

Fowlerville NEWS & VIEWS

"Serving the Local Communities"

INSIDE -
Webberville Report

Volume XIX, No. 33

Monday, August 18, 2003

Published Weekly

Chris Showerman swings into Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*

By Susan Parcheta

When we last took a glimpse into former area resident Chris Showerman's life, the aspiring young actor had just added a hair-raising appearance on the TV reality show *Fear Factor* to his list of Hollywood credits.

Leap forward two years to summer 2003. The local native is about to catapult into Disney video-land mania in *George of the Jungle 2*.

Showerman plays George in this sequel. What? Isn't that part taken? Well, not any more.

George of the Jungle's original leading man, Brendan Fraser, is out. Chris Showerman is in - playing the lead in *George of the Jungle 2* to be released on DVD/VHS this October.

We caught up with Chris in late July during a quick trip home to Michigan - pre-movie launch - to visit his family in the Webberville/Gregory area. Chris was also home for a special adventure. The actor, an Eagle Scout, was about to accompany his nephew, Luke, on his first Boy Scout campout trip.

"This is my first foray back into scouting," revealed Showerman, looking forward to sharing Luke's experience. "It's exciting for me. The first time you do anything, it's new, it's special, and it's scary."

Chris didn't say if it was scary playing George



A rising star on the Hollywood scene is former local resident, actor Chris Showerman

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Power outage brings 'lots' of gas, food customers to town

The failure of the Eastern Power Grid on Thursday afternoon left millions of people in the Eastern United States and Ontario, Canada without electricity. Among those areas suffering a power outage was Southeastern Michigan, including Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Monroe, and Washtenaw Counties. The Lansing area also lost electricity, but power was



restored the next morning.

While the Fowlerville area had a momentary stoppage, the impact was felt the next day when dozens and dozens of motorists from the Metro Detroit area drove west on I-96 and pulled off the Fowlerville exit in search of gas and food. Compounding the situation was a day of hot and humid temperatures and some rainfall.

Shown here are line-ups at two of the service stations on South Grand - Fowlerville Exit Shell and Fowlerville Sunoco.

Fowlerville School Bus Routes — Pages 26-30



New Disney star, former area resident Chris Showerman, is George of the Jungle in the movie sequel, coming out this fall on DVD/VHS.

Showerman, continued

in the movie sequel. He did say it was fun. "It was insane how much fun we had," he laughs, explaining the "spoof on Tarzan" storyline of George - "Who's not so cool all the time" - and his best friend, an ape with an English accent.

In the first movie George, raised by gorillas in the African jungle, meets and falls in love with Ursula. In the sequel they're married, raising their son and still being pestered by

Chris goes on to explain: "If he turns his back on you, as humans we would think that offensive, but, to the chimp, that means he trusts you."

Other memorable creatures were a water buffalo named Bill and the camel that Chris rode off the movie set.

George of the Jungle 2 was entirely filmed in Australia last summer, said Showerman, although some of the effects were created in Las Vegas. Shooting spanned three months, during which time both of his parents, Jeanne Showerman of Webberville, the former elementary music teacher, and Jim Showerman of Gregory, were able to travel there.

It was even more of an adventure for Chris because it was his first trip overseas. Australia was experiencing its worst drought in 60 years during film shooting, he said. But, he noted, the weather was "like a perfect day in Michigan the whole time."

Chris says he misses Michigan at times. "One thing I miss about Michigan is the autumn," he acknowledges. He also misses the people. A trip home provides some down time with family.

"Anything you do free lance," he points out, "is either feast or famine." Being an actor in California is life in the fast lane, and often the ultra-fast lane, he notes.

Now a Californian, since trekking west to seek his fortune in 1996, Showerman still seems amazed by some of his experiences. Like having a personal trainer. Chris has worked as a personal trainer, himself. While he's always been interested in fitness, he spent a grueling two months before filming, he said, being monitored diet-wise and workout-wise. To Chris, the trainer made an incredible \$500 a day "keeping the high intensity in our workouts."

Asked if he has a favorite method of working out - if he could choose any method - Chris responded without hesitation: "Martial arts." He appreciates its holistic approach to fitness.

In keeping with that philosophy, his advice is: "Anything that works two sides of you, the physical and the spiritual, is good."

Not surprisingly, his favorite actor is Jackie Chan. Chan embodies the type of character Showerman would love to portray - "an action hero, but sort of goofy, and a good guy as well."

Chan is both innocent and funny, Chris adds, but not threatening until he has to be. "I love how he creates his fight scenes."

He admits his dream is to play Superman. But, he's come a ways now from his first Hollywood job as "The Pink Dot." Wearing a pink foam rubber suit, Showerman (looking like a giant foam ball with clown shoes) was the mascot for the Pink Dot, one of the first supermarkets that offered delivery.



Chris Showerman shows his fun-loving nature with nephew, Luke, on a recent visit home to Michigan.

my real inspiration as they would be my family in the jungle and George would naturally take on the habits and mannerisms of the primates who raised him.

Do you have an opportunity to sing in the movie and did you do your own Tarzan call?

The producers were thinking of writing in a singing part for me once they found out I was classically trained but in the end, it did not happen. However, I do use my vocal training in doing my own Tarzan yell. The hard part for me was keeping the vibrato out of it!! It started to sound like Placido Domingo meets Jungle Boy!

While you did most of your own stunts, the George of the Jungle I credits listed a couple of

Ursula's maddling mom. As Chris puts it, George is having a bit of a mid-life crisis, trying to balance his life as "King of the Jungle" with being a husband and father.

"It brings it all home," he says of George 2. "We can relate," adds Chris, as we watch George stumble through life's quirky challenges.

Being relatively unknown thus far, Showerman reviews are hard to come by. However, "Moviefhole" reviewer Clint Morris had this to say: "Chris Showerman? Name doesn't ring a bell. But gee, he looks rather good, doesn't he?"

Morris goes on to say that "Showerman is so good in the lead role that the feasible lack of interest based on Fraser's death doesn't last that long."

Overall, Morris says the film is well done, adding, "the kids are assured a good time."

With the movie coming out on DVD/VHS rather than on screen, Showerman points out that the studio can promote it differently. "There's a longer window to sell those products," he notes. For an in-theatre movie, he explains, there's a two-week to a month window to sell tickets. The studios spend so much money getting the advertising market, adding a third to a half more to the movie budget, he said.

Showerman said he did get to meet Brendan Fraser at a "charity gig." Chris was shocked, he said, when Fraser actually sought him out and greeted him with a genuine "glad to meet you."

He talks about getting the part. "I happened to look a lot like Fraser," he notes, then adding in a playful tone, "and it doesn't hurt that I'm a goof ball."

Showerman is living a lifelong fantasy playing the Tarzan-type character, George. He says it all goes back to his childhood. "When I was six, I fell out of my grandmother's weeping willow tree and broke my arm." He was attempting to swing from vine to vine.

"So I was born to play this role," he laughs. It brings to mind the *George of the Jungle* song lyrics: *Watch out for that tree!*

One of Showerman's first memories involving acting is as a five-year old playing in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. "I was the biggest billy goat," Chris remembers. The best part, he says, was being the biggest and being able to ram the other billy goats. "I decided it was fun."

"In *George I* I did a lot of my own jumps," he says. "I did almost all the physical things. I had to actively fight for a lot of it," he explains. "When the studio banks so much money on it, you need to lobby hard."

Besides the action scenes, Chris enjoyed working with the animals. "I love animals," he says, detailing his encounters with Mr. Muggins, "a real live chimp, who was not in the movie much."

"I spent hours outside his cage just sitting there - so he would get comfortable with me being around. It took a lot of patience."

That was about the time *George of the Jungle I* with Brendan Fraser was filming (the movie opened in 1997). Now, six years later, Showerman waits for *George of the Jungle 2* to spring into American homes.

This summer has been quiet - "a fairy tale of unreality" he says, since filming finished last September. It's felt, he adds, like being suspended in a "black hole."

He continues to audition for new projects, including some commercial work. And he's working on some script writing. "I love writing," he says, enthusiastic about his newest story of an escaped convict making peace with the world he's left.

In writing the script, Chris says he strives to stir "compassion for somebody we don't understand."

Back home here, his brother, Sam (Luke's dad) and the rest of the family enjoy his return, if only for a brief visit. Chris gives much credit to his mom for her support while he's gone off to follow his dream in Hollywood.

Chris enjoys the short sojourn, as well. He reminisces about his classmates and friends in Stockbridge, where he graduated as co-valedictorian in 1989, before going on to study music composition and theory at Michigan State University.

His musical talents include singing (with Mid-Michigan Opera Company), conducting and composing for Lansing Community College productions and versatility playing a number of instruments, including piano, saxophone, bassoon and guitar.

He plays a keyboard in his tiny L.A. apartment, he notes. Just before coming to Michigan, he played his guitar in a movie audition.

It looks like Showerman is on track career-wise. "You are happiest," he believes, "doing what you enjoy."

Through all his work, Chris Showerman hopes to remain true to his personal mission: "To bring energy and joy into people's lives without feeling like they're being preached to."

As for the future? "Look for me in action movies," predicts Showerman. "I have the energy right now in my life and I have the drive in my life."

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*Chris Showerman answered a few more questions about the movie *George of the Jungle 2* after returning to California from his Michigan visit, and after this interviewer had seen *George of the Jungle I*.*

What did it feel like trying to fill that role?

Following in Brendan's footsteps - who is by the way a superb actor and intellectual despite the dimwits he often is cast as, was a daunting prospect. I was very familiar with the *George* movie and cartoons, but I spent a lot of my time going to the zoo and studying monkeys. They were

stunt people. Did you have any at all? I did a lot of my own stunts, but some of the things that might potentially alter my face were delegated to my stunt double, Kyle Gardner. He was great - he did some gymnastic things for me and smacked into a bulldozer about a dozer times. He was all black and blue the next day. It is on those days you're really glad someone else is willing to take your hits for you!!

What must it have been like to be the star of the movie, yet being the unknown star, with all those people around helping to produce the film?

No pressure, Right?? It was crazy showing up on the set on any given day, there would be 100 to 300 people there to make this thing happen. Knowing that everyone had an important part that was crucial to the process was humbling. Knowing that the success or failure of the movie would ultimately be credited to me was staggering. After a while, you just have to put it out of your mind or it will put you out of yours!!

How did you like acting with *George of the Jungle I* co-star, Julie Benz, who plays his wife Ursula?

Julie is very sweet. She had a lot of pointers and advice for me as well. She can be seen in the series *ANGEL* as the character DARLA and also in Steven Spielberg's mini-series *TAKEN*.

You had to play the father role in the sequel to *George I*; how was that? Are you good friends with the young actor, Angus T. Jones, who is cast as your son, *George Junior*?

I tend to have a lot of paternal instincts. I loved working with Angus. We would get together and play soccer or pool on the weekends or go to the ocean and look for jellyfish and crabs. Or set, he was very professional and pretty focused considering he is only eight. Angus is on a new series now called *TWO AND A HALF MEN*.

How was your camping trip with Luke?

We had a blast at his first Cub Scout camp trip. It was amazing for me to experience all the things I did as a scout through his eyes for the first time. He caught his first fish, shot his first BB gun, first bow and arrow, and carved a boat out of a bar of ivory soap. What a blast!!

*The *George of the Jungle 2* movie, starring Chris Showerman, is scheduled for release by Buena Vista Home Entertainment on Oct. 21 on DVD/VHS. It has a PG rating.*

Pub. 08/30/04
Fowlerville News & Views
Fowlerville, MI
Part 1 of 'The Chris Chronicles'

Disney film star Chris Showerman talks about life beyond 'George 2'

By Susan Parcheta

Chelsea, Michigan may have Jeff Daniels for its hometown movie star, but the neighborhood to the north - encompassing Webberville, Stockbridge, Gregory, and Fowlerville - can lay claim to native son Christopher Showerman...whose star is rising on the Hollywood horizon.

The actor's film break came last October with the direct to video/DVD release of Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*.

Cast as George, he follows the vine-swinging role of celebrity Brendan Fraser in the 1997 remake of Jay Ward's 1960s animated classic.

Showerman, son of Jeanne Showerman of Webberville and Jim Showerman of Gregory, is a 1989 graduate of Stockbridge High School and 1992 Michigan State University alum.

He earned a degree in music theory and composition while at MSU. After wandering the Lansing theater circuit for awhile, Chris set out in 1997 on the yellow brick road to Hollywood. He's never looked back.

Now that 'George 2' has been showing on home entertainment systems for these past several months, we wondered what the actor has been up to since its release. How's his career shaping up?

From all indications...quite well. The movie is playing on the Disney Channel and Chris is finding himself being recognized as George...almost, that is.

He tells of a recent encounter at an outdoor café in Long Beach. "A guy in his 50s stopped and asked me if I was Tarzan. I got a pretty big kick out of that, even though he got the character wrong, because without the long hair and the loincloth, I'm rarely recognized from that movie. More people recognize me from Fear Factor [he was on in 2001] still."

"Apparently," quips Showerman, "his grandkids play the movie all the time, so I'm sure he was sick of seeing me by then."

Home recently for his cousin's wedding, he tells of a similar event while getting popcorn at a Lansing cinema. "People asked if I was Tarzan," says Chris. Then an employee, who'd seen the movie, recognized him for real...and asked for his autograph.

Another time he says he popped into a video store on Catalina Island. "I asked if they carried *George of the Jungle 2*. The owner of the store told me that they did not in fact carry it, because it was a cheesy direct-to-video release that didn't have the original guy in it. It was all I could do not to bust out laughing. Oh, if he only knew!"

A George 2 reviewer from England wrote: "You know, for a silly movie designed for kids, I had a blast! I'm a big fan of Brendan Fraser, but I have to admit, I like the new guy, Chris Showerman, better as George. There was something different, more of a loveable, boy scout, klutz, nice guy."

We can only imagine the scores of young children viewing *George 2* at zillions of birthday

gatherings, with George's character forever etched in their movie memories.

Mom, Jeanne, found it fascinating at the dentist's office when Chris went for his annual check-up, watching the little kids gazing up - way, way up - at her son walking across the room.

She recalls when the movie came out last fall, Webberville elementary students in Mrs. Snow's class, when asked to list some famous "Georges", first cried out "George of the Jungle"! George Washington was last.

As Chris commented to Moviehole's Clint Morris last October regarding the direct-to-video release, "The way I see it, folks all over the world will be taking me home with them. That sorta makes us family, right?"

Family is all-important to him, as he notes, "I love to see my family - usually about once a year, twice if it's a good year. Now that I have a nephew and nieces, it makes the visit even more special."



Christopher Showerman shares a moment of summertime fun with his nieces and nephew.

With a smile that could melt the polar icecaps, a captivating, fun-loving personality and body-builder physique, it's no wonder the six-foot-two Showerman inspires young moviegoers. Co-star Julie Benz told one reviewer, he's "more like George, than George."

A "Fanboy Planet" profile of the movie begins simply: "Christopher Showerman." It ends simply, too: "Remember Christopher Showerman."

While lots of little boys dream of being stunt men, and spend countless hours playing the role, young Showerman turned that dream into a career goal... to be a movie action hero.

A thrill-seeker by nature, his performance as George of the Jungle was foreshadowed by vine-swinging fun at age 6 in his back yard. "I actually broke my arm," says Showerman, "trying to swing from one branch to another."

Some favorite thrills include piloting, skydiving, bungee jumping, billboard climbing ("don't do this, it's illegal," says Showerman) and, of course, he adds, "helicopter tackling (thanks to Fear Factor). Cliff diving is still on the to do list." **[See more of Chris' action**

adventure list in the extended interview that follows].

The physical power in Christopher Showerman comes from his regimented fitness regime. As he describes it, "My routine is like brushing my teeth - regularity is the key. I don't think there is any magic quick fix for health; it's simply doing something every day to keep you mentally, physically and spiritually alive. The first step is knowing that *you're worth the effort!*"

Last November, Chris wrote in Muscle and Fitness magazine, "I spend two hours in the gym five days a week, plus an hour of cardio." At that time he was eating six high-protein/low carb meals and drinking at least a gallon of water per day.

He flexed his movie muscles for a profile article, "Swinging into Action" (and cover photo) in the January 2004 issue of Max Sports and Fitness magazine.

He currently is getting in shape for the 18th Annual Nautica Malibu Triathlon for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, slated for Sept. 19. Chris will be doing the running portion of a relay team for the event. **[See more about the triathlon benefit and how you can help sponsor Chris' team in a separate article that follows].**

"My diet is slightly different now," he points out, "as I am eating less to slim down [from 200 lbs to 190-195] for the triathlon competition. Easier to run when I'm not carrying so much weight around!"

"I'm still regulating my carbs, but not completely cutting them out. I think the body fatigues over any diet after a while and change slows or stops as a result."

Says Showerman, "I change my routines to keep my body responding and keep myself entertained. I am not doing a third hour of cardio at the moment but I am still doing the 2 hours in the gym from 5-7 a.m."

When it comes to real life action heroes, Showerman has his own. Jackie Chan for one. "I love that he plays the nice guy that has the hidden ability to kick butt. He's also completely charming."

Another Christopher is high on his hero list...Christopher Reeve, actor and everyone's Superman. "He devotes his life," says Chris, "to making a change in the world and lives his life as an inspiration to others."

But the hero Showerman declares has most inspired him is his own brother, Sam, who, explains Chris, suffered severed nerves in an accident, but now is healed.

"He has overcome some amazing odds and hasn't let that change his personality, dull his charm, or lessen his drive in life."

Chris spends much of his time volunteering for charity events...including the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, the organization dearest to his heart.

"I was inspired by the folks I met through that organization and my brother to write a song called Heroes. It's about doing whatever it takes to achieve your dreams - even if the rest of the world tells you that your dream is impossible."

Besides writing music, Chris continues to play piano, guitar and bass. "Back in high school I played bassoon and saxophone, as well. I'm pretty rusty on all of it at the moment," he says, "and then, with a sprightly touch of Showerman humor, adds, "I mostly play the radio now."

Classically trained in voice, he had aspirations at one time to sing Opera. He intended to be a rock star after college, he

says. "They didn't offer a degree in Rock Stardom so I settled for composition instead. I played with various bands for a few years, but realized if I wanted to be a rock star, I'd have to depend on other musicians creatively to be as driven as I am."

"I went back into my first love, acting, because when you go into an audition, it's just you. You succeed or fail based on yourself - there is no one else to shoulder the responsibility."

"I did a number of musicals in Lansing," Showerman says, "and reprised my role of Rocky [Riverwalk Theater 1997] in LA with David Arquett in the stage version of Rocky Horror. I also sang in a new musical in New York last June entitled Rush Limbaugh in Hell, by Tom Klunzinger. Of local interest, the premise is that Rush Limbaugh gets held hostage in Hell, Michigan."

"I think I was the only one in the cast," he laughs, "that had not only been to Hell, but had enjoyed a delicious meal at the Dam Site Inn."

Showerman manages to squeak moments into his schedule for another passion...scriptwriting. "I think the script is the most important part of the movie," he says. "That's why I love to write. You can compensate for a poor director or even mediocre performances if there is an amazing script, but if your script is bad, no one can save it."

"I am writing a western movie script right now," he adds, "called Last Cowboy. I always fall in love with my characters, and this is no exception."

Movies are his life...When asked if he ever feels like he's living a movie, Showerman responds, "Yeah, it really does feel like living a movie...sometimes a comedy, sometimes a tragedy!"

Welcome to reality. TV, that is. An early summer issue of TV Guide mentioned "Hollywood's talent pool overflowing with reality-TV castoffs who wonder what happened to their 15 minutes."

Chris Showerman knows. He's been there...done that. He left Webberville for Hollywood the year George I opened with Brendan Fraser. Six years later, he was the "new George." In between, he did the reality TV scene...and kept on plugging.

Looking back over those years, he recollects: "It struck me as a very non-linear progression. One day I was struggling to get my shot, then the next day, I was in front of major studio producers handing me a chance at the lead in a movie. It doesn't sound like the way things really happen, but that's really how it happened."

Acclimated now to the Hollywood scene, he'll admit to being in awe of certain personalities. "I did meet astronaut Buzz Aldrin this year. That was pretty inspiring. The guy must be in his 70s and still has a handshake so strong, it could turn coal into diamonds."

As for the celebrity scene in general, though, Chris has learned to navigate those waters with ease. "I'm still fascinated by celebrities because they do what I do, and usually more successfully at this point," he says. "I like to study success and what elements seem to be consistent in the champion of any field." As time goes by, though, he notes, "I believe less and less in that mysterious 'star quality.'"

During his early years in LA, he worked in various jobs. "I used to be a massage therapist to several stars. When I first met Heather Locklear, I was pretty nervous because I had a calendar of her hanging in my bedroom when I was 12. But unlike most people who met her that day, I was massaging her feet and legs and had to

assume a professional 'in control' demeanor. I haven't been star struck since."

Having been described in one review as an "amiable newcomer," Showerman has a star quality, though, that casting agents are beginning to discover. Said "Zap2It" reviewer Dale Reynolds of the multi-faceted actor, "Chris is "bursting with talent."

Since George 2 small miracles have transpired; and his list of acting credits continues to grow. "Things are actually moving this summer," he says. "More people in Hollywood know who I am and there are some opportunities showing themselves."

Last November, he served as grand marshal for the 16th annual Rosebud Parade for kids in Pasadena. "I was still completely unknown," he laughs. "Everyone cheered and waved and shouted, 'Who are you?!'"

He starred as Andy Hobart in Neil Simon's *The Star Spangled Girl* at North Hollywood's Secret Rose Theater. That, he says, was harrowing. He had to memorize 70 pages of dialogue in three weeks, perform it live, while during the same time period he was filming *Sea of Fear*.

This independent thriller, slated for release this fall, is directed by Andrew Schuth. "It is a psychological thriller," explains Chris, "where four rich kids charter a sail boat and the captain (played by Edward Albert - that's Eddie Albert's son of Green Acres fame) takes on a fifth unwelcome guest, played by myself. As luck would have it, the rich kids start disappearing off this boat that has been stranded at sea and no one can figure out who is responsible."

Showerman will also be seen on SOAPnet in September, in a series of one-minute episodes, beginning Sept. 13 for six weeks. "One Minute Soap" is a takeoff on the old Taster's Choice serial coffee commercial.

Says Chris, "My character, Michael, meets Rebecca online and they schedule a date. However, Rebecca's loser ex-husband shows up at just the wrong time, threatening to spoil her chances of ever moving on in her romantic life (or at least going out with me!)"

But the hottest role he played this year was a guest appearance on Fox's *O.C.* episode, *The Strip*. Chris was the lead "impossibly hot fireman" stripper at the Cohen house bachelorette party before Julie's wedding.

When asked about the *O.C.*, he says it was a one-time appearance. "Besides, he says, "I don't know if I want to be type cast as a stripper." His famous line from that show came when Julie threw open the door and Fireman Jeff greeted her with, "Is it hot in here? Or is it just me?!"

On that note, the question on the *O.C.* message board the next day was, "Anyone know who he is and where he came from? We'd love to see more (and more and more) of him."

Showerman will be seen more and more as he continues on that yellow brick road to stardom. Most recently, he was privileged to be among those heeding a casting call to audition for the role of Superman in the new movie. That, alone, is a dream come true.

While home, he says, "Mom helped me learn my lines. She makes a great Lois Lane."

Showerman fans may have seen his web interview last fall on *Superman-v.com*, in which Chris explores the archetype of Superman: "I think we all have a Clark Kent in us that is secretly dying to be the Man of Steel."

"The Superman story," he continues, "is perfect for meeting us on a very human level (Clark Kent) and taking us to that superhuman heroic feeling that we get by the end of the film. We walk out of the theater believing that

more things are possible in our own lives. That is movie magic for me."

Like cyclist Lance Armstrong, Christopher Showerman is driven by what's inside. "I've always been pretty driven," he says. "Perhaps it was the values that Mom and Dad raised us with. They always told us (and continue to tell us) that nothing is impossible. I truly believe that. If I didn't, I would never have been able to come this far."

His purpose in pursuing an acting career, he'll say simply, is: "I enjoy what I do."

"Being an actor gives you compassion for everyone you meet, because when you act a character, you can no longer judge him, you have to get inside of him and discover what makes him tick."

"You do that enough," he says, "and you begin to realize that we all want the same things - to be happy, to feel important, to be loved, to be safe, to feel alive. Different characters just go about achieving it differently."

"My main purpose," he adds, "is to enjoy my life and to live to the fullest, and from that I'll hopefully inspire others to enjoy theirs and to become more of what they were meant to be as well."

As for inspiration along the way each day, Chris lists "kids, underdog stories, the promise of a new goal."

Reflectively, he talks about the journey thus far. "It never moves fast enough when you are going forward, but it seems like it all happened in the blink of an eye when you are looking back at it."

Looking back ten years from now, A Disney trivia question might be: "What famous actor played the starring role in the 2003 movie *Walt Disney's George of the Jungle 2*, and went on to sustain a rewarding career in film - both as an actor and a screenwriter?"

Meanwhile, "grab a vine" George fans and swing on down to your local movie rental shop or peruse the Disney Channel listings for showings of *George of the Jungle 2*. The movie is PG. For a nutshell review, go to www.tvguide.com/movies or www.Georgeofthejungle2.com.

Add it to your home collection of Disney films, VHS or DVD, by purchasing wherever movies are sold. It's available online at amazon.com (with reviews)

You can also check up on Chris' activities on his website: www.christophershowerman.com

As he would probably put it, "See you at the movies!"

Pub. 09/06/04
Fowlerville News & Views
Fowlerville, MI
Part 2 of 'The Chris Chronicles'

Interview sequel: The world according to actor Christopher Showerman

By Susan Parcheta

Following is an extended interview with Webberville native Christopher Showerman, star of Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*. This is a continuation of last week's feature article on the actor.

Whatever happens in his acting career, all things will be "excellent and possible" in Christopher Showerman's world. It's how he looks at life...when everyday is like Christmas.

How did you come to have such a positive outlook on life? My mom always looked at the solutions and the possibilities growing up. I think we were trained to not see problems, but opportunities.

We know you are greatly involved in volunteer work. How has that aspect of your life developed? I recently saw *Spider Man 2* and was reminded of a great thought in that script. "With great power comes great responsibility." This is such a great way to really relish the gratitude for all that we have that makes us unique, whether it's money, or intelligence, or strength or a talent, etc.

The converse is true and even more empowering: "With great responsibility comes great power." When you proactively put your energy and life force into making the world a better place and continually hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than others expect, you 'mysteriously' begin to acquire more of the gifts that make it possible for you to contribute and make a positive difference in the world.

How do you know which causes you want to espouse? There are so many worthwhile causes out there I could never get to them all. The bottom line is people putting an effort into enriching someone else's life. It may be a charity or benefit, or it may be teaching your kid how to tie his shoe, mowing your neighbor's lawn when he's sick, or calling someone you haven't talked to in a year to let them know someone's thinking about them.

You helped raise \$700,000 when you were celebrity host of the 18th Annual AIDS Walk Orange County in June. What would you like to share about your work on behalf of AIDS patients? I have several pals living with AIDS. The first time I encountered someone with AIDS, I had the usual reaction of fear and judgment. However, once I became educated about the disease, it's not just a gay issue or a black issue; it is an epidemic that is currently rising fastest with heterosexual women. My involvement with the AIDS effort is to bridge the gap of awareness, understanding and education for folks, who, like me, didn't fully understand the disease.

Tell about the Jeran Hollywood Graffiti gown benefit this spring, and your part in that. The Hollywood Graffiti Gown is a black dress that is covered with platinum beaded signatures of hundreds of female Hollywood legends. Currently, Jerry Skeels and Randy McLaughlin are working on the train, which will have the male Hollywood celebrities on it. (They asked for my signature



Actor Christopher Showerman demonstrates his muscle power, climbing the rock wall at the 18th Annual AIDS Walk in Irvine, CA in June.



Celebrity host Chris Showerman and friend, Keri (l) announce the winners at the 18th Annual AIDS Walk Orange County on Sunday, June 6, 2004.

so we'll just wait and see if it makes the train.) It will be auctioned off and the proceeds will be donated to AIDS research. Opening bid: \$1,000,000.00

Your feeling about heroes...whether in the movies or in real life. A hero is anyone who makes a sacrifice for someone else. Parents, teachers, crossing guards - they're everywhere, and probably most of them don't even know they're heroes. If you think about your favorite stories or movies, I bet you love the hero in that story because he did something selfless for someone else.

Playing action hero roles requires enormous energy. How do you maintain such a high-energy lifestyle? I am pretty high energy most of the time. I think it takes an awesome amount of

energy to compete at the top of any field. However, I believe that passion for what you do enables you to tap into energy reserves you never knew you had. Remember the first time you fell in love and felt like you only needed three hours of sleep for the whole first week?

You did most of your own stunts for George 2. How have you prepared for such action roles? Every role requires different skills from the actor, so I stay in pretty good shape all the time, so I'm ready to expand into whatever the role asks of me (i.e. fencing, horseback riding, etc.).

What kinds of thrilling things would you like to pursue? Motorcycling? Not after my crash in '98 on Sunset Blvd. I broke my leg in three places and was full of pins for a year. I love riding, but will wait till I move out of the city to get another bike.

Skydiving? I kinda promised mom I wouldn't do that anymore. **Mountain climbing?** Yup. **Swimming/diving?** Definitely. **Martial arts?** Absolutely. **Surfing?** I've gone a couple of times, but I'm not very good at it. I make good shark bait. **Horses? Love them! Car racing?** Yes, someday. But this takes some capital!! **Biking?** What, and try to compete with Lance? Not a chance. **Any other sports?** Archery.

How do you think being an Eagle Scout contributed to your career? The whole underlying purpose behind the Eagle Scout challenge is to develop leadership skills. This has been a priceless experience that I still use every day with everyone I meet. I can't recommend scouting enough for both boys and girls.

What about George 3? What if there is a sequel? If there is a sequel, I'd be happy to do it. I haven't heard any murmurs of a sequel.

Variety said when George came out: "Expect a record-setting franchise-encouraging rental and sell-through biz." Do you know how it's been doing? I know we surpassed the sales figures they had projected, but I haven't heard that we broke any records.

By the time a movie comes out, you're at a different place in your life. How do you feel about that? I remember the first time I saw a completed version of George. I thought, "Wow, who is that guy...oh yeah, that was me."

Hopefully George 2 will have a long shelf life...much like another George in It's a Wonderful Life! Or at least as long as a Twinkie.

After playing the hunky role of George, and after the O.C. appearance as the hot fireman, think you'll make next year's hottest Hollywood bachelors' list? Well, I am a bachelor, and I am in Hollywood, and it is pretty hot today. **On the dating scene?** I just got a call from The Secret Rose Theatre Company wanting me to donate a massage or a date to their auction to raise money for the theater. I could donate a date - that's like dropping a quarter into the great date gumball machine.

What if you suddenly found yourself a teenage heartthrob? Well, the teenage heartthrob route hasn't hurt Orlando Bloom's career! I was written up in Scholastic last year. I don't think that qualifies me as a teenage heartthrob yet though.

A quirky question: what magnets do you have on your refrigerator? What a fun question! Hmmm, let me see... One says: A journey of 3,000 miles begins with a single step. - A George of the Jungle 2 magnet - A picture frame magnet with a picture of Mom - One says: We cannot discover new oceans unless we have the courage to leave the shore.

What books might we find in your library? Mostly unread ones. Once I read them, I give them

away. Favorites: *Giant Steps* by Tony Robbins, *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale, *The Search for Superstrings*, *Symmetry*, and *The Theory of Everything* by John Gribbin, *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. **Movies?** *Life is Beautiful*, *The Iron Giant*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Notebook*, *Rocky*, *Terminator 2*, *Lonesome Dove* (miniseries), *The Matrix*, *ET*, *Forrest Gump*. **Music?** Everything, really. I listen to classical, jazz, rap, country, pop, metal. Not a big blues fan - I know, I know, but everything else when it's good. I also like silence a lot.

How is the Christopher Showerman Fan Club shaping up? The fan club is meager in numbers, but mighty in spirit. Thank you so much to everyone who has sent in emails via the websites out there.

You've said you answer all your email? It's true, I do TRY to answer all the mail personally. I figure if someone takes the time to write me, and they are the people that really decide if my career moves forward or not, that should be a priority. Even if I have to stay inside typing, while all the other children get to go have recess.

Who is the president of your fan club? I think my mom is the president of my fan club. At least I get the most email from her, so I'll give her the honorary position.

Do you know how many members you have? I think I have four fans now. **And are you getting more global fan mail?** Brazil, Denmark, Stockbridge, Webberville, Fowlerville, Australia and Canada.

What has been a typical fan mail? It's been such a wide range of responses! I get letters from young men that want to know what my workout routine is, letters from moms to say their kids loved the picture, letters from kids asking my advice on totally unrelated matters, letters from moms on totally unrelated matters...I think people feel a certain sense of security divulging their personal life to me because I played such a likable character...and there is a sense of safety there, too, because I am still a complete stranger.

You recently responded to a teen's letter to the editor about her perception of Disney movies having a racist and sexist slant. You said, "We the audience are actually the ones in control of what ends up on the television and movie screen." Do you get up on the soapbox often? I have opinions on most things. However, I think when you are in the public eye, you need to discriminate pick your battles, otherwise your personal politics can alienate your audience.

Please tell about your personal signature: All things excellent, all things possible.

All Things Excellent: Life is perfect as it is in the now. Just be and accept and appreciate the present moment because it is perfect, excellent. And you are enough as you are right now.

All Things Possible: The future is yet unwritten - with effort and dedication you can shape any future you choose for yourself. If you do not choose one, one will be chosen for you.

Here's a monumental question: You were co-valedictorian of your senior class at SHS. What did you tell your classmates in your valedictory address?

Whew! That was a while ago!! I remember that I had written it on a brown bag and it was about living fully now because now is the only time you have...I think that's what it was.

What would you tell them now? I think I'd shut up and listen - they have 15 years of different experiences I need to catch up on with them.

Help sponsor Chris Showerman's team in children's AIDS triathlon

Actor Christopher Showerman, formerly of Webberville and star of Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*, welcomes local support of his team at the 18th Annual Nautica Malibu Triathlon for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation on Sept. 19.

Showerman spends much of his time donating his efforts to the Elizabeth Glaser organization, appearing at celebrity AIDS benefits during the year.

As he explains, "In 1988, the Pediatric AIDS Foundation was founded by three friends who were compelled to take action after Elizabeth Glaser and her husband, Paul, discovered that she, their daughter Ariel and son Jake were all HIV-infected."

What began at a kitchen table more than 12 years ago is now the leading national non-profit organization dedicated to identifying, funding and conducting critical pediatric AIDS research.

Today, there is an entire community of pediatric AIDS researchers that didn't exist before. Fewer children are being born with HIV, and children with HIV infection are living longer and healthier lives.

Elizabeth Glaser died in 1994 but her vision, passion and mission live on in the Foundation and its work. On December 1, 1997 the Foundation officially enhanced its name to become the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation as a tribute to Elizabeth's legacy and inspiration in working to find the answers that will eradicate pediatric HIV/AIDS.

The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation creates a future of hope for children and families worldwide by eradicating pediatric AIDS, providing care and treatment to people with HIV/AIDS, and accelerating the discovery of new treatments for other serious and life-threatening pediatric illnesses.

A non-profit organization, the Foundation receives an 'A' rating from the American Institute of Philanthropy. Please visit <https://secure2.i-3.com/pedaids/triathlonpledge.jsp> to make an on-line donation or mail donation to:

The Elisabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
2950 31st Street, #125, Santa Monica, CA 90405
Phone: 310-314-1459 FAX: 310-314-1469

"If folks want to support that cause," says Showerman, "they could sponsor me. They would just have to include my name and address on any donations to sponsor my team."

Showerman is doing the running portion of the running, biking, swimming relay event. "This year I am on Team Disney," he said, "which has many participants who work for that company in some capacity. I am on the team because *George 2* was a Disney release." For more information about the event, go to websites (www.pedaids-nauticamalibutriathlon.org) (www.pedaids.org)



George of the Jungle 2 star, actor Christopher Showerman, finishing the running portion of the 2003 Nautica Malibu Triathlon for the Elizabeth Glaser AIDS Foundation

Part 1 Pub. 11/27/06
Fowlerville News & Views
Fowlerville, MI
Part 1 Chris Chronicles 2006



Showtime! New flick, theater tour light up hometown actor's career

Editor's Note: In the summer of 2004, the News & Views published an update about hometown actor Christopher Showerman's life after starring in George of the Jungle 2. We caught up with him again, two years later...to find out where his career has taken him thus far. (Part I of two.)

By Susan Parcheta

In the wild and wacky world of Hollywood, young actors soon discover that the zigzag road to stardom can be strewn with a few boulders.

Local native Christopher Showerman is no exception. Best known for his role as George in the Disney film *George of the Jungle 2*, Showerman's latest movie is *Sea of Fear*, a Lion's Gate thriller released August 22 on DVD.

Shot in summer 2003, the movie is now listed among his film credits. In the meantime, the actor/writer/artist/musician and entrepreneur has been busy doing what many Hollywood hopefuls do to build their careers...anything and everything.

Some actors, like Showerman, diversify their talents while waiting for that supernova role that will propel them into the stratosphere, with adoring fans everywhere.

As for that yellow brick road, it's been said that the beaten path is the safest, but *watch out...* the traffic is terrible. So how does a young actor continue to stand out in that...excuse me...jungle? Well, being multi-talented, Showerman seems to have that covered.

After ten years in Hollywood, the 35-year-old actor decided to leave town this fall, striking out on a different road...called *Broadway*. While *Sea of Fear* appears in living rooms around the globe, Showerman is getting a taste of theater life across the United States. Asked to tour as an understudy in the Broadway show *Legends!*...with entertainment divas Joan Collins and Linda Evans in the lead roles, he jumped at the opportunity.

The 1986 comedy by James Kirkwood (starring Mary Martin as Leatrice Monsee and Carol Channing as Sylvia Glenn) is revived...with the former *Dynasty* co-stars picking up the roles, involving two former dueling movie stars doing a stage show together.

The show kicked off in Toronto in September for a 17-city tour, swinging through Michigan in mid-November at the Wharton Center on the campus of Showerman's Alma Mater, Michigan State University.

A 1992 MSU graduate, the former Webberville resident and Stockbridge High School alumnus, majored in music theory and composition. Classically trained in voice, he had aspirations to sing opera, or be a rock star. He taught music for awhile, played in a few bands (Showerman's instruments include piano, guitar, bass, bassoon and saxophone) and sang in a number of musicals in Lansing, including *Rocky Horror Show* at the Riverwalk Theater.

He inherited his musical genes naturally; mom, Jeanne Showerman, taught music for Webberville Community Schools. Now retired, she is married to Frank McKowen. Chris Showerman's dad, Jim, and his brother, Sam, and family still reside in the area.

Showerman's mom was delighted to learn the tour would come here, knowing she'd get to have him around for a week...since visits home from California are few and far between.

When Chris Showerman set out for LA, he went with his family's blessing. While his mom entertained thoughts of starving artists in Hollywood, she'd also taught her sons to follow their dreams. His parents, says Chris, "always told us that nothing is impossible. I truly believe that."

It was this belief that inspired his signature slogan *all things possible*. He first applied it, in a different form he explains, by writing on the back of his early headshots - the requisite photos every actor needs to convey his persona to the industry.

"The first slogan I used on the back of my headshots was, 'We can inspire positive change.' I felt that was especially appropriate as it was going to all corners of the entertainment industry." This evolved into *all things possible*, and has been a constant touchstone for his work.

I first interviewed Chris in the summer of 2003, talking to him at length about his break into a major film role...following in the footsteps of Brendan Fraser as George of the Jungle in the sequel *GOTJ2*.

By the time of our 2004 update, he'd appeared on an episode of the popular TV series *The O.C.* as the "Impossibly Hot Fireman." And he had just completed his dream audition for the role of Superman in the movie *Superman Returns*, released this summer. Now, two years later, the movie is out with Brandon Routh in the lead role, and

Showerman marks his tenth anniversary in tinsel town.

When we left off that August, he was awaiting news of the Superman audition. Just being considered for the role was a privilege, he'd said. And, as he'd put it then, in an interview for *Superman-v*, "I think we all have a Clark Kent in us that is secretly dying to be the *Man of Steel*." While he'd envisioned being that *Man of Steel* since boyhood days, Showerman - along with all the other contenders - knew that only one actor would be chosen.

He admits to entering a self-imposed black hole for a time. The yellow brick road, he recalls, got a little bit foggy...and the signposts seemed barely visible. The experience proved to be a turning point.

Not only didn't he get the part, his real life hero, actor Christopher Reeve, died that October. A year later he lost close friend and mentor Dalee Henderson, who had struggled with illness for a number of years. Showerman gave the eulogy at Henderson's funeral.

Earlier this year, when he learned the news of Dana Reeve's passing, he shared his feelings about losing heroes on his web forum: "I think we're universally affected by people who have devoted their lives to the betterment of others."

His personal hero, Dalee, he wrote, greatly impacted the way he lives today. He went on to say, "I revered Christopher Reeve as a great public figure who devoted his latter life to improving the quality of life for handicapped individuals. His wife, Dana, was not quite as public a figure, but just as much a hero in how she supported the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, as well as Christopher Reeve himself, while continuing to be a wonderful mother and performer."

Showerman continues his longtime involvement in charity benefits. Besides the Reeve foundation, he's been a spokesperson for Special Olympics and for Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric Aids Foundation. It was while participating in the Nautica Malibu Triathlon for Elizabeth Glaser in September 2003 that he became acquainted with his girlfriend, who "has a heart of gold," he says, "and gets me involved in many charitable causes."

He's performed a number of times on behalf of the Actors' Fund of America, including the star-studded tribute to songwriter Cy Coleman in Nov. 2004, and this summer appeared as a guest celebrity at the Actors' Fund 10th Annual Tony Awards honoring Liza Minnelli.

Not one to stay in a black hole for long, Showerman demonstrated his resiliency by putting an even more positive spin on his *All Things Possible* philosophy. While continuing to aim toward becoming known as an action hero, he's been investing his energy the past couple of years in numerous enterprises beyond *George 2* and beyond *Sea of Fear*.

A few acting jobs have come his way. Recent credits include a dip into TV soapdom on the *One Minute Soap* series on Soapnet (he played Michael in an episode called "Too Late"); *Gentle Barn* (a short film about a farm sanctuary for domestic animals and the effect it has on its visitors); and he plays himself in Christopher Long's *Idol*, which he describes as "a low budget 'mockumentary' about the rise and fall of a newcomer to Hollywood. I got to play myself, which in itself is flattering."

Most prominent this spring was a co-starring guest spot in an episode of *CSI Miami* ("Driven") in which he played Pete, a peeping Tom/massage therapist who is witness to a murder.

"Auditioning for Superman did carry some unforeseen benefits in the press, as it's a current topic," Showerman says, "and it seems to give me some undeserved credibility in the press. Being on *CSI Miami* this year had a similar benefit in being associated with a globally recognized franchise."

As for Routh playing Superman, a *Starpulse Celebrity News* headline this summer read: *Superman's Rival Praises New Man of Steel*. "Honorable in defeat, Showerman admits he dashed out to see the new movie, and has nothing but praise for Routh."

The entertainment website *Moviehole* posted this note: "Showerman, you may remember, was also one of the guys who was up for the role of the new Superman. So what did he end up thinking of the guy that pipped him at the post - Brandon Routh? 'I thought Brandon was a really good Clark Kent. More specifically, I thought he nailed Christopher Reeve's Clark Kent'".

Ironically, now that Superman is out, Showerman's experienced a sizzling summer media-wise. Just previous to his announcement that he'd be going on the road with *LEGENDS!*, the movie rumor mill began churning out tantalizing tidbits about the actor.

Director John Woo, he learned, had considered him for the role of He-Man in the remake of that film. Then *Carmag.com* reported the project being on hold. "Woo," they said, "was reportedly considering several actors to play the role of 'He-Man' in the film, including big names Paul Walker and Triple H as well as relative newcomers Matt Davis (*Blue Crush*) and Christopher Showerman (*George of the Jungle II*)."

Showerman responded to the media hype: "Well, even though the movie has been shelved, it's very nice to be thought of. I had no idea." His name has also come up in the last couple of years for the role of Sam Sinclair in a *Splinter Cell* movie.

"With both these movies," says Showerman, "I was surprised to be considered for these projects, as I didn't actively seek them out. I think that once one actively spends enough time in this small community, you accrue enough critical mass, that at a certain point people just know who you are. That seems to be what is going on for me right now."

"I'm not famous by any stretch," he adds, "but I seem to be gaining some notoriety among some professional circles. I think if you've spent a decade in this town, people just start to be aware of you by osmosis."

The latest Internet rumor was that he might play Dr. Doom in a new film, *Fantastic Four and the Silver Surfer*. *Moviehole* noted: "Rumor has it that the actor, soon to be seen in Lionsgate's *Sea of Fear*, is reading for the role of 'Victor Von Doom', suggesting that although Julian McMahon may be returning to voice the character - who will now be totally masked behind a mask - it may be someone else filling the suit. (Makes sense I guess - why would McMahon want to return if his face isn't going to be seen?)"

Moviehole news continued, "Showerman is a bit of a go-to man for superhero roles at the moment. He was one of the 'Superman' contenders there for a while, and rumor has it that he was one of the muscled young lads that John Woo was looking at for his new live-action 'He-Man'. He's definitely on the rise, so it will only be time before he lassos up one of these big parts."

As for Showerman's take on *Fantastic Four*, he

announced on his website in early August that he he'd auditioned for it, "but the part would have been hidden behind prosthetics. I have instead decided to take the part of the *LEGENDS!* tour with Joan Collins and Linda Evans," he said, "even though it is only understudying two very brief roles."

The physical prowess that earned him the title role in GOTJ2 and places him in the limelight for such roles, also raised his star power for several fitness magazines, including *Australian Ironman*, *Max Mag*, and *Muscle & Fitness* in 2004, *Hollywood Movie Muscle Ironman* in 2005, and a new fitness article for the September issue of *Men's Workout* magazine on newsstands this summer.

That article headlined: "Super fit Christopher Showerman stays chiseled for leading roles." Keeping fit is a #1 priority for the 6ft.2 actor, who is well known in bodybuilding circles.

He enjoys passing on his knowledge to others as a personal trainer. And, while on tour? "Yes," he says, "I do have some fitness clients that I train at a private training gym in Los Angeles. They will have to train with someone else while I'm gone."

Whenever dealt lemons, Showerman pumps out more lemonade. While continuing to train for action roles in that elusive *supernova* movie, he's branching out into entrepreneurial endeavors. For diehard actors, it's called creating your own opportunities.

Says Showerman, "I am on a different path that I'm actually enjoying and feel I'm somewhat in charge of. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to grow stronger and more in tune with myself. I have created a lot of things since that first audition for Superman that never would have happened if I were on the circus ride of being Superman."

Last year (happening to be the 100th birthday year of the t-shirt), he launched InvertEgo, his own line of tees, available online at www.invertego.com.

Long before the DaVinci code was cool, he will tell you, there was InvertEgo. "The idea," says Showerman, "is that there is a word on the front of the shirt - BUT - when viewed in the mirror, there is a DIFFERENT word with a very contrary meaning."

Also an aspiring filmmaker, Showerman's beginning his first foray into that realm. Last fall he completed an audio-script for an action movie, *Last Cowboy*, which fans may listen to on his website: www.christophershowerman.com.

"Folks are welcome to download it from the site. Free! Many of my actor friends donated their voice talents to this project, including Zelda Rubenstein (*Poltergeist*) and Chris Durand (*Halloween H20*)."

A couple of local actors showed up in town to help, notes Chris. "I cast my mom and step dad in small roles for my audio version of *Last Cowboy*. They were out here on vacation and I just put them to work. They were hesitant at first, but they both did an extraordinary job."

While it's not easy to get a foothold in the filmmaking industry, Showerman hopes to produce *Last Cowboy* as a motion picture with Moviehole web owner Clint Morris. The two have formed a film production company, Shorris Film.

(Read more about Last Cowboy in part II of our Showerman feature in an upcoming News & Views).

As for his movie Sea of Fear, released in August, Showerman said he had to wait to see it like everyone else. Before it came out he'd commented on it: "I saw a rough edit of the movie a year or so ago and I'm looking forward to

hopefully a new edit on it. Editing and music can really make or break a movie so I hope we were able to get some great post work done on this one." The movie score was by Brandon Roberts, with blues, rock and folk-like songs woven throughout.

The PG 13 film, as described on co-star Kieren Hutchison's website "is a thriller about a group of people going on a sail cruise for spring break. They tell each other what they fear most and then one by one they are murdered in a way that is connected to their fear. They try to find out if the killer is among them or maybe comes from a boat that is following them, which they suspect could belong to modern pirates that are said to be in these waters..."

The actor shares a couple of *Sea of Fear* filmmaking memories. "We actually shot the movie on that sailboat," says Showerman, "and all of us got very seasick, especially the camera guys because they had to experience the motion through a camera lens."

The cast and crew were up all night shooting the campfire scene, he recalls. "It was shot just outside of LAX and we were directly in the flight path of departing planes. We'd get a few seconds of shooting in before another plane would scream overhead and ruin the audio on the take."

Sea of Fear photos are on Showerman's website, which he revamped last year, making it uniquely interactive. The site features the usual actor data, as well as offering a forum for fans to communicate with Chris and blog with each other.

Showerman devotes a great deal of time to his web forum and will continue to post weekly updates and anecdotes during the coming months of the *LEGENDS!* tour. "It promises to be a very exciting experience," he wrote before leaving, "and I intend to keep you all informed to the extent that my Internet access on the road will allow!"

Listing travel, new experiences and comedy among his interests, the invitation to go out on the road with the *LEGENDS!* cast proved irresistible.

A new door opened on the yellow brick road and Showerman walked through it. Like *The Man of La Mancha's* quest to follow that star, Chris Showerman's "all things possible" dream is ever in the adventure.

* * *

Part II: Q&A interview with actor Christopher Showerman follows in an upcoming News & Views.



Sea of Fear Cast (Top left to bottom right): Adam Mayfield as Joel, Burgess Jenkins as Lance, Chris Showerman as Derek, Kieren Hutchison as Tom, Katherine Bailess as Kate. The movie also stars Edward Albert as Captain and Caroline Walker as Ashley MacDougal.

Part 2 12/11/06
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Part 2 Q&A Chris Chronicles 2006



Chris Showerman talks about his 10 years in Hollywood

Editor's Note: This is the continuation (Part 2 Q&A) of the News & Views 11-27 feature article about Webberville native Christopher Showerman, star of the Disney film George of the Jungle 2 and appearing in the new Lionsgate DVD thriller Sea of Fear. He is currently on a road tour as an understudy with the Broadway show Legends!

By Susan Parcheta

For the past three years, the News & Views has been following the career of hometown actor Christopher Showerman since landing the role of vine-swinging George in Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*.

Hollywood's now home. Showerman felt its call ten years ago. He's made a few discoveries traveling that alluring *yellow brick road*. His quest for stardom has turned up some amazing adventures along the way, including auditioning for Superman and winding up on a Broadway tour.

As he pointed out in Part I, he's content with the path he's on. "I've created a lot of things

since that first audition for Superman that never would have happened if I were on the circus ride of being Superman."

When life deals lemons, Showerman—with his *all things possible* mindset—pumps out more lemonade. While continuing to train for action roles in that elusive *Supernova* movie, he's branching out into entrepreneurial endeavors.

We asked Chris to share some thoughts on his Hollywood experience: His take on the movie scene in 2006; what it's been like being on that yellow brick road aiming to make it big in Hollywood; his new endeavors and goals; his perspective on the entertainment industry from the vantage point of ten years into the business.

Chris, you went to Hollywood to pursue your dream of becoming an action hero in the movies. As happens to many actors, the "bug" bit early when you were cast as the biggest Billy Goat in an elementary school play. You went on to major in music at Michigan State University, but when did the stage lights really go on for you? Did you do any other acting in high school and college?

Hmmm, theater work. You're really making me think now!

Stockbridge High School: *A Bad Year For Tomatoes*; *Lil' Abner* (I was just an extra in this). Michigan State: *La Cenorentella*. Lansing Community College: *Once On This Island*; *For the Love of the Dark One*.

Riverwalk Theater: *Lies and Legends*; *Bleacher Bum*; *Rocky Horror*. Mid Michigan Opera Co: *Closer Than Ever*; *It's not My Fault*; *Choices* (I think that was the title - it's been a while now!) Los Angeles: *The Wright Brothers*; *The Littlest Witch*; *Rocky Horror* (again!) *Star-Spangled Girl*.

So you started out in theater. You've said you like theater work and movie work equally well. What triggered your desire to try films?

I was cast in a movie in Lansing - then promptly un-cast. However, for that moment that I had the role, the thought of making movies suddenly seemed very possible to me. I owe a lot to that little movie I was never in because *it is the belief in the possibility of events that allows them to happen!!*

Do you remember what movie that was?

The little movie I was not in was called "Into the Woods". No, it wasn't a musical by Stephen Sondheim. I believe they did end up making it in Kalamazoo.

Ten years ago, you packed your bags and set off on that yellow brick road to L.A. to follow your dream. Was there a point where it hit you that you weren't in Kansas anymore?

Yeah. Day #1.

You first appeared on celebrity radar when you were on an episode of Fear Factor, a popular reality TV show. While that kicked off your career, and those shows continue to remain popular, what do you think about them now?

Reality television has always been around in various forms. Game shows and the news could be considered reality programming. However, the harsh reality for most actors and writers began in 2000 with the show *SURVIVOR*, when prime time was being allotted to these unscripted shows that were amassing huge popularity.

Though the reality craze seems to have leveled off, it appears to be a phenomenon that is here to stay, as it offers apparent real life drama to the viewers and a very low production cost (compared to scripted shows) for their creators.

I have appeared in a ridiculous number of these shows, as many of my friends work in reality programming, so I can attest that there

is much less "reality" occurring on most of those shows than you might think.

The highest profile reality show I ever did was Fear Factor during its first season. I believe my exposure on reality programming has had little to no benefit for my acting career. However I must admit they were usually fun to participate in and I love the atmosphere of being on set - even if there aren't any lines to memorize.

GOTJ2 didn't catapult you into film prominence as you may have hoped. You've just turned 35, yet you don't seem unnerved by the number of hoops you've had to jump through to stay on your chosen career path as an actor.

If it wasn't a challenge, it wouldn't be fun and therefore not worth doing!

Can you give us your take on the entertainment industry from your perspective of ten years into the business? What do you think, for example, about recent Disney decisions..going family friendly..cutting some 650 jobs.

I think that Disney makes decisions based on product branding and revenue. Period. A G or PG rated movie isn't necessarily a better movie or a more spiritual or moral story - it simply has a broader audience. Not only are you including all the movie patrons under the age of 18, but for every child that attends your movie, usually a parent attends as well. It's all business. And yes, there is no reason for the Disney title to NOT be family as they have so many production companies that can put out the more adult themed features.

I think, however, that it was a mistake for Disney to let Nina Jacobson go. Nina was the one who green-lit, among other titles, George of the Jungle 2. So I may be a bit biased, however she oversaw the companies' biggest big-screen successes of all time, including this year's *Cars* and *Pirates of the Caribbean 2*. She is a very savvy woman with a lot of drive and experience. Disney, like all giant corporations, will occasionally fall victim to their own groupthink. This will be a big win for whatever company acquires Ms. Jacobson.

In your first interview with N&V, you'd said you'd like to be the next Jackie Chan, and we know Sylvester Stallone is one of your heroes. What are your thoughts on the status of the action hero in Hollywood over the past ten years?

I believe the topography of the entire entertainment industry has shifted dramatically in the past 10 years. The **action** hero, as we know it, has faded from the blockbuster summer season he once dominated. His replacement is the **super** hero. The major difference is that an **action** hero's powers, although usually exaggerated in their representation, are borne of actual human abilities. On the other hand, the **super** hero's powers are limited, not by the stifling rules of reality but only by the imagination and talent of the writer, director, and computer generated effects animators.

Perhaps collectively we feel that the real challenges of our world have gotten so out of control that no mere mortal could save us anymore. Or perhaps we need to escape further into fantasy to get away from it all. Either way, I feel like the effect-driven blockbuster movies of today lack the real jeopardy that made the action movie of the 1900's, regardless of how improbable, riveting - complete with REAL stunts and REAL explosions.

What that means for a budding action star today is that there is no necessary skill set or physique formerly associated with the action heroes that had to at least appear as if they could possibly pull off the extraordinary feats

scripted for their character. Now you could just as easily be saved by Toby Maguire as you could by The Rock.

I have always admired Jackie Chan for his charm and unassuming nature in his movies, which I believe is how his movies were able to translate so well to so many different cultures. That charm, charisma, and wit still remain key ingredients for longevity as any kind of star - but especially a heroic one.

We know you wanted to be the next Superman, and how much you loved Christopher Reeve, both as an actor and as a human being. How has your purpose evolved, do you think, from then to now?

In the decade since I came out to Los Angeles, I have zeroed in on my own mission statement as a performer and a human being. I'd like to catalyze a genre that retains the visual spectacle and thrill we have come to expect from a blockbuster, yet the clear-cut line between good and evil isn't so blatant. Somewhere in the gray area between right and wrong the viewer is inspired to consult or possibly reconsider his own beliefs.

Superman returned in more ways than one for you this year because, not only is the movie out, but also it's nearly two years since Christopher Reeve died, and now this spring, Dana. USA Weekend reminded the nation of all this when they interviewed people who'd known the Reeves. You lost two heroes in their passing. You've been actively involved in the Christopher Reeve Foundation for several years. Do you have your own personal memories you could share with us?

I never met Christopher Reeve. but I was inspired by his books and interviews. He is an awesome example of All Things Possible..No Excuses! I met Dana a couple of times at different CRPF functions. She was a lovely human being and a symbol of strength to so many people. Their marriage set a great example of supportive teamwork and left behind an amazing legacy of courage and real power.

You've a wide field of interests. Has this helped you remain resilient?

I love to write as well as act. Performing and writing require very different energies but they have a symbiotic relationship for me. At times when my acting career seemed to stall, I felt lucky to have a creative outlet like writing that I could pour myself into.

Actually, the darkest times for me as an actor have become some of the most prolific and informative times of my life. Having a creative outlet has allowed me to channel painful disappointments into some of my most inspired work rather than falling into a depressing self-absorption.

Although a lot of my decade in Hollywood has been very difficult on many levels, looking back, I wouldn't change a thing. My favorite Nietzsche quote reads: *That which does not kill us makes us strong*, and I would add, that which does not break our spirit gives us wisdom, elegance, and conviction - what a gift!

Your movie, *Sea of Fear*, came out in August on DVD. As described on your co-star Kieren Hutchison's website, it's "a thriller about a group of people going on a sail cruise for spring break. They tell each other what they fear most, and then one by one they are murdered in a way that is connected with their fear." What did you think of it?

Andrew Schuth, our director on *Sea Of Fear*, started this movie with about \$100,000 of borrowed money and a script he wrote himself. It's pretty inspiring that this guy with no preferential treatment in the industry was able

to go out and make a real movie that he then sold to Lionsgate (production company).

Just think, if we all had that much drive and determination to make our dreams real! For those who aren't as familiar with the movie making process, it is an extremely expensive logistical nightmare. Making a movie for \$100 k is like building a house for 20 bucks.

A few weeks after *Sea of Fear's* release, your co-star Edward Albert, who played the Captain, died of lung cancer. He was also one of your heroes. How will you remember him?

For those of you who saw *Sea Of Fear*, Edward played the Captain. He was a wonderful man with a magnificent spirit. In between takes around the camp fire, Edward would tell hilarious stories about taking care of his father, Eddie Albert, or his godfather, Lawrence Olivier, or pals like Marlon Brando.

Edward is one of those spirits that stays with you long after he leaves the room. He was not only a very accomplished actor and intellectual but served people as an activist - being a voice for those who couldn't otherwise be heard. He is a real hero. His existence should be celebrated - his gentle compassion emulated.

Edward lived his life fully - a life where /all things are possible.

How did you get the idea for your movie script *Last Cowboy*? What's the update on that?

I developed a character I really enjoyed for an audition for a new series called Transylvania. It was supposed to be a follow-up to the movie Van Helsing starring Hugh Jackman for NBC, but Transylvania never actually make it to the screen. After developing this charming Texan, I decided I wanted to do something with him, so I wrote a script around this character who became Lorin "LS" Sheffield and the script became Last Cowboy. Since then I produced an audio version of the script that is available on my website.

Currently, Last Cowboy is being shopped to different studios and financiers as a property of Shorris Film - my production company with Clint Morris (formerly Showerman Morris Productions). Shorris film is on the verge of making a production deal on a werewolf movie called Howl written by Clint. We are also excited about acquiring a new property called Rampage, a comedy/thriller about an unstoppable bull by Greg Kappy.

How did you meet Clint Morris of Moviehole?

Clint Morris contacted me after we shot George Of The Jungle 2, but before it was released, and asked for my first interview about the movie. He has always stayed in contact since that time and proven himself to be a real upstanding guy.

After spending some time with him a couple of years ago when he and his wife came to the states for their honeymoon, we decided that we should join forces and start our own production company - and that is how Shorris Film came to be.

If folks want to keep up with me, they can check in on my site. They can find out loads of movie related things on Moviehole.net but I am not officially affiliated with that website. My production company with Moviehole.net owner Clint Morris can be found on the web at www.shorrisfilm.com.

You also have a passion for the environment. What is the documentary you're working on?

I recently had an opportunity to develop and pitch a series idea called Surviving Evolution to the Discovery Channel. Surviving Evolution is a reality/documentary hybrid series that deals with issues of alternative energy in a very cool way. Since then, I have united with a Canadian

director and together we hope to make Surviving Evolution a reality - no pun intended.

I definitely want to make a show about alternative fuel sources that reaches the "Least likely to use alternative fuel" demographic. Usually there is a motivation beneath the resistance or unwillingness to look at facts so I want to go to the root of what frightens people about it.

If you have a personal vested interest in using fossil fuel, there would naturally be a resistance to go elsewhere for energy. If you fear for your job or lifestyle, there would also create some resistance to change.

It's my goal to show that alternative fuel is not only the "Right" thing to do for the planet and our longevity on it, but that it has MASSIVE benefits for everyone. I'm sure the blacksmiths who use to shoe horses at the turn of the 20th century were uneasy about the automobile initially as it meant they would be out of a job. In fact, these same guys were the ones most qualified.

Why do you believe in the power of films?

I believe not just in films, but the cultural power of story telling. Throughout recorded time, story telling is how a people comes to identify with itself.

By altering a culture's myths, you alter the way that culture operates in the world. Therefore, storytelling is a powerful tool for social change and the far-reaching power of the media (film, TV, Internet, etc.) creates an opportunity to unite the world as a global culture. It's a slow process though.

Your website, www.christophershowerman.com, is designed to be interactive. Was that your idea?

My web site was designed entirely by Kurt Ahrens of the Ahrens Design Group. Having it be interactive was my idea. I do spend a lot of time responding to fans from the site but that is why the site is there in the first place. I always appreciate when folks write in.

Do you really answer all of your e-mail?
I try to respond to all the email I get from the site.

You're not only artistic in the sense of writing and music, but you also enjoy designing and inventing things, such as your creation of the InvertEgo line of tees in 2005 - ironically, the 100th birthday year of the t-shirt. What's the update on those?

My new t-shirts, named InvertEgo, are available online now at www.invertego.com. The idea is that there is a word on the front of the shirt - BUT - when viewed in the mirror, there is a DIFFERENT word with a very contrary meaning. The company name, InvertEgo, comes from the idea that we show one side of our personality to the world, but when we take a good look at ourselves we can see the whole range of who we really are. I haven't really sold a lot of shirts, but I have had to put this effort on the backburner momentarily."

"I came up with InvertEgo clothes long before the DaVinci code because I like puzzles and hidden meanings. I believe we are all complex puzzles, made up of more than what meets the eye. The self that we represent to the world is necessarily a thin veneer over a depth of psychological life made up of our ego, super ego, alter ego...ergo - InvertEgo! We show the world one thing and hide the rest. The second word on InvertEgo clothing is hidden backwards in the negative space but becomes readable in a mirror, if you know what you're looking for!



Christopher Showerman sporting one of his InvertEgo tees

You indicated an interest in archery in a previous interview. Do you still practice? Hunt? Is that from your scouting days?

I only hunt paper targets. When time permits, I practice archery at a couple of local archery ranges here in LA. I have had a bow since I was in Cub Scouts and fell in love with it. The bow I'm using now is a compound #70.

You've been active in volunteer work during your ten years in Hollywood. What is surfacing for you now?

I have spent a lot of time lately with Reading for the Blind and Dyslexic, as well as doing motivational speaking engagements with various kids' organizations. I have always loved speaking to young people. Back when my mom taught at Webberville, she would occasionally give me the opportunity to address some of her students.

I have had three speaking engagements this year with kids groups around Los Angeles. I focus the topic on possibility thinking and how our choices can shape the lives we live.

Most of these kids have severe medical conditions so they grow up feeling less than other kids and limited in their abilities. My goal there is to give them the control over who they are and stop letting the handicap define them. That's one of the most rewarding things I have gotten to do.

GOTJ2 plays now and then on the Disney Channel and you're appearing on the celebrity scene more often. Do you find you are more recognized now? How has your increasing celebrity status figured into your home ties..friends, family?

The glamour of celebrity as we know it has been a relatively recent and short-lived phenomenon. Before the advent of cameras in the 1840's, the only way to be "Famous" to a mass audience was to

have your face mass-produced on money. In the golden era of Hollywood, there seemed to be certain magic around those few celebrated Hollywood stars.

With the advent of reality television and hundreds of TV channels starving for cheap programming, the probability of being "famous" (even if only for 15 minutes) is much higher, but the uncommon mystique formerly associated with fame is more rare than ever.

As for my own experience, I'm rarely recognized by strangers unless I happen to be walking around with hair extensions and a loin cloth. It is still fun, though, to get calls and emails from pals who saw me (most likely making a fool of myself) on TV. Other than the good laugh we all get and some fun stories for me to tell, my friendships and family ties remain otherwise unchanged.

What's it been like knowing you're becoming highly visible in the media and your fans can now "Explore the Works of Christopher Showerman" on Amazon.com?

I used to be really knocked out by knowing that strangers could watch my work or read about me. I still like to be aware of what is floating around about me, but it doesn't affect me like it once did. It's kinda like dating the prettiest girl in town. At first, you can't believe your lucky stars. After a few years you still appreciate that someone is willing to put up with you, but you're not constantly pinching yourself anymore to make sure it's not a dream.

Publicity can be addictive for some, but for me it's just a great tool to make folks aware of my next project. I'm not as shy as I use to be, but I don't want to learn new things about myself in print!

How do you have time to juggle your time between friends, relatives, agents, fans, co-workers..how do you find balance?

Balancing act: I believe we all find ourselves at times out of balance and stretched to our limit. Out of fairness, I try to be as honest with myself and those around me as possible about my limitations.

My personal goal is to prioritize what is most important to me beforehand, and attempt to always keep that in mind. Setting boundaries requires a great deal of diplomacy and compassion, but I think it is necessary to keeping balance and control in life.

Why did you decide to go on the road and be gone from home so long with the LEGENDS! tour, when this is an understudy role?

I'm an actor. I act. I love the opportunity to perform. What a dream to get a chance to be with great performers and learn from them and get paid for it! This tour was an opportunity that just fell in my lap and I would be an idiot NOT to go on the tour. I can't think of any opportunity that has come to me this effortlessly so it feels like the right thing to do as well. I do love a good adventure!

My role with the show is a very small one - I am understudying two brief parts - about five pages each in the script. None of the film stuff came through that I was waiting for, though, so here I go on another adventure!

Speaking of home ties, you surprised your mom and step-dad on a visit to California, nabbing them for your audio version of Last Cowboy. Tell us more about that.

"I cast them in small roles in the audio version. They were out on vacation and I just put them to work. They were hesitant at first, but they both did an extraordinary job."

I understand you surprised them with something else when the *Legends!* tour came to East Lansing. Would you fill us in on that?

When you're on the road for months at a time, it's really a special event to get a home-cooked meal and I wanted to share that with my friends from work! Soooo, I volunteered mom to host a breakfast party for the entire cast and crew of *LEGENDS!* We had a full house and mom did great.

You signed off on your e-news from the road with "Take care of each other." How did that come about?

It's just my way of signing "love" in a way that hopefully doesn't make people uncomfortable.

After all, what is love but caring for each other?

I know an actor wants to act, no matter what...are some able to manage both active theater roles and movies? I suppose Michigan's Jeff Daniels could be an example? Do you see that as being who you are too?

I believe those who love to act love all the variations of acting. One would be hard pressed to find a great movie star who never worked the stage. There are some stylistic differences and differences in the technique, but ultimately, it's all the same craft. I count my lucky stars to be able to make a living doing what I love.

As a kind of ambassador for "all things possible" - when you reflect back over the last ten years on your yellow brick road, what do you see? And gazing down that road, what would you like to bring into your life?

Having been blessed with so many opportunities and lessons thus far, I'm looking forward to an ever-increasing sense of certainty, security, and sovereignty in my life. I am devoting my energies to finding more joy and excitement along the way, because I believe it is from this state that we all can turn in our most inspired creativity and optimum performances.

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Editor's Note: Chris reports that Last Cowboy (described as a supernatural Western) will now be titled Between the Sand and the Sky and will be in production in 2007.