



The Return of Brandon Routh

From Superman to Super Love Triangle

+ Writing | Katie Pegler

By all appearances, Brandon Routh looks like a tall, dark and handsome twentysomething graduate student at a Midwestern liberal arts college who all the ladies swoon over in his various English classes. In fact, it could have been the scenario had he continued his education. Routh, whose breakout role as Superman/Clark Kent in *Superman Returns* put his name on the map, attended the University of Iowa as an English major before pursuing the life of an actor.

In his latest feature, *Lie to Me*, Routh's character embodies that familiar sweet charm and innocent charisma of a Midwesterner with boyish good looks. The decision to place Routh in the role of James in *Lie to Me* is not a surprising one by Executive Producer Joanna Colbert and Casting Director Richard Mento, considering that *Lie to Me* was filmed in Kansas City, Mo., the hometown of director and co-writer John Stewart Muller. When Muller and Co-writer Laura Boersma first began to write the screenplay, they considered setting the story in Los Angeles but ultimately opted for Middle America.

The engaging, tumultuous and, at times, tear-jerking film, whose world premiere takes place at the Newport Beach Film Festival April 26, explores the myriad of difficulties facing young adults who are striving to figure out what

they want in love and, ultimately, in life. The film provides an insightful look into relationships, much like a 2008 version of *Singles* (sans the grunge lifestyle, but with an equally impressive soundtrack including the likes of DeVotchKa, El-P, Mellowdrone, Minipop, Asobi Seksu, Maxx Femm, Paul Layton, Okkervil River and Pink Mountaintops), and it takes an in-depth look at human emotions such as love, jealousy, honesty, betrayal, fear of commitment and other insecurities. Yet the extreme twist in the film that examines modern relationships comes when it's revealed that the attractive and seemingly happy couple *Lie to Me* first focuses on, Mason (Steve Sandvoss) and Sam (Courtney Ford), are in an open relationship.

Enter Routh's character, James, who reunites with his college sweetheart, Sam, at the wedding of Sam's sister. Despite having not seen Sam at all in the past five years, James is immediately drawn into the chaotic vortex of Sam's relationship with Mason. And thus begins a series of heart-wrenching lessons that all those involved in the love triangle must learn, and that test the boundaries of how much is too much for freedom in relationships.

If the onscreen chemistry between Routh and Ford seems real, it's not the viewer's imagination. Married last November, the two were engaged during the filming, and the

analysis of their characters' issues became a way to examine their own relationship. "We went back and forth on the main themes of the films," Routh says. "And exploring it together, we could feel more comfortable as actors. Plus, for this film, we could test our own notions of our relationship."

Although he's not into open relationships (and what person would be, if he were married to the drop-dead gorgeous Ford?), Routh is open to the concept of them as learning processes. "I think they can work for those who are trying to figure things out in relationships," he says. "At the same time, in this case, being completely dependent on someone else doesn't work ... Sometimes people losing what they have ultimately leads to figuring out what they want."

As for what Routh hopes viewers will take away from the film, he relates the film's core message to the idea of emotional and personal growth. "You have to trust that you can find love and you can't be afraid," he says. "If you don't take some sort of risk, you'll always settle. People are scared to be alone, which is apparent in this film, but nothing risked, nothing gained."

Many are quick to peg Routh as a heartthrob and, consequently, write him off as a serious actor, or scrutinize his film choices following

"I don't think it's too difficult to be taken seriously in more diverse roles — we'll see people's response."

Superman Returns. He's not too fazed by the naysayers, considering they didn't stop him from working with first-time feature director Muller on an independent film, or from taking more controversial roles, such as that of his character in the upcoming *Life is Hot in Cracktown*. Currently in post-production, the movie is based on Buddy Giovinazzo's novel of the same title and explores the ways in which crack cocaine has infiltrated inner-city streets.

"I don't think it's too difficult to be taken seriously in more diverse roles — we'll see people's response," Routh says. "With *Lie to Me*, it's OK to be that type of guy who is sensitive and attractive — being judged by your looks, that's part of being a celebrity, so I can't complain. But, obviously, I don't want to be pigeonholed, which is why I've taken on a range of roles. Just because I played Superman doesn't mean I can't play darker characters like [the one] in *Life is Hot*

in Cracktown."

Other upcoming projects from Routh include *The Informers*, *Miss Nobody* and *Dead of Night* (all in various stages of production and filming), as well as the upcoming horror anthology series *Fear Itself*, which is slated to premiere May 29 and run for 13 episodes on NBC.

And why does Routh think he has been able to succeed in Hollywood while so many other aspiring actors find themselves waiting tables or completely give up? He says he had a "plan B" of going back to school to pursue a writing career. "I always knew I had something to fall back on," Routh says. "I was still young when I first pursued acting and willing to take a risk, but I was never really desperate. A lot of people move to Hollywood and are dead set on being an actor, no matter what, and they're not open to new experiences — it's an end all, be all for them."

And that is the kind of humble sincerity that will continue to make the ladies swoon, whether Routh is walking the red carpet or, perhaps one day, handing out signed copies of his first novel.

***Lie to Me* World Premiere**
Newport Beach Film Festival
April 26 at Lido Theater, 6 p.m.
3459 Via Lido, Newport Beach | 949.673.8350

