Hollywood Exclusive - With strangeness in movie biz, Paxton grateful for â€˜Big Loveâ€™ -Danielle Fishel

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

Bill Paxton, who stars as the head of a polygamist household in HBO's esteemed "Big Love," is grateful the show has been picked up for a fourth season â€” and hopes it will be renewed for several seasons after that. He makes it sound as if the drama has provided him with a lifeline.

Bill made his name â€” and a solid living â€” as a movie actor, with featured parts in some 50 films (ranging from "True Lies" and "Twister" to "Apollo 13" and "Titanic"), but by the time he was offered "Big Love," quality parts had begun to dry up.

"It's become a strange time in the movie business," he says. "There are many independent films being made, with so much financing falling through, and when 'Big Love' came along â€" I had never played a recurrent role â€" I wasn't reading parts as good in feature films."

There have been reports that Paxton turned down the lead in the 2006 "The Da Vinci Code" in which Tom Hanks ended up starring, but he insists, "It's just one of the untruths that have been reported about me."

Another: That he approves of polygamy.

"I've been misquoted on that because people get so hung up on the instrument that drives the show, which is really about relationships. The fact is I'm not really approving per se, but for me to say someone's lifestyle is right or wrong, well, we live in a country that professes freedom, and I'm not a liberal, I just believe in human decency. I believe in live and let live. Whether you're into a heterosexual marriage, a same sex marriage or polygamy, it is not our right to judge."

THE VIDEOLAND VIEW: Danielle Fishel is having a blast hosting the Style network's weekly "The Dish" which is an irreverent "The Soup"-type compendium of "mishaps and meltdowns of celebrity fashion and lifestyle," as the network puts it. She admits, "It is kind of a juggle" to do the job. The former Topanga of "Boy Meets World" is also a full-time college student in Orange County, Calif. She's studying psychology with an eye toward some day, perhaps, having a marriage and family practice specializing in helping children of divorce.

"That's the goal I'm pushing forward. I like to challenge myself, and going back to school was scary for me. I'm older now, 27, and I was afraid I'd be the oldest student in all my classes," she candidly notes.

Between hitting the books, of course, there's the task of hitting on the faux pas of the famed. Fishel tells us, "So far it's been great. Everybody seems to like it and have a good time with it. She also says she's such a huge fan of Joel McHale and his "The Soup" on E! that she did a full court press to land the hosting assignment of its fashion-focused counterpart. "Joel is such a pro and he's so funny, it was a little intimidating to think people would be comparing us," admits Danielle. "But I just looked at it as, one of the biggest fan bases of 'The Soup' is women. Joel does talk about what celebrities wear, but I don't think we women want to see a guy like him pick on fashion too much. We start to feel like, 'How dare you?'"

NOW HEAR THIS!: With sweeping cutbacks and million-dollar-plus deficits plaguing public radio stations, including his Minnesota home base, "This American Life's" Ira Glass admits, "I'm worried. But I feel we have ways of making money. One of the ways to be sure we make our budget is, in April and May, we're going to do our show as an event, live on stage, in movie theaters around the country. We've never done the show live on stage before." Glass does add, "I have to say, though, we are not in trouble. Simply by asking if people would help us cover the streaming costs of the show, we wanted to raise $152,000 and we more than made that."

GETTING BETTER: Drew Carey's been spending the last few days trying to get over a bad case of the flu â€” so bad, they shut down production of his "The Price is Right" for yesterday (2/23) and today.

With reports by Stephanie DuBois and Emily Feimster.

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