

PROFILE

AT EASE IN HIS SKIN

From playing a himbo in the hit vampire TV series *True Blood* to his latest romantic comedy role, there's no looking back for Australian actor Ryan Kwanten, writes **Sally Browne**





Full on: Actor Ryan Kwanten in his best-known role as Jason Stackhouse in the hit TV series True Blood; Kwanten (right) with Ryan Coor and Sarah Snook plays a slacker with a pressing problem in his latest film role Not Suitable for Children.

At home in Los Angeles, Ryan Kwanten is reading a quote off his fridge. “The point of living and of being an optimist is to be foolish enough to believe that the best is yet to come,” he recites.

The quote is by the late British actor and writer Peter Ustinov. “I love that quote,” says Kwanten. “. . . looking at life from the glass half-full perspective. Who says that getting old means getting serious?”

Kwanten changes the quotes on his fridge about once a week. He finds the words inspiring. Not that he isn’t above seeing a bit of humour in such things.

In fact, the 35-year-old actor is part-way through writing his own inspirational book – of sorts.

“It’s a satire of the self-help industry,” he confesses. “I’m midway through the second draft.”

That’s been put on hold, though, because of the flow of great film and TV work.

It seems this optimistic actor’s glass is plenty full right now – from shooting the last few weeks of Season 5 of *True Blood*, to heading to Queensland (yes, ladies, very soon!) for the thriller *Mystery Road* to talking about his latest charming romantic comedy *Not Suitable for Children*.

Most of his year (and fan mail) is devoted to the character Jason Stackhouse, the frequently shirtless himbo he plays on the popular HBO series *True Blood*. But he still finds time to shoot Aussie films such as last year’s *Griff the Invisible* and *Not Suitable for Children*, out on Thursday.

In the romantic comedy, Kwanten plays Jonah, a 20-something slacker whose life comes sharply into focus when he discovers he has testicular cancer. For technical reasons, his sperm cannot be frozen so Jonah must decide whether he wants to father children – now.

The film co-stars rising talent Sarah Snook. The two had to pass a “chemistry test” – and not the kind set by your science teacher. The film was shot on Kwanten’s home turf of Sydney last year.

The movie brings up a subject that doesn’t come up very often, says Kwanten – the male biological clock.

“It was the first time I’d ever read of the male biological clock,” he says.

“You always see films like *Knocked Up*, where females have a timeframe to have kids but we definitely have it, too, us guys.

“I definitely want kids at some time in the future but I don’t think it’s something I want to put a time line on.

“I’m certainly not footloose and fancy free now. I’m still single but I’ve settled down in terms of my ridiculous party days.”

The film hits the screens at the same time as a very different male-driven comedy, *Ted*. That film explores the bizarre exploits of 35-year-old man child John, played by Mark Wahlberg, and his talking teddy bear.

Leaving the teddy bear aside, both films take a look at what it means to be a man today.

“It’s such an interesting question,” says Kwanten, the oldest of three brothers.

“I had to answer this a couple of years ago, the question of what it means to be a man. My best guideline was my dad, so I threw it to my dad and said, ‘What does it mean to you?’ and he said, ‘Mainly it’s three traits, loyalty, honesty and humour’.

“You’ve got to have a sense of humour, it will sustain you through relationships, it will get you through the good times and the not-so-good times.”

Certainly there are more choices nowadays, Kwanten says, when being single in your 30s is no longer frowned upon. Kwanten is comfortable in his skin now at 35 (and comfortable showing it off, too). He’s been happily living in LA for the past 10 years.

“I feel it’s that sort of age where you come into your own,” he says. “You pass your awkward teens and you pass your early 20s when you feel the need to prove yourself. I’ve felt great about the last 10 years.”

He’s managed to keep it real in LA, surrounding himself with down-to-earth individuals. His best mates are not celebrities but a real estate agent, a construction worker, a concierge and a stay-at-home dad.

“For me it’s the adage, location, location, location. You have to remove yourself from the madness and narcissism that exists here. I’ve seen it get the better of some people.

“I live near the water so I’ve got that salt-water breeze, which tends to kind of mellow people out. It reminds me of where I grew up in Sydney.

“So I don’t get homesick. There’s a gum tree outside my window. That’s what I grew up with. I’d be a fool to start moulding myself into someone else because nobody can do me better than me, that’s my own little niche.”

Next on the clapper board for Kwanten is the comedy *Knights of Badassdom*, in which he will star alongside *Game of Thrones*’ Peter Dinklage.

And at the end of the month, he begins shooting *Mystery Road*, to be directed by *Toomelah*’s Ivan Sen and starring Hugo Weaving.

It’s a long way from Summer Bay, where Kwanten first came to fame playing Vinnie Paterson in *Home and Away*.

In fact, Kwanten never meant to have a screen career. He was dragged into an audition when his mum was dropping off his younger brother at a theatrical agency.

He calls his time on *Home and Away* his four years of acting training.

“Vinnie was so extroverted compared to my over analytical and introverted self,” he says.

So how would Kwanten describe himself now? “I’m still an observer of life,” he says, reaching for a snack from his inspirational fridge. “I don’t necessarily say I’m an introvert, but I love to just watch the world go by.”

Not Suitable for Children is out on Thursday.

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