

# DRESSED TO KILL

Double-breasted suits, big guns and sleaze for sale! Jared Daperis talks about his latest role as the notorious Melbourne gangster, Squizzy Taylor in *Underbelly*. Interview by Matthew Myers.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN BRAWLEY

**DNA: What kind of research did you undertake for the role of Squizzy Taylor?**

**Jared Daperis:** I did the internet rounds and read some books, but we also had some great researchers on the *Underbelly* crew. They helped me sift through information. As I was playing a real life character, I wanted to make sure I was doing him justice and represent how he really was. But there was only so much information on how he was behind closed doors.

**You filmed in Williamstown, Melbourne, with vintage clothes, cars and guns. Was it as exciting as it looks?**

Oh, it was, except that I was wearing a three-piece suit on a 35-degree day! But it was a lot of fun and the cars were amazing. I really love Melbourne and it was great to have it as a backdrop, especially in the era of the '20s. This was when the city was booming and all the Victorian buildings were so grand and wonderful to shoot in. Back then, with the gold rush, Melbourne was the richest city in the world and *Underbelly: Squizzy* is a good showcase for the city and that whole exciting era.

**The pin-striped suits, slicked back hair, women with their pearls – it was all very sexy. It was very classy and that's also what's appealing. When you're wearing a nice tailored three-piece suit it looks amazing and the girls with the hair and diamonds! That classic look is very cool right now.**

**Were you tempted to keep any of your Squizzy costumes?**

I did manage to snag a suit. I was very fortunate to have about 10 tailor-made suits that were incredible. So I twisted their arm and they let me keep one. I think it will sit in the closet as a memento, but it is a beautiful blue and purple pinstripe.

**You've been acting professionally since you were a child; do you think you're a little wiser than the average newcomer?**

Well, I've been in the industry for a long time,

so it's certainly beneficial to know how it all works and all the ins and outs of being on set. And I'm very comfortable on set, so it is a benefit. But *Squizzy* has been a new experience and the exposure from the *Underbelly* franchise is all very new and exciting.

**One of your breakthroughs parts was playing Little Joe Cartwright on the American drama Ponderosa. What was that like?**

As a 12-year-old boy, riding around a western town as a cowboy was amazing. It was like a playground for me! It was an absolute blast and we shot out of Daylesford on a set near Trentham. They built the town and house on a huge property, which was basically turned into 1858 America. I hadn't had any riding experience until then, but it came in handy for *Squizzy* as I had to jump on a horse a bit.

**In 2004, you appeared in The Full Monty.**

**What are your memories of that?**

I was 15 at the time and I played the son of the

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main guy, who was Matt Hetherington. In the second last scene, before they did their final strip, I had to wait side stage for the curtain call. So they did their thing, and then I'd go out and join them to take a bow, while they were all in their towels!

**It just so happens that Matt Hetherington is a past DNA Straight Mate!**

Oh wow! My father in the show! I haven't seen Matt since then, but he's a great guy.



Jared Daperis (right) cut his teeth on shows like *Blue Heelers*, *Round The Twist* and *Stingers*. Now, he tackles his biggest role in *Underbelly: Squizzy*.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG NOAKES

**Do you think we're ever going to have gay marriage in Australia?**

I'm sure that gay marriage will happen and that one day we'll look back on it in the same way that we look back on other prejudices and issues, which are just so absurd. I have faith that it will be fixed soon enough.

**Have you ever been mistaken as gay?**

I guess a little bit. Not necessarily mistaken, but being involved in film, television and theatre, people can just assume it. When I was at school, my mates would be playing footy and I love sport, but I was off doing theatre, and there were questions. But I haven't had them for a while [laughs].

**If you were gay, who would you go for?**

Oh gee, it would have to be Brad Pitt. The man is a fantastic actor and how can I deny how good-looking he is!

**He's also a bit older than you, so he'd be a sugar daddy!**

[Laughs] A sugar daddy! I must like an older man then.

**Who is your diva?**

I reckon Katy Perry is pretty cool, but I really like Rihanna. She's awesome and has a really cool thing going on. I'm a sucker for her song *We Found Love*, with Calvin Harris.

**Is there anyone in the business that you've looked up to?**

I've had some great mentors who I've worked with and who've helped me a lot, who I respect. In terms of emulating the careers of actors in the industry, it would be hard to go past Daniel Day Lewis. I think he's really inspiring. I also think the work that Tom Hardy (*The Dark Knight Rises*) does is wonderful. He immerses himself in what he does and that's something that I'd like to replicate.

**What is the campest thing in your house?**

That would definitely be my beautiful fluff ball shih tzu poodle puppy. Now that's pretty camp! Her name is Willow and she's my little girl.

**What advice would you give to someone wanting to break into the industry?**

I worked with a 10-year-old boy on *Underbelly*, who played one of my little pickpockets. He was asking me the same thing and I said if you enjoy doing this and being here, then keep doing it and don't stop. As soon as you start questioning it, then it's not worth it, as it is too hostile an industry to pursue. But if you really want to do it, then go for it.

**Are you a jocks, boxers or freeballing man?**

I'm a boxer briefs man.

**And what about Squizzy Taylor?**

Well, Squizzy is well exposed a lot of the time.

**He freeballs?**

He does often, but he wears the '20s long johns and under the studio lights it was very, very warm. I certainly wouldn't recommend the woolen variety.

*more: Underbelly: Squizzy* airs on the Nine Network during April.