

## [David Hyde Pierce Doesn't Want You to Know What His New Movie Is About](#)

by [Eric Spitznagel](#)

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*Photo by The Perfect Host LLC.*

Maybe it's just me, but I was always creeped out by Niles Crane, the character played so brilliantly (and so Emmy-winningly) by David Hyde Pierce for eleven years on *Frasier*. Everything about him, every comical eccentricity and quirky flaw, hinted at a psychopath in sheep's clothing. The impeccable manners, the OCD, the love of opera and fine wine, the vague effeminacy, the way he ordered a latte with a "whisper" of cinnamon; it all seemed like the personality profile of somebody with more than a few skeletons in his closet. You know why we never saw his first wife, Maris? My theory is that Niles kept her in a pit in his basement and was planning on making a suit from her skin. Tell me you can't hear Niles saying a line like, "[It places the lotion in the basket?](#)" To this day, I still can't watch a *Frasier* rerun without turning on all the lights in my apartment.

Anybody who shares my paranoia will likely be delighted by *The Perfect Host*, a new film starring David Hyde Pierce that's having its world premiere tomorrow at the [Sundance Film Festival](#). Pierce plays Warwick Wilson, an adorably neurotic, vaguely effeminate man with impeccable manners, O.C.D., and a love of fine wine. At least during the movie's first 30 minutes, the character is all but interchangeable with Niles. But then the plot takes a turn for the ugly.

I called Pierce just as he was preparing to fly out to Park City for Sundance. He was his usual charming self, uttering every sentence with the same deadpan delivery that earned him so much critical acclaim on *Frasier*. But this time, all I could imagine was Niles with dead eyes, ready and willing to commit acts of unspeakable horror.

**Eric Spitznagel: If there's any lasting message I got from *The Perfect Host*, it's that you should never trust anybody with swords on their walls.**

*David Hyde Pierce:* I think that's a good rule to live by. If there's a sword on the wall, run down the hall.

**Have you ever met somebody with a sword collection who didn't turn out to be a little creepy?**

Wow, that's a complicated question. I'm trying to think if I've *ever* met anyone with a sword collection. Oh, you know what, my grandfather had a Civil War cavalry sword over his fireplace, and he was a very sweet man. So maybe that disproves the rule. Then again, he didn't have a collection, he just had the one. Maybe it's when the sword collection starts multiplying, that's when you start to worry.

**I have to admit, David, this movie kinda freaked me out.**

Good. That was exactly our intention.

**I see your face and I think, "Aw, it's the guy from *Spamalot* and *Frasier*. I wonder if he's gonna sing torch songs with Michael Feinstein." But then you start taking Polaroids and there's blood everywhere and things go horribly wrong.**

Be careful what you reveal. I've tried to be cautious as I do interviews, because I'm very mindful of not giving away too much of what happens in the movie.

**It's not like we find out at the end that your character sees dead people. He shows his true colors pretty quickly.**

Yes, but one of the things I really enjoy about this movie, and it's what drew me to it in the first place, is that it starts out a certain way, with certain expectations, and they're not all that different from the way people are used to seeing me. And then... *(long pause)* I get to be different. *(Laughs.)* I really like that.

**You do realize how that could be disconcerting for some of us?**

Well, it's not like you're suddenly seeing me doing nude scenes. That would be disconcerting even for me. But the reason this movie works, I think, is that I play a role that seems so completely inappropriate for me. If it was played by somebody who does this sort of thing all the time as an actor, then it would be harder to take that journey. There are probably a million actors who could have done a wonderful job in this part, but there is something psychologically more satisfying for an audience to see me do things that are just, well, *(laughs)* nothing that Niles would've done, let's just leave it at that.

**Are you sure about that? Did it ever cross your mind that Niles might have a dark side?**

Oh boy, that's funny. Honestly, I think at the core of Niles, he's completely innocent. There's nothing about him that's in any way dark. Despite all the jealousy and sibling rivalry and plotting and scheming and all that, I think that's what made him so palatable and fun. Deep down, he had a good heart.

**So if we examined the crawl space in his house, there'd be no bodies?**

At worst, you'd find a few cases of wine.

**We've established that you don't want to give away any of the big secrets in *The Perfect Host*. So what can we share? Calling it a movie about a dinner party doesn't really do it justice. That makes it sound like *My Dinner With Andre*.**

I like to say it's a movie about a guy who robbed a bank and he's looking for a place to hide out, and he talks his way into the home of this man who's just about to throw a dinner party, and it's the biggest mistake he's ever made in his life.

**That still sounds like *My Dinner With Andre*.**

*(Laughs.)* Not at all.

**Unless we're talking about the director's cut of *Dinner With Andre*, where Wallace Shawn tortures and ritualistically murders Andre.**

Now, be careful.

**Sorry. I'm giving away too much again?**

I like the descriptions that are a little bland or uninteresting, because then when people see the movie, it'll surprise them and hopefully generate some excitement.

**Maybe we should talk about something else. Should we fabricate plot points to throw readers off?**

Like how?

**I could say something like "I totally didn't expect your character to reveal in the third act that he has a vestigial tail."**

I thought you were going to say we should talk about a completely different movie.

**Sure, that'd work, too. What'd you think of *Avatar*?**

I haven't had a chance to see it yet, but I will.

**Are 3-D glasses required to get the full effect of *The Perfect Host*?**

No, this will be the one movie where you actually have to take *off* your 3-D glasses.

**(Long pause.) What?**

We're acting in 3-D.

**I have no idea what you're saying. May I awkwardly change the subject?**

*(Laughs.)* Please do.

***The Perfect Host* features your very first sex scene in a movie.**

You might be right. I don't know. Now I have to go back and think about all my other films. *(Long pause.)* Well, I made out with Janeane Garofalo in *Wet Hot American Summer*, and I think we ended up in bed together for the credits. And then there's *A Bug's Life*.

**Wait, what? You had sex in *A Bug's Life*?**

No, no, I was kidding. It's a children's animated film, so of course not. I mean, unless you watched it frame by frame, you'd never see it. *(Laughs.)* No, I think you're right. *The Perfect Host* is probably my first.

**Was it easier to have adult relations in a film when you... how can I phrase this delicately?... when you didn't technically have a partner?**

*(Laughs.)* First of all, I'd like to say that these are some of my favorite questions that anyone has ever asked me.

**Really? I'm the first journalist to ask you about your cinematic sex life?**

Oddly enough, yes. But to answer your question, I cannot imagine a sex scene being more awkward and weird to film than this one. You don't have to go into detail about, you know...

**The thing that makes it awkward and weird?**

Let's just leave it up to their imaginations.

**I agree. A little mystery will just make it more intriguing.**

And that's the whole point of this, isn't it?

**Of course, some readers are now probably thinking, "What the hell, did he fuck a hippo?"**

*(Laughs.)* Whatever it takes to sell tickets.

**Is the world ready to see Niles having filthy, unprintably disturbing sex in a bathroom?**

I think it's what the world has been clamoring for. It's the one thing we didn't get during all those years of *Frasier*.

**If I can once again change the subject without a segue...**

I insist.

**You're the most famous non-participating celebrity ever to appear on *The Family Guy*.**

(Laughs.) Ah yes, say no more.

**I'm talking about the episode in which you had a trouser malfunction at the Emmys and accidentally flashed your testicles. Clearly that was a joke, but did they get permission to use your name?**

No, not at all. I don't know why they don't have to, but they don't. I found out about the episode after the fact. But it was hysterical. And I like [*Family Guy* creator] Seth [MacFarlane] a lot.

**If you Google search "testicles" and "David Hyde Pierce," you'll get over 21,000 results. Does that give you a weird sense of pride?**

Wow. I don't know. Are there photos?

**Not as far as I can tell.**

Well O.K., good. That's all I care about. Actually, to understand what any of that means, you should be Googling other celebrities and testicles, just to see what kind of results you get. I'll bet Brad Pitt has like a billion more testicle hits than I do.

**Out of curiosity, I just Googled "Kelsey Grammer" and "testicles" and got only 2,740 results. What could that possibly mean?**

The sad thing is, whoever's creating Web sites about me and Kelsey and testicles, it's probably the same person.

**During *The Family Guy*'s 100th episode, [Seth McFarlane](#) claimed that you originated the voice of Stewie, which turned out to be untrue. Was that just wishful thinking on his part?**

What happened is, when the show was being created, he sent me a script and asked if I wanted to do the voice of Stewie. But I just didn't get it. I read it and thought, "I don't understand what's funny about this." So being the genius that I am, I turned him down. Fortunately, Seth ended up playing the part and nobody, myself included, could do it better.

**He's also suggested that they might be developing a live-action movie or musical version of *Family Guy*, and that you are his first choice to play Stewie. Is there any way in hell you'll say yes?**

I think it could certainly happen that they'll make a live-action movie or musical of *Family Guy*, but I can't imagine any reason why I'd ever consider playing Stewie. I will definitely go see the movie, but I won't be involved in any way.

**Why not? Are you afraid that you won't be able to do Stewie's British accent?**

No, I think it's because I'm 51 years old and I'm not going to walk around in a diaper.

**Stewie has an ambiguous sexuality. Just hypothetically, if you did play him in a movie, would you insist that he be out and proud?**

I guess I haven't watched the show enough to realize he had an ambiguous sexuality. Really? He's a baby!

**Well yeah, but he's a [very mature baby](#).**

Oh, I see. (*Laughs.*) Like I said, it's not even worth speculating because there's only one Stewie, and it's Seth.

**There are also [rumors circulating on the Web](#) that you're being considered to play the Riddler in the new *Batman* sequel. Can we get our hopes up?**

Well, based on the number of calls I've received about it, no, it's not true at all. In fact, you're the first person who's asked me about it.

**Wait a minute, you're telling me the Internet can't be trusted?**

I would never say a thing like that.

**I just Googled your name and The Riddler and got just 2,270 results. That's considerably less than testicles.**

Interesting. Well, maybe they'll hire me to play the Testicular.

**You once said "My life is an open book, but don't expect me to read it to you." Would you be willing to take part in an anything-goes, nothing-off-limits interview of charades?**

Of *charades*? I don't even know what you mean. We're in separate states, how could we possibly do charades?

**Obviously I didn't think this through. Well, would you be willing to describe what you're doing right now and I'll just make some guesses?**

(*Laughs.*) That's ridiculous. And then you'd translate it for an online interview?

**Or if you'd prefer, you could just give me hints about your private life in the voice of Stewie. That would make everybody happy.**

I'm not going to talk about Stewie anymore. You're obsessed and you have a problem. I think it's time you admit it. That's the first step towards recovery.

*David Hyde Pierce's iPod Top Five*

Some advance warning: If you actually try to reproduce Pierce's playlist, it will likely result in a seizure. It begins with several lovely classical and opera selections, luring you into a false sense of security. And then, with no thematic foreshadowing whatsoever, Fergie starts screaming at you, "Them chicken's jackin' my style!" It's like a knock-knock joke with the greatest punchline ever. [*The first four of Hyde Pierce's Top Five—Stephen Hough's Rachmaninoff Piano concerti, Leif Ove Andsnes's Haydn Piano Sonatas, Jean-Yves Thibaudet's Opera Without Words, and Richard Goode's Beethoven piano concerti, are not available on LaLa. But his No. 5 most played is!*]