

Podtalk: Director Stephen Merchant for 'Fighting with My Family'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 20, 2019 - 2:18pm

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CHICAGO – Stephen Merchant is well known for his hilarious takes on über-tall (he's six-foot-seven) and awkward comedy. He helped create the British "The Office" TV series with longtime collaborator Ricky Gervais, and HBO shows like "Extras" and "Hello Ladies." He writes and directs his first major feature, the pro wrestling film "Fighting with My Family."

The film is produced by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who also makes an appearance in this based-on-truth story of "Paige" (Florence Pugh), a World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) mainstay who came from a pro wrestling family in Britain. It's an insider's view of the preparation and sacrifice it takes to make the big time, as well as a family story about the odds being stacked against it. You'll hear the origin of Merchant's involvement in the Podtalk, told in his unique dry style.



Stephen Merchant with Dwayne Johnson, On Set for 'Fighting with My Family'

Photo credit: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Stephen James Merchant was born in Bristol, England, and began his broadcasting career while still at the University of Warwick. His sly demeanor was legendary on "The Steve Show," and it helped launch a stand up comedy act. He met Ricky Gervais when he was hired to work with him on another radio station (apparently Merchant's resume was the first one handed to him). Through a BBC production course, he created a short film called "Seedy Boss" with Gervais, which became the genesis for the original British "The Office" TV series, which took off like a rocket in 2001. He continued to work in radio while writing and performing in "The Office," and was an executive producer with Gervais when the American version started in 2005.

Post that show biz phenomenon, Gervais and Merchant went on to create a notable podcast and the TV show “Extras,” which aired in the U.S. on HBO, which led to “Hello Ladies” (2013), also on HBO and based on Merchant’s stand up act. He has also appeared in films, including “Hot Fuzz” (2007), “The Tooth Fairy” (2010, with Dwayne Johnson) and the recent “Girl in the Spider’s Web” (2018) in a non-comedic role. He does a small bit in “Fighting with my Family,” which also features Nick Frost and Vince Vaughn.

In PART ONE of a Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, director/writer Stephen Merchant talks about his connection to “Fighting with My Family” and bridging the gap between Britain and American ideals.

In PART TWO, Merchant and McDonald riff on being tall, stories of “The Office” and the best pick up lines from the creator of “Hello Ladies.”

“Fighting with My Family” opens everywhere on February 22nd. Featuring Florence Pugh, Jack Lowden, Nick Frost, Lena Headey, Vince Vaughn, Stephen Merchant and Dwayne Johnson as himself. Written and directed by Stephen Merchant. Rated “PG-13”



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 24 2024 - 5:02am):
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