

The Hot Seat



James Van Der Beek

The charismatic actor ditches his nice-guy persona in a new sitcom. By **Sarah Bruning**

A lot of actors aren't willing to poke fun at themselves, but you seem like you're game for anything, like playing a version of yourself in the new sitcom, *Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23*. Have you always been self-deprecating?

Yeah. I think I may have lost it at some point in the early 2000s, but then I regained it. It's amazing what unemployment will do. [Laughs]

The “Crying Dawson” animated GIF went totally viral and kicked off a bunch of “Vandermemes.” Which is your favorite?

You know, it's funny: We shot the clips in just one day. [Funny or Die] crew members would shout out a GIF idea, and I would just do it. It was total improv, and we did it so quickly that I have no real recollection of what we filmed. But I think my favorite meme would have to be where I do some around-the-world motion with my head as if I were on *Jerry Springer*. When I saw it, I cracked myself up.

Speaking of Funny or Die, the video where you modeled DILF-brand khakis was hilarious. Do you consider yourself a “Dad I'd Like to Fuck”?

As long as my wife does, I'm cool!

Fair enough! Are you a khakis guy in real life, or do you prefer a different type of DILF-wear?

I've been rocking a shawl-neck sweater lately. I don't know if that makes me Mister Rogers or a DILF. Maybe somewhere in between.

People have come up with some pretty funny nicknames for you. Which one do you think is the most clever?

I like “Le Beek C'est Chic,” which came from [writer] Nahnatchka Khan of *Apartment 23*. My nickname throughout college was always “Van Der...” and then whatever anybody else wanted to put at the end of it, whether it rhymed or not. I always responded to “Van Der Motherfucker.”

How would you describe your personal sense of humor?

Mostly inappropriate—or the wrong thing in any given situation. For *Dawson's Creek*, I was playing the most sensitive human being on the

face of the earth. At the end of a take, I'd just say the most inappropriate and dirty thing.

My castmates would always get a big laugh, because it was just the last thing you'd expect to come out of my mouth.

***Apartment 23* is about a pair of incompatible roommates. What's your worst cohabitation story?**

I've always had good luck. My college roommate was a dwarf. We got along great and roomed together for two years.

Any strange fan interactions?

A woman in North Carolina followed me out of the local Harris Teeter and was looking in my grocery bag, which I thought was odd. Then she took her hand, wiped the dirt off of my car and said, “Thank you, I will take this home to my children!” and just walked away.

Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23 premieres Wed 11.