

# Interview

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But does this performance of marketing the movie itself — and whether or not an actor wants to play ball — even matter in terms of a movie's prospects?

I asked Paul Dergarabedian, who heads the box-office division of Hollywood.com. "I don't think it matters," he said, "not in a negative way. It's the old adage: There's no such thing as bad press. For a contentious interview to go viral is money in the bank for these movies. It's at least getting the name of the movie out there. That's what raises awareness.

"Now, there's a difference between awareness of a movie and wanting to see a movie. You can have huge awareness but have no one show up."

Let's look at "Now You See Me," which has grossed \$65 million since opening in theaters last month. The budget was \$75 million. Those numbers don't look good. "Actually," Dergarabedian said, "the movie opened much bigger than expected and held really well (its second) weekend. And I think the Jesse Eisenberg interview may have actually helped the movie because everyone was talking about it." Close to 1 million people have clicked on that interview, which features Eisenberg sitting next to a poster for the movie. He is droll and casually insulting, as if in homage to his performance as Mark Zuckerberg in "The Social Network."

But what if an actor goes way off-brand, like Hill, who became indignant over Rolling Stone reporter Erik Hedegaard's query about flatulence: "I'm not answering that dumb question! I'm not that kind of person! Being in a funny movie doesn't make me have to answer dumb questions. It has nothing to do with who I am."

"The movie trumps all, unless he did something so egregious and so beyond-the-pale," said Dergarabedian. "If you really want to see a movie, none of this behavior will stop you from seeing it."

Here's Lui's perspective: "Jonah Hill, in this specific case, was asked to be goofy. This is someone famous for being in these comic, silly situations — look at '21 Jump Street,' look at 'Superbad.' So he probably can't get away with it the way Tommy Lee Jones can. In the long run, will he lose acting jobs? No, of course not. And that's the way celebrity is set up: They're indulged."

Social media has also blurred a few lines. If you follow a celebrity on Twitter or Instagram, there is an illusion of intimacy and access. This might be quietly messing with the minds of those of us in the media, even if we don't realize it. Pamela Rutledge, of the Media Psychology Research Center, talked about the "parasocial relationship," which is what happens "when you see someone a lot on television or any kind of media like Twitter, and you feel like you know them."

There's a sense of immersion, she said, which makes everything seem more real. "And that means that your brain thinks you're already friends." Even if, intellectually, you know otherwise. "So what I see with these interviews is a disconnect between the expectations of these reporters and the expectations of the actors."

And yet: "There are actresses who will post sonogram pictures on Twitter," said Lui. "So how then are we — the fan, the consumer, the media — supposed to take all these cues that are contradictory and act accordingly?"

If an actor happens to take the opposite tactic — Channing Tatum has been consistently funny and charming in interviews — can it make a difference in their career? Per Lui: "I love Channing Tatum, but we would all agree that he is not a master thespian. He's gotten ahead, and he's managed his career so brilliantly, and he's one of the top players in the game because he's made smart decisions. But also because he's nice. Nobody wants to see him fail." And according to Dergarabedian: "Channing Tatum's movies have consistently opened well across the board."

Then again, we've all become such jaded media consumers, we're likely to tune out anything we suspect is a recycled sound bite. Eisenberg, Hill and Ifans took a damn-the-torpedoes approach. They weren't pretending to be nice. They didn't fake a polite response to questions they clearly felt were idiotic. They were being authentic to whoever they are — or whatever mood they were in at that precise moment.

"They're all put through this

junket situation," Lui said, "and some of them are better at it, and others fail spectacularly."

Here's an example of the former: Longtime Chicago actor Michael Shannon was on "David Letterman" promoting the Superman reboot "Man of Steel."

Based solely on the characters he plays, Shannon might be one of the scariest men working in Hollywood today. (His performance as General Zod offers a thrilling "interstellar glare of doom," as my colleague Michael Phillips put it. Like I said, scary.) There is a lot of respect out there for Shannon's talents. That 2009 Oscar nomination for "Revolutionary Road" was no accident. If anything, he has every right to be just as disdainful of the song-

and-dance of a press tour as Jonah Hill.

Except there he was on "Letterman," wry and amiable, sharing one self-deprecating story after another, including a withering put-down from Sidney Poitier, who told him: "I don't know what your technique is, but you're weird."

I'm pretty sure he's heard that before. He is weird, a little. That's part of his appeal. He's also a smart, decent, witty guy who doesn't take himself too seriously.

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# Howard Kurtz To Leave CNN For Fox News

NEW YORK (AP) — Media watchdog Howard Kurtz, host of CNN's "Reliable Sources" for 15 years, said Thursday that he's jumping to Fox News Channel.

Kurtz will host another Sunday morning media criticism show to replace the current "Fox News Watch." He'll also appear as an on-air analyst across the network during the week and write a column for the network's website on social media news and industry trends.

His jump comes less than two months after Kurtz was interviewed on his own show to apologize for and explain a series of mistakes he had made in a story about basketball player Jason Collins, who had announced he was gay. Kurtz said

the incident did not play a role in his exit from CNN, that the timing of it and his contract renewal were coincidental.

"The folks at CNN have been nothing but gracious to me during my 15 years of hosting 'Reliable Sources' but this is a chance to create a new franchise and play a larger role," he said.

Michael Clemente, Fox's executive vice president of news, called Kurtz "the most accomplished media reporter in the country" and said his addition would bring greater depth to the network.

Kurtz, a longtime media reporter at The Washington Post, began as a panelist for the show when it started in 1992 with Bernard Kalb

as host. Kurtz took over as host in 1998. CNN, in a statement, thanked Kurtz and wished him well. "Reliable Sources" will continue with a variety of hosts in the next few months, which is how TV networks often test possibilities before choosing a successor.

It had been a rough stretch for Kurtz. He had written a column for The Daily Beast saying Collins had hidden a previous engagement to a woman, when in fact Collins had talked about it in a *Sports Illustrated* story and television interview. Kurtz acknowledged being too slow to correct the mistake and making an inappropriate comment about playing "both sides of the court" in a video story.

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