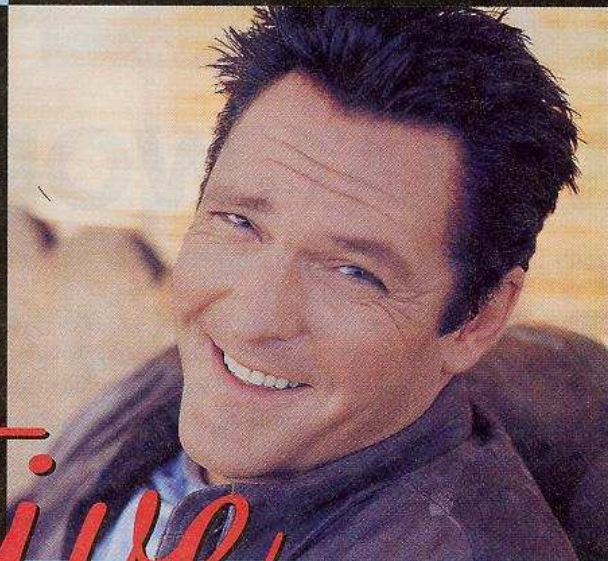


THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE

Sensitive



by Sean P. Egen

Michael Madsen is a man trapped in the wrong era. He's a throwback to a time when men were men and "politically correct" meant punching the right box on a voting ballot. This tough-guy actor has played some pretty unsavory characters in films such as *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Getaway*. But he's also in touch with his sensitive side—in nice-guy roles in films like *Free Willy*, and as a published poet. Madsen's collection of poems, *Paradise Burning*, is available in bookstores and at his Web site, *Michaelmadsen.com* (www.michaelmadsen.com).

We asked this brick-and-mortar actor how he wound up in cyberspace.

bLink: Why'd you start your own Web site?

MM: I don't really know as much about computers as I'd like to. It's kind of embarrassing to me—my ten-year-old son knows more about it than I do...I thought I just needed to catch up with the times a little bit. I figured the best way to do that was set myself up a Web site.

bLink: Do you have plans to publish directly onto the Internet, à la Stephen King?

MM: I just finished another book, called *Quack, Quack*, and I took it around, and so far everyone's thrown it out their door. So I didn't know where to go with it. I did recently have the idea of publishing it on the Internet, but I heard Stephen King was really regretful that he did his book that way because he got ripped off. He wasn't able to produce the revenue for it and a lot of people got it and didn't pay for it. I think that until the technology is devised to set that kind of thing up to protect the author, or until I know more about it, I'm going to have to figure out some other way to get my book out there.

bLink: Do you prefer acting or writing?

MM: I'm a lot more proud of my writing than I am of the acting. The writing for me is a lot more personal. I never really had any intentions of writing a book—that was purely accidental. I was surprised that there was a response to it. A lot of folks did seem to understand what it was, 'cause it's not for everybody, let's face it.

I guess because it's more personal, it meant more to me. It seemed like it was more honest.

The acting sometimes, to me, is so phony, and all of it is so overblown—I mean, I could go on for hours about acting, but I'm sure not going to bore your readers with it.

bLink: Ever looked back at one of your poems and wondered who that guy is?

MM: [Laughs] Yeah, there's a few of 'em like that.

bLink: Your writing is edgy and dark. Is it tougher to be dark as a parent? (Madsen has five sons.)

MM: I think that I've been fortunate in that I've been able to understand the dark sides of whatever it was I was living through. And I've also been blessed enough to have these boys and have them be such a major part of my life...It's funny, when you're happy and things are going well, you're not writing as much. A lot of that stuff comes from troubled areas. And when those troubles don't exist anymore, you find yourself wondering what the hell you're going to write about now.

bLink: Have your kids seen any of your grittier roles?

MM: They like the action stuff and think that's cool. And they love *Free Willy*, *Wyatt Earp*, and the TV stuff...But the heavier stuff like *The Getaway* and *Reservoir Dogs*, they're not really old enough to see those pictures.

bLink: Do you prefer playing good guys or bad guys?

MM: I don't really have a preference. I figure that if you play someone really, really dark, that character needs to have a sense of humor. And if you play somebody who's really nice and together, then that person should probably have some sort of baggage somewhere that they carry around. Just so it's not one-dimensional.

bLink: If you could fight anybody in Hollywood, who would you fight?

MM: [Laughs] Wow. They'd have to get in line.

bLink: Could you take them?

MM: That's hard to say. Sometimes people surprise you. ☺

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