

Roger's Turn To Speak

Our **EXCLUSIVE** Interview with Writer/Producer **Roger Director**

By Diana Maiocco



It was a warm, sunny day on Wednesday, February 5, 2003 as I drove up the Pacific Coast Highway to interview Roger in Malibu. Roger suggested that we meet at the Marmalade Café, a charming, country-style restaurant located in the town's shopping center (great choice, by the way). As with everyone I have interviewed, Roger was very friendly and happy to talk about his experience on *Moonlighting*. He remembered that Glenn gave the writers a lot of freedom and nothing was too outlandish. It was a fun trip down memory lane for Roger as we talked about some of the show's funniest moments as well as some of the most disconcerting when viewers let it be known that they weren't too happy with the plot developments.

DM: Now, how did you come to work on *Moonlighting*? How did you get the job?

RD: My agent called me and said, "I want to send you the tape of the pilot for *Moonlighting* because it looks like it will be picked up again for the fall." And I watched that tape. It was just brilliant. One of the great, great things about Glenn is that he lets the actors knock it out of the park, among his many talents. There's the scene where Maddie comes into David's office in the pilot. He gives Bruce this incredible monologue where he is announcing

a basketball game. And then he puts his finger on Maddie as having been a former playmate of whatever month.

DM: Miss March.

RD: Well, there's this long monologue. You never see that in a TV pilot because people don't give that much time or space to an actor. But Glenn knew what he had in his hands. There was the middleweight champion of the world, Bruce Willis, so he wrote this thing for Bruce so that moment when the door opens, the pail falls on Agnes'

head and he does his thing. Well, at that moment, you knew instantly watching the pilot that you were watching a major star. The question was what would happen with him, but he was like a major talent. And the whole episode, their chemistry was so hilarious. You just knew that it was going to be a great show. I had been working for Steven Bochco at *Hill Street Blues*, and I wanted to do something involving, maybe a little bit different kind of tone, and so my agent sent me the pilot for *Moonlighting*. And it just took me about three seconds to realize that this would be a great opportunity to work on something like that, so I met with Glenn and he hired me to work on the show. I was just really thrilled because it was a completely different kind of a show. And like everything else in life, you only realize in hindsight how weird it was, and how fun, and good it was. But I remember there had been one other writer on the show. But when it began its second full season, I think I was the first writer hired, and then Ron (Osborn) and Jeff (Reno), Debra (Frank) and Carl (Sautter), and I remember *The Lady in the Iron Mask*. I mean, we had to start writing episodes for the year, and it was that summer. And, in fact, I remember being hired for the show and actually sitting in Glenn's office over on the Fox lot while they were still making the schedule for the fall for ABC. And it wasn't absolutely clear, momentarily to my dismay, that the show was, in fact, going to be on the fall schedule, so I realized that I had been hired for a show that might not get on the air. And Aaron Spelling had an enormous amount of influence, whatever the reason, and obviously the show was just too good to not put on the air. And it

Allyce and Curtis were immensely creative at that point. Bruce and Cybill always wanted to just simply do the best job they possibly could and working with them was educational and helpful.

got put on the air. I remember the summer when Debbie and Carl came in and pitched the black and white show (*The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice*) and sitting in the story meetings about that. And it was time to write that first episode, and Glenn sat down and rolled a piece of paper into his typewriter and wrote, "Fade in," and started writing the episode with David's brother.

DM: *Brother, Can You Spare A Blonde?*

RD: I was just stunned because my process doesn't involve just rolling a piece of paper into the typewriter and start writing, but that's how talented Glenn is. And he wrote that great episode and I, at the same time, was writing the second episode. I had pitched this idea to Glenn about a guy who had disfigured a woman he was in love with and she was wearing a mask to hide herself. It was just very weird, and at the end of the show... I don't know why, but this is a tribute to the kind of freedom Glenn encouraged, I

just thought to myself that it might be funny to see all these men and women dressed up in dresses, wearing masks, and running around and chasing each other through the hotel. And to my surprise, Glenn said, "Yeah, that sounds good. Go write that." So I did, and it was bizarre and funny, I think...although, it was half-bizarre and half-funny. But it was great because you could really pretty much try anything with the show and you would give it a go. I mean, Bruce and Cybill were up for anything. Cybill, the more dirt, paint and mud... I forget in which show, there was a sequence through a mall. It may have been in *Brother; Can You Spare a Blonde?*

DM: It was.

RD: At the end, you know?

DM: Yes.

RD: Well, I saw the outtakes, the dailies, on that. Cybill goes sliding down an escalator and she insisted on doing that by herself, I think. In one of the outtakes she came down, at about 60 miles per hour, and she landed on her head. She was okay, but it was just a demonstration that she and Bruce were always up for something weird and crazy and getting muddy or paint splattered. She was always, "Throw more, throw more of it on me!" which is a great thing. A lot of actors and actresses have serious issues when anything disturbs their look or their hair, for example.

DM: And what was funny about the episode *The Lady in the Iron Mask* was Bruce in a dress. I mean that was hilarious!