A List

Sabrina star Gavin Leatherwood on playing a 'brooding' character and his theater roots

The actor talks to Sara Feigin about playing a character the polar opposite of himself - and why fans can't seem to separate the two

by Sara Feigin • New York • 13 March 2020

Gavin Leatherwood - In pictures

17 images

Open gallery

ES Insider Newsletter
The hottest luxury and A List news

Enter your email address Continue

Register with your social account or click here to log in

"My fans want me to be this f***ing brooding guy, but I'm kind of a light goofball" says Chilling Adventures of Sabrina star Gavin Leatherwood from CloudM, the rooftop bar of Time Square's CitzenM Hotel.

The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina arrived on Netflix two years ago and since then, life has been a whirlwind for 25-year-old Hawaii born, California raised actor.

Leatherwood began acting at age six in a professional production of Arthur Miller's All My Sons and made appearances on TV shows including NCIS and Grown-ish before capturing the hearts of teens everywhere as Nick Scratch on Netflix's Chilling Adventures of Sabrina, inspired by the Archie Horror Comics of the same name and the late '90s Melissa Joan Hart TV show.

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

In person Leatherwood's lighthearted demeanour is the polar opposite of his Sabrina character, a brooding and damaged teen fighting with both figurative and literal inner demons.

The actor has been working non-stop for the past 10-months, filming Sabrina and spending time with his famous co-stars including, Ross Lynch and Kiernan Shipka.

We caught Leatherwood after wrapping part four of Sabrina to chat about how he's different from his troubled character, his desire to return to the theatre and fangirling over his famous co-stars.

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

What's it like as an actor to create a character that's new to such an established set of characters? How much input did you have into your character of Nick Scratch?

"I feel like the pressure was off. With Sabrina and Harvey and the aunts, those characters existed already. There was a bit more homework for them to do while I just got to play with who I felt the dude was.

David Rapaport, who's the casting director, had a note for the audition - this character should be the most confident in the room, in every room - and that was a really helpful little thing to go off of."

Your character goes through a lot of growth throughout the third season - what was it like to start the series as a villain of sorts and then become Sabrina's love interest?

"I like that the dichotomy really changed, in part one and part two, he was heart-throbby to some degree. In part three, as I was shooting I was telling my mom some of the bits that were happening, she said, 'Nick's going to have some backlash. How do you feel?' I like it. I think it keeps people searching for what they think is right and wrong. It keeps people engaged with the character because if he were great all the time it would get boring."

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

Tell us about how you first started acting.

"My first professional show was Arthur Miller's All My Sons, and I was six years old, and I had done some community theater before that. I'd been around it my whole life. I just caught the bug and fell in love. After All My Sons, there was a break and then I played John Darling in the Peter Pan tour with Cathy Rigby as Peter Pan from 2004 until 2006. We went to 77 cities, 30-something states. "

Are you hoping to at some point get back to doing theatre?

"I'd love to do plays more specifically. I have a high respect for people who do plays. I did one right before Sabrina and I just loved it. I did Elevator (a play by Michael Leoni) in LA, but there's something to be said about the theater game in New York as well, and I would love to spend some time here and do some theater. It's the greatest f***ing adrenaline rush an actor can ever have. You shake right before you go on and then once you finish you're still shaking and crying, it's an amazing experience that's hard to explain. It's like jumping out of an airplane and falling for 90 minutes."

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

Do your fans have trouble differentiating between you and Nick?

"It happens more often on social media. I've noticed a couple of times if someone says 'Hi' on the street, that they have a preconceived idea of who I might be. You can see in their eyes, I don't know if it's a level of disappointment. They want you to be this f***ing brooding guy, but I'm kind of a light goofball. But, that's fine, we can suspend the belief and that's that."

Do you try and stay in character as Nick while you're on set, or do you turn back into Gavin the second they call cut?

"F*** no! No, to each their own. But I would be exhausted if I was staying in character that whole time, it would be so draining. As soon as they say action and to cut, it's easy to be that person. But as soon as they say cut, it's back to being yourself or else you'd go crazy.."

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

Because you play a brooding character on the show, do fans ever send you messages that feel like they're more meant for Nick instead of you?

"Yes, totally. It's super odd, it's weird. They say such harmful things. Why would you ask anyone to step on your neck? I don't know, it's probably just this fad, I'm 25 now and I'm having trouble keeping up with some of it. The minds are bright but they're finding abbreviations for the longest sentences and saying things like step on my neck and run me over, punch me in the face. I hope the fans don't mean any of those things."

I think it's like how when you see a really cute puppy and want to squish it.

"I totally get that, but I don't want that puppy to bite my face off. Lick my face off, that's fine. Well, I guess I get it now."

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

Sabrina fans are so devoted, especially on social media - what has it been like to see the fan response to your character?

“I didn't really realize it until Kiernan Shipka, who plays Sabrina, and I went to Argentina for Comic-Con there which was such a blast. We could hear the fans waiting for us to come out. It was an explosion of energy that's hard to wrap your mind around.

I'm a homebody as well, I like to sit in my spot and recharge and regenerate and watch TV or read. When I do see that sort of support, it's exciting.”

What was it like acting with people who have been in the TV world for long, with Kiernan on Mad Men and Ross coming from Disney Channel?

“I hadn’t really seen any of their stuff. I watched some of Mad Men and loved the show, I just have commitment issues with TV shows. I definitely knew that they were from other shows, so I had a level of respect for them already and I looked up to both of them.

Kiernan has collected her 10,000 hours of being on a set at this point. I think she actually did the math. She knows exactly what's going on.

I think we got really lucky with this entire group of people, everyone is super talented and I'm learning from everyone constantly.”

Gavin Leatherwood at Times Square's CloudM bar (Sara Feigin)

Can you tell us about your upcoming projects?

“My world has been Sabrina for the past two years now. There are lots of auditions and conversations happening. I'm just excited to get back into the water in a whole other way. It's the hustler, entrepreneurial side of being an actor.”

Do you know yet if there's going to be Parts 5 and 6? Is it scary waiting to find out if a show you're on is going to be picked up for more seasons?

“I have no idea if part five or six are happening. It's kind of liberating, to be honest. I love not knowing what's ahead. You either fear or embrace the unknown. It's been a wild ride. But for the interim, some sun, maybe a beach, maybe too many beers.

It's been a long 10 months, I'm not going to lie. It's been hard work, and it's not as glamorous as people might think. There's the beautiful bits that are captured on-screen and are cut to look even more glamorous.

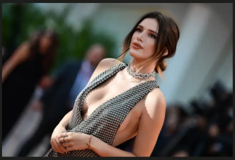
Kiernan, I don't know how she does it, she's like the Energizer bunny. She just runs off of, I don't even know what, the Holy frickin spirit or in this case for the show, the unholy spirit. But we do some 15 to 16 hour days. It's a crazy f***ing job that we do and I wouldn't do anything else, I love this.”

gavin leatherwood
Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina
Netflix
Kiernan Shipka
ES Insider Instagram

Related articles

The Hadid family goats make their modeling debut alongside Bella

All the times Barack and Michelle Obama were the ultimate power couple



Bella Thorne crashes OnlyFans after predicted earnings of $1m a month