

Between Takes

Jenna Fischer

The Office star can't get enough, ahem, Cox...



Jenna Fischer and John C Reilly cosy up in *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*.

HERE AND NOW A born-and-bred Midwesterner, Jenna Fischer studied theatre in Missouri before trekking out to LA and struggling to make it big on the small screen. The success of America's take on *The Office*, now in its fourth season, has thrust the 33-year-old into movie contention, with small roles in *Blades Of Glory* and *Slither* (written and directed by soon-to-be-ex-husband James Gunn) leading to her biggest part yet, as the love of John C Reilly's life in *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*.

Weren't you originally up for the role of Dewey's shrewy first wife rather than Darlene, aka the 'Reese Witherspoon' role?

I just assumed they wanted me to play Edith because I play a lot of these wallflower characters. But when I got there, they asked if I would read Darlene. I said, "I think you're thinking of another girl, someone with a big, bubbling sexuality like Jessica Simpson." But they had faith in me, so I just let loose and by the end of the audition, I was on John's lap with his face in my boobs.

Did that sense of abandon carry over to the set?

Yeah, we were always going off-script into these weird places. I have a dark, raunchy sense of humour so I was happy to not have to edit myself. We made so many Cox jokes – it's the most fun thing in the entire world! We had this storyline where Dewey puts out a breakfast sausage, and we did this whole run like, "Darlene does not normally like to take sausage in her mouth in the morning but every morning she chews on Dewey's sausage." I love John C Reilly. It's my second movie with him.

What's the other film?

It's called *The Good Life* [now retitled *The Promotion*]. It's a small, independent comedy where John and Seann William Scott play two assistant managers at a grocery store, vying for the same job. We were actually shooting both movies at the same time, so I'd show up on the *Walk Hard* set and be John's wife and then on the weekends, I was Seann William Scott's wife! I felt very confused and conflicted. I just did not know which man to belong to.

Is that you singing in *Walk Hard*?

No. I tried. I took voice lessons and they recorded me and it was fine but Darlene can't be fine, her voice has to be amazing. [Director] Jake Kasdan walked me out to my car and said, "You know Jenna, we didn't make you sing at the audition and the reason for that is we hired you for your acting." I thought, "I know what that means – you're using another woman's voice!"

How did you end up in comedy?

I really don't know! When I was doing theatre in college, I got cast a lot in comedies, but when I first came to LA, I had a harder time. My take on comedy was always pretty understated and character-driven and it took me a while to find my troupe. I auditioned for a long time for traditional sitcoms and would never get the roles.

Luckily, people like Judd Apatow and [*The Office* executive producer] Greg Daniels came along.

How far did you get into the new series of *The Office* before the strike hit?

We got 12 episodes in – 12 out of 28 – so we were just gearing up to start some of the main conflicts of the season. If we're able to come back, I guess we'll have to condense all that. All I know is that I'm in a holding pattern. I can't take other jobs so I'm just doing all the things I can't do while I'm making the show, like going to the dentist.

Are you still enjoying the TV grind after four years on the show?

One of the things that makes me sad about the strike is that with our fourth season, we were having more fun than ever. I think Season Three was a little tough on everybody because we were all starting to get attention from the movies so people were kind of exhausted and confused and overworked. This season, it's like we all figured out how to balance things and we were loving it.

You directed *LolliLove*, your own film...

If you can call it that. I just had a bunch of friends over to my house one weekend, including Jason

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Segel and Linda Cardellini who were on *Freaks And Geeks*, and we started videotaping ourselves improvising these outlines I had written about improving homeless peoples' lives by giving them lollipops with cheery slogans. And from that, I wrote a script and then we went back and reshot it. But it was all very loopy-loopy.

Do you see yourself doing more writing and directing in future?

I will never write or direct anything again. Swear to god. It was awful, I hated it.

Why?

It was too much responsibility. I was like a one-woman production and I didn't like telling actors what to do, I didn't like dealing with their emotions, I hated having to tell somebody if I didn't like something – I felt so bad.

Did you have to fire anybody?

No, it was just a lot of different personalities and my husband at the time... We're separated now.

Not because of *LolliLove*..?

Goodness no, although I'm sure a psychologist could watch that film and see the demise played out in front of them!

***Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story* is out now and is reviewed on page 52.**

TAKE TOO! For more exclusive **Between Takes** star interviews, head to www.totalfilm.com/betweentakes

BUZZ CUTS

A-list news. In tiny chunks.



● *St Trinians'* **GEMMA ARTERTON** will be Daniel Craig's sex-interest

(along with *Hitman's* **OLGA KURYLENKO**) in *Bond 22*. Gemma is called Fields...

● The **BIRDS EYE VIEW FILM FESTIVAL** returns to the BFI Southbank, ICA and Curzon Soho from 6-13 March. It celebrates and showcases the very best features, docs and shorts from female filmmakers. Head to www.birds-eye-view.co.uk for all the info.

● Your views on this will depend on if you liked *Superman Returns*, but insiders are hinting that neither **BRYAN SINGER**, writers **MIKE DOUGHTERY** and **DAN HARRIS**, nor even **BRANDON ROUTH**, are

coming back for a sequel. It's all rumour, mind.



WORDS: MATT MUELLER PICTURES: JUSTIN STEPHENS/CORBIS OUTLINE, ALPHA, PA PHOTOS

