

## Interview: Adam Devine, Director Jake Szymanski Realize ‘Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates’

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- [20th Century Fox Films](#) [2]
- [Adam DeVine](#) [3]
- [Alice Wetterlund](#) [4]
- [Anna Kendrick](#) [5]
- [Aubrey Plaza](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Interview](#) [8]
- [Jake Johnson](#) [9]
- [Jake Szymanski](#) [10]
- [Kumail Nanjiani](#) [11]
- [Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates](#) [12]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [13]
- [Sam Richardson](#) [14]
- [Stephanie Faracy](#) [15]
- [Stephen Root](#) [16]
- [Zac Efron](#) [17]

CHICAGO – The funniest movie of the summer describes its whole situation through the title – “Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates.” This hilarious farce features a killer cast, led by Adam Devine and Zac Efron, and brilliant comic direction by Jake Szymanski.

The premise is simple...two brothers, who wreck every social event their family participates in, are chastised by their gruff-but-lovable father (the great Stephen Root) to get some decent dates for their sister’s upcoming wedding. Since each of the bros are between relationships, they solicit the potential dates on Craigslist. Enter two hard partying galpals (Aubrey Plaza and Anna Kendrick), who pretend to be virtuous to get a free vacation to Hawaii (the destination wedding). What could go wrong?



Adam Devine, Zac Efron, Anna Kendrick and Aubrey Plaza of ‘Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates’

*Photo credit: 20th Century Fox Films*

Plenty as it turns out, and the rip-roaring screenplay (based on a true story, wink-wink) – by Andrew Jay Cohen and Brendan O’Brien – is amazingly stitched together by director Szymanski (who began his career at FunnyOrDie.com), by simply focusing on the truth of the awkward pairings. Dave (Zac Efron) is the straight man, and he delivers unerringly, but Mike (Adam Devine) is the centerpiece brother of the duo, and jumps through the most hoops in the film. Devine began his career in 2006, and has made his mark on TV shows and movies as diverse as “Pitch Perfect” (2012), “Workaholics” (2011, also show creator), “Uncle Grandpa” (2013), “The Intern” (2015) and as the hapless Andy on ABC-TV’s “Modern Family.”

HollywoodChicago.com sat down with comic actor Devine and director Szymanski during a promotional tour for the film in May of 2016. “Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates” opens on Friday, July 8th.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Adam, it seems like you had a lot of freedom to establish a real comic character. Of all the characteristics of Mike, what was the key to make him both funny and real?

**Adam Devine:** Jake blessed me with that freedom. It’s really about committing super-hard to whatever you’re trying to create. In essence, I’m just copying my favorite comedic actors, and it’s the people who make me laugh the hardest who commit the hardest. I wanted the audience to fully believe in Mike, even though he’s doing outlandish things. If the viewer believes the character, then he will be funny.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jake, this film feels like a step by step formulation. How did Andrew Jay Cohen, Brendan O’Brien and yourself take a simple idea like this and expand it to comedy glory?

**Jake Szymanski:** The guys did a great job with the script – when I read it, I felt like it would be one big party. That was my goal, to keep heightening the craziness to ratchet up the tension of a wedding. That was the plan, so if it came off that way, then great.

**Devine:** My agent pitched me the film before I read it, and I was like, ‘what?’ [laughs] Then I read it, and it was so funny.

**Szymanski:** When I went in for my first meeting, after reading the script, my first note was ‘they do a Craigslist ad, they end up on TV, maybe that’s a bit too much.’ And the writers told me that really happened – I didn’t know it was based on a true story. I said, ‘What? This is bananas!’

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The stuff that worked was the stuff that seemed true, like the hilarious montage of family events that Mike and Dave ruined, and especially the exploding RV scene...

**Szymanski:** Our explosions guy was the same guy on the ‘Transformers’ movies, and we literally didn’t know how big that explosion was going to be. All he said to me was, ‘hey I have fireworks shooting out of it, but I’m adding a flame ball, too. Is that all right?’ I just said, ‘yeah, sure.’ When that thing went off, the actors thought the stunt had gone wrong. [laughs]

**Devine:** I seriously hit the deck. I went down hard and really felt the heat. That reaction is real. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jake, what personally was your favorite scene to shoot?

**Szymanski:** Probably the ‘All Terrain Vehicle’ [ATV] scenes. That was about playing with toys and filming a quasi-action sequence.

**Devine:** Yeah, that was fantastic fun. Because even when he called ‘cut,’ I’m still on a cool ATV! I would gun it every time the scene ended.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Adam, this is the first film in which you would be considered a lead role. What extra considerations come with that territory, and did you feel you had nailed it after the shoot was done?

**Devine:** I’m always thinking, ‘my career is over, I have to move back to Omaha, and work on the railroad, with the rest of my family. [laughs] So no, I’m never thinking I’ve ‘arrived.’ I think that’s a good way to be.

**Szymanski:** Didn’t you go back to Omaha after the film wrapped?

**Devine:** I got my overalls on, and my lantern, all ready to start working on the line again. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jake, what does the great comic actor Stephen Root bring to the table in the role of Burt [the father of Mike and Dave] that you think other actors couldn’t do? For example, his slamming of a door was a perfect ‘Dad’ thing to do...

**Szymanski:** He broke that door, and it was at a fancy hotel.

**Devine:** The production had to buy a new door.

**Szymanski:** I said, ‘go nuts, go at it.’ I was encouraging him to really mangle the door in his anger. They were unusual doors anyway, so it was even funnier.

**Devine:** I went back to that villa, when I did my stand-up TV show, ‘House Party,’ and those doors are confusing.

**Szymanski:** I’ve done that several times in my life, and if you’ve had a few drinks, you can get mad at something stupid like a hard-to-close door. ‘Why won’t the door close?’ And having Stephen Root do it, well, he is a comic genius.





ATV Scene: Adam Devine in ‘Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates’  
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox Films

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Adam, you’re opposite Zac Efron, one of the more beautiful men in moviedom. What do you admire about Zac that has taken him beyond his looks, especially as a comedy partner?

**Devine:** It’s about what I was saying earlier, Zac fully commits to delivering the character. That’s why he comes off as so funny, even though he’s not necessarily a comic actor. But that is why when someone like Jake is directing him, and giving him funny stuff to do, he’s able to commit to that, and you believe him in that situation.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jake, one of the huge strengths of the film was how the team characterized Tatiana [Plaza] and Alice [Kendrick] as more badass and adventurous than their equally strange wedding dates. How do you think you’ve nailed this generation of women better than other films?

**Szymanski:** Yes, this is a generational statement film about women today. [laughs] I don’t know about that, but it was really important to me to balance out the script, because initially it was all the guy’s film. I wanted to make it a true four-hand ensemble. The women are the driving force of the film, and they have just as much fun – if not more fun – than the guys.

There aren’t many roles out there like that for women, and I also think it will be fun for the women in the audience, to see Aubrey and Anna play real characters who do have fun, even if they are a bit crazy. There are no stereotypes in the film.

**Devine:** They are more integral to this story than just being our ‘dates,’ they are true characters rather than just love interests.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Adam, you are nearing a production date of the first movie you’ve written, ‘When We First Met.’ What did you find most daunting about writing a script, and where did you find your inspiration for both the plot and characters?

**Devine:** It’s really just ‘Mike and Dave’ 2. [laughs] ‘When We First Met’ wasn’t fully my idea, the script had been written, but the producers asked me to get involved. And although the original writers were great, I had to tweak it to my brand of comedy. They had me do a ‘comedy pass’ on the script, to make it more current to me – and so I went through it, took every scene apart and rebuilt it. But I kept the same bones of the script, and adjusted it to make it seem more natural coming from me.

**Szymanski:** I have nothing to do with this movie, but it’s so important in comedy to re-write to the style of the comic actor that you’re casting. If you put it in their voice, and give them freedom to do it, it comes out way better.

**Devine:** Comics know that they do best. They might not be best to rewrite to another person’s comedy, but they know what is best for them. Luckily, I come from both a writing background – with ‘Workaholics’ – and I also act in what I’ve written. That ‘First Met’ script was fun to do, and the fact that afterward that they told me we had a budget and they were producing it, then all the better.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jake, you were an early online influencer with ‘Funny or Die.’ How do you believe that web site has changed or challenged the comic landscape?



Adam Devine & Jake Szymanski in Chicago  
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox Films

**Szymanski:** Well, I know I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for 'Funny Or Die.' It's this digital generation that can do this, put stuff online, to work it out and show the world what they can do. It puts more eyeballs on a wider range of people's work.

**Devine:** You really develop your voice and, as a director, learn how to do it and learn how to run a set – it's just on a smaller scale, and gives you experience before taking the next step. It used to be you had to be almost like a rich kid to be a director, or needed to be highly financed to make a short film. Now you can learn on your own, and post stuff, and I think in the next ten years there is going to be a wave of talented directors. It's happening somewhat now, but it's going to explode.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** But do you see a difficulty with too much material out there to access?

**Szymanski:** I think good material always rises. My philosophy regarding online video, if it's bad, no one sees it. But if it's good, people pass it around. That's how things get seen, it gets passed around. No one passes around bad stuff.

**Devine:** Or if there is there is a funny cat in it. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** David Letterman once called show business 'high school with money.' Besides prom king Zac Efron, who are currently the most popular kids in the high school of show business?

**Szymanski:** I don't know. That's a good question. I wish I up to speed more on this stuff. I've been in a cave editing this film for the last six months. I came out of the cave, saw that Trump is the nominee, and thought, 'what happened'? I edited for too long, I felt like Rip Van Winkle.

**Devine:** There are people like Anna and Zac, who are household names. And then there is people like Aubrey, who are emerging...

**Szymanski:** Adam is definitely in the high school. If you flip through the 'yearbook,' Adam is on nine pages!

**Devine:** Or – better explanation – I am the student photographer who secretly inserted pictures of myself. The head of the yearbook staff would say, 'We gave you a camera and somehow you got more photo credits?' [laughs]

*"Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates" opens everywhere on July 8th. Featuring Adam Devine, Zac Efron, Anna Kendrick, Aubrey Plaza, Stephen Root, Alice Wetterlund, Kumail Nanjiani, Jake Johnson, Sam Richardson and Stephanie Faracy. Written by Andrew Jay Cohen and Brendan O'Brien. Directed by Jake Szymanski. Rated "R"*



[18]

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- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/adam-devine>
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