

# Expect The Unexpected

by Tanya Anticevic

You know, sometimes I like to think of the acting and entertainment business as a merry go round ride; careers seem to have these ups and downs; there are times in your career when things just seem to be going round and round . . . and throughout it all, it's kind of like being on a fun ride- a ride, which some people never want to get off! However, at least with a Merry-go-round, you pretty much know what to expect. In the entertainment business . . . not so much. There's one thing that I've learned to count in this business and that is to expect the unexpected.

Occasionally when writing interviews, my story starts off as one thing and then turns into something entirely different. When I began ruminating on an article about a young actor named Justin Grafman, I thought "Oh, what a great story: really super adorable little boy pursues acting for years and then one day, right before High School decides to stop acting completely". That is not exactly what my story ended up being about.

It turns out that my story about Justin Grafman is a little bit more special. Justin you see, as it turns out, has had a huge obstacle to overcome: Justin is a deaf kid- and he actually prefers to be called so, rather than "hearing impaired". In fact, Justin's experience of the auditory world is through a hearing aid, and he's doing more than just fine with that. Prevailing in an already challenging business is already reason enough for accolades, but continuing to triumph in the face of disabilities, I would say, is admirable.

## How it started

Justin's older brother Jake (who is also deaf) had started acting first, and thanks to the attention and interest from Jakes talent agent, Justin kind of followed in his brothers footsteps.

Thank to his involvement in the Burbank deaf community, through a referral (and of course his cute looks!!!) Justin's first job in front of a camera was for a 2007 baby Einstein video series with Marlee Matlin teaching little kids sign language. Both Justin and his brother had gone to a school where they taught sign language.

Next up, Justin got a sweet gig on the hit TV series "Scrubs" where he got to play a deaf kid who comes into the hospital with a stomach ache and the only person who knows sign language is the janitor. "It was a pretty good experience", recalls Justin. As it was his 8th birthday, after they filmed Zack Braff and Donald Faison presented him with cupcakes!

## All about Steve

One of the highlights of Justins acting career was also



JUSTIN GRAFMAN



getting to work with major stars like Sandra Bullock and Bradley Cooper in the film "All About Steve". Justin said that he got to do a cool ambulance scene being helped by a paramedic. When Sandra Bullock met Justin on set, she proclaimed to all those around " Hey, you guys are no longer the cutest guys on set- Justin is".

When I inquired about how acting fit into his school and home life Justin in his very easy-going manner said " Acting was a totally different thing than school

cause it was basically work. I guess I was just focusing on acting then when I went to school it was about hanging out playing soccer with friends and being in school".

Justin says that he never felt like he was missing out on "being a kid". He looks back at the years he spent acting as a "Good Time" and he's glad he did it.

## It's all about the hair

Most people wouldn't really think about this, but imagine if you had to keep your hair in a certain style for years and years and couldn't change it even if you wanted. Well, in 2013, right before going into High School Justin decided he wanted to stop acting. Those curly long locks that made him extra cute and extra "castable" were quickly sheared. Making a very free (and lighter!) Justin, very happy.

He was excited about joining the football team . It was going to be " too much for me to do classes and acting and football, so I just decided to try football".

During our interview I asked if he would ever do acting again? " I don't think I'm going to be serious about it . . . like . . . my

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# Cover Stars Winners!

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COURTNEY CARTER



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JOHN "SHRED" WARREN



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## All of current submissions are Cover Super Star WINNERS! Congratulations!

### **Iliia Wolf:** Actor / Dancer / Singer - Florida

Iliia Wolfe is 11 years old and lives in Naples, Florida. She currently holds a Yellow belt in Tae Kwon Do, is signed with The Diamond Agency and has received many awards in dance, vocals and musical theater. See page 24 for more info on this awesome young actor! Contact: Erica Spieth - 239-692-2301

### **Courtney Carter:** Model - Washington

Courtney Carter is a model based in Washington state. She is an expert cheerleader and competitive track athlete, with a huge love for animals. She is currently studying at Eastern Washington University.

### **Nayah Damasen:** Actor/Singer - Relocating to California!

just turned 9, has a big voice and is a great little actress. She has played lead as Ariel, Mrs Lambchop, Dorothy in the Wiz and sang at many professional sporting events, recently she sang the National Anthem for the America's Cup

Opening Ceremony on 4th of July in San Francisco, CA.. You can check her out her singing YouTube: my3nsj Contact: Mardi Damasen, 408-667-0594.

### **John "Shred" Warren:** Musician - Los Angeles, CA

John "Shred" Warren is a metal musician and talent extraordinaire. With an ear for all things musical, Shred has performed on stage in the critically acclaimed Broadway show, "13 the Musical" at the Malibu Playhouse. He loves Iron Maiden and can be found practicing his electric guitar daily.

### **Jay Jay Warren:** Actor/Dancer - Los Angeles, CA

Jay Jay Warren is an actor in Los Angeles. He can be seen guest starring on NBC's, "Sean Saves the World", is slated to act in the feature film, "Third Man" and recently began teaching dance in Malibu, CA at Dance Star. Represented by Paradigm and Managed by Gregg Edwards, Jay Jay has found great success in a very short period of time.

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whole career... I like acting. But in life I want to be doing some other stuff... I'm interested in photography. I'm going to look into that and see where that takes me and keep playing football and finish high school."

This would have been where my interview ended, but as I mentioned, life does not always go as we expect.

### The unexpected

A little over a week ago, an agent name Gail Williamson from the KMR (Kazarian/Measures/Ruskin) "Diversity Department" found out about Justin through a friend in the local deaf community. One of the many great things about KMR is that they provide the entertainment industry with experienced professionals with disabilities, actors with special needs! That's what Tommy Grafman (Justins father, co-founder of "MacMyDay") really likes about Gail Williamson, is that "she gets it". Even though Justin wasn't really in the market for new representation, Tommy said that Justin had often been going out for roles that didn't fit him.

Barely a few weeks into his decision to "stop acting" for a while and Justin was off to audition for a major TV and Film conglomerate, to potentially do guest spots on shows- roles more tailored for his special needs. Justins agent heard back immediately about the audition and the feedback was not surprising. "They're excited about him, they said he is very likable and they will keep him in mind for future guest spots!" says Tommy Grafman.

