

Film Close-Up: Mike Myers

by Joey_Berlin

Unlike so many ex-"Saturday Night Live" stars, Mike Myers has been able to create pop culture icons seemingly at will. First he scored with "Wayne's World" and then he grooved again with "Austin Powers." And for the past six years, the Canadian comedian has provided the Scottish-sounding voice of the most lucrative cartoon character in modern moviedom.

MIKE MEYERS - Mike Meyers is the voice behind Shrek in 'Shrek The Third.' CNS Photo courtesy of John Clifford.

"Shrek" was a smash hit, the sequel still holds the record for the highest domestic box office total since "Titanic," and Myers hopes to three-peat with "Shrek the Third." Myers, Eddie Murphy and Cameron Diaz return to the computerized kingdom with more of their sparkling banter and reference-heavy humor in their third trip to Far Far Away. In "Shrek the Third," the big green guy must reluctantly assume the throne unless he can find a suitable replacement.

Myers, who turned 44 a week after "Shrek the Third" hit the theaters, has kept a low profile for the past several years. But he is finally ready to start talking about a new comedy he has in the works, "The Love Guru." And in 2009 he will star in a biopic about Keith Moon, the wild, ill-fated drummer from The Who.

Q: What do you love about who Shrek is?

A: I relate to the vulnerability that Shrek has. He, in every one of the movies, has to learn to love himself. In the first one, he had to learn to love himself in order to be loved. He had to learn to love himself in order to be a husband. In this one, he has to learn to love himself in order to be a father and a king of a country.

Q: So how do you relate to that aspect of "Shrek?"

A: I'm the youngest of three. My head is mostly scar tissue. It was tough. I'm the "Hey guys, wait up!" kid. And I struggled through a lot of misinformation by my older brothers. And I relate to that when it comes to "Shrek." Traditional villains are heroes in this. Traditional heroes are villains. They sort of make you question what's normal, what is the right way to have a family, to love, to be? It is about diversity. It is about inclusion and loving yourself. I'm very, very proud to be part of that.

Q: The last time we actually saw you on film was in "The Cat in the Hat" in 2003. Where have you been lately?

A: I haven't done many movies over the period of time I've been doing movies. I create and I write the movies that I do. An average film takes 60 months from your first inkling of an idea to it being in front of an audience. I actually only take 36 months, generally. But because I write and produce them, I'm in an office from 9 to 5 every day. You know, it's so satisfying and I'm so appreciative that I get to create and write, that it does take a lot to break me out of that cycle and do somebody else's movie. I have. I will. And I do.

Q: When you have an idea for a new character, what is your writing process like?

A: I take a year to "tour" the material, like the Marx Brothers did. I think that's a really smart idea. I did that with "Austin Powers," I did it with "Wayne's World" on "Saturday Night Live." And then this latest movie that I'm starting to film in two months called "The Love Guru," I'm doing that in August and that has been roughly a year and a half or two years of developing it, of writing it and doing it.

Q: By "tour" the material, you mean you performed as the love guru in front of an audience?

A: Yeah, I would do secret shows. I have friends that have theaters and so about a third of the audience were friends of mine who would come. A third of the audience would be people that had heard that I was doing it. And a third would be people thinking they were coming to see an actual guru. I did that for a year and I videotaped them and it informed me.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about "The Love Guru?" Is it a period piece?

A: No, "The Love Guru" is about a Canadian boy who was left in an ashram in India, grows up to become a guru and is hired by the Toronto Maple Leafs to win the Stanley Cup. So this is what I've been working on.

Q: What is next for you after that? Have we seen the last of Austin Powers?

A: We have not seen the last of Austin Powers. We're developing a fourth, entirely from Dr. Evil's point of view. That is also part of what I've been doing in the last little while. In addition, I've been sort of developing, but it's being written by Donald Margulies, the movie "Moon," which is about Keith Moon. And that's the movie I will do after "The Love Guru." These things just take time. And when you write, it just takes forever.

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