *ROBOT WARS* (1993) too. That's kind of the lame end of it all. You remember *ROBOT WARS*?

SC: Yeah. That's Charlie Band and Full Moon. Barbara Crampton and Lisa Rinna were in that... You then, eventually, went onto work for another low budget maverick, Jim Wynorski, in CRASH LANDING (2005).

Eastin: Yeah, Jim, he's a character! He's the one who will shoot a film in three days! He's like — "Okay, what, what are we going to do in this scene. H-m-mph! Okay! Let's do that!" He's very funny! I've worked with him a couple of times, I think.



With Sam Rockwell in *MATCHSTICK MEN*

SC: Of course, CON AIR had somewhat of the same vibe as CRASH LANDING, but a much bigger budget!

Eastin: The very first day I got on location for *CON AIR*, I walked into the lobby of the hotel in Park City and there was a tall, skinny African American kid standing there. And Park City is *really* white, so you could tell he was probably feeling like a stranger in a strange land. So I walked over to him. I said, "Hey, man! Are you doing the movie?" He said, "Yeah, I'm Dave Chappelle." I said, "I'm Steve! Do you wanna come up to my room and smoke a joint?" He said, "Y-e-a-h!" Ha!

Well, none of this should probably be in the story... [laughs]... Ya' know, fuck it! Fuck it! So, I loved that show and we did all the stuff where I put him on the plane. So about a month and a half in, it was time for me to do my big speech. It was a

Steve Eastin and Dave Chappelle in *CON AIR*

long, long speech and I knew it was coming. I went in and I did it. [Director] Simon [West] said, "Fuck! Print it! New deal!" That means I nailed it in one take. I was elated because it was really a lot of dialogue. So we went back, and Dave and I were sitting around and decided to smoke a celebratory spliff. Just about that time, there is a knock on the door. We open the door and the smoke goes into the first assistant director's face! He says, "Simon liked what you did so much that he wants to do another one, tighter." Which means it was going to be more of a close-up. I'm pretty ripped. So we go — and I'm holding onto my ass with both hands. Now, I like to work straight because if I fuck up, I want it to be on an even keel. So we go in and I do it again and he says, "Print! New deal!" I nailed it, again. I was relieved. But if you watch the movie, there is a close-up of me and my eyes look like two peepholes in the snow.

SC: A close call!

Eastin: But the funniest thing that happened was when Chappelle swallowed that match in the movie. It's the scene where the guy pulls the matches out of his throat and lights the Indian on fire. That's a good visual for everyone. In the first scene, I'm putting them all on the plane, searching them and opening their mouths and stuff. These guys were so detail

oriented. Simon West was incredible. He said they wanted to explain why I didn't see the string that was tied to his tooth that led down his throat. They thought that was a hole in the plot. It was brilliant that they even spotted it. So they write a scene and they bring us into Disney. We are out in the middle of Mickey Mouse Land on a sound stage. So, we do this scene where I'm supposed to start to look into Chappelle's mouth and I'm supposed to say something like 'Your breath really stinks.' He's supposed to say, "I've been eating garlic and I haven't had a cold for a month!" Chappelle and I looked at each other and said, "This is some bullshit!" So, we started riffing. We were going back and forth and back and forth and the in one that they ended up using, I said "Oh, man! It smells like someone shit in your mouth!" And Chappelle says, "Well, he said he loved me!" And that's the one

they use. Then they rewrote it, so I had to go back and loop it. For television, I said something like, "It smells like you shoved socks in your mouth," or something like that. But, it was pretty funny. That was a great moment.

SC: Did you spend much time with Nicolas Cage on that?

Eastin: It's interesting. Nicolas had just gotten married to, I think, Patricia Arquette. They were so in love. I was probably on the set three months and I spent more time with him, over a period of two days, on *MATCHSTICK MEN* than I did the entire time I was on *CON AIR*. I'll tell you a great story about him though. My daughter was turning 18. We were having a good time on *MATCHSTICK MEN*. I

went up to him on the second day and said, "Hey, Nicolas. My daughter is turning 18 today. If it's alright, would you wish her a happy birthday?" He said, "Sure, man! I'll do that." So we started filming. The whole day went long. He's in every shot. We're filming in Laurel Canyon. Base camp was at the end of a steep hill with a food truck and the electric equipment and everything. So it gets to be about 5 o'clock and my daughter finally shows up. We're down by the food truck. The walkies are all over the set though, and I heard that it was a wrap for the day. We're down at the bottom of this hill and I look up and Nic comes out of the house that we were filming in and he stops in the middle of the street. He looks down and he walks all the way down the hill and says to my daughter, "Happy birthday, baby!" and he gives her a kiss. Then he ran back up the hill to his car. I just thought that was a real class thing to do. It was about a block, up and down the hill.

SC: Nice. What was it like working with Ridley Scott on that?

Eastin: Ridley Scott is a crazy, wonderful director. I was so excited. We were supposed to start shooting on a Monday. My family is in San Diego, so I went down there, the weekend before. I'm not much of a sun block guy. So I go in Sunday afternoon to pack up and go back to L.A. I look in the mirror and I'm tomato red. I am sun burned like you wouldn't believe. I think, "Oh, fuck!" They could fire me for that. This is exactly what happened and if I'm lying, I'm dying! So, I checked my messages. I called my answering machine. This is the message I got: "Yeah, Steve. This is Lana, Ridley's assistant. He would like you to come in tomorrow as sun burned as possible." And that is a true story, man. I kid you not! I come out of the trailer, Ridley was walking by. He said, "Ah, yes, just like I pictured you — a weightlifter gone to seed!" I said, "Thank you?" So that was pretty incredible.

But *CON AIR* was a beautiful experience too. Steve Buscemi had a daughter about my daughter's age. They'd swim together. My mom used to call someone who was really comfortable to be around like old shoes — broken in. That was Buscemi. We'd have nice chats. My kids were just beautiful on that set too. I was going through a divorce at the time, so I had them with me. I'd babysit them at lunch and they'd be sitting there with these 6'-6" actors playing the convicts, just chatting away with them. It was quite a sight. It was such fun.

SC: Was working on A MAN APART as interesting?

Eastin: That was a fun experience too. It was my first offer as a film. F. Gary Gray, the director, had seen me in CON AIR and thought I could play the head of the narcotics division. He had a great sense of humor. My name was Ty Frost and they called me Frosty the Snowman. So, my agent calls and tells me that I have an offer for a movie. I asked when my audition was. He said, "No, Steve. It's an offer." I said, "I think there is something wrong with my phone. It sounded like you just said offer." So, yeah, it was very complimentary. And then a lot of people, because of Vin [Diesel]'s onscreen demeanor, have certain notions of him. But, he's really a good guy. He was smart. I find that the ones that continue to have success, feel fortunate to be where they are and believe that everybody involved is an important person. Both he and DiCaprio treated me like an old G. "What was it like on CHIPS, man?"

SC: Even today, you're still doing great stuff on television. You did a little arc on DEXTER.

Eastin: Yeah. That's a good credit. I did three shows. I couldn't figure it out because the guy didn't have anything to do. I had one line of dialogue in each show. So when I read it, initially, I turned it down. I'm just kind of past the one-liners. Even though it was DEXTER, I still turned it down. They came back and doubled the offer. I said, "What the fuck?!" Then I found out James Manos, who created the show, also produced an incredible HBO film that I did called THE POSITIVELY TRUE ADVENTURES OF THE ALLEGED TEXAS CHEERLEADER-MURDERING MOM (1993) with Holly Hunter. I had a real nice part in that. I played Beau Bridges' Christian counselor and I think Jim just wanted to do me a favor. So when I found that out, I said sure. And I had a nice time with the baby. I got to hold the baby a lot.

SC: That obviously shows how wonderful and cooperative you are — Jack Sholder worked with you a few times, Manos made this happen for you...

Eastin: Simon West and I really hit it off, as well, when I did CON AIR. He really appreciated me. He put me in the remake of WHEN A STRANGER CALLS (2006).

SC: What was doing that remake like?

Eastin: It was a great acting exercise. I had to open a door and Simon said to me, "We are not going to show the gore. So we need to see it in your eyes." And when we went to the screening, he said it was absolutely more than he could have ever hoped for. I just look around the room and in the next scene I'm puking on the front porch. It was just a great acting exercise! I like being challenged.

I had a big part in THE X-FILES. Chris Carter, the guy who created the show, I saw him up in Santa Barbara. He comes up to me and said, "You know, your episode has been voted in the top four of all the episodes we did of THE X-FILES." It was such a nice compliment because that show was all about me. I was a small Wisconsin sheriff. My son was involved with an alien growth hormone and I had to find my dead kid in a meadow. It was just a wonderful experience, shooting up in Vancouver.

Gillian Anderson was sweet. She just had her baby, so I didn't hang out with her much. I told

David Duchovny a joke and, a year later, I was doing a COMMISH movie up there and he saw me and said that's still my favorite joke. You want to hear it?

SC: Sure!

Eastin: An agent goes to a local play. And he watches the play. Afterwards, he's outside, talking to the producer. And the producer says, "What did you think of the play?" The agent says, "The play was okay, but the leading lady sucked!" The producer says, "That's my wife." The agent says, "Would you let me finish?..." You get it?



Steve Eastin and Vin Diesel in A MAN APART

SC: Yeah. Do you relish moments like that?

Eastin: You know something? I am so in the thick of it, that I don't see it. But apparently on IMDb someone came up with a list of the 300 most underrated actors in film history and I'm on the list at 297. I was really very pleased by that. Of course, half of the people in front of me are dead! Warren Oates — all those folks. But to be on a list with those guys was quite an honor.

SC: Of course! But, it's no surprise. Hell, you even worked with Celeste Holm and Lynda Carter on WONDER WOMAN.

Eastin: [laughs] You do your homework, don't you?! Yeah, that was an experience. It was really fun. There is a scene where Lynda Carter is in a sauna. And my buddy and I were the bad guys. We run gas through the holes in the sauna and knock her out. We had to pick her up. He's got her under his arm and I've got her by her knees. And we're going to count and pick her up. We were going to go on "1, 2, 3!" I was set to go on three, but he picked her up on one and I stumbled and my face went right between her breasts. They were in a towel, but I tell ya, it was very dark! Some pretty serious hooters! She was cool about it! I love little fun things like that!

SC: I imagine it's such a tough business — back-breaking, ego-draining — that you've got to enjoy those little things!

Eastin: [laughs] Mining coal is back-breaking. In this profession, it's just hard to get a job... My grandfather was a coal miner in Southern Colorado. Every time I think I have it tough, I just think about him.

SC: Luckily, you have done so much in your career. But if someone asked you to name a

few of the things that gave you the most joy, what would those be?

Eastin: I would say NIGHT WARNING is one of them, just because of the social implications. Because of my involvement with FIELD OF DREAMS, I did a charity style baseball event, a few years after the film came out. I pitched with some major leaguers on that little field we filmed on. We had a banquet one night. There was a guy. He was in the fantasy baseball camp from Chicago and he asked to talk to me for a second. I said sure. He told me that his son was on the Sioux City plane that crashed in the cornfield. The son was flying back from his mom's, an unescorted minor on the plane, and he didn't make it. He died. He told me that he didn't know if he was going to be able to go on living. He loved [his son] that much. But when he walked out on that field at that event, he felt something heal inside of him and wanted to thank me for that. Stuff like that is pretty wonderful.

SC: Art really does heal. What was Kevin Costner like on that project?

Eastin: He was a prince, man. A prince! He's a down-to-earth guy. He's like Mark Harmon. Mark Harmon is the prototype of that. Although Kevin didn't grow up in wealth and Mark did. But they are both unaffected. I think the good ones who have managed to stick around are that way. Jimmy Stewart, when he was about 76 years old, was asked what he attributed his great success to. Without missing a beat he said, "I was very lucky!" The ones that stick around truly believe that and they treat people right, from the wardrobe people on up. It's a team effort.

SC: Nice.

Eastin: But, back to your earlier question, you know something?

SC: What?

Eastin: I like them all. All of my projects. They are all like my kids. Even being on CHIPS, which was a cheesy, horseshit show — I had a great time on that. LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE — I worked with Melissa Gilbert when she was 10 years old. That was one of the only times that a crew has ever applauded when we finished that scene. It was just really well played.

SC: Don't forget, you were also Warden Brickhouse on the 2001 television series BLACK SCORPION!

Eastin: [laughs] Oh, man! That one I barely remember. I was on a bunch of them, but it was Corman stuff, kind of shoestring. You know what I'm really proud of?

SC: What?

Eastin: I did a play here called THE MIRROR. The characters were the four ages of man — Spring, Winter, Summer, and Fall. I was Winter, a retiree, and the LA Times gave it a great review.

All in all, I think I've had the perfect career because I don't get hassled, but I've made a decent living at it. Oh, and I loved working with Leonardo DiCaprio in CATCH ME IF YOU CAN. I actually had billing above Jennifer Garner in that one. That was a great experience working with Spielberg. You know something? [CONTINUED on PG. 47]

LINDA PURL *Continued from PAGE 31*

and those projects eventually led to my doing some fund-raising events where I *did* get to sing. And then eventually I'd get to do the occasional musical and, ultimately, I got to record. So, it just really started because I was missing music. Now I go out about once a month, or once every six weeks, to perform somewhere... and sing somewhere. I sort of moved into a jazz field, but I'll

always draw from the Great American Songbook, seeing as I can't sing pop to save my life. [laughs]

SC: Future projects?

Purl: In terms of future work, not really much to report at this time. I just finished a play in Hawaii, which was quite enjoyable. I have concerts coming up, and I'm working towards a big one in Japan in December, along with a new concert in

New York in March.

SC: And did you want to talk to our readers about your website?

Purl: Oh! Please visit it! [laughs] And fans can absolutely email me through Facebook. Ω

Thanks: Lisa Blumenthal, Barbara Vetter, Eddie Brandt's Saturday Matinee [www.ebsmvideo.com].

STEVE EASTIN *Continued from PAGE 41*

I just thought about this! In a three month period, I was lucky enough to have worked with Spielberg, Ridley Scott and Brian De Palma. I did MATCHSTICK MEN for Ridley, then the BLACK DAHLIA for Brian. They flew me over to Bulgaria for that.

SC: I really enjoyed THE BLACK DAHLIA. What was your take on it?

Eastin: I knew it was going to be a tough one. It's such a dense book. Then I think people got confused because they thought it was going to be the story of the Black Dahlia and it really wasn't. It was from James Ellroy, the L.A. CONFIDENTIAL guy, and he's a good writer.

But you know something? I look around at my photos — there's Nicolas Cage in CON AIR. I was on WAGONS EAST (1994), the day that John Candy passed away. Sometimes I feel like ZELIG, from that Woody Allen film. I'm just the guy who's

in the background in all of these different settings in history. It's been pretty amazing, I must say.

SC: You mentioned UP IN THE AIR earlier. What's your take on Anna Kendrick, who is now quite the powerhouse in the industry.

Eastin: I worked with her right at the start. I think it was her first big part. I know she had done things in the TWILIGHT series, but this was George Clooney. This was a big deal and she was a kid! She was *really* young! Whoever her parents were, they did a great job. She was so sweet to me. She actually said something that really resonated with me. Something must have happened with that scene, because, as I mentioned, it ended up on the Academy Awards, *twice* — once for Best Picture and once for Anna's nomination. But, you're not aware of it when you're doing it. You're just focused, I guess... So, after we finished it, she came up to me. She said, "Steve, I wanna

tell you something." I said, "What's that?" She said, "You are so handsome, will you sleep with me?" [laughs] No, she didn't say that! She said, "I want you to know that out of this whole movie, this was the scene that I was most afraid of. Because I had to do it with a computer screen and I didn't know if it was going to work. I want you to know, you made it easy for me because you broke my heart." That was the sweetest thing to say. Like all segments of society, in show business there are people who are clueless and arrogant. But it seems like the ones who have that Jimmy Stewart thing, those who believe in the collaborative quality of it, those who are egoless in the work itself, those are the ones who last.

SC: From our conversation, it seems that last statement applies a lot to you, as well.

Eastin: Ah, thank you. I just feel grateful, man. Grateful! Ω

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