

In Conversation with Sir Patrick Stewart: Savannah Film Fest

By [Marie DeFreitas](#) • SCAD Contributor November 5, 2017 at 7:43pm



At SCAD we are presented with a multitude of amazing opportunities. One of those this past weekend was attending a discussion with Sir Patrick Stewart after a screening of his recent movie Logan at SCAD's annual Film Fest. Stewart spoke about his friendship with Hugh Jackman, his reactions to the film, and about his road to fame in theater.

Sir Patrick Stewart is pretty much everything you expect him to be in person: funny, humble, witty and articulate. When discussing Logan where Stewart plays Charles Xavier, he spoke very fondly of the franchise and about (surely you can guess if you've seen the movie), how this would be his final role as the professor. Here in Logan, Stewart said, we see the professor in a very different way. Usually he is quick, on top of things, an intellectual who has it all under control. But that's not the case here. In Logan we see the professor as confused, not in control at all really, and quite helpless, to which Stewart said it was a very different portrayal and overall character to play. There are quite a few scenes where Stewart's character even had to be carried by Jackman, in which he said he lost twenty pounds for. Stewart said he would joke with Jackman saying, "Hugh, there are probably thousands of people who would want to be in my place, being carried around by Hugh Jackman".

Sir Patrick Stewart has seen this film more times than he was able to count on his fingers, but he spoke about a particularly special time when he saw it at the Berlin Film Festival. As the movie was ending Stewart looked to Jackman to find him in tears. He said to the audience, "I thought, if Hugh Jackman can cry then I certainly can. I let it out too". By the end of the screening Jackman reached for Stewart's hand and they weep together. "Of course Hugh was saying goodbye to the franchise as well," said Stewart.

Stewart also spoke about his first steps into his career where he wasn't so hopeful about his future as an actor. "I was depressed," he said about the time after his graduation. However, soon after this he was offered a job as an assistant stage manager where with the few tasks and occasional small roles he said, "I was in seventh heaven. I could look out front and there was a theater...I was blissfully happy."

"Everything that ever happened to me was a fluke," Stewart went on in the interview as he began to discuss how he got his role as Jean-Luc Picard in the famous tv series Star Trek: The Next Generation. He said, "I was aiding in a lecture for an English professor at UCLA. "He said to me, 'This will be much more fun if you and an actor friend of mine would read excerpts from the plays I'm lecturing about'." And lucky enough, an executive producer of Star Trek was there sitting in the crowd. Stewart reflects, "At some point during this scholarly academic evening he turned to his wife and said, we found the Captain".

But Stewart also faced difficult with obtaining the role, saying that the show's Gene Roddenberry made it clear that he didn't want him. "'We don't want a bald British actor!'" Stewart remembered him saying. It took another six months before the role was finalized, but lucky for us, Stewart got it.

Since Stewart got that role he's had countless numbers of fans coming up to him and expressing just how much the show and his role meant to them. Stewart reflected on a couple in particular that were extra special. One flight attendant on a British Airways flight crouched down next to his seat and started pouring out how much the show helped him throughout all the tough times as he was grew up, and got him to a good place. Got it! er was a Las Vegas police officer who wrote him a letter saying that much of what he sees everyday reminds he of the harsh cruelty and awfulness of people's lives and it really brings him down. "...the only thing I can do is go to my shelf and take down an episode of Star Trek and watch it, and I feel better."

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Stewart smiled as he spoke about the letter. “There’s no remark anyone made which has pleased me and moved me more than that,” he said.

At the end of the interview in the Lucas Theatre with all of us sitting quietly in awe of his presence, Stewart spoke directly into the hearts of us art students here at SCAD as he expressed the importance of art in our world. “The thing about art...is it has the power to change lives.”

“...it is to give people insight into other lives and other situations and other places that perhaps they’d never really considered that way before. That way you can have an impact on the world.”

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