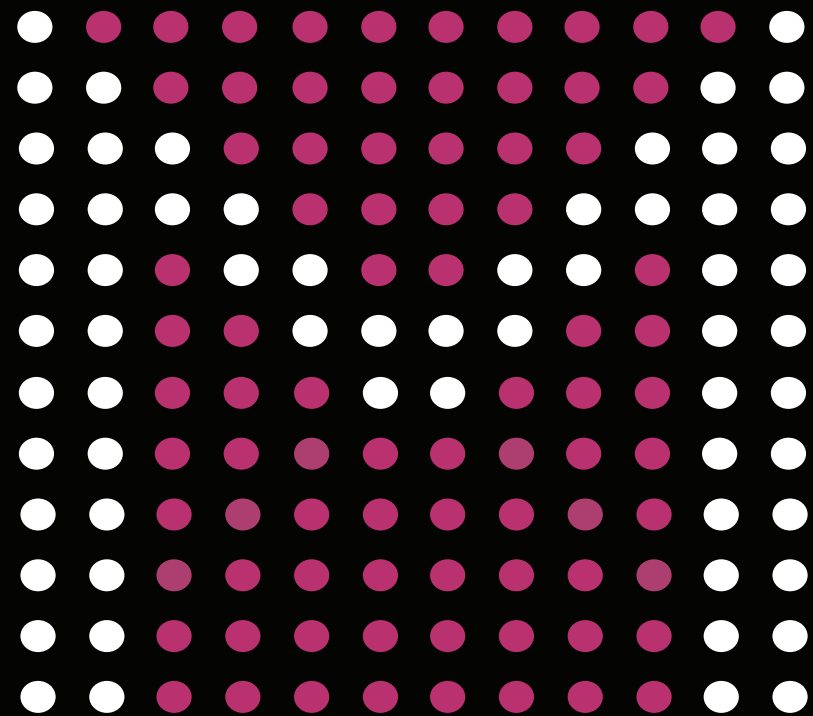


MARK GAGLIARDI

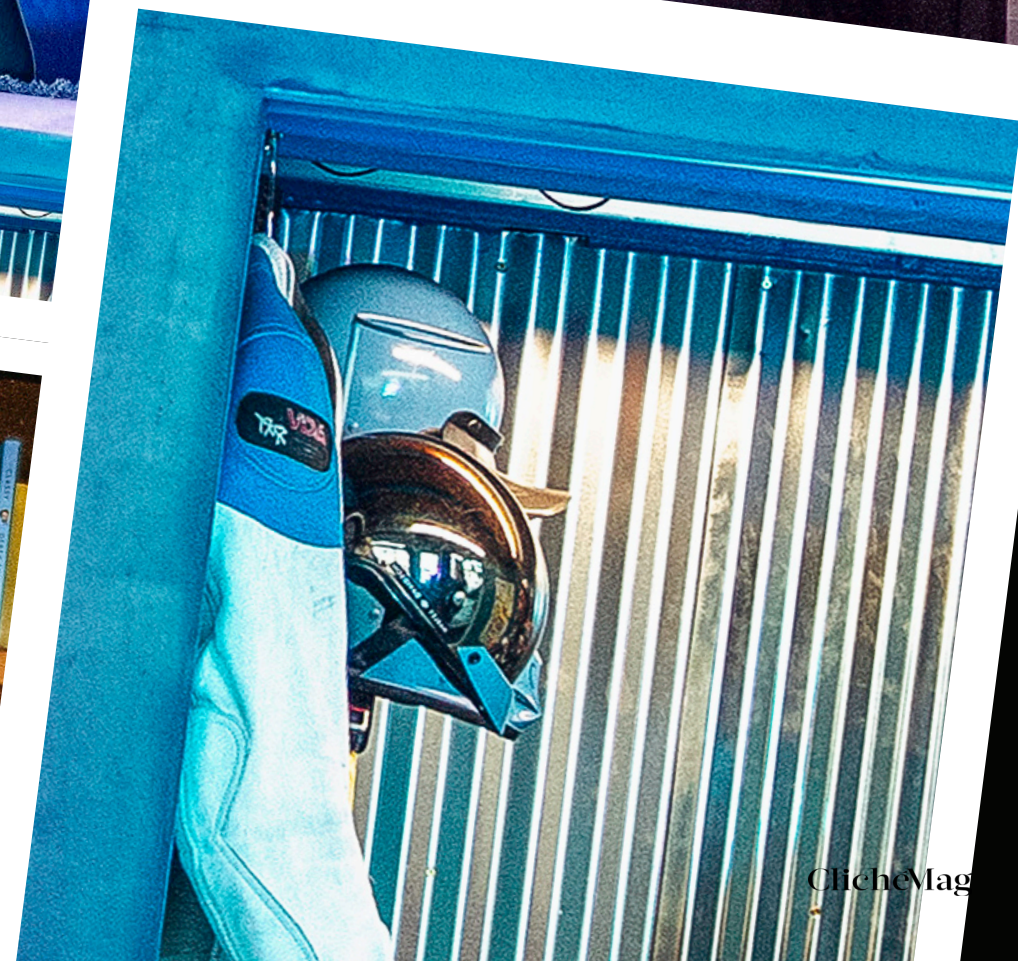


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Mark found his presence on stage at age five when he took on the role of a big tough boxer for his theater's play. His walk across the stage in the oversized gloves brought his first laugh out of the crowd, and he knew he was where he was supposed to be. He grew up in the 80s and makes it a point to note how the times made an impression on him. "I was a kid in the great 80s. My greatest artistic inspirations have never been humans. First, it was The Muppets." His love for The Muppets has now grown into an admiration for three camera work shows, other examples being Sesame Street and his first television show Amigos on PBS. "Kermit was the glue that kept it all together, but as a performer myself, the one I get is Miss Piggy. I feel her." Gagliardi adds that the biggest influence on his desired move to Hollywood was the film Who Framed Roger Rabbit? The characters roaming the streets of Hollywood created an image in his head that stuck with him and left him dreaming of the day he'd make it. More inspirational figures for Gagliardi are Philip Seymour Hoffman, Vincent D'Onofrio, and Kevin Pollak. His goal has always been to be a character actor, and these actors played some of his favorite roles with a charisma he tries to embody.





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From his early acting years came somewhat of a prized artifact Mark keeps stashed away in the same way he received it. A frequent acting partner in his later 60s gifted Mark, a young boy at the time, books that he had trained with and held onto. “This same guy played my grandfather, and I opened it up, and he had written me a letter from the point of view of a colleague. This really stuck with me that he saw me on such an equal level.” Gagliardi adds that he learned so much from those materials and the provider as a person. He still pulls the books out to this day and enjoys keeping the letter tucked in the book. “It’s like preserving an artifact. I kinda like keeping it in its original form.”

One of Gagliardi’s favorite acting exercises is long-form improv prompted by a word, scene, emotion, etc. “I love getting up on a stage with absolutely nothing,” Mark says. He often goes to workshops with close friends with who he shoots lines and bits around within their personal time, so the chemistry on stage is a flowing learning experience. “It’s sort of like a magic trick, long-form improv.” Similar to this structure is one of his earlier collaborations, Drunk History.





The concept of Drunk History came from Derek Waters, a friend, and co-creator of Gagliardi's. "Derek and I have always enjoyed history channel documentaries where one historian talks and actors recreate the scene. Our friend Jake was telling a story about Otis Redding at a bar, and it was really something." Derek took the idea of drunk narration over different historical figures and events in lesson format and ran with it. Mark was the first to take a crack at it. "I talked about Alexander Hamilton, and I drank a whole lot of Scotch. By the time we were done with that, there was no place to sleep. Everything was a mess. It was awesome. After that, it just took off and, in a really weird way, was a huge part of my career." Their genius went past recording and into the strategies they used for episode exposure. Mark shared that Derek wanted the episodes to be a little bit difficult to obtain. He would hand copies out on DVD and tell the recipients to keep it off the internet. This gave it some stir and buzz purely word of mouth that sparked curiosity in varying groups. He eventually dropped the footage a couple of months later when all of the cast was dispersed during the holidays. The varying locations helped the show gain traction in a few different areas, and soon after, it took off.

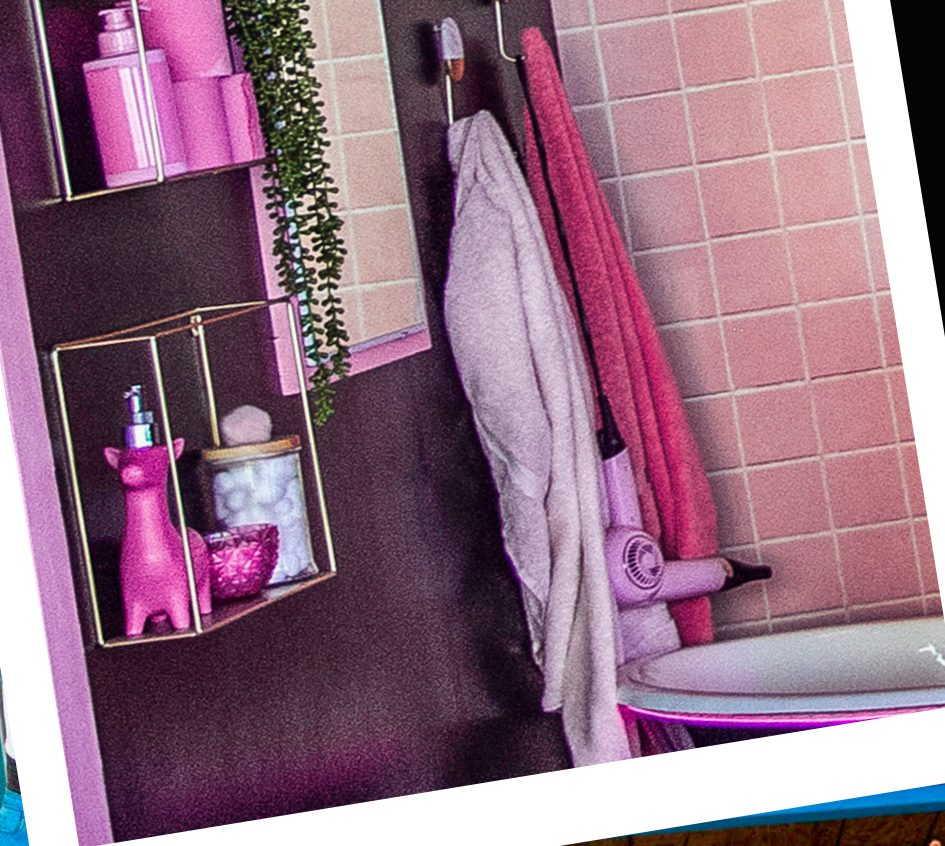
One of Mark's more recent projects is his role as Father Chuck Donnelly on Blood and Treasure. He was excited to share his recent experience of being blown up on set. "Having worked in comedy so long, I never got to do action-y stuff." The team created a replica stage of their set in Montreal and placed cannons with foam and balsa wood on either side of the shot. The visual was created by blowing the cannons and the set in one frame, shooting Mark up into the air in another frame, and overlapping them to create the illusion. "I love it when the audience is worried about me. It makes me feel good."

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Blood and Treasure pays a few tributes to the stories of Indiana Jones. Mark shares his particularly favorite homage he got to reenact as a “superfan” himself. The scene is set in season 2 when Father Chuck Donnelly quietly goes into a darkened church to search for a tomb. He needs a picture of this tomb but would draw the guards’ attention to himself if he took a flash picture. He then has the idea to take a rubbing of the tomb sample on paper. The homage ends with Father Church Donnelly leaving the church nonchalantly whistling the Blood and Treasure theme song. Mark shares that he thought of this adlib as he is an Indiana Jones super fan (his favorite being The Last Crusade).

The cast of Blood and Treasure’s chemistry runs deeper than on-set bonding. The team has been working on this project through the expenditure of the pandemic and even experienced sharing a quarantine-like environment together. They had shot most of season two in Montreal and begun collecting their scenes from Bangkok before things started to shut down. “We were forced to stay in a hotel that progressively got emptier, and then all went home, took a few months, and then all ended up in Rome under the very strict protocol,” shares Gagliardi. All cast were issued orders to remain in their room unless they were shooting, and they must only participate with cast members of the same designated “zones.” Mark noted this experience as a “trauma bond” and related it to a summer camp. “We were all together all the time. It’s all we had.”



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There are many more ways Mark plans to take the stage. “I have a big bulletin board with a lot of first acts of plays, so any writers out there, let’s collab and make an act two.” For now, viewers can expect to see more of Mark Gagliardi, “playing as truthfully as you can on stages and screens. And I hope it makes you laugh.” ❖

