

The Hot Seat



Joe Manganiello

True Blood's maverick werewolf drops trou as a big-screen stripper in *Magic Mike*.

By Sarah Bruning

Between *Magic Mike* and *True Blood*, you're giving Taylor Lautner a run for his shirtless money....

[Laughs] A few years ago, I was introduced to the guy who plays Teen Wolf [on MTV] and someone said, "Hey Joe, this is Teen Wolf!" I said, "Hey man, I'm thirtysomething wolf."

So who would win in a werewolf fight: your character on *True Blood*, Jacob from *Twilight* or Scott from *Teen Wolf*?

That's going to be an easy decision after everyone sees what happens [with my character]. Alcide is a bad man this year.

How long did it take you to perfect his growl?

I was growling in my audition. [Laughs] I remember sitting in the waiting room, and the walls were very thin in the casting office, so I could hear the guys before me. [They weren't really] growling or going there. I started second-guessing myself. And I decided, You know what? I'm going to do my thing, and it's either going to be the coolest thing anyone's ever seen, or I'm going to look like the biggest idiot.

You got the part, so it worked.

I was probably 24 inches away from the casting director's face. She's this 4-foot-11-inch-tall woman from Long Island, and I'm growling and snarling and frothing at the mouth in her face. That was the start of it.

Sounds like you really channeled your inner wolf.

During freshman year in drama school at Carnegie Mellon, we had

to do an animal project where they sent us to the zoo to study an animal, and then we had to inhabit that animal for up to three and a half hours a day for seven weeks.

Yikes. What was your animal?

I wanted to be a tiger or something cool, but I was a penguin. I remember thinking, This is the dumbest shit I've ever done in my life. When am I ever going to use this? But here we are.

You interviewed a friend of yours who used to strip to research your role in *Magic Mike*. What did he say?

His insight was mostly about the lifestyle and the tone. When I read the script, it [came off as] this Soderberghesque exposé. But when I sat down and interviewed my friend, I realized how funny it all is. It was almost like the sense of humor of '80s pro wrestling. I laughed for two hours while I sat at the table with this guy.

What was the biggest surprise you learned about the stripping world?

There is a whole crazy Peter Pan Lost Boys culture. They go to work, do drugs, drink with their buddies, make money from women. These guys wind up in their 40s—sometimes 50s—still in that lifestyle.

That's quite the juxtaposition.

It's sad, creepy, grimy and the most fun you've ever had all at once. And as [my friend is] telling me this, he kinda looks off into space, pauses and says, "Man, those were the best days of my life."

Magic Mike is currently in theaters.

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