

Interview: Actor Brendan Wayne on His Legacy in 'Cowboys & Aliens'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 27, 2011 - 10:49am

- [Brendan Wayne](#) [2]
- [Cowboys & Aliens](#) [3]
- [Daniel Craig](#) [4]
- [DreamWorks](#) [5]
- [Harrison Ford](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Interview](#) [8]
- [John Wayne](#) [9]
- [Jon Favreau](#) [10]
- [Keith Carradine](#) [11]
- [Olivia Wilde](#) [12]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [13]
- [Paul Dano](#) [14]
- [Sam Rockwell](#) [15]
- [Universal Pictures](#) [16]

CHICAGO – Brendan Wayne is certainly no stranger to cowboys. As the grandson of one of the greatest western stars ever, John Wayne, Brendan carries on the family tradition in the upcoming Jon Favreau film "Cowboys & Aliens," featuring Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford.

Born Daniel Brendan La Cava, son of the John Wayne's daughter Toni, Brendan took on the Duke's last name as he was moving up as a working actor. After taking on a series of smaller TV and movie parts, his breakthrough came portraying Randy in the TV remake of "Angel and the Badman" (2009), with Lou Diamond Phillips in the role his grandfather made famous. He adds the bloodline to the the new film, "Cowboys & Aliens," portraying lawman Charlie Lyle.



Legacy: Grandfather (John Wayne in 'Stagecoach') and Grandson (Brendan Wayne in 'Angel and the Badman')
Photo credit: Warner Home Video & Lionsgate Home Entertainment

Brendon Wayne called HollywoodChicago.com from Los Angeles, and talked about the new film, his career and of course his famous grandfather.

HollywoodChicago.com: Cowboys and Aliens is poised to become an event movie for the summer. With the cache of Iron Man director Jon Favreau and the Star Trek writers as part of the mix, what can audiences expect from what sounds like a fun popcorn movie?

Brendan Wayne: It's going to be a little bit bigger than that, I think Jon did such a good job, because he cultivates relationships. If you have a good western, it's based on those types of relationships and how those people survived in a perilous journey. This is what we have in 'Cowboys & Aliens,' as Jon approached this as if it were a western, even with the extraterrestrial element. At the end of the day, it's going to be a great western.

HollywoodChicago.com: Here you are, the grandson of John Wayne, working with Indiana Jones and James Bond. Did anybody on the set comment on the legendary movie combination and credibility?

Wayne: [Laughs] When I got there, I was quiet as a church mouse, because I'm sitting with Hollywood royalty. Keith Carradine was next to me, whose father [John] was in my grandfather's breakout film, "Stagecoach" and his last film, "The Shootist." And with Sam Rockwell, Paul Dano and Olivia Wilde, I was hoping just to get a line. I'll just hang out, it was great.

As the film moved along, Jon came to me and said he was going to make the role bigger, which was a nice surprise. As we were filming, nobody had come up to me and said anything, even though we were on a western. One day, I'm sitting next to producer Denis Stewart, and I just remarked, 'my grandfather would sure like this town.' And he looked at me and said, 'you brought it up, we made a deal not to talk about your grandfather because you're probably sick of it.' And I looked at him and said, 'why on God's green earth would I be sick of talking about my grandfather?'

I don't have any ego about that. I've seen how far he reaches and how many people he touches in a positive way. So I told Denis to talk all he wanted, and suddenly he just opened up and he was also dying laughing. And I had the feeling that people were trying to avoid me on the set. I thought, 'Am I a jerk?' I realized at the end of the day they were trying to be respectful.

HollywoodChicago.com: What about matching your tradition with James Bond and Indiana Jones?

Wayne: I remember standing in line for 5 hours at a theater in Sherman Oaks waiting to see 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom' and here I was on the set with him. We had to do a table read for an upcoming scene and Jon comes in and does a great job making sure everyone is comfortable. He set it up like it was a classroom, and had everyone stand up and introduce themselves. So there was Daniel Craig standing up and telling us who he was portraying and Harrison Ford did the same. I look over and thought, 'you got to be kidding me, we know who you are!' [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What did Jon Favreau give you as a director or what did you observe about him that you had never experienced in a director before?

Wayne: Jon sets the tone on the other side of the camera. Then when we do get in front of it, we all have a level of familiarity and comfort. I've been on different movie sets, and it doesn't always come out that way. It was just a great journey that we got to do for four months.

HollywoodChicago.com: I think Favreau remembers when he was in that actor's position on the set, and he reacts accordingly.

Wayne: He's the type of director that if someone doesn't think the scene is working, and they have a point, Jon will say, 'good idea, let's do that.' To me, that is the sign of genius. It's the guy who can learn while he's doing it.



On Set: Brendan Wayne as Charlie Lyle in 'Cowboys & Aliens'
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

HollywoodChicago.com: Of course this film involves a lot of special effects and pretending objects are there when they are not. What is the best actors tip for dealing with that?

Wayne: As an actor, you'd better have an imagination. This is just becoming more prevalent with every movie I make, pretty soon I'm going to making out with some girl who is not really there. [laughs] I just like to tell people, hey, we've been doing it since we've been born. It's just being kids, playing cowboy. It's being able to go back and take away the rules, and if a character has to react to a 27-foot alien jumping out of

a tree, you see it coming and you get scared. I actually look to my three daughters, to their reactions. I've asked my daughter how would you act in this scary situation? She shows me, and I think there you go. I just steal, grand theft acting. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: If you had an 1870s cowboy and a space alien for dinner, what would be the first question you'd ask to each of them?

Wayne: To the alien, I'd ask 'who do you want to eat?' [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: I noted on imdb that the decision to take on your grandfather's name didn't come until recently. What was your decision behind it and was there any backlash because of it?

Wayne: I initially had never intended to take the last name. I'm proud of my pop, he's an ex-Navy pilot who flew in Korea. My Dad's great uncle was director Gregory LaCava, who was nominated twice for an Academy Award, including "My Man Godfrey." I had pedigree on both sides, but obviously JW supercedes everybody.

My managers and my agents were really pushing me to do it, telling me it's a good idea. I struggled with it for a long time, I started acting in 2000, and it took me six years to actually do it. I talked to my Dad, and he knew where I was going. He said to me, 'if your mother was a Rockefeller, and you were in the oil business, I'd say change your name.' [laughs] He then told me my grandfather worked his ass off to create the image, and be something people could believe in. He didn't want it to end with him and people should do this for their family. So I said okay.

I started with Danny Wayne, but a fellow actor came up to me and said I couldn't do that name. When I asked why he said, 'because it sounds like an Asian lounge singer.' [laughs] So I went with my original first name, Brendan.

HollywoodChicago.com: Well, let's face it, your grandfather's original name was Marion Morrison, so he had to do the same thing.

Wayne: That's what my Dad said, 'it's not even his name!' As far as backlash, maybe some people have some issues with it, but I don't think anybody has the courage to say something to me.

HollywoodChicago.com: You played opposite Lou Diamond Phillips in the remake of your grandfather's picture "Angel and the Badman." How was it to participate in a film remake of your own heritage?

Wayne: I was nervous. The first thing they told me is that I wasn't the lead, Lou Diamond was. I had no problem playing Randy, a role opposite my grandfather's original role. I thought Lou was a good choice, because he's so opposite from my grandfather there really wasn't going to be any comparison. My joy was in the opportunity to get to be in a remake of one of my grandfather's classic films.

HollywoodChicago.com: Your publicity picture from that film looks so much like John Wayne in Stagecoach.

Wayne: The Hallmark Channel got a hold of those looks and they were like, 'this is where we're going.' The stills they got out of it were awesome. When people meet me they always say that they're not sure I look like him. But I look like him enough, because they think of him from the 1960s and '70s, not when he started out in the 1920s and '30s.



John Wayne and Brendan Wayne
Photo credit: Brendan Wayne

HollywoodChicago.com: Your grandfather had to fight his way through many bit studio parts before breaking through in the legendary film Stagecoach. What type of role would you like to breakthrough with if you had a choice of any type and why?

Wayne: Jason Bourne. I know my buddy Jeremy Renner is taking over the role in 'The Bourne Legacy,' but the role represents a part of me that I really enjoy, the physical side, and that part to me would be really fantastic. I like films that support America, because no matter what I do or how hard I try I'm not going to get around that. That's how I feel, so it must be genetic.

HollywoodChicago.com: Which of your grandfather's films do you connect with most as an actor as far as the purity of his performance and why?

Wayne: The first one for me is 'The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance' [1962]. He wasn't the guy in the white hat and the white horse in that

one, he was the man who was flawed, but did the right thing at the right time for the greater good. And that's someone I hope to be and hope to play.

I also love 'The Cowboys' [1972]. As a Dad, I look to that portrayal in the way he carried those kids, matured them through the process, gave them the responsibility and demanded that they fulfill that responsibility. For me, that is a wonderful lesson.

HollywoodChicago.com: Do you remember any stories about your grandfather's transition into the more method actors of the 1950s, like Montgomery Clift in 'Red River'?

Wayne: Oh man, I heard that whole era drove him mad. [laughs] I also heard that John Ford would have the method actors keep doing scenes with him. My aunt would tell me you're lucky you never worked with Ford, because he'd find a way to make filmmaking a laborious process.

HollywoodChicago.com: What do you think America learned from your grandfather's very public and very courageous battle with cancer, and what do you remember about it as a child?

Wayne: There was a bartender I worked with who kept articles having to do with my grandfather's illness and one of the headlines reads, 'John Wayne Beats the Big C.' It was when he had his lung removed in the 1960s. It meant so much to the country, he was like Superman. To me sometimes it is surreal what he meant to people, but if he could do it, then you all can.

When he was dying, it began on the set of his last film, 'The Shootist' [1976], and I remember visiting that set. In retrospect, they had to shut down filming for a few weeks while he was being treated. He was tough as nails, so he wasn't going to let anybody know. At that point, I didn't realize much.

Eventually we started visiting him at the UCLA Medical Center. He got very thin, but he never lost his spirit. Even when he was dying, he was able to think way bigger than himself. He told us that the doctors gave him more time earth, and to make sure the research goes on. Get the funding, use my name, whatever it takes to make it happen. That is how the John Wayne Cancer Institute started, and today we are at the forefront of research and diagnosis.

HollywoodChicago.com: What story has your mother told you about her father John Wayne that is most memorable to you?

Wayne: You get this image of JW or The Duke as a taciturn tough guy. Then you hear about the real man, going to watch a ballet and crying because it was so beautiful to him. The stories my mother told me that made the biggest imprint were the ones that made him human. His humanity was the best part of all the stories I ever heard.

"Cowboys & Aliens" opens everywhere July 29th. Featuring Brendan Wayne, Daniel Craig, Paul Dano, Sam Rockwell, Olivia Wilde, Keith Carradine and Harrison Ford. Screenplay by Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman and six others. Directed by Jon Favreau. Rated "PG-13"



[17]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [18]

Senior Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

pat@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

© 2011 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Sep 24 2024 - 12:20pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/15050/interview-brendan-wayne-on-his-legacy-in-cowboys-aliens>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brendan-wayne>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/cowboys-aliens>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/daniel-craig>

[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dreamworks>

[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/harrison-ford>

[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>

[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>

[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/john-wayne>

[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jon-favreau>

[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/keith-carradine>

[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/olivia-wilde>

[13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>

[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/paul-dano>

[15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sam-rockwell>

[16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/universal-pictures>

[17] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>

[18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>