

This Time, Stuart's 'Attitude' is Straighter than Usual

By Mike Szymanski

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Jason Stuart never thought he'd play the straight guy, but in "10 Attitudes," the movie he stars in and produces about gay relationships, he very much allows the actors and comedians around him get the laughs.

Stuart is an out gay comic who made national headlines in 1993 when he came out of the closet on "Geraldo," and is now a semi-regular playing a gay therapist to Damon Wayans on "My Wife and Kids."

"I wanted to make this movie about bad dates, I certainly had enough material," says Stuart, in an interview with Zap2it.com. "And it all slowly came together, although it took a while to get it finished."

After meeting Emmy-award winning producer Michael Gallant in a group therapy session five years ago, they both commiserated about miserable dating experiences. Gallant, who produced "War & Remembrance" and the upcoming "Adam and Steve," began writing the story about an average guy's quest to find the perfect man in West Hollywood.

They ended up putting Stuart in situations with actors such as "Married With Children's" David Faustino and Comedy Central's Scott Kennedy for dates that were completely ad-libbed. Faustino, known as a very heterosexual youth on his TV show, surprised Stuart by trying to set up a three-way liaison with he and his girlfriend, while Kennedy explains his creepy fascination with boy bands and his hobby stalking Marky Mark.

"I have to give Michael credit for creating a movie out of nothing, a lot of times we had no idea what was going to happen," says Stuart, who admits he's been in situations where male and female couples have tried to take him home.

He befriended Faustino on the set of an indie film "Get Your Stuff," and they let their improvisational skills take them through the date. Stuart depended on plenty of friends to get him through the movie, which was funded by himself, Gallant and Rob Bonet from the Alan Carr estate.

So, for example, the kitchen is really that of Stuart's good friend Alexandra Paul from "Baywatch," and the living room where the group therapy sessions are held is really at comedienne Judy Tenuta's place.

"We wanted to make it all as easy as possible, not to have them go very far for work," quips Stuart, which explains why Tenuta looks like she's just woke up in a few scenes. "And Alexandra shocked me because she never got mad at me before, but she certainly did for this role."

Over the course of the dates, Stuart's hair gets lighter and darker and his goatee gets shaved and grown back — it's explained away in the film, but the reality is that he was off doing other parts. Stuart began in the business with "Murder, She Wrote," "Charmed," "Seaquest," "The John Larroquette Show" and "Three Sisters," and more recently he's twice taped "Will and Grace" as well as "Providence," "Drew Carrey," Bryan Singer's "House" and has small roles in films such as "Vegas Vacation," "Kindergarten Cop," "Gia," and "Lost and Found."

Constantly on the road with his comedy routine, Stuart has recently hit the pavement taking this gay “Swingers” film to the Barcelona Gay & Lesbian International Film Festival, where it won the audience and best picture awards, and “10 Attitudes” has played festivals in Philadelphia, New Zealand and Austin.

“The 30-something or 40-something gay men who are not perfect seem to have connected with the character of Josh that I play,” Stuart explains, adding that he’s still not in a relationship. “Half of the guys in the 30s, 40s and 50s are dead because of the AIDS epidemic, and the other half want someone who is 12, so if you’re lucky to be alive, it’s very hard to find someone.”

Others in the film include “Bold and the Beautiful” star Sean Kanan and his longtime “Too Close for Comfort” friend Jim J. Bullock who is now doing “Hairspray” on Broadway. Dealing with all the ups and downs of different kinds of relationships in the film hasn’t helped Stuart in his own personal life, however.

“I had to go back into therapy because I can’t figure out why I don’t have a boyfriend,” says Stuart, who’s longest relationship lasted five years. “But I believe my husband is out there, I just don’t know what he looks like or where he is.”

Meanwhile, he’s continuing to tour, with upcoming gigs early next year in Maine, Mexico Michigan, Idaho, Indiana, Missouri and more. He’s in the indie film “A Day Without a Mexican,” and just taped an episode on Kirstie Alley’s new show, “Fat Actress.”

But, he’s most excited about doing a scene with Oscar-winning actress Faye Dunaway in an upcoming film “Ghosts Never Sleep.”

“I forgot a line, and I screamed, ‘I’m with Academy Award winning actress Faye Dunaway!’ and everyone waited for her to react,” Stuart recalls. “She put her hand on my knee and I felt like we were crying together. It was incredible performance, and this is someone who co-starred with Jack Nicholson, George C. Scott, Warren Beatty!”

And, with that role, Stuart seems to come full circle. He’s playing a talk show host, not unlike “Geraldo,” who gave him his big open door.

Stuart’s “10 Attitudes” is opening in major markets throughout the country through December.