

Interviews: Red-Carpet Opening Night at Chicago International LGBTQ Film Fest Reeling33

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CHICAGO – The Red Carpet was rolled out at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago on September 17th, 2015, as the 33rd “Reeling” Film Festival – the second oldest LGBTQ celebration in cinema history – had its Opening Night. The film that kicked off the fest was “Fourth Man Out,” beginning a week long showcase of LGBTQ films.

The film is a hilarious and sensitive comedy about modern attitudes and relationships, as a small town man reveals to his friends and family that he is gay on his 24th birthday. Walking the Red Carpet were featured performers Kate Flannery (“The Office”), Parker Young (TV’s “Arrow”) and Evan Todd. Also lending support was Van Hansis (“As the World Turns”), who is featured in the festival entry, “Kiss Me, Kill Me.”



‘Fourth Man Out’ Opened the ‘Reeling33’ Film Festival, September 17th, 2015

Photo credit: Jed Entertainment

The 2015 Chicago LGBTQ International Film Festival is in its 33rd year, and has an incredible line-up of films, events and parties from September 17th-24th. Theater venues include the historic Music Box Theater, Landmark’s Century Centre Cinema and Chicago Filmmakers. [Click here](#) [24] to check out the entire line-up of happenings.

HollywoodChicago.com scored interviews from the participants on the Red Carpet on Opening Night, as Reeling33 continues a week long celebration of film.



Kate Flannery of “Fourth Man Out” and “The Office”

Kate Flannery is familiar to TV audiences for her nine season run in the role of Meredith on the classic ensemble comedy “The Office.” She turned in a funny and poignant performance as Karen, the mother who doesn’t know her son is gay, until he decides to come out on his 24th birthday.

HollywoodChicago.com: It can be said your show business journey began in Chicago. What was the circumstance of your roots at The Second City here?

Kate Flannery: In 1988, I came to Chicago from my hometown Philadelphia to stay with my favorite aunt, who had lived here since the 1960s. She offered me this opportunity after I graduated from college, and I was able try out at The Second City – my aunt thought I would be a good fit there, and boy was she right. The first show I saw at The Second City – which I will never forget – was a night where Jane Lynch was sitting in for Bonnie Hunt, who was getting married that day. During the after show improvisation set, Hunt came on the stage to perform, in her wedding dress.

I went on to work with Jane Lynch at The Annoyance Theater doing the ‘Real Live Brady Bunch,’ and now I’m touring with her on her national ‘anti-Cabaret’ act, ‘See Jane Sing.’ We’ll be at the Lyric Opera House [Chicago] in January.

HollywoodChicago.com: You are in ‘Fourth Man Out,’ the opening night film of the Reeling Fest. Why do you think it is easier for the straight men of the generation depicted in the film to support their gay brothers and sisters?

Flannery: The world has changed so much, and younger kids have so much less judgement about everything – about coming out, about the transgender community, about racial issues – they don’t care to draw lines between people. I think that is fantastic, and this movie is the evolution of coming out in America. This is an amazing story that represents that change.



Kate Flannery and Evan Todd Do Two Versions of Opening Night Red Carpet Poses

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: After portraying a character for nine seasons on a hit sitcom, what trait do you believe you gave Meredith and what endearment or trait did she give back to you?

Flannery: Well, my Dad owned a bar in Philadelphia for 50 years, and I talked about it a lot, so I didn’t start out as a drunk. Whether that had anything to do with Meredith, I don’t know. [laughs] I guess it came naturally. What Meredith gave me was a sense of chutzpah, to be the loud and proud drunken floozy of ‘The Office.’ I can’t tell you how many women have come up to me and said, ‘I’m the Meredith of my office!’ And their attitude in the way they say it, I know they mean it.

I’ll tell you the other thing ‘The Office’ gave me. It was a dream come true, because I grew up watching the great ensemble comedies of the 1970s – ‘The Mary Tyler Moore Show,’ ‘M*A*S*H,’ ‘Cheers’ – so many great shows that changed the game. To actually be in the same world as those shows, and to have a finale that the audience actually celebrated and invested in, it was really gratifying.

HollywoodChicago.com: ‘The Office’ went through a lot of transitions in the last quarter of the show’s run. Was there any point during that

period that you felt any difficulty from the production?

Flannery: It's always hard when you lose the star of the show, and when Steve [Carell] left it was difficult on a couple levels, because he is such a great and 'high vibe' guy. He brought so much to each moment, on-screen and off. It doesn't get any better than Steve Carell. It's very rare when someone who is number one on the call sheet is more concerned about the whole show than just himself, and that was Steve. That was a gift that I learned from him.

HollywoodChicago.com: What were your thoughts the morning of the announcement of the Supreme Court that gay marriage would be the law of the land?

Flannery: Complete joy and disbelief, I never thought it would happen in my lifetime. It was an affirmation as to how fast the world is changing and evolving, and how lucky we are to see that.

HollywoodChicago.com: What issues do you anticipate for gay Americans in the upcoming presidential election?

Flannery: I think they just need to be picky as to who will best represent them. Some politicians aren't moving as fast as the rest of the country. They really need to get on board, because everyone else is on the fast track, and we're not going to slow down.

HollywoodChicago.com: Was your father's bar called 'Flannery's'?

Flannery It was 'Flannery's Tavern,' in Philadelphia, baby!



Parker Young of "Fourth Man Out" and TV's "Arrow"

Parker Young is an established young actor, who is a veteran of three major television shows in the past four years – "Suburgatory," "Enlisted" and "Arrow." He turns in a nuanced and sympathetic performance as the straight best friend of the "Fourth Man Out."

HollywoodChicago.com: You are actually representing a generation in their mid-twenties, as they accept their friends for who they are. What makes it easier for the straight men of today to welcome their gay brothers and sisters when they declare their orientation to the world?

Parker Young: It's one of those things that in the end, is the right thing to do, and as time progresses, the right thing always emerges as what we need to do. Our generation is more aware of what we think about it as individuals, and we're not listening to negative backlash when we don't agree with it.

HollywoodChicago.com: You have a significant role in the TV superhero show 'Arrow.' What is your opinion regarding the popularity of the superhero genre in the media, and why more that ever is it working for everyone?



Parker Young of 'Fourth Man Out'

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Young: I feel like superheroes have always been around in some form, but right now –with the production values of today – it's easier to make these shows. Also, audiences are so used to them right now, so you can depict the comic book clashes and violence within the stories, and it's reaching a larger and more diverse range of people. And in the end, everybody loves a superhero, I hope to portray one myself.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the circumstance of the first time you stepped in front of a big time professional job camera, and what now is the significance to you of the first line you said?

Young: The first thing that comes to mind is when I shot the pilot for the ABC-TV show 'Suburgatory.' The scene I auditioned for in the pilot was cut, so all I had to do was I had to jump out of a car and do a crazy dance. I thought to myself, I was so excited to be here and a part of

this, that I was going to do the best dance I knew how to do. So I jumped out, and did this ridiculous horse riding-type movement, and it ended up becoming an iconic image in the pilot, and when the show was picked up, my role grew significantly. Even though that was so tiny, I gave it my all, and it paid off.

**Evan Todd portrays Adam in “Fourth Man Out”**

Evan Todd is the title character in the Opening Night film, as a man in a smaller town with a loyal and diverse group of male friends, who decides to come out on his 24th birthday. His decision is met with confusion and transition, but always acceptance. Todd was also in one of the more notable TV holiday movies from last season, “Grumpy Cat’s Worst Christmas Ever.”

HollywoodChicago.com: Your character comes out to his male friends, and there is almost immediate acceptance. Why do you think your generation of straight men are willing to be more accepting than previous generations?

Evan Todd: I think that simply there are less hang-ups and that feeling of being emasculated when having gay friends. In general society, I think people are figuring out that it doesn’t take anything away from who they are, and really now nobody cares or makes a big deal out of it. We just want our friends to be happy and part of our lives.

HollywoodChicago.com: How did the four of you bond as friends in the film, beyond the rehearsal and story that is in the script?



Evan Todd (left) of ‘Fourth Man Out’
Photo credit: Jed Entertainment

Todd: We didn’t have much time, we met on set the first day. But we were staying at the same hotel and sharing the same trailer on the set. We had some time when we were hanging out off of the set, and that really helped.

HollywoodChicago.com: You were in the famous holiday classic, ‘Grumpy Cat’s Worst Christmas Ever,’ What is your favorite type of holiday film, and were you able to duplicate the enjoyment when doing your contribution to the holiday genre?

Todd: [Laughs] Honestly, one of my favorite holiday films was ‘Home Alone,’ so I felt I got to live a dream of being an idiot bad guy in the Grumpy Cat movie, which was similar. It was celebratory of family and all that crap, but also it was fun, and somebody got to win the day, which especially works during the holidays.

HollywoodChicago.com: What were your thoughts the morning of the announcement of the Supreme Court that gay marriage would be the law of the land?

Todd: I was relieved mostly, because I didn’t want to be disappointed. I went through the time when Proposition Eight in California passed [banning gay marriages] and I was so disappointed then, so I was ready for the country to take a stance and say, we’re no longer going to represent that viewpoint anymore as a country, and other people need to catch up.

HollywoodChicago.com: Do you foresee any issue being as important for gay Americans in the upcoming presidential election?

Todd: I think now it’s the transgender community that is picking up the spotlight, where they can start to advocate what they need. All communities are rallying around them as well, because – for example – the gay community wouldn’t have been able to achieve what they did without other parts of straight society rallying with them. And it will be the same for the transgender community.

**Van Hansis of “Kiss Me, Kill Me” and “As the World Turns”**

Van Hansis is representing his new film “Kiss Me, Kill Me” at the Reeling Fest, and he also has a place in TV history as well. While portraying Luke Snyder from 2005 to 2010 on the daytime drama “One Life to Live,” not only did the character come out as gay, but shared the first kiss to be shown between gay men in soap opera history.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the premise of the film ‘Kiss Me, Kill Me,’ that you are premiering at the Reeling Festival?

Van Hansis: It’s a sexy, stylish West Hollywood noir-type film, and has it’s roots in those 1940s detective thrillers where a beautiful person is

murdered and no one knows who they are. I'm really excited to be a part of it, and I had a blast working on it. It's directed by Casper Andreas, who does a lot of LGBT cinema, and we had a very fun cast.

HollywoodChicago.com: Speaking of the 'kiss,' you had a significant moment in daytime drama history, when you shared the first gay kiss on 'As the World Turns' in 2007. What surrounded that event at the time?



Van Hansis at 'Reeling33'

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Hansis: It was crazy, because it was my first real job as a performer, and I didn't understand how much of a moment it was for pop culture, and what it meant to a lot of people. At the time, I was just showing up for work and doing my job, and the script called for a kiss. In retrospect, I completely understand it now, and I'm grateful to have been a part of it.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was it like stepping into a pretty famous soap opera as your very first professional job?

Hansis: On that particular show, we would tape a scene, and then it wouldn't air for about a month. So you know the feeling when you listen to your voice on an answering machine? It was like that for me times 2000 when I saw that first scene on the air. It was so strange – I look like that? I sound like that? That's the way I move? [laughs] It took a lot of getting used to, I especially thought the boom mike was odd, towering above my head.

My first line was yelling something in a coffee shop. I took over the role of Luke Snyder as a older teenager. On soap operas, Luke was born on the show, and then they accelerate their ages until they get to be teenagers, and that's when I took over. The kid left one day, and I came in yelling at someone in a coffee shop, in my letterman jacket.

HollywoodChicago.com: What were your thoughts the morning of the announcement of the Supreme Court that gay marriage would be the law of the land?

Hansis: I was absolutely thrilled and excited. I actually did an interview that morning for a web series I'm directing, and I was saying then it's about damn time. I think the country as a whole knows it's about damn time, and I'm glad it turned out the way it did.

"Reeling33," Chicago's LGBTQ International Film Festival, runs from September 17th-24th, 2015. For film, events, venues and ticket information [click here](#). [24]



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