

HUFFPOST ENTERTAINMENT

‘Crazy Ex-Girlfriend’ Actress Michael Hyatt on the Start of Her Career: ‘Suicide Wasn’t Ever An Option to Me’



Michael Hyatt plays “Dr. Akopian” on The CW’s series Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.

Michael Hyatt’s [Twitter](#) & [Website](#).

Photo By Lesley Bryce.

My head exploded when I interviewed Michael Hyatt, who you'll recognize from Ray Donovan and True Detective.

Now Michael plays the recurring character "Dr. Akopian" on The CW's series Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.

But back to my head exploding — picture Michael Ironside's victims in the film Scanners.

Michael really breaks down the emotional toll she's gone through most of her life which totally explains how she can play such diverse roles. She has a lot to work with. And we will keep watching her in everything she does because of this!

What was your first reaction when you found out you got the part on Crazy Ex-Girlfriend?

Well, this was a second time around for me. I tested for the part of Paula (fabulously and rightfully played by the amazing Donna Lynne Champlin) and was devastated when I didn't get it. Aline Brosh McKenna, (co-creator, exec. producer, and sometimes director of the show) sent me the kindest most complimentary letter which helped lesson the blow. Anyway, when this role came around and they wanted to see me for it, I thought well, I'm no stranger to them; they know what they're going to get. I did my thing, went into the closest bathroom to wash my makeup off and change my clothes, and left it behind. I wasn't going to get punched in the stomach twice. I think it took a moment to get the call but I had moved on. So, when my manager / friend called, I think my response was "Oh, okay, cool". Grateful to have it, but you've got to learn to take it or leave it. You just

don't ever know where and when the work's going to come and life has to be beautiful with or without it.

You're most recently known for portraying "Detective Sheila Muncie" on Showtime's award winning series Ray Donovan. Are you excited to return for the new season?

When you're asked to play a recurring character you know its future is uncertain. Having friends who are writers I know that sometimes the longevity of a role depends on how your performance (on and off screen) is received by the audience and people you work with. So, it's an immense compliment to be brought back for another season. I love mixing it up with the guys (seem to do that a lot with the roles I play) and Jon Voight and Liev Schreiber are great men to do that with.

What are your thoughts about violence on television?

To be truthful, I don't have the stomach for it. It is what it is and I know it serves the majority of the viewing public, but I just choose not to absorb it. I'm a hypersensitive person and find that I get deeply connected to the people and events around me; sometimes, more than I should. It serves my work but not the best way to live. I've learned to protect my peace by greatly limiting the amount of negative energy in my personal space; that would include violent (whether it be emotional or physical) subject matter on television or in film.

You were on Broadway in Ragtime. What was it like your first and last night on the Broadway stage for

this production?

I didn't grow up with Broadway being a dream. The stages of Jamaica were my foundation, as I watched my father perform. Even when I came to this country, I lived in Maryland and D.C. My exposure, then, was Arena Stage and Shakespeare at the Folger, the best regional theatre houses in the country. I knew I wanted to act but had no idea what that looked like beyond what was in front of me. The only reason I moved to New York was because when I tried to get jobs at Arena Stage they told me they only hired their actors from New York. Bye bye, D.C. That was the earthly story, anyway. My first night on Broadway was... interesting. I remember being in the wings and someone said, "Hey, I saw your dad". He must have mistaken me for someone else, because I hadn't seen my father in years, much less talked to him. Turns out he was there with everyone else in the family. He was so moved by the experience, he had a diabetic seizure after the show by the stage door. As my sister and I grabbed him before he hit the ground, he looked at me and said, "I am so proud of you". Then his eyes rolled back. Apparently, I inherited his mother's voice. All this from a man I barely knew (He recovered, by the way. I guess he had recently been diagnosed and wasn't well versed with how to manage it. Or, something like that). Truthfully, by the end of the run, I was over the monotony of doing the same thing eight shows a week. I had booked some TV and film work in the meantime and was constantly juggling the schedules. I can only laugh at my youthful ignorance and sense of entitlement back then. Don't worry, I've experienced my fair share of

unemployment since then, so I learned my lessons. And, yet, it's all relative, isn't it? You are where you are and you live fully in it for the time you have it. Impermanence.

What were the weakest and strongest moments of your life?

I think the weakest moment was my mid-thirties. Having hit a ceiling of what was available on television on the east coast, my manager at the time suggested I move to Los Angeles. I had just broken an engagement and agreed the timing was perfect to start a new life. The first year in LA was beautiful; I jumped right into work and was sailing. Then, the work stopped and I felt empty. I lost who I was and couldn't find myself. I was going through the motions of survival I had set up for myself - going to auditions (but not booking much of anything) grocery shopping, paying bills, even going out every now and then, but it just wasn't clicking. I even took an acting class because I thought I had lost whatever skill I had. I remember laying in my bed having a conversation with God, asking that if this was all I had to look forward to then if life ended I'd be fine with it. Suicide wasn't ever an option to me — even at my lowest point there was always a glimmer of hope — but if I was suddenly hit by a truck it wouldn't be such a bad thing. I remember breaking down in acting class and everyone stayed with me way after class ended to console me. Yeah, it was a rough time. Then I go to this audition (because no matter what, you don't miss an audition) and I book the job. Then I book the next one. IT clicked. Something changed, something opened up

within me and I was brought back to life. I understand, now, that when I hit that point of helplessness, that bottom, and let go of all defenses and expectations, I unconsciously opened myself up to the truth within me; the stuff that exists naturally before fear and judgment comes in to suppress it. Christians call it letting go and letting God. There's not a Christian bone in my body (well, maybe the fibula) but it's essence is truth — I let go of my idea of how things should be and, in doing so, opened up myself to a more truthful experience of life and... it worked. Now, at the strongest moment in my life, I have learned to trust that Truth more and more. Still get sidetracked every now and then, balancing the yin and yang of ego, but I'm better at recognizing the noise for what it is, shutting it down, getting quiet, and just Listening (the capital L referring to Spirit consciousness). I love my life now, by the way, Happy. Grateful. Humble.

What's the one thing you have that you can live without?

Well, there are two things; issues with hair and issues with weight. I remember when I finished graduate school and signed with the people who would represent me in the business, my then manager told me, in no uncertain terms, that if I wanted to work in this business, I had to lose weight, cut my locs, get rid of the spaces between my teeth and lose the mole on my chin. That voice lived with me for so many years. It's amazing how much faith I put in the person, and people, who believed those words to be absolute truth. It was not ever meant for me to live

in what is conventionally understood as beautiful. I don't have any desire to walk around with straight hair and a size four body and I have spent too much time trying. Now-a-days I let wigs create the romance when I work and I focus on being healthy, happy and truthful to who I am, whatever size clothing that fits in. THAT'S what books the job, thank you very much! LOL at the absurdity of something so simple.

What's your favorite TV show and film from your childhood?

Oh, this is fun!!! Nothing was better than Little House On The Prairie, unless it was Entertainment Tonight. But, remember Battle Of The Network Stars? I would cry real tears when ABC lost, because that meant Scott Baio lost!!! And, we can't forget Trapper John, M.D.! -The wonderful Madge Sinclair! Movies weren't in my consciousness until I it my twenties in New York. I swallowed whole anything Robert De Niro and all Godfathers. I just loved the silent strength those men came with. My teachers.

What was it like on the set of True Detective?

That was a true challenge. Acting without a script and no understanding of the storyline, beyond what was said in the scene I was in. I get wanting to keep the show a mystery for the audience and all of that but, keeping it a mystery from some of the actors in the show???? At least allow me to come into the office and read the script. You can even hold my cell phone so I can't record it in any way!!! It left me with a real sense of

disconnection from everyone, unfortunately, even though I knew there wasn't anything personal in that choice. But!! I had a job to do and I did it. I treated every scene like an audition (where, many times, only the sides [piece of script] are released) and created my own story. Hopefully my performance didn't stink.

Where did your name Michael come from?

I was an avid Michael Jackson fan in high school. You couldn't tell me...expletive! I was one of those kids who ate, slept, and breathed that man and his music. As a joke, kids started calling me Michael. I liked it. It stuck. I didn't change it legally but everyone (outside of my family) calls me that, now. Once again, not much conventional about me.

Anything else you'd like to say?

I'm grateful to my manager/ sista / friend, Robyn Bluestone, for being willing to go solo (to cut down the noise),...for...naaaa, I'll thank quietly. All is well. It will work!

Ilana Rapp

Writer, NYCastings, "V" fanatic