

INTERVIEW WITH MEMBER OF THE WEEK:

DYLAN RAMSEY

Dylan Ramsey

Canadian Actor

Dylan, our Actor/Producer of the Week stars in film, television and stage (most recently "E-Ring", "All Lies on Me" and "Vacancy"). He is currently producing a feature film and has previously produced three films.

For more info visit: www.dylanramsey.com



Some people say that there is too much competition in LA and since a lot of the Hollywood Productions come to Toronto, an actor would have a better chance of getting roles in Toronto. What has your experience been like?

ACTRA recently quoted that the amount of "runaway" productions from the US to Canada equates to less than 3%. Keeping this in mind, the amount of competition in Toronto is relatively equal to that of Los Angeles when you include the amount of work being produced in both Countries. Now factor in the amount of talented and driven people in LA and the competition stigma lessens. What you need is a great team behind you, and personal initiative/motivation on top of being skilled in the craft. This does not mean lots of training, but having the chops to deliver the work when you get in the door. I still study but I am also true to myself. Lastly, you need a realistic mindset – you have to be in this for the long haul. For some it would take ten years before they break through the door. I have met those people; I have also met the "overnighters". Believe me when I tell you the passion and truth in those who worked hard far surpasses those who win it overnight. They relish it more and appreciate the respect that they have earned.

How long did you try acting in Toronto before moving to LA?

This is honestly irrelevant. How long. What does that truly mean? I began acting in Toronto in 2003. I left for Los Angeles in 2005. So I hustled in Toronto for around two years. Some actors joked around and called me "The King of Independent Film" while in Toronto hahaha. A lot of actors that I met in Toronto kept asking me why I was here (in Toronto), because I had dual citizenship (Canada, USA). It came to a point where just after one year I thought I should move to LA (in 2004). I planned for it and when it came down to the wire it felt wrong. I was following OTHER people's instructions and feelings not mine. However my plan to relocate to Los Angeles in 2005 felt right. My entire being knew that it was time for me to leave. So I picked up and left. Good and bad things happened to me in Toronto and I knew that if I wanted to really test my drive it was time to hit LA. I was and still am just another Canadian/American down here hustling. I do work more as an actor in LA.

How long have you been acting in LA?

As I mentioned earlier I relocated to Los Angeles in February of 2005. I came down with three other friends (two guys, one girl and myself); I planned and organized the trip for a whole six months. Spoke with a lot of other Canadians that were heading down for pilot season (almost had a team of twenty to travel with). We had a three-month plan. Check into a long-term (monthly hotel: Highland Gardens). Then re-evaluate and decide to go from there. The girl left after the three months, LA wasn't working out for her however she is working in Toronto constantly and I have to proudly admit, she wrote and is now pitching her own TV Series. One of the guys just took off back home (after a year and a half) but that was an unexpected move he

will be back. The last of us is still down here with me, and is doing well. I was the only one with papers and the last fellow got his American Residency (after much crazy hard work) in six months of moving down!

LA is great, I get seen a lot and book enough to keep myself pre-occupied. Casting is much more open to seeing developmental talent (that's me) than it is in Toronto. I know a couple of actors in Toronto who are/were series regulars and they still can't get seen in Toronto.

How many more auditions and acting jobs have you been able to get in LA?

I auditioned more this summer (over thirty, Lesa Kirk is a God send!!!! I absolutely love her) for the USA than I have in my entire two years in Toronto. These auditions were for leading roles in feature films and series leads or recurring in television productions. For over seventy percent of my auditions it was down to the wire (another person and myself). It takes time to beat out the name talent and I am here for the long haul. Two recent experiences that I would love to share are:



Dec 2005 (no snow!) I auditioned for a play "VACANCY" in North Hollywood, a leading role. The production was having a difficult time casting this role. I walked in and delivered. After I was done the team of three individuals thanked me and I left. For some reason I thought I totally blew it. I ran into [Tonya Lee Williams](#) (an amazing woman, who I am lucky enough to call my friend, gosh I love her) and she recognized me from the ACTRA Event that I attended when she received her Award of Excellence (you go girl!). We exchanged hellos and that made me feel all the more vulnerable (as a result of my audition). Anyhow, three weeks later I got a call from the theatre company and I thought they were going to offer me discounted tickets for their show (hahaha, I actually told them I

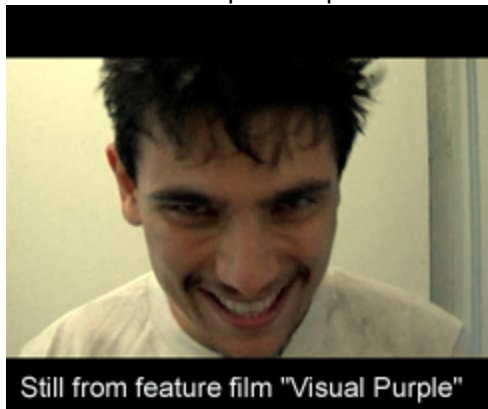
thought there were calling to offer me tickets) after they laughed they offered me the lead saying that it was a no-brainer for them to have cast me. I was flattered, and since then I have made an awesome friend ([Richard Dubin](#), the assistant director) who is amazing and has been a great supporter since. It was a sold out run (two weeks, long for Hollywood Theatre) and Gerry Jordan (my Toronto Agent) was down and came to see the play with Tonya.

The second story is when I booked a day player role on a SAG indie-feature film "[ALL LIES ON ME](#)" (indie in LA means that its not backed by a studio, this film had a budget of \$500,000). My role was opposite [Fredro Starr](#) (Save the Last Dance, Torque) and he was awesome, funny and we got along really well. I played the role of Petrov (a Russian porn producer) and when we shot my scenes I had the director, producers, writer and crew laughing so hard. I got a call later that night saying that they wrote me in more later on in the film and bumped me up to a supporting role. They loved the work. Great things come to those who just want to work and really sink their teeth into the moment.

To make this real quick I guess, I used the first year (2005) to settle down in LA, get a job (bartender, yay) and make a living to pay for the car, rent, bills, acting classes, headshots, etc and well you know how much we dish out... then in 2006 I hustled to get myself an agent and manager down here and then went to producers for shows like LOST, 24 (three times now), CSI Miami, blah blah blah.... Booked a role on E-RING (opposite Benjamin Bratt & Dennis Hopper, thank you Jessie Disla, the casting director). It goes on and on. The point is, when you are ready and comfortable personally, you will be ready to focus on the work.

How easy or difficult is it to network and make the right contacts in LA?

It's very easy and very difficult. LA is that city that we heard about, and the city that we never heard about. There are so many events out here. I did the whole "red carpet" hoopla when I first got out there. A friend of mine got me in to all those parties (I thank him for it), however that got old real quick. You meet all kinds of awesome, amazing people and you will meet all kinds of sleaze. Always go with your gut and try these things out. The best people I have met, who I call friends, came from hard work and just being real and honest and true to myself. I made an excellent FRIEND (not contact) from E-RING. I can't believe that I did and who this person is. I am very grateful for them reaching out. We get together and talk and I learn about their life and triumphs as well as difficulties and I share mine. Being with this person has taught me that my issues are quite different to that of those who are in the "big leagues." The best is when I know I can help them out. I met Cynthia Butler-Hayden the founder of the PRISM Awards (at a red carpet event) who I put in touch with Tonya (they share the same mandate). She is a beautiful person (they both are). As a bartender I met some amazing talented people who I can now call friends: [Ricky Brava](#), [Barbara Eve Harris](#), [Peter J. Aguilar](#), Alan Fulmer, [David Heisler](#) (up and coming actor, established actress, established producer, up and coming producer, and photographer respectively). I also get to meet stars, celebs, and transients, rich and poor folk. The reality is, you get what you put out there... There is goodness and greatness for all of those who aspire to seek it. But this city waits to swallow up those who want take that road too.



Still from feature film "Visual Purple"

How were you able to get a Work Visa and what kind of Visa did you get? How long did it take to get it and how much did all the expenses total to?

My father, the greatest man alive, was able to get American Residency on account of his hard work as an esteem professor. He came to Canada/America with hopes of opening doors for his family and children. After a couple of years in Canada (which were hard and difficult) he left for the USA where he now works constantly and gets to travel. Again, the USA opened doors for him like it is now opening for me. I have never met someone that works harder than my father (but we all say that about our parents). I thank my father for his brevity, passion, love and understanding.



On set of film "Together"

There are at least seven friends of mine who have managed to get two/three year VISAS to the USA. Each of them spent around \$5000 (not sure which currency) and with a month of intense hard work (harder for those with scarce resumes) all managed to get their VISAS. They are down here now hustling like each one of us.

What is like to live in such a spread out city like LA with its supposed smog and how does it compare to living in a city that has a dense downtown?

I love New York and Toronto, I just wished it never snowed or rained as much. When I first got to LA (I will share this with you and you all can laugh) I cried the first three nights. We were staying in a hostel and all four of us got packed into one small room. I balled my eyes out hahaha! No heater, it was Feb the nights are freaking cold at that time of the year and I got sick. I made it my madness to find better accommodations and moved to the Highland Gardens within a week (thank heavens for that place). I never really noticed the smog until I spent three months in Vancouver this past summer (first time there). Vancouver is absolutely beautiful. If I ever raise a family, I would move there. Or retire there. Vancouver has a downtown like Toronto/New York, then it has North Vancouver which reminds me of Hollywood Hills (the hilly suburbs of Hollywood) and the best place ever in Vancouver KITSILANO which reminds me of the cleaner places in LA (like Santa Monica). Oh right... we were talking about Los Angeles. hahaha. I thought I disliked LA until I went home during the summer of 2005 (to visit family and friends). While driving on the DVP to an audition (some episodic, thanks Gerry) I suddenly asked myself "what am I doing here, this isn't home" and that is when I realized that LA is home. I love it here. The city is spread out like a nightmare, but you get used to the driving and value the alone time as your time to just relax and listen to your favorite music, CDs (dialect, acting, whatever), talk shows, reflect on your character, work personal life. It's probably your only alone time that you have and it's awesome. Everyone says each section of LA is so different. Like Santa Monica is different from Venice, from West Hollywood, from Hollywood, from Pasadena from any other section. Honestly, besides the level of cleanliness all the houses (structures) are the same. But what you do get is the different kinds of people who click to that lifestyle, canyons, parks, beaches and restaurants. I am a Yonge & Eglinton kind of guy myself. Some people prefer the Annex, The Beaches, Bloor & Bathurst, etc... You will find your niche. One thing I do miss terribly is the walking. I love to walk, and walking is almost not an option in LA. It's too bad.



Anything else?

Doesn't matter which city you are in, or what level of competition, follow your heart/gut. The answer there is always right. I could never book a commercial for North America while in Toronto. But I booked every European commercial I read for. Toronto may have not worked for me during my early stages, but everyone's journey is different. There are people I highly respect that leave LA after every pilot season with their Asses kicked (so they say/believe). We all have our own journey and I only started mine. I have no idea what to do, how to do, or what is right or wrong. I don't listen to "rules", I listen to my gut and I surround myself with like people. Its funny, when I first started this career (I never wanted to be an actor) I had my reasons. Those reasons have changed so drastically. I can now safely say that life has given me a purpose to pursuing this career and that there is something deeper and as each day passes I am coming closer to that truth. I can't wait to share it with others. It is wonderful and amazing to feel a huge change in such a short time span (a year). Embrace change, it is the best thing and follow the truth that screams within you.



Best of luck and much love to all of you, enjoy the journey.

Lastly, thank you Curt for reaching out and giving me this opportunity to share my story.