

Ed Speelers x Man About Town

"I'm trying to heal my knee at the moment. I play a lot of football, and my knees are starting to wear out." Remarks a refreshingly spry Ed Speelers, as he sits down to discuss his less-than-ideal start to the year. "The industry is also obviously taking a big step back at the moment, so that's finding its feet to sort of recalibrate, which I'm okay with. If that's part of whatever this journey is going to be for this year, then that's part of it!"

Despite those minor set backs, Speelers can proudly and confidently boast a prolific twenty-twenty three. The golden age of streaming certainly comes with its challenges, as high creative output can often suffocate even the most prestigious series, by not allowing them the space to breathe amongst such a competitive landscape. Clearly possessing an eye for quality, Speelers starred in two of the biggest TV shows of that year, both of which were greeted with great fanfare and admiration.

The first, was none other than the genre-defining sci-fi series '*Star Trek: Picard*' for Paramount +, an uncharted and unfamiliar universe to Speelers at first, but a welcome voyage that gifted him a whole new fanbase. "The feedback from that show has been incredible, and the reaction to Jack has been great. I've also started doing the Star Trek conventions and met some really great folks out there, the fans are just so kind and attentive. Trekkies will always be there, till the end of time."

Speelers also featured in the fourth season of the popular Netflix thriller series '*You*', portraying British author and socialite Rhys Montrose. Initially perceived by viewers as a captivating psychotic adversary to the main killer, Joe Goldberg (Penn Badgely), it's later unveiled, in one of the most remarkable plots twists of the year, that Rhys had actually fallen prey to Joe's murderous blood-thirsty tendencies earlier in the series, and in fact was a figment of Joe's fractured psyche the whole time.

"It wasn't necessarily a soul-searching part, but it certainly was intense and a lot to dig into. The '*You*' demographic is particularly intense as well. Mainly because the things they say about Penn, which I always find intriguing based on the role he's playing and some of the comments people make on him, but like the Trekkies their feedback has been really heartfelt and I do understand the importance of support and a strong fanbase, as a huge fan of football and how much I care about Tottenham Hotspur and watching them myself."

After eighteen months of intense roles, it was clear Speelers was eager for something a bit more alleviating and light-hearted, a desire that strangely mirrors the story of his next exciting venture. "I was sort of gearing up towards the end of the series of '*You*' that I was on, which was when the Netflix team asked if I'd be interested in doing a romcom for them with Lindsay Lohan, which was '*Irish Wish*'. At the time, considering the characters I had been playing, it made a lot of sense to do it."

'*Irish Wish*' follows the whimsical romantic journey of shy-and-retiring book editor Maddie Kelly (portrayed by Lindsay Lohan) who is forced to confront the nauseating reality, that her best friend has just become engaged to the love of her life. However, Maddie is soon unexpectedly gifted with a supernatural intervention, as she makes a spontaneous wish to be with her heart's desire. To her surprise and horror, Maddie awakes the next morning in place of her best friend, and now finds herself as the bride-to-be.

Speelers steps into the role of earnest wildlife photographer James Thomas, who like all great love interests, starts off as a sincere bystander in the story, a seemingly inconsequential stranger who soon becomes instrumental in guiding Maddie to reassess her life's direction and unearth what her heart truly desires. "It's a game of flirtation, of two people trying to understand each other and realising that they thought they were on one path in life and actually since meeting each other, soon realise that they should start investing more in each other and see how that pans out. James is also very laid back, I don't think he's overly ambitious but he's still making his way and going on his journey, and he's quite comfortable in his own skin. I think that's something that appeals to Maddy, and why there's a connection."

Despite his natural leading man demeanour and irrefutable charm that radiates through the screen and has served him so well over the years, the romantic comedy genre marked new territory for Speelers. "It was great to be there and try and keep an even keel whilst there's lots of mayhem within the comedy sphere bouncing around. It's actually a real skill, and I wanted to understand how that process worked and it's definitely given me a hunger to do more comedy."

Understandably a concoction of excitement and trepidation, Speelers was soon put at ease by Lindsay's reassuring presence, as a "powerhouses and queen of the genre" and all-round generous soul. "We got on really well and the main thing is that we trusted each other in the process. We struck up a good rapport working together. I think people look at rom-coms as being one thing, but actually there's a real balance. All of the scenes are quite snappy, there's not a lot of dialogue and you have to get to the end of the scenes quite rapidly, while keeping a lightness of touch."

Notwithstanding the seemingly immeasurable pressure of his newly adopted leading man status, Speelers, like all things he throws himself into, managed to connect with his on-screen counterpart with ease. "James and I have some similarities, actually. I can be very sarcastic whether that's a good thing or not, I'm not sure [laughs]. It's certainly a challenge when the character is close to yourself, because you find little intricacies that can push him from yourself a little bit and not stay in the comfort of your own skin."

Exceptionally-timed physical comedy is a hallmark amongst the very greatest of the romantic comedy genre, a difficult art that even the most highly skilled comedic actors struggle to make seem natural and uncontrived. From Speelers point of view, he was subjected to a masterclass from Lindsay Lohan herself. "I've got to say her physical comedy, that's a real strong point for her. She's great across the board in this film, she literally throws herself into it. She's got wonderful timing and she's done it for years, this is her bread and butter. Freak Friday for instance, has lots of physical comedy and she really embodies it."

The palpable force of Speelers and Lohan's onscreen chemistry is enough to make anyone believe in love, but it's also enhanced and enriched by the picturesque setting of Ireland. Here, the Emerald Isle transcends its role as mere scenery, and instead evolves into character in its own right - a silent but significant presence that shapes the narrative and becomes an integral part of the characters romantic odyssey. "It was brilliant; we were staying in County Wicklow and we had a great little town nearby called Greystones, which is right on the seafront. My girlfriend came up to visit at one point with the kids, which was so nice. If I had more time, I would have driven off to different locations and taken myself off trail. I did go running a lot, and got lost a couple of times but it's a beautiful part of the world."

Continuing to stretch his love interest muscles, albeit this time he's a bit more of a problematic one, Speelers can be seen next in the highly anticipated biopic *'Midas Man'* which chronicles the life of legendary queer music entrepreneur Brian Epstein, who famously went on to manage music superstars 'The Beatles' "I play this American hustler, who wants to be a singer, wants to be an actor and as a result is kind of there to cause problems for Brian. You think he's a charming guy that's gonna take Brian off on an adventure but he's not really what you think he is. I had a great time shooting that though, with Jake Fortune-Lloyd who plays Brian and I had some really great scenes with Emily Watson, who is an absolute legend and force of nature."