

The Twilight Lexicon interview with Michael Welch cast as Mike Newton in the film adaptation of Twilight by Stephenie Meyer. Interview conducted by Cocoa.

We would like to thank Michael and his management for sharing a few moments with us during his very busy filming schedule.

Lexicon - Why did you decide to become an actor?

Michael - Growing up, I was an awkward little runt. Playing and performing were basically the only ways I could connect with people. I was always most comfortable "on stage." So it was clear at a young age that my life was either going to be dedicated to sports, music, or acting. Acting was the most fun.

Lexicon - Do you prefer stage, television, or film? Why?

Michael - Honestly, I love them all for different reasons. I know that's a complete cop-out, but it's true. They are vastly different experiences and there are advantages and drawbacks to all three. But there is NOTHING like the stage. I've only done two plays in my life and I need to do more. Working with a live audience is like skydiving. It's scary, but if you can do it successfully, it's the most incredible feeling in the world. By the way, I highly recommend skydiving. It's safe, don't worry about it.

Lexicon - Can you tell us a little about your charity work?

Michael - I work with an organization called Kids With a Cause (kidswithacause.org). They're great. I've been with them for eight years. They've helped a lot of kids.

Lexicon - What would you consider to be your dream role?

Michael - I don't know.. John Lennon. Jeff Buckley. How about Edward Norton's serial killer younger brother in a P.T. Anderson movie? That'd be cool.

Lexicon - The Twilight fandom loves music, Do you have any favorite songs or bands? What is playing on your iPod right now?

Michael - I love music as well. There is a full list of my favorite bands on my MySpace page. In the past five years, my two favorite bands have been Tool and Pearl Jam. The last two bands I listened to were Yaesayer and Yes. I LOVE Yes. My favorite song for about three years now has been "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" Parts: 1-10 by Pink Floyd.

Lexicon - What was your very first audition ever like?

Michael - It was great! I auditioned for one of the many spin-offs of the “Mighty Morphin Power Rangers.” I forget which one. Maybe “Turbo.” After the audition, I told the casting director that it was my first audition ever. Apparently, that’s not what you’re supposed to say because they like people with experience. I didn’t know that, so I told the casting directors of my first ten auditions exactly how inexperienced I was. I had a hard time getting work until I stopped doing that.

Lexicon - What made you want to audition for the role of Mike Newton?

Michael - Originally I auditioned for Edward. Ha! As soon as I read the description I knew it wasn’t for me. Although I appreciate my representatives thinking I could pull off, “hauntingly beautiful; the most unbelievably good looking creature the world has ever seen,” honestly, come on. Me? I don’t think so folks. Any potential charm I may have comes out of quiriness, not physical attractiveness. Anyway, Mike seemed to be the best fit, and Catherine liked how I played the role. I auditioned for Eric too and I was kinda funny, I have to say, but Justin has been a perfect Eric.

Lexicon - Can you tell us a little about your Twilight audition process?

Michael - Catherine held what’s called a “mix and match” session, where actors reading for different roles auditioned together in order to determine which group of people had the most “chemistry.” Don’t worry, I don’t know what that means either. I got to work on a couple of scenes with Kristen, which was fun. Catherine was really funny. She definitely seemed like a cool potential boss.

Lexicon - Can you tell us what it’s like working with Catherine Hardwicke? (We have heard so much about her, but no real stories.)

Michael - She’s a very serious director, but she exudes playfulness. No matter how much she has to deal with or how stressful the situation is on set, she does an excellent job of staying optimistic and keeping a smile on her. I’ve worked with directors on the other end of that spectrum, and it’s not the most pleasant way to make a movie. As far as a story- One time, she told Justin to hit me in the face with a volleyball in the middle of a take. So he did. Right square in the face. Oh Catherine! You’re so craaaazy.

Lexicon - Have you read the Twilight series? If so, who is your favorite character, why? If not, do you plan on reading it?

Michael - I read the first book. I didn’t want to read the others until we were done filming this one. Easy answer, but I really do love Bella, particularly picturing Kristen as I read it.

Lexicon - How would you describe Mike’s character?

Michael - I think he's a cool guy. He's finding himself, he's working it out. I think he represents the high school experience for a lot of kids. He's athletic, he's fun, and he's "in love" with a girl who has her little heart set on someone else. Someone much more chiseled. I'm sure most people can relate or at least sympathize with Mike.

Lexicon - Should Bella choose Mike in the end? Why?

Michael - That's a conversation to be had between Twi-hards, TwilighTERS, and those who are better qualified to discuss these matters. Of course I want Bella to choose Mike. That makes me a leading man!

Lexicon - How has it been shooting with Kristen Stewart? What is the chemistry like between the cast?

Michael - Great chemistry. Couldn't be better. Sparks are flying off our heads it's so good! And Kristen... come on... she's so good, all you have to do is react off of her.

Lexicon - What elements of your own life do you draw upon to play Mike?

Michael - Failing to procure a relationship while in high school, that's probably been the most beneficial experience to draw from. 😊

Lexicon - What did you do to prepare for this role?

Michael - Honestly, not a whole lot. I read the first book, I read the script, and I didn't do much else. I wanted to come from myself and be open to the situation on set. I didn't want to plan anything, I just wanted to keep the character alive and spontaneous, and figure it out as I went along. I've never really done it that way before, I usually prepare rigorously. I just decided to trust myself, and my instincts, and be open to Catherine's vision. It's definitely been an experiment. But I naturally share a lot in common with Mike coming into this. You know the whole golden retriever thing? That's not something I need to work on, that's just in me. So I think it'll be ok. I guess we'll see...

Lexicon - Mike Newton's parents own a hiking supply shop, are you into hiking? What hobbies do you have?

Michael - I lived in the hills of Los Angeles for about a year. There were some great trails by my apartment and I went hiking as much as I could. Other hobbies: I like to play the drums, eat, watch movies. I was into Magic: The Gathering for a while, I had my poker faze. I don't know. I'm a pretty boring guy. I just like to hang out. OH YEAH. Ping-pong! I'm good at that.

Lexicon - With the damp and cold weather how are you keeping warm?

Michael - I've worn the same coat everyday for the past couple of months. I pretty much only have the one... You certainly don't have to send me a coat. I need to learn to fend for myself. ☺

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

Michael - Yeah, you know I love you guys.

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?

Michael - This film in no way rests on the shoulders of Mike Newton. I'm just trying to have fun, be real, and add as much life to the movie as I can. I'm not really feeling the pressure to be honest.

Lexicon - Have you had the opportunity to meet Stephenie Meyer? If so, did she give you any insight into Mike's character?

Michael - I did meet Stephenie. She's really sweet and great. She seemed pretty thrilled on set. She didn't really get into character discussions or advice for any of us. I asked her for feedback on a scene. She said she just loved watching these characters come to life (or something like that). I think she trusts what we're all doing.

Lexicon - You have been very receptive to the fans, even given them the nickname Twi-hards. What kind of reception have you gotten from them? Any Twilight fan encounters?

Michael - The reception has been overwhelmingly gracious and quite frankly, freaking awesome. I've had a lot of fun with the online community. They've welcomed me into their domain with kindness and courtesy, as if I were a cousin of some kind. They certainly didn't have to do that. One girl thinks I have a weird nose and a gross face, but other than that, you've all been super nice! I've encountered some Twi-hards on my road trip. I've also met a lot of fans since I've been in the northwest. I feel the excitement bubbling about the movie. It's coming people. Ooooooo! It's coming!

Lexicon - Have you, by any chance, been getting any presents in the mail...socks maybe?

Michael - Why yes, yes I have. Quite a few of them actually. How did you know? Could it be that you TOLD your readers to send me socks? Haha, you crazy kids. Yeah, I have tons of socks waiting for me at home. I shall remain sockless no more!!

Lexicon - Our Twilight users always want to know...are you single?

Michael - Nope. Ha-ha! Should've found me in high school ladies. Too late now. I've got a good one and I'm not letting go of her.

Lexicon - A Message to the fans:

Michael - Here's my fortune cookie advice for the day. Do what you love, love who you love, fight for who and what you love, listen to authority but always think for yourself, learn some education, don't graffit-o-tag your local streets, and go Lakers!

Once again, thank you Michael for your wonderful humor and candid answers. You are forever our Mike Newton.

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