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Woody Cuts Loose

The tap hasn't even run dry and Norm's bar stool is still warm, but Woody Harrelson already has moved on to bigger things.

By Sam Baltrusis, *The Daily Free Press, Boston U.*



Woody Harrelson plays an architect who's offered a million bucks to share his wife for a night in *Indecent Proposal*.

When the moment came, Woody Harrelson just couldn't do it. "I'm a big believer in sex," Harrelson says, "and all of its positive attributes, but..."

Harrelson, the lovable but dumb bartender from *Cheers*, is now the down-and-out architect in Adrian Lyne's spring release *Indecent Proposal*... and he's in bed with his best friend's wife, Demi Moore.

"It was kind of strange having known her all this time," Harrelson says of shooting the passionate love-making scenes. "The situation was like a good friend of yours who has a wife you also know pretty well and have spent time with... and then suddenly you're in bed together," he says.

Harrelson, off-screen, is known for his testosterone-driven libido. He's dated his share of actresses and had brief flings with Brooke Shields, Moon Zappa, Ally Sheedy and Glenn Close. But on the set of *Proposal*, Harrelson admits he just couldn't, well, get into the mood.

"It's like, yeah, granted we're actors and all, but still the situation was very awkward," Harrelson says. "During sex scenes, all I was thinking was 'My God, what would Bruce think of this?'"

Harrelson, 31, has gone from a Bible-thumping, Presbyterian mamma's boy from Ohio to Hollywood's jet-setting Don Juan. After graduating from Indiana's Hanover College, he moved to New York to pursue a career in theater. He understudied in Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues* and was offered a six-month contract to play Woody

Boyd on *Cheers*, replacing the original bartender, Nicholas "Coach" Colasanto (who died in 1985). Six months became eight years, and Harrelson's career blossomed.

"I'm just totally thrilled that I am in movies and that I am working as an actor," he says. "I remember when I was in college and I really didn't look forward to much except skipping my first two classes and getting to the third one. There wasn't really a lot to it then."

These days Harrelson has a lot more to look forward to. He seems to have slipped effortlessly into his role as a Hollywood stud. In fact, after the *Cheers* finale, he plans to put his dim-wit Woody Boyd persona to rest and pursue a full-time film career. "I've got more offers than I can accept," he says. "And not the Woody Boyd kind, either."

For a guy who's lived his TV life the past few years as a dumb hick, that's a big relief. "In terms of the way we are all feeling and the direction we are all heading, it seems to be time to move on." He pauses mid-sentence, paying homage to the show that launched his career. "But gosh, it's going to be sad."

Still, Harrelson's future with movies seems to be on track. His recent performance in *White Man Can't Jump* surprised skeptics and catapulted the actor into the coveted Hollywood "hot seat."

In Paramount's *Indecent Proposal*, he plays David Murphy, an architect who, Harrelson says, "is totally in love with his mate and happens to fall into economic hard times."

The sought-after role (he beat out the two Baldwins, William and Alec) teams Harrelson with two of Hollywood's box office hard hitters — Moore and Robert Redford. The movie, reuniting Director Lyne and

Producer Sherry Lansing for the first time since 1987's *Fatal Attraction*, is a promising career move for Harrelson.

In *Proposal*, Redford plays a charismatic financier who offers the happily married couple (who is suffering economically) a million dollars if Moore spends just one night with him.

Harrelson says *Proposal* is about what money can and cannot buy. And it has an important moral twist. "The question is if you, the viewer, came up against the situation, what would be your reaction?"

How would Harrelson react in a real-life *Indecent Proposal* situation? "It's hard for me to gauge because I have a lot of money," he says. "I have to know what it's like again not to have any money. It would be hard for me to react because I'm not in need of money... but these characters were in need."

Harrelson definitely is not in need — for money or movie roles.

"It still, to this day, blows my mind," he says, reflecting on his unorthodox and uncommon ascent into the Hollywood hierarchy. "There was a time in my life when everything I did was geared toward my vision of what success is. There was a reason for every conversation, every relationship and every period of free time.... It was all about this notion, this need for success. And once I found success, it was hard to get out of the success-driven mindset. For me, it is imperative that I live my life independent of whatever is going on externally. All that matters really is if I am happy."

His comic tone transforms to a quiet, sincere response: "I'm happy now. I'm very happy. But it has taken a long time for me to come to that." □



Here's one word for all you mourning *Cheers* fans — reruns.

Last call for laughs at Cheers

It was the place you went where everybody knew your name. But after 11 seasons, the cast of *Cheers* is turning off the lights and going home.

No more Norm. No more Sam. No more Woody. "I definitely think it's time for *Cheers* to go," says Woody Harrelson, who plays Woody Boyd on the series in which he co-stars with Ted Danson and Kirstie Alley. "I think most people would agree."

Not college students. "Losing *Cheers* is like losing a close friend," says Jen Tague, a junior at Boston U. "I've been watching the show since it followed *Family Ties*, and it has become a Thursday night ritual."

That's right. Long before *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Cheers* was the knot that tied this generation together.

"I'm in a fraternity and everyone in the house drops their studies to watch *Cheers*," says Cliff DeGrot, a junior at the U. of Oregon. "Losing *Cheers* is a pity."

But don't mourn the show's loss too long. Harrelson has a list of upcoming movie roles. Kelsey Grammer is getting his own NBC show to play *Cheers*' favorite shrink, Dr. Frasier Crane. And George Wendt, who plays Norm, has a new sitcom waiting after the finale.

Cheers, which debuted in September 1982, outlasted such classics as *All in the Family* and *I Love Lucy*. It's the only comedy that has surpassed *M*A*S*H*'s longevity. *M*A*S*H* lasted for 255 shows; *Cheers* has done 263.

And that can mean only one thing. "I will be watching the reruns faithfully," Boston U.'s Tague says. ■ Sam Baltrusis