TV Close-Up: David Arquette

by Eirik Knutzen

Absolutely nothing makes David Arquette happier than waking up early in the morning to spend quality time with his 2-year-old daughter Coco before her nanny arrives. Then it's usually time for everybody to visit her mother, Courteney Cox of "Friends" fame, now starring in "Dirt."

DAVID ARQUETTE - David Arquette plays financial whiz Jason Ventress in the TV drama â€œIn Case of Emergency.' CNS Photo courtesy of ABC."It's great," laughed Arquette, 35. "Coco and I dance around no matter how tired I am. Then we have breakfast and find a place to be silly. Or we have an adventure somewhere; just about anything is an adventure for us. My greatest joy as a father is watching her discover new worlds and evolving into a funny character.

"Coco is developing a little attitude and a glow about her," Arquette continued, chuckling. "She's really verbal and expressive ... she has brought so much to our lives. Something truly amazing is watching Courteney be the mother that she is, which made me love her even more. Life is nothing but incredible."

And things are getting even better now that Arquette wrapped the 13th episode of his own half-hour ensemble comedy series, "In Case of Emergency," shortly before Christmas. The show revolves around four old high school chums reunited through a series of medical emergencies one night at a hospital on Los Angeles' west side after treatment from the same comely doctor (Lori Loughlin).

Strictly a hired hand as a performer, Arquette - the brother of fellow actors Patricia Arquette (Emmy Award-winner for "Medium"), Rosanna Arquette, Alexis Arquette and Richmond Arquette - portrays slick financial wiz Jason Ventress, a sleaze ball with shady dealings facing serious time in the slammer for fraud who screws up a suicide attempt, shooting himself in the foot instead. The motley group is rounded out by Kelly Lee (Kelly Hu), a scantily clad "massage therapist," Harry Kennison (Jonathan Silverman) as a limp twit Everyman and Sherman Yablonsky (Greg Germann), a freaked-out multimillionaire diet guru.

Family life is much easier now than when "In Case of Emergency" was in production at Sony Studios in Culver City, Calif., the same time "Dirt" was shooting at Paramount Studios in Hollywood (about an hour apart by car), according to Arquette, who also serves as an executive producer of the "tabloid soap opera"

along with his wife.

"I used to have writers' and production meetings on the 'Dirt' set before or after finishing work on 'Emergency,'" Arquette said, "with certain chores, like casting, handled on the Internet during breaks in the shooting schedule. Now, with the help from our nanny, Coco is on the 'Dirt' set every day for lunch and dinner.

"Now I can juggle my time off in order to stop by my wife's set as much as possible - if she doesn't have a scene that I wouldn't want to be around for," he continued, evenly. "It's a sexy show that's out there with lots of love scenes. I used to be far more jealous than I am now. I feel secure, having a baby and being married for seven years. It doesn't drive me crazy like it used to."

Although there is no part in "Dirt" currently for Arquette ("I'm too old to play Courteney's much younger lover"), he hopes a recurring role of some sort will crop up in her future as he thoroughly loves acting with her - as they did in all three of the "Scream" horror movies. They were a lock before the first bloody body hit the ground and eventually married at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral in 1999.

The grandson of the late comedic actor Cliff Arquette - best known as the rustic character Charley Weaver on "Hollywood Squares" and a number of variety and talk shows - was born in Winchester, Va., to parents in and around show business. Performing seemed to run in the family, leading to hooking up with sisters Patricia and Rosanna in Los Angeles.

It proved to be a wise move, as he soon scored a major role as Luke Perry's best buddy in the low-budget hit motion picture "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." His three shots as lovable cop Dwight "Dewey" Riley in the box-office-smash "Scream" flick series assured him of work for more than a decade. Since then, his credits include a modest 1996 guest shot on "Friends" as Malcolm and such feature films as "Muppets from Space," "Stealing Sinatra," "Slingshot" and "Time Bomb."

His most pressing project at the moment, however, is launching "The Tripper" - "a funny horror film about a

bunch of drugged-out hippies stalked by a man obsessed with Ronald Reagan" - which he happened to write and direct. He and his wife also have cameos in the movie that he hopes will be released in at least 500 theaters on April 20.

"Financing is easier to obtain for horror films," Arquette explained, "and it gave me a chance to write parts for my family and friends."

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