

Entertainment Outlook

Talking with RICHARD DREYFUSS

STAR SPEAK



FRANK SANELLO

Actor Richard Dreyfuss teams for the third time with director Steven Spielberg in "Always," a romantic drama based on the 1943 fantasy film "A Guy Named Joe." Dreyfuss' previous collaborations with Spielberg, "Jaws" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," were two of the biggest hits of the 1970s.

Born in Brooklyn, where his father was an attorney, Dreyfuss moved to Beverly Hills at the age of 8 and began working in local theater. During the Vietnam War, he was a conscientious objector and worked in a hospital as alternate service.

He made his film debut with a bit part in 1967's "Valley of the Dolls." It wasn't until 1973, however, that Dreyfuss established himself as a major American actor with his performances in two classic films, "American Graffiti" and "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz."

His commercial success in the Spielberg films was topped in 1977 with critical acclaim when he won the Best Actor Oscar in Neil Simon's "The Goodbye Girl," opposite Marsha Mason.

But over the next decade, his career went into a downturn until his triumphant performance in the hit comedy "Down and Out in Beverly Hills."

Dreyfuss' next film, "Once Around," will reunite him with his diminutive "Always" co-star Holly Hunter. The film will be directed by Lasse Hallstrom ("My Life as a Dog").

Q. Was Holly Hunter cast as your romantic interest to make you look like a basketball player?

A. Holly is the perfect size for me. Plus she's intelligent, malleable, tough.

Q. You have the Spencer Tracy role in "Always." Did you ever find yourself imitating his performance?

A. Imitating Tracy was a good tool sometimes. At other times, I wondered if I was relying too much on him. He was extraordinary. Only two actors have been able to achieve a kind of rhythm with prose: Charles Laughton and Tracy. You can hear it in the rooftop scene in "Desk Set." An odd, totally rhythmic quality.

Q. Which of your own films are you most pleased with?

A. I don't watch my own work. I don't avoid them. Maybe I'll see a film of mine once, then never again. I don't like to study myself.

Q. After the success of your film "Stakeout" in 1987, several critics

said you had become a sex symbol. "Always" also casts you as a larger-than-life romantic hero. After a career of playing nerds, how did you feel about your new identity on screen?

'I like being a sex symbol, although it's not something I want to be exclusively in films.'

— Richard Dreyfuss

A. I like being a sex symbol, although it's not something I want to be exclusively in films. But I have to admit I always had it in the back of mind: Why aren't I playing sex symbols? So when I finally got to play one, it felt real good.

Q. How would you describe your working relationship with Steven Spielberg?

A. I give up a lot of my creative control when I work with Steven. Steven and I have a shorthand (using) grunts and raised eyebrows. I like to discuss my role with most directors, but with him I just lay back. He has a



Richard Dreyfuss

wizardry I don't have. "Jaws" will stand as one of the greatest films of the postwar era.

Q. Are you pleased with the current state of filmmaking?

A. I should have been born in 1915. I'm an actor who would have flourished better in the '30s and the '40s. In the old days, an actor did 12 movies a year. One stretched that way.

Q. What kind of films would you like to make?

A. I hope "Glory" is a huge success, so more historical films are made. Every time a turkey like "Revolution" comes out, it puts another nail in the coffin of historical films. The public's been shown a lot of bad historical dramas lately.

Q. I've been told by Spielberg and others that everyone on the set of "Always" was in awe of Audrey Hepburn.

A. I made the mistake once of telling her it was a thrill to work with her, and she said, "Oh, shut up!"

Q. Holly Hunter told me you were an intellectual and very well-read. What are you reading now?

A. Antonia Fraser's biography of Oliver Cromwell. I love history. I'd like to play Tom Paine, Huey Long....

Q. Is this a good time in Richard Dreyfuss' life right now?

A. I'm happy. I have two kids, I'm 42, and I make a good living. My wife is involved in a zillion charities. I'm thinking of sending her to Sainthood Anonymous. She makes me a better person because of her involvement in various causes.

OUR LANGUAGE

by Jeffrey McQuain

Yawp cries out or makes a harsh sound. You shouldn't yawn at this clue: Change the n of yawn to p for yawp.

Never forget the e on the end of mustache. Good spelling, of course, can be painful; every speller of mustache "must ache."

OUR LANGUAGE AD-VICE: This week the Ad-Vice Award goes to a refrigerator manufacturer whose product is "Guaranteed Until 2000 A.D." When used with a specific year, the abbreviation A.D. should be placed before the year, not after. Put the abbreviation afterward in "the 20th century A.D." but remember to save a specific year for last, especially as we start A.D. 1990.



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