



Ari Graynor and Cheyenne Jackson of *The Performers*

You both play porn stars in the new Broadway comedy *The Performers*. What kind of research did you do for your roles?

Ari Graynor: For me, I was most concerned about understanding the inner life of this woman. To me it kind of had less to do with porn; it's not a documentary about porn, you know? I wanted to be true to the story that we were telling about her.

Cheyenne Jackson: It's different for men than it is for women in the industry. If you're good at it, and women want to work with you, you can work until you're in your sixties. So it was important for me to understand why these guys got into it, how it affects their personal lives, what do their families think about it and their psyche. What causes someone to think, Oh, I'll do that! My character, Mandrew, is so passionate, he really thinks this is a true art form. He thinks he's, like, Steven Soderbergh. The stakes couldn't be higher for these people. It means everything.

How skimpy will your costumes get?

Jackson: We've made a conscious decision to not talk about how naked I get, but suffice to say that the people who come to see that [aspect] will be satisfied. [Laughs]

Graynor: That's so cheeky! What, are you going to screw the whole audience?

Jackson: No! But that's the million-dollar question, and I think it's important to have some kind of air of mystery about it.

So what would be your real-life porn names?

Graynor: It's your childhood pet and the street that you grew up on. So mine is Yaya Highledge.

Jackson: Nice. Mine is Conan Meadows.

Do you have backstories for those names?

Jackson: I think he would be an ex-football player, not so bright. Before that he worked at a Dairy Queen, and somebody asked him to enter a hot-body competition, and he got a lot of attention. He thought, 'I can't play sports anymore, so I'll dance,' and that segued into porn.

Graynor: Yaya Highledge grew up on the East Coast. She was an intellectual, and she got upset that there wasn't more accessible porn for women...

Jackson: I love it; this is going completely the other way.

Graynor: She entered the porn world as an entrepreneur and started a company that made porn for women, which is just really hot sex with good-looking people, nothing too outrageous. Then she created a magazine for it. She directs as well, but she was the first star of the company. —Sarah Bruning

The Performers is playing at the Longacre Theatre, 220 W 48th St between Broadway and Eighth Ave (theperformersonbroadway.com). \$34.50–\$197. Opens Wed 14.