

The Twilight Lexicon's interview with Gil Birmingham cast as Billy Black in the movie adaptation of Twilight by Stephenie Meyer. Interview conducted by Cocoa.

We would like to thank Gil for taking this time to answer a few questions and share some of his incredible experience with us.

Lexicon - What drew you to acting?

Gil - I've always felt acting chose me. I wanted to be a musician, which I am. I was scouted in my gym and was asked to be in a Diana Ross music video. I enjoyed working on the set, started studying, and came to realize that acting was a just a different medium derived from the same creative place as music. Now I love them both.

Lexicon - Do you prefer stage, television or film?

Gil - I have respect for them all. Each requires its own unique measure of creative expression. Television is generally a very fast paced environment and I like the challenge. I love the immediacy and aliveness of stage. Film can be very intimate, yet larger than life.

Lexicon - Of all the roles you have had, which one would you say is your favorite?

Gil - I feel it is vital to embrace all the characters I choose to play, flaws and all.

Lexicon - What would be your dream role? Why?

Gil - A dream role for me would be one that not only entertains, but also shares with the audience some reflective sense of how we as humans (or non-humans) are all struggling to do the best we can.

Lexicon - What is the funniest thing to ever happen to you on a set?

Gil - This is kind of personal, but I'll tell. During shooting on the set of "Lone Ranger", I split my buckskins. Because of time issues, I had to continue shooting several takes of a sitting scene strictly from the waist up. I felt a little self conscious especially when the crew started calling me "One Horn."

Lexicon - I see you are a musician. What kinds of music do enjoy playing? Do you have a favorite band or song right now?

Gil - I've been a guitar player since I was 10 and love playing the works of Stevie Ray Vaughn, Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, old school blues rock. My musical tastes range from Sting, Seal, Allman Brothers, Dave Mathews, Jack Johnson, John Mayer, to Maroon 5, Moby, Natalie Imbruglia, Nora Jones, Rascal Flatts, Keith Urban, Red Hot

Chili Peppers, Willie Nelson, and Bob Marley. So you can see my taste is all over the place.

Lexicon - Can you tell us a little about your audition for the role?

Gil - Catherine Hardwick paired me up with different actors auditioning for the role of Jacob, my son. At first we were asked to read the scripted lines and then we did considerably more improvisation scenes. It's really about the look AND the chemistry. It's nice when you audition and capture moments of magic.

Lexicon - This isn't your first experience with Vampires, which plight is more appealing to you, werewolves or vampires?

Gil - Well, as clan leader Billy Black, I'll have to go with werewolves. I like that the Quileute tribe and their werewolves' transformation serves the sole purpose of protecting the people and the land.

Lexicon - Billy Black is in a wheel chair due to complications with diabetes, have you ever played someone disabled? Do you think working in a wheel chair will be limiting?

Gil - No I haven't played a person with a disability before. I think Billy Black uses his wheel chair as an extension of himself and he does not let it limit him. Nor will I.

Lexicon - How would you describe Billy's character?

Gil - Billy is a fascinating culmination of genealogy and spiritual wisdom who understands the challenges of the human condition with a great sense of humor.

Lexicon - Have you ever met Billy Burke (Chief Swan) or Taylor Lautner (Jacob)?

Gil - That's funny. Who's the real Chief here? Or the real Billy? Billy Burke is such an open personality that playing best friends just came naturally. And Taylor is the kind of young man that any father would be proud to have as a son. I feel as strongly about Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. They are all wonderful and talented people. Good times.

Lexicon - Have you read the book? If so, who is your favorite character?

Gil - Yes I have and again I have to go with Billy Black. Stephanie Meyers has really carved out a beautiful love story in a genre that is generally associated with the darker side. Yet the character's wants, needs, and desires are so universal to us all. And Billy Black gets it. He operates from the heart and understands that those things that do not elevate us contaminate us.

Lexicon - If Bella were your daughter, what advice would you give her regarding Edward and Jacob?

Gil - The developing years of a young girl's life is so sensitive in her search to discover herself, that I feel a balanced perspective would be needed, i.e. a female point of view (mother). But I might suggest a break and/or a different environment for a time. That sounds pretty good coming from someone without children.

Lexicon - What personality traits do you share with Billy?

Gil - I certainly share his traits of humor and a love for people. I think we both attempt a spiritual consciousness in our day to day living and the honoring of the gift to be here.

Lexicon - What scenes are you most looking forward to filming?

Gil - Every scene is an occasion to find a unique way of telling the story. I look forward to the collaborative process of each opportunity.

Lexicon - Are you surprised by the hype surrounding this film? Does it add to the pressure of performing knowing the high expectations for the film?

Gil - Absolutely! It is such a rare occurrence that something inspires so many people to want to fully engage and participate. I feel privileged to be a part of it. In regards to the pressure of performance, I have a little motto I find freedom with, "Relax, be true, and enjoy the ride"

Lexicon - Have you checked out any of the online Twilight fan sites?

Gil - I have actually gotten some of my research from these sites, especially Stephanie's symposiums. I am amazed at the sense of community shared with all the fans. So many people are emotionally moved by these stories. The fans are great and it is very exciting to have such wonderful support for a project.

Lexicon - You just finished filming "Love Ranch", can you tell us a little about your role in that film?

Gil - Well, it's quite different than Twilight. The story, directed by Taylor Hackford, is about the married couple, played by Joe Pesci and Helen Mirren, who founded the first legal brothel in Reno Nevada in 1975. I play corrupted law officer Johnny Cortez, who serves as the right hand information man to Charlie Bontempe (Joe Pesci). Johnny battles with the moral dilemmas he faces with his choice to be both law man and participant in underhanded shenanigans.

Thank you again Gil. We wish you all the best in your career and we are thrilled to have you as a part of the Twilight filming project.

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