

## Interview: Cozi Zuehlsdorff, Nathan Gamble of ‘Dolphin Tale 2’

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CHICAGO – When sequels are made, they are rarely better than the original and often have different cast members. “Dolphin Tale 2” defies both of those conventions, and the returning cast delivers the goods – including Ashley Judd, Morgan Freeman, Harry Connick Jr., and the teenage actors Nathan Gamble and Cozi Zuehlsdorff.

Both 17-year-old actors are experienced veterans in show business, and both began when they were eight years old. The first “Dolphin Tale” film was Zuehlsdorff’s debut, and Gamble had his first movie role in the Best Picture Oscar nominated “Babel” in 2006. Zuehlsdorff can also be found on the Disney Channel’s “Mighty Med” TV series, and Gamble had kid roles in “Marley and Me” and “The Dark Knight.”



Cozi Zuehlsdorff and Nathan Gamble of ‘Dolphin Tale 2’

*Photo credit: Warner Bros.*

The two bright and intelligent actors sat down to talk with HollywoodChicago.com, regarding “Dolphin Tale 2” and their careers, including a lively debate on the type of fish “The Incredible Mr. Limpet” was. Suffice to say that the 17-year-old actress was correct, and the aging film critic was wrong.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What have you both learned about marine biology and dolphins in general since you’ve now done two films?

**Cozi Zuehlsdorff:** We’ve got our degrees! [laughs]

**Nathan Gamble:** For me, they surprise me each time you get in the water with them, in how easy it is to connect with them. They are very human-like, and I treated Winter just like any human co-star. These creatures have nothing to compare themselves to, because they are so different and so unique.

**Zuehlsdorff:** And it was cool, as you mentioned, that we learned so much science behind them, through working with the trainers and doing

background on our dialogue in the scripts. We learned even more in the second film, especially regarding the anatomy of the dolphin and how their lives are.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This might sound strange, but what have you both learned about being actors by interacting with a dolphin?

**Gamble:** When I did the first film, I thought, 'oh I'm going to be working with an animal.' Now my attitude is that I'd act with them like I act with Harry Connick Jr. or Morgan Freeman. They are that sociable.

**Zuehlsdorff:** I can see it with Nathan and myself, with Winter and Hope [the dolphins]. But also, something I learned from underwater acting, is that if you do a smile happily that it's magnified, so you look strange. You have to learn to do a half smile, then it translated to normal. The underwater perspective inflates you. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What was the easiest part of portraying Sawyer and Hazel this time, and what was the most difficult part?

**Zuehlsdorff:** What was easiest is that Charles Martin Smith wrote and directed the second one so beautifully, that I actually slipped into the feelings that you get when you're a teenager, trying to understand about being an individual. The hardest part for me was being angry for a portion of the film. I'm not that kind of person.

**Gamble:** The dialogue in the film was so easy to latch onto. The hardest part is that although Sawyer has broken from his shell a little more, he's still a reserved and shy person. I'm not that at all.

**Zuehlsdorff:** That was great acting, because I've never known you to be shy in your real life.



Cozi Zuehlsdorff, Harry Connick Jr. and Morgan Freeman in 'Dolphin Tale 2'

*Photo credit: Warner Bros.*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is Charles Martin Smith's movie, since this time he wrote the script, directed it and had a small part. What felt different about this sequel than the first one because of Mr. Smith's influence this time?

**Zuehlsdorff:** It didn't feel that different. Charles was as involved in the first one as this one. He commits to the dialogue, and he immerses himself in the experience. He makes sure the whole experience is immersive, so we feel very comfortable. We can place ourselves in the scene exactly how he imagines it. You end up trusting him, because of that, because he knows what colors he wants.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Cozi, since both you and Harry Connick are play the piano, how has he helped you with keyboard technique and how have you helped him as an actor?

**Zuehlsdorff:** I showed Harry the ropes. [laughs] I don't think I helped Harry as an actor that much, except that it's easy for him to have a daughter on screen because he has three in real life. Can you imagine me helping Harry with acting? Never. [laughs] Regarding keyboard technique, he showed me some bass notes and jazz play. You couldn't ask for a better music mentor.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Nathan, one of your major scenes in "Dolphin Tale 2" is with Oscar-winner Morgan Freeman. How has being around this top level cast of actors, including Ashley Judd, Harry Connick and Kris Kristofferson, allowed you to absorb their techniques and ways of approaching acting?



**Gamble:** Each actor has different qualities that I learned from – Ashley gave me so much in each scene, she really is a phenomenal actor, and makes each take a new version of the scene. This gave me, as a newer actor, something to feed off on. With Morgan, he is the kind of person you want by your side in any scene, because he's 'Morgan Freeman.' That was very special. Working with him one-on-one was a dream come true.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Cozi, it said in your biography that you were home schooled. What curiosity do you have about kids who have gone through the regular school system, and what advantages do you think you have because you were homeschooled?



Cozi Zuehlendorff, Nathan Gamble in Chicago, August 22, 2014  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**Zuehlendorff:** I have some good friends who do public school, and I am very interested in what it's like – especially in comparison to the movies I've seen about it. [laughs] Seriously, that's all I know. There are many advantages, I work at my own pace so I control my free time. I had to really learn self-motivation. Most people tell me 'I'd love to stay home all day and watch TV in my pajamas.' The myth of the pajamas happens to be true, [laughs] but everything else is about self motivation. You determine how awesome your education can be, in many ways.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Nathan, you've played enough characters now to answer this question. Which of those other people felt closest to who you are, and why?

**Gamble:** I did this film in Canada called 'The Hole' [2009], directed by Joe Dante. I portrayed this loud, obnoxious and quirky 12-year-old. I definitely related to him.

**Zuehlendorff:** Are you calling yourself loud and obnoxious?

**Gamble:** I can be sometimes.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Which movie dolphin do you think will eventually be the most legendary and why – Flipper, The Incredible Mr. Limpet or Winter?

**Zuehlendorff:** The Incredible Mr. Limpet is a fish, not a dolphin.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What?

**Zuehlendorff:** The Incredible Mr. Limpet was played by Don Knotts, and he was a fish.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** I guess I'll have to look it up. I'm being homeschooled [Mr. Limpet is a tilefish].

**Gamble:** That's more than I knew. I've never even heard of The Incredible Mr. Limpet.

**Zuehlendorff:** Okay, definitely Winter will be the most famous, because she is the only one out of all of them that is inspirational.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You're telling me Flipper is not inspirational?

*“Dolphin Tale 2” opens everywhere on September 12th. Featuring Nathan Gamble, Cozi Zuehlsdorff, Ashley Judd, Harry Connick Jr., Morgan Freeman, Charles Martin Smith and Kris Kristofferson. Written and directed by Charles Martin Smith. Rated “PG”*



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