

Flashback: A Screech Interview, Dustin Diamond Dies at 44

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CHICAGO – A man called Screech is gone. Dustin Diamond, who portrayed the Screech character for many years on the series “Saved by the Bell” and its various iterations, passed away on February 1st, 2021, in a Florida hospital after a bout with cancer. He was 44.

The character Diamond is best known for, Samuel “Screech” Powers, began on the Disney Channel in 1988 in “Good Morning Miss Bliss.” NBC-TV had the rights to the show’s premise, and re-tooled it into “Saved by the Bell” in 1989, and it became a touchstone show for that teenage generation through its four seasons and spinoffs. After leaving the franchise in 2000 (“Saved by the Bell: The New Class”) Diamond began life’s roller coaster ride that many child actors endure.



Dustin Diamond in Chicago, circa 2012

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

He reinvented himself as a stand-up comedian, but also made himself available for a number of reality shows, including *Celebrity Boxing* (versus Ron “Horschack” Palillo), and cameo parts in films such as “*Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star*” and “*Made,*” both exploiting his former role as Screech. He appeared on a sex tape (“*Screeched – Saved by the Smell*”) and contributed to the tell-all book “*Behind the Bell*” (although he later repudiated the ghost written tome). He was arrested in 2014 in a bar altercation, and served three months. His cancer diagnosis came three weeks before his death.

In 2012, Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com interviewed Dustin Diamond at “The Hollywood Show,” and photographer Joe Arce took his portrait.

HollywoodChicago.com: You had the rare opportunity of starting out with a part as a kid and taking it all the way to young adulthood. Did you trust or mistrust the production team with the character and did you get frustrated at times as you were changing and growing, and that the character wasn’t?

Dustin Diamond: We grow together with the character, because you’re with it every single day. The biggest frustration was changing to prime time, ‘The College Years.’ Then it was like you don’t want to change it too much, and not fix it if it isn’t broken, but you also have to change a bit for an older audience. The College Years didn’t pan out just for that reason.

HollywoodChicago.com: You wrote a book a couple years ago about the ‘Bell’ experience. How was that able to purge both the good and bad of the whole trip?

Diamond: A lot of the stories I put in the book were simply answers to the questions I had been getting over the years. People kept asking me who was dating who and what was happening behind the scenes. I got tired of talking about it, so I just put it in book form. I wanted to write a story of my life, but all the book publishers were interested in was the dirt. I talked to a ghost writer, and they put things in there that I never say, like ‘douche-nozzle.’ I’ve never said that in my life. When I read it, I laughed. I guess they fulfilled their 80,000 words.



Dustin Diamond as Screech on ‘Saved by the Bell’
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Entertainment

HollywoodChicago.com: When you live in the show business community of Los Angeles, what are the best places to escape to, when you’re trying to avoid anything to do with the entertainment industry?

Diamond: Gleenblatt’s Deli on Sunset. They have a great rare roast beef sandwich that’s awesome. They don’t have a sandwich named for me yet, but I might change my name to ‘Rare Roast Beef’ Diamond. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You’ve done stand-up comedy, what excites you about the tightrope walking of that particular experience, and how long did it take you to feel comfortable with what you were doing?

Diamond: I’ve been in the business 27 years, but every time before a stand-up show, I get butterflies. I don’t look at it as nervousness, but adrenalin. It’s your energy, you have to wield it. Stand-up in general is the most raw form of entertainment. There is no pyrotechnics or back-up dancers, it’s just live and die by your jokes, that’s it.

Sources for this article were from wikipedia.com. Dustin Diamond, 1977-2021



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