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15 June 2008 22:06

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 - Interviews
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 - Features
 - Inside Hollywood
 - Film Forum
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- Music
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- What's New
- Downloads
- Competitions
- E-Cards
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Casey Affleck: Gone Baby Gone

03 Jun 2008

Unlike his brother Ben, box office success has so far eluded Casey Affleck. That's about to change with the release of *Gone Baby Gone*, a film directed by Ben starring the other Affleck that everyone's talking about.

Favouring indie movies, such as Gus Van Sant's *Gerry*, over 'The End of the World is Nigh' blockbusters such as *Armageddon* and outright turkeys like *Gigli*, Casey's career path has been very different to his brother's. He's also managed to avoid the co-joining of his name with that of his partner Summer Phoenix for the sake of an easy tabloid headline like 'Bennifer'.

Having met Casey, it seems unlikely impending stardom will rock his happy set up with Joaquin's sister and their two small children. Caseymer? Casummer? Doesn't have much of a ring to it, does it? But the long sought after fame he deserves appears to be just around the corner.

In the past six months, Casey has proved his acting chops with two outstanding character roles. In Andrew Dominik's deconstructed Western *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, he provided Oscar nominated support to **Brad Pitt** (he lost out to **Javier Bardem**) for his sycophantic portrayal of the man who killed the lauded outlaw.

Now, in *Gone Baby Gone*, the directorial debut by older brother Ben, the 32 year old actor has the starring role as a private investigator hired to find a missing four-year old girl. The film was due for release last November but was held back because of its similarities to the Madeleine McCann case.

Gone Baby Gone isn't the first time Casey and Ben have partnered up professionally. The brothers began acting around the same time and Casey assisted Ben on his first short movie, the humourously titled *I Killed My Lesbian Wife, Hung Her on a Meat Hook, and Now I Have a Three-Picture Deal at Disney*, when he was only 18.

In Kevin Smith's comedy of sexual politics, *Chasing Amy*, he had a small part watching his big brother get nowhere fast with a girl who likes girls and, in 1997, he starred in *Good Will Hunting*, watched Ben and friend **Matt Damon** pick up an Oscar for their script and went on to choose a series of dud roles alongside the likes of Bette Midler in *Drowning Mona* and a contemporary version of *Hamlet* starring **Ethan Hawke**.

A long collaboration with **Gus Van Sant** began with 1995's *To Die For* as one of the dozy kids who help **Nicole Kidman** kill her husband, and then he co-wrote the intriguing *Gerry* with Damon and the pair wandered through the desert looking for 'the thing'. They never found it, but Steven Soderbergh found Casey and kept him in the desert for his *Ocean's* franchise as getaway car driver Virgil Malloy.

Slightly taller than his six-foot plus brother with less of Ben's all-American poster boy good looks, Casey is still incredibly handsome in the flesh. His youthful, more subtle good looks help him convey the child-like qualities with an unnerving maturity that made his performance in *Jesse James* so mesmerising.

Often accused of mumbling his way through roles, his softly spoken Bostonian twang is a mere whisper because he developed laryngitis during the flight from Los Angeles. A film star in a bad mood who's been asked the same questions all day long is always a worry for a journalist. "How does it feel to be nearly as famous as Ben?" "What's it like working with Ben?" "How did you feel when the film was pulled because of the McCann case?" x 25.

I only had seven minutes with Casey, barely long enough for me to flutter my eyelashes at him, let alone enough time to extract juicy quotes from someone who could hardly talk. But you get the feeling, after watching his brother's life played out in the media, he won't find it difficult keeping his ego in check when he is more than simply nominated for an Oscar. There was nothing diva-like about him as he thoughtfully answered my questions, which I hoped he hadn't heard too many times before...

I read that Brad Pitt set your pants on fire on the set of *Jesse James*... Literally?!

Yes. That's what the interview said.

He might have set my pants of fire. It's not unlike something he would do. He does those kinds of things enough, you might actually forget about it if he had. Most people would probably remember if Brad Pitt did that to them, but figuratively he did set them on fire!

"He might have set my pants of fire...Most people would probably remember if Brad Pitt did that to them, but figuratively he did set them on fire!"

There was a lot of talk about a homoerotic content in *Jesse James*. Do you think the film played up to a gay subtext?

I don't think it played up to it. There was a lot about the movie being about modern day celebrity culture and talk of it being a kind of homosexual relationship in some way, but my friend Gus Van Sant likes to say, "You make a movie and you let the themes find themselves". That's really smart, I think. You make a movie and let the bigger ideas unfold and find you, instead of trying to control them.

On *Jesse James* there was certainly no talk of there being a homosexual relationship or about it being about a movie star and a stalker. But I think when you create an interesting relationship, people are going to project things from their own life, or things that they imagine. They're going to find all kind of things there.

They did the same thing with the film I wrote with Matt Damon, *Gerry*. It was a very minimalist movie and the relationship is mysterious between these two guys. Mostly they don't do anything but walk and they do very little talking and there are all kinds of ideas floating around there about what that movie is about. I think it's great that people find different things.

Are you aware that you have a gay fan base?

I wasn't aware I had any fan base. [laughs]

Well, you definitely do after your last two films.

Er, I don't know. How do they break down the demographics?

When I write about you we'll be able to work out how popular you are by how many hits the articles get.

Oh, I see. What's your website again? Gay Donation?



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Would you consider doing a gay role? A *Brokeback* maybe?

Yeah, sure. I'd consider doing all kinds of roles if the script was right. I pick parts by who's directing and if it's written well. I wouldn't be a good actor if I had some kind of limitation on the type of characters I wanted to play.

"I wouldn't be a good actor if I had some kind of limitation on the type of characters I wanted to play."

Your character in *Gone Baby Gone* had to make a very tough decision at the end of the movie. As a father, what would you have done?

It's a really hard situation to imagine being in. I go back and forth. I think most of the time the character made the right decision and I would like to think I would have made that decision as well. It's difficult emotionally because it's a sad thing to have to do to a kid. Ultimately, I think it's probably the best thing.

What was the most difficult aspect of being directed by your brother?

There weren't really any. He did a great job and we work together really well. [He pauses for thought] I know it sounds like I'm just trying to be nice, but we got along. I mean we fought a lot, but it was good healthy fighting, the sort you're supposed to do when you're working with somebody on something creative and you don't agree. You ought to be passionate about it and voice your opinion, especially when it's different to someone else's. There wasn't really anything bad about the experience.

***Gone Baby Gone* opens in UK cinemas on 6 June 2008.**

Want to see more of Casey Affleck? Buy *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* online now. You'll save some money to put towards [Gerry](#) and [The Last Kiss](#), also starring Casey Affleck. Alternatively, watch the trailer for *Gone Baby Gone* below.

Author: Rachael Scott

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