

Interview with Actor Patrick Fischler

Written by Ryan Donada

Monday, 25 March 2013 12:13 - Last Updated Monday, 25 March 2013 14:29



Actor Patrick Fischler, known for his TV roles in *Mad Men* and *Californication*, will be screening *The Test*, a short film by Fischler and his wife, Lauren Bowles, at the Phoenix Film Festival April 4 to 11. Created and starring both Fischler and Bowles, the film captures the emotions and drama of the vulnerable situation of a pregnancy test. AFM caught up Fischler to chat about acting, his short film and more.

AFM: How and why did you develop a love for acting?

PF: I grew up in L.A. and my dad loved movies, so he introduced me to them when I was relatively young at home, but mainly in the theater. I was kind of a latchkey kid. He worked and my parents were divorced, so I raised myself on TV. From a really young age, I knew I instantly loved it, had a total love for it. I got into theater in high school, and continued through college — that was the real discovery, when I really realized I loved it.

AFM: So you did a lot of theater?

PF: I did theater a lot in college starting freshman year. I was doing plays all the time. That was when I realized this was definitely something I want to do after college.

AFM: What's the most fulfilling part of acting to you?

PF: Being able to do what I love. There are a lot of people out there that don't get the opportunity to do what they love; they're stuck in jobs they don't like. Ultimately this business [acting] is so hard. I've been making a living as an actor for 20 years. I love what I do and so it doesn't even feel like I'm working.

AFM: How did it feel to produce and act in a short film alongside your wife, Lauren Bowles?

PF: It was great. We've known each other since college, which is 25 years. We've both been making a living as actors (she's in *True Blood*), so we've been working forever. We knew we wanted to do our own thing; we've been talking about it for a while, but we get hired all the time and, ultimately, you get no control at all on what parts you're playing.

We had a theater company in the late 1990's that we were a part of together. This film just came to us and decided it was time to work together again. We saw a short film at a festival and said to each other, 'Let's do this.' So we did it. We paid for it and hired everybody, I came up with the idea and Lauren wrote it. It was fantastic — there's no one I want to work more with than my wife. We may argue about stuff, but we never bring it to our home. When it does, we look at each other and both just turn work off.

AFM: Have you got to do things like this with Lauren in the past?

PF: This is the first non-theater thing we have done together. She wrote a lot of plays we did in college and the theater company we ran, and I produced them, acted in them. So this is a first for us.

AFM: What makes *The Test* different from other films you acted in in the past?

PF: Number one: Working with my wife. We both get to play a regular couple; I have mainly played very unique roles [*Mad Men*, *Californication*]. I love doing that and I can ask for nothing more, but it's fun to sometimes play a normal guy. This is just a normal couple going through a problem that a lot of couples do and would go through. That's the best part, acting as a normal dude.

AFM: How did *The Test* come about in the first place?

PF: A lot of people ask me this, but it actually just came to me as I was driving. I was thinking about ideas for a short film, and I thought, 'What

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about a couple who are taking a pregnancy test.' That's such a vulnerable time in your life because your life is about to change completely, or not at all. And when I say completely, I mean completely; my wife and I have a three-year-old and I know what that is like.

I thought it would make it even more interesting if the couple were at a precipice in their relationship, where they weren't just a happy couple. There's a lot more going on and the stakes are really high.

We've seen a lot of shorts and thought it would be cool to be in just one space. We found this bathroom and loved it. It was very interesting because the bathroom was small and so it was a challenge to make it look interesting. Our director, Anthony DiBlasi, is absolutely fantastic and we talked to him before we shot about the vibe and what we wanted it to look like — he did exactly what we wanted and more.

AFM: Will there be future collaborated short/feature films between you two?

PF: Absolutely, 100 percent. I think that our next idea is to do a feature film, or a short film that can be developed into a feature.

AFM: Off the subject of acting, have you ever been to Phoenix? How do you like it? What's do you like to do here?

PF: No, this will be my first time. I've been to Sedona (I loved it), but my wife's been to Scottsdale for a bachelorette party. We also did the Grand Canyon too, two days there and two days in Sedona. This was years and years ago, maybe 14. What we drove through Arizona; it was beautiful. I'm looking forward to flying out to Phoenix for the festival.

AFM: I hear you like to cook. Are good at it? What is your favorite dish to cook?

PF: You know what, chili. I'm a chili fanatic and we make it a three-bean vegetarian chili. We started eating vegetarian at home. I found an incredible recipe that I made my own, this three-bean chili. Beer is the key; you got to have it in your chili. Most recipes say to add liquids, so I add beer and let it soak in all the ingredients. That's my sort of staple, but I cook a lot of different stuff.

AFM: Do you have any other hobbies?

PF: That's a good question. I am so busy between acting, cooking and raising my daughter, that's pretty much it. I love going to see movies. I am a movie fanatic; I kind of see everything and am not the kind of person that just watches them at home. Movies are a real passion of mine.

AFM: What are your future goals?

PF: I am in this new movie 2 Guns with Denzel Washington and Mark Wahlberg that I had a blast shooting down in New Orleans that comes out this summer. I am also in Big Sur, based on a Jack Kerouac book and have been playing a role in the TV show Californication, which has been a really good time.