



Young Actor Steers "Sherman's Way"

Michael Shulman Moves From Broadway To The Big Screen — And The Producer's Chair

(CBS) Michael Shulman is used to being in the spotlights of Broadway. Now he'll be in the cinema spotlight also. Shulman stars in the new film "Sherman's Way," a coming-of-age, road-trip story with a little bit of romance thrown in as well.

Shulman, 27, has already acquired an extensive resume, both on the stage and on screen, with turns in Broadway's "Les Miserables" and TV's "Party Of Five." Now, the youthful actor has focused his attention to the film, which he also produced.

"I like to think I'm not as stuck up as Sherman," Shulman told CBS News about his starring role.

The plot centers on the college-aged Sherman, a Manhattan native and the son of an affluent politician, who strives for success at everything he attempts. An over-achiever who feels at most comfortable with his East Coast routine, Sherman soon finds himself in an argument with his girlfriend, Marcy (Lacey Chabert, also from "Party Of Five"), and eventually stranded in California's wine country with a peculiar vagabond named Palmer ("Ally McBeal's" James Le Gros). The middle-aged and eccentric Palmer quickly becomes a mentor of sorts to Sherman, who soon takes up a less formalized approach to life.

Although Shulman distanced himself from Sherman's pretentiousness, the actor did note the similarities between himself and his character.

"I was completely like Sherman," Shulman said. "I grew up in New York in this fast paced environment."



The actor was in for a surprise when he arrived on set in some of the most remote regions of Napa Valley, and discovered that there was no Internet access or cell phone service in the area. But Shulman quickly adapted and participated in activities he had previously never encountered while growing up in New York, as he learned to drive stick shift and even went totally nude for a skinny dipping scene in a lake.

"The director [Craig M. Saavedra] needed someone to get naked and, as a producer, I was the one who had to do it," Shulman said of his stripped-down performance in one of the film's more comedic moments.

Shulman says he even forgot to tell his friends that he would be naked in the film. They were slightly stunned during a screening.

"My friends see ["Sherman's Way"] and they're like, 'We did not want to see you naked,'" Shulman said.

Although he was in unfamiliar territory, Shulman said he was happy to be working with longtime friend and colleague Chabert, who was there for several days of filming.

During casting, Shulman called Chabert personally and asked her if she was interested in playing his girlfriend once again. The two actors had previously portrayed an onscreen couple on "Party Of Five."

"We also did 'Les Miserables' together 12 years ago," Shulman said. "So we've known each other for a long time. ... It's amazing to have friends like that."

On set, Shulman also spent a great deal of time with director Saavedra, as they financed "Sherman's Way" through their joint production company, Starry Night Entertainment. Working on this independent project allowed Shulman to gain insight from Saavedra about filmmaking.

"He taught me a lot," Shulman said. "It's not about fame or finding your trailer. ... It's about your role and being a part of this team. I hope I can take that through everything I do."

"Sherman's Way" is now playing in select theaters.