

## Interview: Actor Josh Gad, Director Joshua Michael Stern Get ‘Jobs’

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CHICAGO – The new film about the founder of Apple Computers, “Jobs,” is a tour de force for Ashton Kutcher, in his portrayal of Steve Jobs. Opposite to him is familiar character actor Josh Gad, as Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak. Creating the ethereal atmosphere in the film is director Joshua Michael Stern.

Josh Gad and Joshua Michael Stern were recently in Chicago on a promotional tour for their new film, and provided insight to capturing the essence of what made those two “Steves” tick. Josh Gad has been a journeyman actor, cast in five TV series over the years (like “1600 Penn”), character film parts (“The Internship”) and in his most high profile, originating the character of Elder Arnold Cunningham on opening night of the Broadway smash “The Book of Mormon.” Joshua Michael Stern made his directorial debut with “Neverwas” (2005), and followed that up with “Swing Vote” (2008).



The Two Steves: Ashton Kutcher and Josh Gad Make History in ‘Jobs’  
*Photo credit: Open Road Films*

Josh Gad and Joshua Michael Stern recently sat down with HollywoodChicago.com, to talk about the impact of “Jobs,” both as a biography and as a spotlight on the overall impact that the two Steves had on technology and culture.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Josh, what was it like for you to temporarily live in the 1970s? What did you observe about that generation that you both liked and disliked?

**Josh Gad:** Interesting question, because in a way, Steve Wozniak was not a product of the 1970s. He wasn’t embracing the cultural experience, like drugs and the other elements, that his peers were doing. For his character, it was more about fashion and the aesthetics of the time, it wasn’t so much about the embracing of the 1970s culture. He was living in his own isolated world, a fun loving guy who was a bit



of a merry little prankster, inventing incredible pieces of technology. There was just a blind joy about him.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Joshua, what is your journey to this film? What was it about your take on Matt Whiteley's script and Steve Job's life that secured you the directorial assignment?

**Joshua Michael Stern:** I just loved the idea of bringing to the screen the story of a man who was essentially an enigma – there was so little known about him personally. It felt like to me this story was a Shakespearian tale. A young prince who was given up for adoption, and raised by people who loved him very much, but he always felt bigger than his environment. He then meets a band of outside innovators and assembled them in a garage.

Once Jobs ascends to the highest throne, he still isn't viewed as legitimate and is quickly removed. After that banishment, he learns about himself and is able to come back and take everybody out. He essentially learns that if the business of vision is ever going to succeed, he had to do it his way. He was ready when he came back.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Josh, what element of actually building a computer – soldering gun in hand – was fascinating to you? Did doing this role change your perspective on now modern, everyday technology?

**Gad:** The whole aspect the soldering gun and learning computer programming was an out-of-body experience for me. As much as Hollywood likes to think I'm a computer geek, I'm not so technologically inclined. Apparently I give off some vibe that I am. [laughs] The attention to detail with this work is what's fascinating and daunting to me. The capacity to understand how to put these integrated circuits together to make this device [indicating his mobile phone], to this day I can't wrap my head around it.

Saying I have the utmost respect for those who do it is an understatement. It's more of this awestruck feeling I have. That I take for granted the fact that I can on my phone and do all aspects of setting up a flight – booking it, seeing if it's delayed, moving it, finding a better flight – we use this technology and it's readily available to us. We rarely ask how does this 5-inch device essentially run my life for me? It's all technology that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak contributed to, the greatest achievement of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.



Ashton Kutcher Finds Divine Inspiration in 'Jobs'  
*Photo credit: Open Road Films*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Joshua, besides getting the Steve Jobs characteristics and mannerisms down, what did Ashton Kutcher have to understand about the variations on being older than his actual age, in deference to the character, and why was it important to begin the film with the older and more familiar Steve Jobs?

**Stern:** This wasn't really a movie about the products of Steve Jobs. The beginning scene, when he's talking to his company about the iPod, could bring the audience into the Steve Jobs that they recognize and know. They didn't really know him when he was younger. It was important to set that stage, and then we could tell him story from his early age twenties to his late thirties, without having to revisit the more familiar Jobs. This story wasn't about the older aged period of his life.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Josh, You were portraying one of the ultimate tech geeks, long before being a tech geek was cool. What do you think was cool about Steve Wozniak?

**Gad:** I can name 20,000 things that I think is cool about Steve Wozniak. The deference and admiration I have for him is incredible. Not only did I fall in love with this character, I became obsessed with the man. I was fascinated by his journey and his true love for life. He is also an enormously generous man, and I think that is what defines him as much as anything else.

At the end of the day for any actor it is about the essence. Unless you get a facial or voice transplant, you're not going to become the real person, because everybody has at their fingertips photos and footage of that person. You can't transform into a version of him that will make everyone happy, but what you can do is find the essence. That heart, that generosity of Wozniak's soul, we felt was really important. We wanted to define both Steve Jobs, and the people around him. We wanted to express the humanity of those familiar people.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Joshua, we see the negative elements of the personality of Jobs in the film. In your opinion, how are those negative elements as important a part of his legacy as his innovations. Is it the old adage that the thing that makes us great also has the power to destroy us?

**Stern:** I think so, but what I also think was important to me was to show that side of Steve, born in frustration, as he was trying to explain to others how amazing this new world of technology could be – when there were others around him that had no reference to how that could be. Also as he is seen as temperamental and perfectionist, he was trying to do one thing for thirty years, create a personal computer. It was also about his desire to be associated with his products, and not himself.

It wasn't lost on him that he started to wear those mock black turtlenecks. He understood that priests wore black so that the congregation would not associate him with anything human or culturally present, that they would only associate them with God. He knew he didn't want to be associated with 'Steve' any more, he wanted to be associated with the product. In many ways, his life started in a certain place of searching, and slowly he removed himself, his relationships and emotions, and became more about the things he was doing. So in the end, it was about what he was holding in his hand, it wasn't about Steve.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Josh, you had the glorious experience of performing in an opening night on Broadway, for a play – like 'West Side Story,' 'South Pacific' and 'Fiddler on the Roof' – that will presumably run in revivals forever. What did it feel like that opening night of 'The Book of Mormon,' and how does it feel now to have been part of Broadway history?

**Gad:** Creatively, it was the most rewarding thing I've ever experienced, by virtue of the passion and history that went into that project. People don't necessarily know this, but I did the very first workshop of that show, five years before it opened. It was only one act at the time, Trey [Parker] and Matt [Stone] had animated gifs behind us on the screen. They were trying to decide whether to made a movie or a Broadway musical. To track it from that point, then seeing it executed and receiving the overwhelming response, it was both a profound sense of relief and just 'wow, I can't believe I'm part of something for the ages.'

**Stern:** From an outsider's perspective, Josh has created a character that will live on through show business culture and time, and just to have been the person who 'founded' him, must be really rewarding. It doesn't happen that much in an actor's lifetime, and however varied and amazing Josh's career will be, he always will have created that character.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Joshua, we look at great innovators like Thomas Edison, the Wright Brothers and we look to when they were born was part of the catalyst for what they invented. What are we to learn about the generation of Steve Jobs, as far as when he was born and how his experiences informed his inventions?



Director Joshua Michael Stern  
Photo credit: Walt Disney Studios

**Stern:** I feel like the late 1960s and early '70s, this period of 'free love' that people have romanticized, really only dealt with one part of the culture – the youth culture. But there were also the people who were never involved with that, and where did they go? They went inside.

And then came the hangover of the 1970s, while the culture was shifting in free love morality, there was that whole bunch of 'inside' people who were thinking about what's next. It was that point in the early 1980s when all of those guys came out of their garages and said, 'this is what we were doing in the last ten years, while the rest of you were screwing and doing drugs.' This was the new industrial revolution, and the genius of Steve Jobs was less in the discovering of the technology but recognizing that it was the next industrial revolution.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Josh, you've been involved in a number of TV pilots and short run shows. In going through that experience, do you have any type of clue about what makes a television show stick in this modern era of multiple screens?

**Gad:** No, I clearly don't have a clue. [laughs] You know, I have some insight into it by just being a viewer. The model as it currently exists is unsustainable. I can't tell you the last time I watched a TV show live. Most of the people I know watch their shows on DVR recordings or



online. It's the dark secret that nobody in the industry wants to talk about, although they're embracing it more.

We need to find a new model because I think if 'Seinfeld' were launched today, it wouldn't last one season. That seems unacceptable. What I'm saying is that we're losing potentially great shows because there is not enough patience. Take for example, 'Breaking Bad,' which has just become a phenomenon recently. It had the time to develop because it was on cable, and that model needs to diversify more and spread onto the network. It's difficult because of ad sales, but something has got to give. Content is suffering as a result of the numbers game. Plus they can't compete against the 900 channels and the millions of internet sites with the old model.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally Joshua, how did the term 'Neverwas' pop up in the creation of your first film, was it always there or did it come about through the process of making it?

**Stern:** There were five different names for the film, and the title of the book within it. The story is about the son of a famous children's book author who killed himself, and the reality of living in the culture that adored his father's creations. 'Neverwas' was a term that encapsulates what fantasy is, something that feels fanciful but in reality never existed. It fit the model of that film.

*"Jobs" opens everywhere on August 16th. Featuring Ashton Kutcher, Josh Gad, Dermot Mulroney, Lukas Haas, Matthew Modine, J.K. Simmons, Ron Eldard, James Wood and Leslie Ann Warren. Written by Matt Whiteley. Directed by Joshua Michael Stern. Rated "PG-13"*



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