

Coffee Date is a cross-over romantic comedy about a straight man whose life spins out of control when an unexpected friendship with a gay man causes everyone in his life to think he is gay. Co-stars Wilson Cruz and Jason Stuart sat down for coffee once again at Romancing the Bean, the very coffee house where they shot scenes for the film. Envy Man sat in on the conversation between hunky Wilson Cruz and funnyman Jason Stuart.

Jason Stuart: Do you remember how we met? I do, of course.

Wilson Cruz: You do?

JS: The first time I had ever met you was at the taping of the TV special out there in Hollywood on Comedy Central. You were sitting in the audience and you came over to me and you were so sweet.

WC: Yeah, I do remember that. That was where we met?

JS: Yeah because they used your face as a reaction shot in my comedy set which I used as a demo for years.

WC: That's so funny that you remembered that.

JS: I remember seeing you and the show My So Called Life. I wanted to ask you, how did it come about for you to get the part, because you were so young?

WC: You know it was like every other thing. At the time I was just trying to get a job. I was 19 and I had this very, very small agent in a small agency.

JS: Had you done any other TV work before?

WC: No, I had mainly done theatre.

JS: So, you went right into television Hollywood royalty because you went in with Winnie Holzman, Scott Winant, all the people from Thirtysomething.

WC: And I knew who they were because I was a big fan of Thirtysomething. I wasn't going into this naive.

JS: See, I'm getting chills thinking about that, just as an actor, because I would have killed you and three other people to do something like that. When I met you, that's in a way what meant so much to me. Because I saw someone who, ten years later, all of a sudden, you had such a tremendous opportunity, something that I never had. There was a changing of the guard and something did happen. And when I saw you looking at me in the audience during my set and I said, "Oh wow, I'm here".

WC: You know I've always thought you were hilarious, Jason, I've always thought that, and I appreciate comedy in our lives. I mean, I think if we can't laugh about ourselves and laugh about our existence; especially these days... we're in big trouble. And you really helped me do that. You know at the time, in the early 90's, we needed a lot of that. You've been an incredible ambassador for us.

JS: God, ambassador? I don't know if they let Jews do that. Then Rent was the next big thing, correct? And then all of a sudden, the whole gay world just said, "Here's our person. We have our teenage gay person".

WC: And there was a lot of pressure in that and I got a little lost in that, I'll be honest. I felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of it and even though I didn't really want it I felt like I did have to step up to it.

JS: What was it like to be in the film Nixon with Oliver Stone.

WC: I've never been shy about my opinions, and Oliver Stone is pretty famous for his opinions. In the end I think he respected me for being able to say what needed and wanted to do, but there were some moments between us.

JS: Tell us...

WC: I played this house boy who J. Edgar Hoover, played by Bob Hoskins, comes in contact with, and I eat fruit out of his mouth, an Oliver Stone wanted to put me in this very risqué outfit and I thought that it didn't serve the scene and it didn't serve me and it took the surprise element out of the scene, which is what it was supposed to be, and so he and I had some words about it.

JS: Do you think you would have been able to do that if you hadn't been on My So Called Life?

WC: I think I was so oblivious that I didn't care. You know I'm kinda like this New Yorker boy. If I feel something, I say something, I do it and say it. In the end we're the only ones who take care of ourselves in this business. We have to be the mommy and the daddy.

JS: I grew up in the time where I spent the first ten years of my career of people saying to me basically, "you're light, you're this, you're too gay, you're too that," – I used to call it T-O-O something." It was always something like that, and I remember thinking to myself when I was on the set with you, Wow, look that this guy. He's so confident." I was the one when Stewart Wade, the director, had said, "Well, we're trying to get a hold of Wilson Cruz and we can't get a hold of him." And I had just seen you at the OutFest and don't remember what I said but...

WC: You came up to me, and I remember this well, I tell everybody the only reason why I'm in this movie is because of you. You came up to me and I asked you what you were doing lately and you said that you were getting ready to make this movie and you said. "Actually they've been trying to get a hold of you because they haven't cast one of the leads."

WC: And actually I knew about the movie because my boyfriend at the time went in for an audition.

JS: And the director actually said to me, "Do you think we should call him because his boyfriend's up for it." I said, "Are you kidding me? He's an actor. He will just find away to deal with that."

WC: I think in the end it kinda did mess up our relationship.

JS: I always hasten to talk about this, but I've done two episodes of Will and Grace, which was sort of like being on Survivor because every day they were so obsessed with getting the show funny and the jokes perfect. I remember Glenn Close saying to me, "I'm an Academy Award- nominated actress. I can't believe I have to take this shit." She was going so crazy. Now, have you ever read for Will and Grace?

WC: I never read for Will and Grace. I met with Max and Dave, after the show had ended actually I met with them about another series they were doing, but they didn't cast me in it.

JS: I think also, as actors, we have to have the guts to say to the director "I did a film with Mekhi Phifer."

WC: Wow!

JS: Oh, gorgeous, just we don't even want to go there.

WC: Yes, we DO want to go there.

JS: He's so straight. And he has this beautiful□

WC: Penis?

JS: Well, that I didn't see but I could pretend to be him for you later.

WC: (Laughs)

JS: Do you think of yourself as a leading man or as a character actor?

WC: I'm a character actor.

JS: You do?

WC: Yeah, absolutely.

WC: When they wanted me to play the love interest in this, last summer when I was doing this and Noah's Ark. It was the first time that anybody was like, you know, I wasn't playing somebody's best friend, you know, or somebody's sidekick. I was somebody's love interest or somebody's... I was desired.

JS: You were THE guy.

WC: And that was so foreign to me so I had to like let go of whatever insecurities I had about that.

JS: You've also worked a lot; you've completely changed your body and the way you look from My So Called Life.

WC: Yeah, but you know, in the end, I was doing Rent, and I was 25 years-old and I weighed 120 pounds, I was wearing a size 0 skirt, and when I finished that I looked in the mirror and...

JS: I'm never going to say was wearing a size 0 skirt.

WC: (Laughs)

JS: That's something I'm never going to say.

WC: I looked in the mirror or day after I finished Rent and thought, you know I don't like the way I feel about myself and I just wanted to change that for me.

JS: And then when I saw you at Outfest and all of the sudden you had this incredible body and I thought to myself, "This is a leading man". But to me the thing about Coffee Date, the thing that was really interesting about your performance... Jonathan Bray is straight and you are gay, there's the kiss, (I'm going to ruin it, but) there's the kiss. The kiss scene to me was incredible because what you did was you almost crawled up on him.

WC: Well, that was all improvised, too.

JS: Yeah, but you kissed him like a man kisses a man. And that□s the way I kiss. You know, Jews and Latins, very similar. There's a passion to it.

WC: That whole scene, you want to talk about improvisation, we literally rewrote that whole scene on the spot. Because he had reservations about it, and rightly so, about what he was being asked to do.. and there was an awkwardness about the whole thing. It needed to be that way, and I think ignoring the awkwardness would have been a problem, and you know there's a line where I say to him, "What are you so scared of? And all of that was improvised It was really me, Wilson, an actor, asking Jonathan Bray, really.

JS: Which is so much better.

WC: Yeah, and it really was about, "What are you so afraid of?□ And that□s really the question at heart.

WC: I think it's harder for people to come out now than it was ten years ago. I think it's harder for people now, just in terms of fear. I think we've been hit over the head with so much fear, just in the last five years, that we're ruled by fear so people aren't willing to take the same kind of chances that we were willing to take over ten years ago, and I think that's one of reasons why.

JS: Is there anything you wanted to ask me?

WC: There is. You mentioned that you've doing more producing these days.

JS: I also have my own TV special, which is called Jason Stuart, Making My Way to the Middle.

WC: Did you say "Sleeping Your Way to the Middle"?

JS: That would even be better. And the last question . It's just a simple little question, and if you just say "yes" then it would really be great. Would you marry me?

WC: No, I can't do that because I'm not getting married these days. I had a commitment ceremony once. It didn't work out.

JS: With crazy guy?

WC: With crazy guy. We'll leave it at that; so I won't be doing that again. Thank you, Jason. I adore you. I just give you a hard time.

JS: Thank you. Thank YOU. (Kiss)

JS: We just kissed.

WC: It was hot!

JS: Thanks. (EM)