

An interview with David Dean Bottrell

By: Roz Browne



Actor-Writer David Dean Bottrell has written many hilarious screenplays for studios like Fox Searchlight, MTV Films, Paramount and Disney; one of which was made into a movie called *Kingdom Come*. He is probably best known for his reoccurring role as the creepy "Lincoln Meyer" on season three of ABC's *Boston Legal*. A former off-Broadway actor, playwright ("Dearly Departed") and active WGA member, he blogs for the Huffington Post about his experiences in the entertainment industry. His short film, *Available Men* (which he also directed) had its world premiere at the 2007 HBO Comedy Arts Festival and went on to win 17 "Best Short Film" awards on the festival circuit including the World Comedy Festival in Toronto. He was an original cast member of the mega-hit comedy show "Streep Tease" which ran for 15 months at the Bang Comedy Theatre in L.A. before moving on to a special engagement at the Public Theatre in New York this summer. And, as if that weren't enough, he teaches acting on the side. I recently had the pleasure of seeing his awesome solo show "David Dean Bottrell Makes Love". If you ever get a chance to see it, I suggest you check it out!

CB: THANKS DAVID, FOR AGREEING TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THE COMIC BIBLE MAGAZINE. SO LET'S GET STARTED. DID YOU ALWAYS KNOW YOU WERE GOING TO BE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT FIELD?

DDB: Oh my God, no. I came from a very religious family who were big believers in Proverbs 16:18 - "Pride goeth before a fall." Modesty was highly valued in our house and you never wanted to be perceived as any sort of "show-off" because that kind of behavior would only lead to yet more sinful stuff like sex and dancing. But I was always a super sickly kid who spent a lot of time lying on the sofa with a washcloth on my forehead. Slowly, I started becoming obsessed with sci-fi TV shows and comic book heroes like Batman and Thor. Our home life was sort of grim, so I was always looking for some kind of fantasy world to escape into. I had some drawing talent and thought maybe I'd become an illustrator or maybe an art teacher. I didn't really think entertainment was a possibility.

LEARN BY LISTENING. LEARN BY ASKING QUESTIONS. LEARN BY DOING. LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN. THEN LEARN SOME MORE.

WHAT CAME FIRST ACTING OR WRITING?

Acting came first. Writing came much later. It was the biggest surprise.

WHEN DID YOU START WRITING/ACTING? AND HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

In high school, I fell madly in love with a girl who was active in the drama club. Her name was Valryn Warren - which struck me as the most beautiful name I'd ever heard in my life. It took me a year to get up my nerve to audition for one of the school plays, but I finally did. I wound up playing Val's husband! In the drama club, I finally found my tribe: the geeks, the freaks, the gays, the daydreamers, the misfits. I was in Heaven. I didn't even attempt to write anything until I was in my 20's. I think I was about 30 when I finally managed to finish my first real script. It was a stage play and I had a little beginners luck with it.

WHICH ONE OF THE TWO IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR YOU?

DDB: Tough question. I guess my wimpy answer is that they're both hard in their own way. Acting always feels to me like an Olympic event. There's so much adrenalin and nutty energy that gets expended in such a short period of time. But if you manage to pull it off, it's so thrilling! Especially if the audience likes you. Writing is more of a journey. At its absolute best, it's like an expedition to some place you've never been before. What they both have in common is you're always looking for some kind of "truth" (whatever that may mean to you at the time).

CB: HOW DID YOU DEVELOP YOUR SOLO SHOW?

DDB: Back in December, I wrote and performed a spoken word piece about my relationship with my ex and it went over like gangbusters. That led me to thinking about writing an whole show made up entirely of "love" stories. Suddenly, I got really interested in how many different meanings the word "love" has and how fantastic the emotion of love can make you feel. And how that same emotion can feel shitty and worthless and stupid. So I just started writing about every major experience I'd had with love since I was five years old. My director, Jim Fall came on board and helped me edit and shape it. Six weeks later, I was performing it at the Comedy Central Stage. It all happened very quickly.

CB: DID YOU HAVE ANY SECOND THOUGHTS OF REVEALING TOO MUCH IN YOUR SOLO SHOW?

DDB: Funny, that never once occurred to me while I was writing it. It was only after I saw a tape of the first show, that it occurred to me that I reveal a shit load about myself during the course of the evening - some of it extremely personal. Honestly, that was never my intent. My intent was just to just tell the truth about what I said, thought and did. I think that's why the show has been such a success. We're rarely honest about the underbelly of our lives: our embarrassments, our losses, our bad decisions. When you offer that up (particularly in a funny way) it's very cathartic for everybody present. I think comedians serve sort of a public service in that way. We're kind of mental health

workers. Speaking for myself, when I hear people laugh I never think it's because I'm so fabulous; I always think it's because they understood what I just said. Everybody's tripped. Everybody's fallen. And everybody learns to get up again.

ANY ADVICE FOR UPCOMING ACTORS AND WRITERS?

Yes, learn. Learn by listening. Learn by asking questions. Learn by doing. Learn everything you can. Then learn some more. In fact, don't stop learning. It will make you really good at what you do. It'll keep you interested in the work. It'll keep you sane. And it will help you through the dry spells and rough patches - of which there are many. And most important of all, learn to love your life for what it actually is. Not what you'd like it to be. It will make a huge difference.

For more information on David visit www.daviddeanbottrell.com

– Roz Browne is a Comedy Award Nominee, Comedian and Actress, voted Boston's Metro's Favorite Comedian during the Boston Comedy Festival. Television appearances include NBC's Outlaw, ABC's The View, Comics Unleashed with Bryon



Allen... She performs regularly at all of the major comedy clubs nationwide and was featured at the Toyota Comedy Festival in New York. She also produces the "Merry Wives of Comedy" Show.

www.rozbrowne.com

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