

## Interviews: Jesse Metcalfe, Brenda Strong Go Back to ‘Dallas’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 11, 2012 - 3:31pm

- [Brenda Strong](#) [2]
- [Dallas](#) [3]
- [Desperate Housewives](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Interview](#) [6]
- [Jesse Metcalfe](#) [7]
- [John Tucker Must Die](#) [8]
- [Josh Henderson](#) [9]
- [Larry Hagman](#) [10]
- [Linda Gray](#) [11]
- [Patrick Duffy](#) [12]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [13]
- [Seinfeld](#) [14]
- [TNT Network](#) [15]

CHICAGO – Dust off your cowboy hat and power bolo ties, the legendary TV show ‘Dallas’ is about to launch again, June 13th, on the TNT Network. Returning as the Ewing family are Larry Hagman (J.R.), Patrick Duffy (Bobby) and Linda Gray (Sue Ellen), joined with the new Ewings, Jesse Metcalfe (Christopher) and Barbara Strong (Anne).

Metcalfe and Strong both have television cache as cast members of the recently departed series “Desperate Housewives.” Metcalfe played John Rowland – the hot gardener friend of Eva Longoria’s Gabrielle – for five seasons. Brenda Strong was the voice and conscience of the show, she portrayed deceased Wisteria Lane resident Mary Alice Young, who narrated each episode.

Both actors joined this “continuation” of the TV series “Dallas,” which originally ran on CBS-TV from 1978 to 1991. TNT Network has picked up the show as if it never left the air, with Metcalfe and Strong as members of the Ewing clan, which includes the original Ewing cast of Hagman, Duffy and Gray. HollywoodChicago caught up with the newest inhabitants of the “Dallas” universe.



### Jesse Metcalfe, Christopher Ewing in “Dallas”

Besides being one of hottest fellow travelers on Wisteria Lane, Jesse Metcalfe has had a promising career in both television and movies. He burst onto the scene in the NBC-TV soap opera “Passions,” portraying fan favorite Miguel Lopez-Fitzgerald. After his splash on “Desperate Housewives,” he landed the title role of the film “John Tucker Must Die,” which further cemented him within pop culture. Jesse Metcalfe portrays the adopted son of Bobby Ewing (Patrick Duffy) named Christopher.



Jesse Metcalfe (as Christopher Ewing, left) and Josh Henderson (John Ross Ewing) on the New ‘Dallas’  
*Photo credit: TNT Network*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What was your basis in deciding to take on the Ewing legacy as an actor? How do you feel this was the next, best step for you?

**Jesse Metcalfe:** It was the script, just to be specific. I was very skeptical and hesitant to even audition initially. when the idea was brought to me by my agent. I knew ‘Dallas’ as this quintessentially 1980s soap opera. Was it a good idea to remake this iconic and well-known show? Plus with all the remakes, reboots, re-imaginings in TV shows and movies, most of those are failures. So there was a thought process as ‘is this the next step?’

My opinion quickly changed when I read the script, and then hearing that Larry [Hagman], Linda [Gray] and Patrick [Duffy] had given it their stamp of approval and would be part of the new series, because I didn’t think you could do a new series without having some original cast members. Their participation grounded the show. Plus this show is a ‘continuation’ of the series, not a remake. It’s as if the cameras weren’t rolling for 25 years, and this is where the family is at now.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The show is setting up your character to be the moral center of the next generation of Ewings. What is your opinion regarding the extreme wealth and power that occurs at that level in America – the so-called one percent – and how do you want to play out that responsibility and morality as an actor?

**Metcalfe:** I think I have a great opportunity to be part of that discourse with this character. I see Christopher as the ‘anti-Ewing,’ since he was adopted and is a bit of an outsider, somewhat the Ewing black sheep. He definitely runs away from the dysfunction of his family, because he did study abroad, and he’s working on an alternative energy patent, which will move the family away from oil drilling and towards environmentally friendly power. That’s very central to the new ‘Dallas,’ and it makes it very contemporary.

The new ‘Dallas’ is also redefining what it means to be a Texan. What it meant to be a Texan in the 1980s is very different from what it means to be a Texan in 2012. The country has evolved and Texas and evolved.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The first series gave you a template regarding the mechanics of how the show operates. Which performance or situation from the first series did you pay particular attention to, in formulating the character of Christopher Ewing?

**Metcalfe:** None. I’ve gone back and watched 40 episodes or so, which barely dents the full run of the show. I just went back for a sense of tone and maybe how to see first hand how dysfunctional Christopher’s childhood could have been. So I could see how far he could go with the issues of the family, and how expressive he could be regarding that, within the framework and history of the series.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You have worked with several of the first series cast members. What impressed them about this continuation of ‘Dallas’ that got them all on board again?

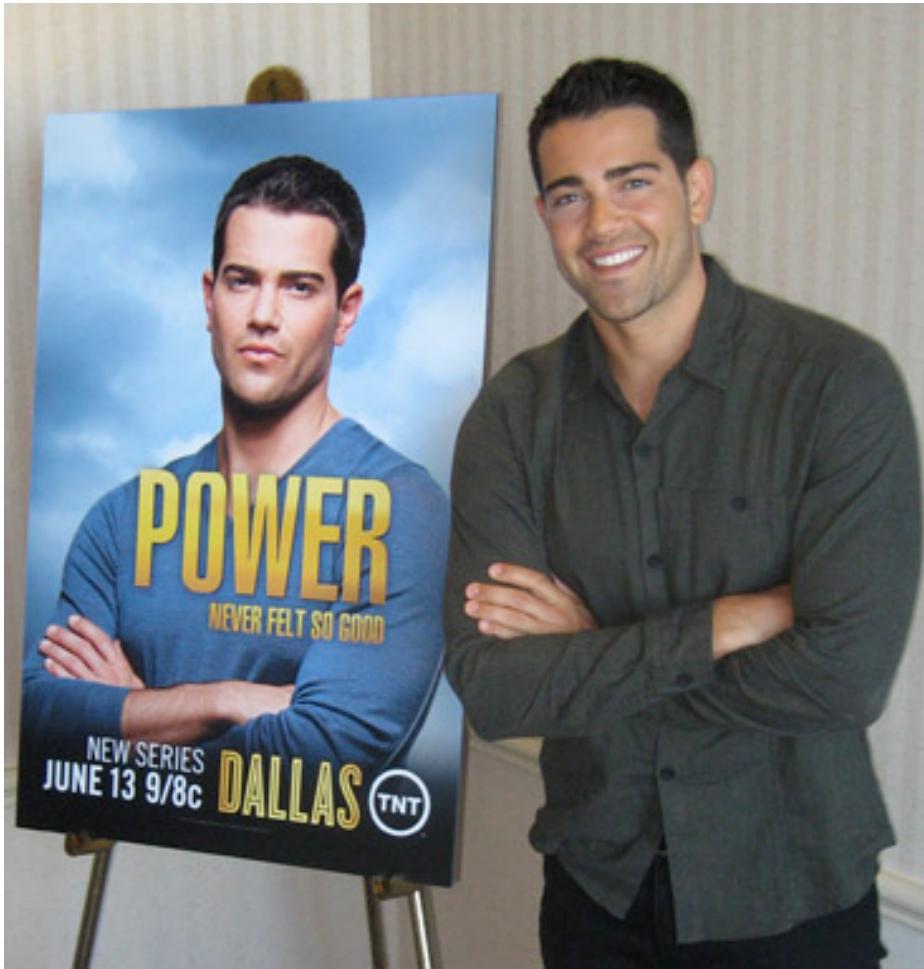
**Metcalfe:** I think they really felt that this was the first time that someone captured what made the original series so successful, tonally and staying true to the original theme. It’s about the dysfunctional family, and the interaction between them. It’s about grand topics of money, greed, power, ambition, loyalty and betrayal. As long as we keep those themes at the heart of the show, we really can’t go wrong, There is a character for everybody to relate to, and I think that is why Larry, Linda and Patrick wanted to be a part of it.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You are one of the most famous daytime drama personalities of the last ten years, when you appeared on ‘Passions.’ What impresses you about the loyalty of the fans at that level and what did you learn most as a young actor by playing Miguel Lopez-Fitzgerald?

**Metcalfe:** I’ve had people coming up to me all the time saying that they’ve loved me since ‘Passions,’ so clearly that’s how it started, and that’s how they keep following my career. It’s flattering when you receive that type of loyalty.

The fan base expanded, though, when I did ‘Desperate Housewives,’ that is a whole other thing. That character resonated with a lot of people, young and old, female and male. That was the show that made me a household name.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Which leads to the next question. Since you spent some time on that set of ‘Desperate Housewives,’ what is the key to the particular energy of show creator Marc Cherry and why do you think that energy clashed with some of the actors on the show?



Jesse Metcalfe in Chicago, June 6th, 2012  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**Metcalfe:** I think that the most successful TV writers and show creators operate on a different level, a genius level. They have a very clear vision of what they are trying to create. I know that Marc Cherry was very hands-on, he would spend a lot of time on the set, making sure the actors were getting the comedy that he had written into it, and making sure the tone he wanted to have was being created on set. If there was any creative conflict in that regard, I would say it was justified, but I never experienced it. That show for me was just fun.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What were the circumstances on landing the title role in ‘John Tucker Must Die’ and were you happy to be playing a character who was into basketball since you played so much as a youth?

**Metcalfe:** I got ‘John Tucker Must Die’ just from a meeting. Coming off of ‘Desperate Housewives,’ I met with a couple executives from 20th Century Fox and they saw fit to give me the role. Given the Lothario character I played on the show, maybe they thought it wasn’t much of a stretch. [laughs] It was an incredible opportunity for me, because I was able to stretch a bit comedically.

I am proud of the film, it was well-done and fun. People still come up to me and call me ‘John Tucker,’ so that film definitely had an impact. As far as the basketball, I got to come onto the set and play a simulated game where I got to hit the winning shot, with the crowd cheering, how can that not be fun? It was living out a fantasy.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** At what level do you still want to get to as far as feature films are concerned? Auditions aside, what type of characters or film genres are casting agents not considering you for, that you want consideration for?

**Metcalfe:** My career is a work in progress. This industry is about proving yourself, constantly. When you think you’ve proven yourself, your foot firmly in in the door, think again! There is another role you’re desperate to play, another project that you’re desperate to be a part of and another group of people you have to prove your capability to. I think that this business only remembers that last thing you did, and if the last thing you did was a comedy, then all you do is comedy – or if it’s a drama, can he be funny? That’s just the name of the game. After 13 years of acting, I’m still doing what I love to do.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally, at what point in your career did you think to yourself, ‘how did I get here?’

**Metcalfe:** Maybe after that first season of ‘Desperate Housewives,’ I had an opportunity to stop and smell the roses. I’ve had the opportunity to do a lot of incredible things, because of my career. I was very proud to win a SAG Award for Best Ensemble, the first season of ‘Desperate Housewives,’ and I feel strongly that we can do the same for this cast of ‘Dallas.’

★ **Brenda Strong, Anne Ewing in “Dallas”**

Meeting Brenda Strong is like meeting Mary Richards or Archie Bunker – she portrayed the iconic Mary Alice Young on “Desperate Housewives,” one of the most distinctive and ever-present narrators in television history. She is also remembered from “Seinfeld” as Sue Ellen Mischke – the “Oh Henry” candy bar heiress and “braless wonder” – as a foil to Elaine. She has had a long and rich television career, appearing on “Twin Peaks,” “Everwood” and writer/director Aaron Sorkin’s cult show, “Sports Night,” among others. Anne Ewing is Bobby’s wife on “Dallas.”







Brenda Strong (as Anne, at right) Joins Larry Hagman (J.R.), Linda Gray (Sue Ellen) and Patrick Duffy on ‘Dallas’  
*Photo credit: TNT Network*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You made a brief appearance on the first run of Dallas as ‘Cliff’s One Night Stand.’ How are we to know that your role as Anne Ewing is not just another dream of Bobby’s?

**Brenda Strong:** We don’t. [laughs] That’s for the audience to find out as this unravels, because nobody knows who Anne Ewing is, truly. For all intents and purposes, we just pick up in a marriage that has been in existence for seven years, and they are running Southfork. Bobby and Anne are the new Jock and Elly [Ewing, from the first series], the patriarch and matriarch of the family. The audience is expected to think, okay, here we are, a modern-day Ewing clan.

There is a bit of history we don’t know about Anne, and as the season unfolds the audience will get to know her and really understand how authentic this marriage is, as a contemporary relationship. She’s an intelligent, self-assured woman, but then things start to unravel when you get glimmers of her past.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What legacy of the Ewings did you focus in on in developing the character of Anne?

**Strong:** Anne has married into the Ewings, so she doesn’t necessarily have to assume some of the genealogy or the family curse. In many ways she has aligned herself with Bobby because of her heart-centric and fiercely loyal nature. Bobby is the moral compass of the Ewings, and he is with a woman that reflects that as well. She is a peacekeeper, she’s kind of the glue between the older, warring generation of the Ewings and the younger generation. She knows that Bobby wants peace in the family, and she does whatever is in her power to make that happen.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What impresses you on how the members of the first run cast took to their characters again and created an energy for guiding the new cast through the world of the Ewings?

**Strong:** What’s unique to Larry, Linda and Patrick is not only were they cast mates, but they are the best of friends. They have been friends for 34 years. There is an authenticity of respect and adoration that they share, and they brought that energy to the set. So that history knowing those characters as well as they do, and the love they have for each other, kind of infused the set with a sense of we’re all part of the Ewing family, we belong too. It was immediate humility and generosity, and they couldn’t have been more gracious.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** ‘Dallas’ is a show about money and power, particularly the type of power that occurs in the State of Texas. Do you think the notion of Dallas is different today because of the debate regarding the so-called one percent versus the 99?

**Strong:** Interestingly enough and ironic, the original ‘Dallas’ first aired in 1978, during the midst of the first oil crisis and recession. We’re in very much in the same economic times. There is an appeal with the audience to view people with wealth and how they behave. That’s different from the first time, because when they behaved badly then, it was escapism. Now we have the opportunity to explore a social conscience, and how can we not be the wealthy oil mongers who pillage the planet for resources? How can we bring alternative energies to the future, and how will that conversation play out in the Ewing family dynamic? That is the difference in approaching the show now.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In doing your homework in watching the first series, what situation or character impressed you the most – or helped you best with your character – and do you think it’s possible in television today to have a ‘Who Shot J.R.?’ moment?

**Strong:** Your questions are like the show, so many twists and turns that I have to follow them in the same way. [laughs] I would say out of deep respect for Barbara Bel Geddes [Miss Elly Ewing on the first series], if there was any character that I modeled Anne after it was Miss

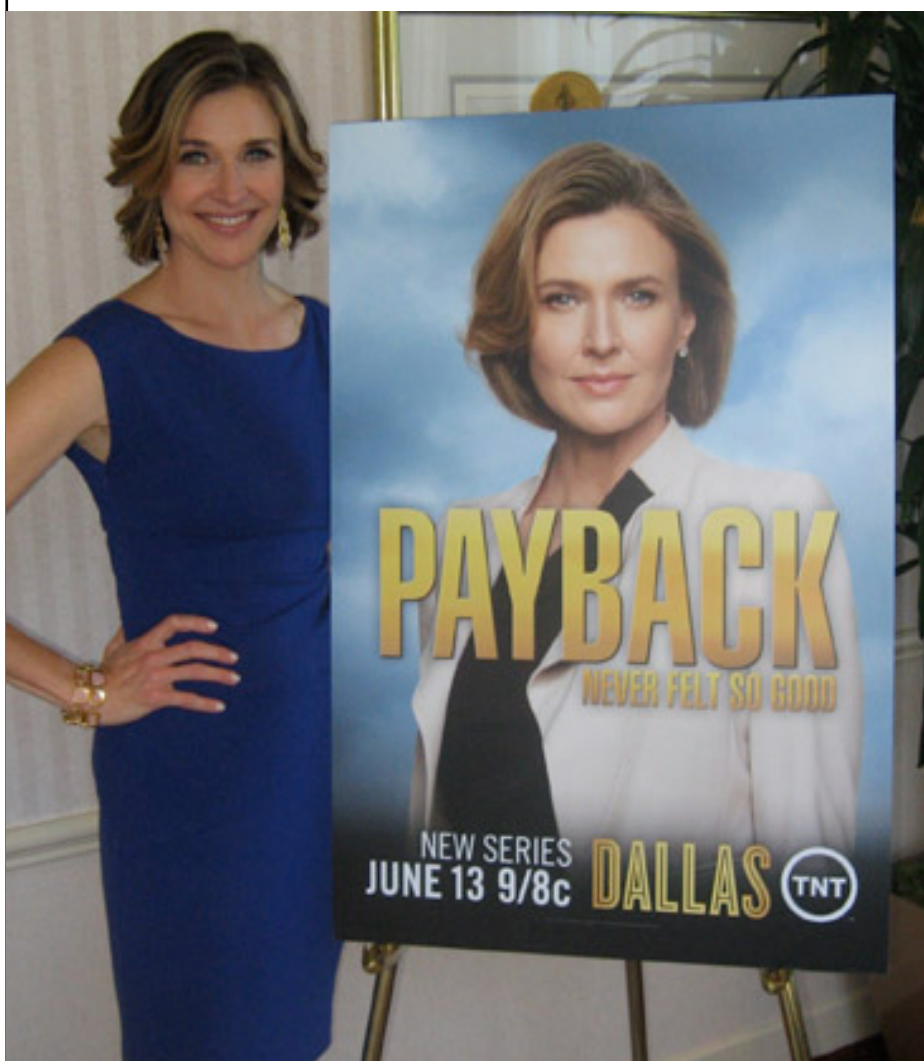
Elly. I felt that she wielded her matriarchy with a gentle iron fist. She is such a full actor. There was an episode where she was sitting at the dining room table, and J.R. and Bobby tell her that they found Jock Ewing's horse, but not her husband. She sat at the end of the dining table, and had such still depth of grief, yet never let it out. That's a Texas woman, the strength in their genes, who are fierce and not easily ruffled.

As far as the second question, we have a cliffhanger in every episode. This is an adrenalin-driven show and Patrick has said that in every one of the new series scripts, there is about four of the old series. The pacing of today's television is much faster.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You are one of the most famous narrators in television history. Now that you've completed your run as Mary Alice Young of 'Desperate Housewives,' what do you think you've learned from her in filtering the character through your consciousness?

**Strong:** One of things I did very early on in the series came when I was trying to find her voice. At first it was hard, because I wasn't sure what her perspective was. It was a disembodied voice, where was she? Was she in heaven? Purgatory? A ghost? And one of my producers gave me the best note I could have received. It was to just drop the sound into my heart. This character is not just commenting on her friends, she is passionately observing the human condition. That was the condition that Mary Alice came through, loving compassion for how frail we are in humanity. It was wisdom from perspective, in a disembodied place.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You've had three notable roles in exceptional and legendary television shows – 'Twin Peaks,' 'Seinfeld' and 'Herman's Head'...I mean 'SportsNight.' Which character do you think will live the longest in pop culture and which was the most interesting experience for you?



Brenda Strong in Chicago, June 6th, 2012  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**Strong:** 'Seinfeld' will live the longest in pop culture. It was definitive, and they were so good at capturing a specific place and psychology. And Sue Ellen Mischke, the 'Oh Henry' candy bar heiress, was one of few characters who wasn't Jerry's girlfriend, she got a one-up on Elaine and I just loved playing her. It was salacious and audacious, a great parody of the O.J. Simpson trial, with me trying on the bra – if it doesn't fit we must acquit – that one will hold up in pop culture. Even my son's generation loves those repeats.

'Twin Peaks' is a little more surreal and twisted. I loved the show, but by the second season they didn't know where they were going, David Warner [who played Thomas Eckhardt, Strong was his assistant named Jones] and I were just making it up as we went along, and they said, we like that, just go with that.

I will say I have been dreaming of working with Aaron Sorkin again, I was bummed that I didn't get to do "Newsroom" [Sorkin's upcoming HBO series], I think it's going to sweep the Emmys. I adore that man as a writer and friend, I hope I get to work with him again.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You were a yoga instructor and teacher when there was a Mind/Body Institute at UCLA. How has it defined your spirituality and approach to life?

**Strong:** Yoga in and of itself has had a huge impact in my spirituality, and in my ability to navigate life, and being an actor in show business, and making sure I'm not thrown under that machine and ground to dust. [laughs] It's hard. You have people that adulate you and hate you. It's tough for any persona, let alone a soul to navigate. Yoga has kept me grounded, going back to a beginner's mind and healthy. It has allowed me accept what is now, whether it's painful or joyful, it's all part of the experience. It allows me to accept it all without judgement.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What is your dream job as an actor? What role or character or genre would you most like to play before your career is done?



**Strong:** I would like to step into some of the classic roles of Shakespeare, I’d love to play Queen Gertrude [‘Hamlet’] and step into some of these powerful and historic women roles, ala Cate Blanchett. I think I’m ready now to do that, to wield a little more power in my career, and do more complex roles.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You and I went through the same times in American history and culture. What do you think characterizes our generation and timeline the most, regarding that experience?

**Strong:** We have such an interesting generation. I was the youngest of six children, but I grew up as a kid in the 1960s, and I did feel the freedom and liberation, especially for women. Ultimately, when we came into the 1980s it was a bit shocking. The ‘80s ripped the rug from under me. I remember that one of the first things that Ronald Reagan did when he came into office was take the solar panels off of the White House. That was a declaration that the United States would keep the oil standard. All of the economic advancements that came through that administration came with a loss of the heart and soul of what was fought for in the 1960s.

We are also of a generation that had journalists exposing what was really happening with this country, with the Vietnam War and Watergate. We’ve since been disenfranchised in some ways, we had the promise of freedom, truth and love, and then we’ve been sold a bill of goods opposite to that. Now we’re in the power position to reclaim it, and I really hope we do.

*The continuation of the TV series “Dallas,” premieres with back-to-back episodes on Wednesday, June 13th, on the TNT Network. See local listings for channel locations. Featuring Larry Hagman, Patrick Duffy, Linda Gray, Jesse Metcalfe and Brenda Strong.*



[16]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

© 2012 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 16 2024 - 12:59am):**  
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/18939/interviews-jesse-metcalfe-brenda-strong-go-back-to-dallas>

- Links:**
- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
  - [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brenda-strong>
  - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dallas>
  - [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/desperate-housewives>
  - [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
  - [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
  - [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jesse-metcalfe>
  - [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/john-tucker-must-die>
  - [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/josh-henderson>
  - [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/larry-hagman>
  - [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/linda-gray>
  - [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-duffy>
  - [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
  - [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/seinfeld>
  - [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tnt-network>
  - [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
  - [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>