

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID PHILIP RICHARD

*Could it be that **The Joker** has been given a bad rap? Maybe underneath that sinister exterior beats a heart of gold?*



claimed local actor *David Philip Richard* couldn't be further from his latest character in temperament and personality – *The Joker*.

Though clearly, like his alter-ego, he does like to leave people with a smile on their face – though thankfully, very much alive!!

We caught up with David on the red carpet at the BAFTAs – *Barnstaple Academy Friendly and Talented Awards*, to find out a little more about the private man behind the mask.

Q: So, David, how was it playing this iconic and rather scary character, *The Joker*?

A: I like *The Joker* in *Batman*. He's a baddie and I like playing baddies because they're interesting. I'm a goodie really but even as the villain I still get to make everybody laugh and smile. But they'd be scared of me if I walked down the street dressed as *The Joker*!

Q: Can you tell your fans a little about your life growing up? I believe you are a local lad...

A: Well...I was born in the hospital at Barnstaple. I've got two sisters and a brother-in-law, Philip. But I've also got a sister-in-law, Julie and five nieces and nephews – Savanna, Lola, Victoria, Alec and Dean. Hi guys! They call me Uncle David and always come to see me in productions (along with my cousins and friends).

Q: Yes. I hear you were recently in a Pantomime?

A: Yes. My friend Barry's a skeleton and Peggy's the evil mother. Today I have my hair dyed green, back then I had on a black mask and blue wig! It was a production for Drama Matters up at the college. We do the Christmas Panto and birthday parties too.

Q: There's obviously a playful side to you then. Dare I say, a joker? I'm just wondering what you were like, how things were for you, growing up?

A: I lived in Maples when I was younger. And went to Lampard Vachell once I was 5. It was alright. I liked cooking the Christmas cake. Took it home to mum and dad. They

died... a long time ago now. But I remember they enjoyed the Christmas cake! I had a wood stall too. Where I made wooden owls and people came to buy them for Christmas. I don't carve anymore but I do still have some in my cabinet in the lounge. I had a lot of people around to love me and lots of friends at school when I was growing up.

Q: Do you remember playing any jokes on your friends?

A: There was one time. Not really playing a joke on them, but I'd cooked baked potatoes and was supposed to share them with my friends. Anyway, I ate all the jacket potatoes on the bus! I was hungry. Don't know how I had them all. Just ate them. All for me! With cheese on top. I'd made a lot. Lots in a tin. I was meant to share them but I was feeling greedy. And now, when I make a quiche it's just for me.

Q: So you like cooking then... and eating!

A: Yes, I like to cook. Quiche. Just a normal quiche... I made pumpkin soup for tonight with marmite sandwiches and pizzas. I toast my bread first.

Q: I can't imagine The Joker cooking, though maybe he would eat all the jacket potatoes.

A: (laughs) I do myself a packed lunch for college or I go to Venture cafe for sausage, egg,

bacon, mushroom baguettes, crisps or chips, mushy peas and capuccino. My cousin Linda works as a waitress there. I lost a lot of weight recently. Lots of walking. And healthy eating. I feel better for losing the

Q: A:

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weight. More energy. But I always sleep well. The Doctor suggested I went onto healthy eating. Good for me. Look after myself.

So do you live on your own then?

Yes. I live at Whiddon Valley in a house of my own. I like it like that. No pets even. I've lived there a long time. One of my sisters lives near, but I do all my ironing, mop the floor, hoovering. I like to keep it clean and tidy. My mum and dad taught me when I was a little boy.

And when you're not at home and not winning awards?

I have got lots of certificate awards on my bedroom wall... (laughs) Well, I like to be out and about doing things. Been to Butlins and Lands End. (They've got ice-cream and a cafe!) I really enjoy drama and art too. People say I'm very arty - I just like making things

and drawing. I have my hair cut every 6 weeks. Number 4! They make me 2 cups of coffee and biscuits. 2 sugars and milk. They give me an extra one while I'm waiting. Only me. I'm special. (laughs) I've got to get them a box of chocolates and a card to say thank you. I go shopping every Sunday and still go Christmas shopping in Exeter every year. I went to the Queen's Theatre to watch an Elvis tribute act. And Bridgewater for the Carnival. I like the floats. My favourites were *Braveheart*, *Mary Poppins* and then, *The Last of the Mohicans*. I remember I was on a float once. Barnstaple Carnival. With Amanda from Gateway. That time I was a Mexican drummer. I had a big hat. It was a long time ago, but it was in the paper.

Sounds busy!

And sometimes I go to the pictures. Saw *Marvel 4* last week. I like all the comic book films. Seen all of the *Lord of The Rings* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Sometimes I go to the library. I'd go for a book with *The Joker* on the cover! I like scary films too... *Terminator*, *Cyborgs*, *Batman* obviously. I go to the cinema and pick up their brochure, find out what's on. Think I'm one of their best customers. Sometimes I get extra biscuits (with 2 cups of coffee) there too.

Q: A:

As who's been stood listening...

David is called away to join the rest of the cast, smiling as he goes, I get called over by one of the crew

“I've not known David long, but very quickly I saw that he's extremely intelligent and he's got a really good memory. He's also a very kind man. Always talks to everyone. Says good morning. Very friendly and polite. Even the staff in Tesco's know him. Always says hello. I think he just likes people. Very sociable. But at the end of the day, he likes to close the door and have his own time.”

At the end of his sinister deeds, *The Joker* as portrayed in *Batman* comics and films leaves his victims with a deadly smile on their faces. David leaves people smiling in his wake too... but for very different reasons. So altogether an unlikely casting for *The Joker*. But then, maybe that's what makes a great actor.

I find myself laughing, thinking of my time with David and recalling those classic Joker lines based on his renowned unreliable memory -

“... if I'm going to have a past, I prefer it to be multiple choice.”

And the BAFTA goes to...