

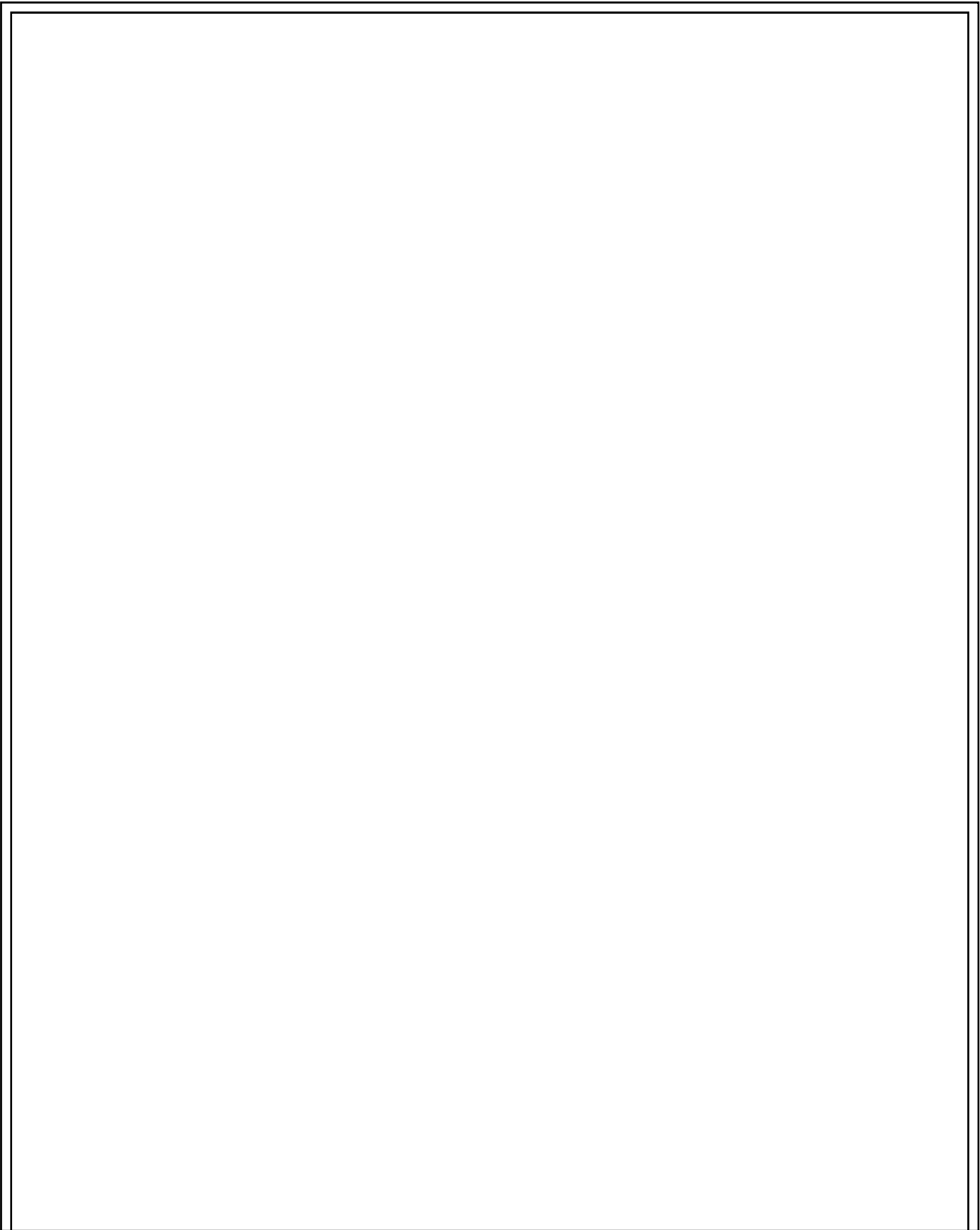
Interview: Verne Troyer – Mini-Me in ‘Austin Powers’ – in Chicagoland

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 11, 2012 - 1:18pm

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CHICAGO – The small but mighty Verne Troyer is a lucky and humble star. He grew in Michigan, and maintains his Midwestern roots in his approach to show business. Troyer makes an appearance at the Hollywood Palms (Naperville, Ill.) and the Hollywood Blvd. Cinema (Woodridge) to introduce “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me” and “Goldmember.”

Troyer has Amish roots, and led a conventional and productive life in Michigan. He was working in customer service for a phone company after a move to Texas, when he got connected to a placement service for the smaller people in entertainment. That led to his first gig, as a stand-in/stunt person for the John Hughes film, “Baby’s Day Out” (1994). Five years later, after taking roles in familiar 1990s films – including “Men in Black” and “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas” – he broke out as “Mini-Me” and portrayed him in the second and third films of the Austin Powers series.





HollywoodChicago.com talked to Verne Troyer, as he makes an appearance this weekend at the Hollywood Palms in Naperville, Ill., and their sister theater the Hollywood Blvd. Cinema in Woodridge to host “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me” and “Goldmember.” The congenial and virtuous Mr. T. had some fine insights to his life and career.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was your favorite memory from you childhood in Michigan and why does it stand out for you?

Verne Troyer I think it was growing up around my grandparents. They were Amish, so it was a different lifestyle. Whenever we visited or spent the night there, it was just a whole different vibe. I miss that, riding in the horse-and-buggy.

HollywoodChicago.com: Which family side was Amish?

Troyer: Both sides.

HollywoodChicago.com: But your parents weren’t Amish?

Troyer: I was Amish for my first year. And then my parents, as my Dad says, jumped the fence and went to the other side. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You did your first work in Hollywood as a stand-in stuntman on ‘Baby’s Day Out,’ filmed partially in Chicago. Who or what was the motivating factor that got you from Michigan to Texas, and then to Hollywood?

Troyer: I had just turned 21 years old, and I was laid off at my job in Michigan, which was working as a telephone company operator. My brother was in the midst of transferring his job down to Texas, so because I didn’t have anything going on I went with him. I lived there for ten

years.

In 1993, I was working for Sprint in customer service, and a friend of mine who was the president of LPA – Little People of America – got a phone call from the producers of ‘Baby’s Day Out,’ and they were wondering if there was anyone close to a stand-in size, I guess they searched worldwide and couldn’t find anyone. I sent in my picture, and they flew me out to Hollywood to meet with them. Two days later, they offered me the job, and I quit my job at Sprint.

HollywoodChicago.com: Of all the directors you have worked for, which one impressed you the most regarding the way they ran a movie set, and why?

Troyer: I have two. Terry Gilliam, who I describe as ‘crazy-cool,’ but he has this amazing vision. The other is the guy I’ve worked with the most, Jay Roach. He is my favorite.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you have been out in public, like at a bar or restaurant, what is the weirdest request a fan has asked or you, and what question annoys you the most?

Troyer: There are a couple, again. ‘Get in my belly...’ or they want me to do the pinkie. I’ve turned that around by making the person who requests it do the pinkie, and then I make fun of them. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the best advice anyone ever gave you when you were learning to be an actor, and how have you best used this advice when you are in front of the cameras?

Troyer: I never took any formal acting lessons. I just get into it. But one tip I got as a kid, ‘don’t eat the yellow snow.’ [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You’ve done two reality shows. Between ‘The Surreal Life’ and ‘Celebrity Big Brother UK,’ which one had the better production team, the one you felt most comfortable with and why?

Troyer: ‘Celebrity Big Brother UK.’ They didn’t twist things around, they were straight with me. The other show was garbage.

HollywoodChicago.com: I’ve read where you are a pretty intense video gamer. Which game currently is your personal favorite and why, and which one would go into your personal Hall of Fame as the best ever and why?

Troyer: Right now, it’s ‘NBA 2K12,’ and also the new Max Payne. It’s hard for me anymore to get into shooter games, because I am a sports guy. That’s why the basketball game works for me. As far as my Hall of Fame, it probably would be Madden, but I also include that basketball game.



Verne Troyer as ‘Mini-Me’
Photo credit: New Line Cinema

HollywoodChicago.com: Given that you’ve had a totally different life experience because of your height, and because of the challenges associated with it, how do you think that experience has made you a better person?

Troyer: I grew up in a family that are average size, and I grew up with parents who didn’t treat me any different. I never looked at my size as a handicap, I felt like I fit in at school – I was even elected Homecoming King. I don’t know what it’s like to be tall, so this is normal for me. It’s you guys who are abnormal. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: I also read you were a Big Ten college football fan. What is your opinion of the Penn State punishment? Do you think it was too harsh or not enough?

Troyer: That is a difficult subject. I think they did the right thing, but the biggest problem I have was how a legendary coach, Joe Paterno, had to be released. He did do the wrong thing, but it is also sad that his career got so tarnished.

HollywoodChicago.com: Even though you’ll always be known for being in the two Austin Power’s movies, what role besides that one have you enjoyed playing the most, and why?

Troyer: It’s actually a short film, no pun intended. [laughs] It’s called ‘Bit Players,’ and it’s a fictional behind-the-scenes of ‘Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.’ I’m playing an Oompa-Loompa, and there is another veteran actor playing a Oompa-Loompa. The scene is in the

...dressing room, where we’re putting on the costume. I think it’s going to be my big break, and the veteran actor is just dismissive – ‘just another little person.’ He tells my character to make nicey-nicey with Santa Claus, because that will be my lifelong gig.

I’m trying to be a serious actor, and I’m actually rehearsing ‘The Glass Menagerie’ in the mirror. It’s funny, but it’s also touching. I think it’s available online, just type in ‘Bit Players.’

HollywoodChicago.com: With your now long career, and since you were just a kid from Michigan, when was the first time you looked around and thought, ‘How did I get here?’

Troyer: Right after Austin Powers. I had no idea how big it would be. When it blew up, it changed my life forever.

Verne Troyer hosts “Austin Powers, The Spy Who Shagged Me” and “Goldmember” at the Hollywood Palms (Naperville, Ill.) on August 11th and the Hollywood Blvd. Cinema (Woodridge) on August 12th. [Click here](#) [17] for more information and to purchase tickets.



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