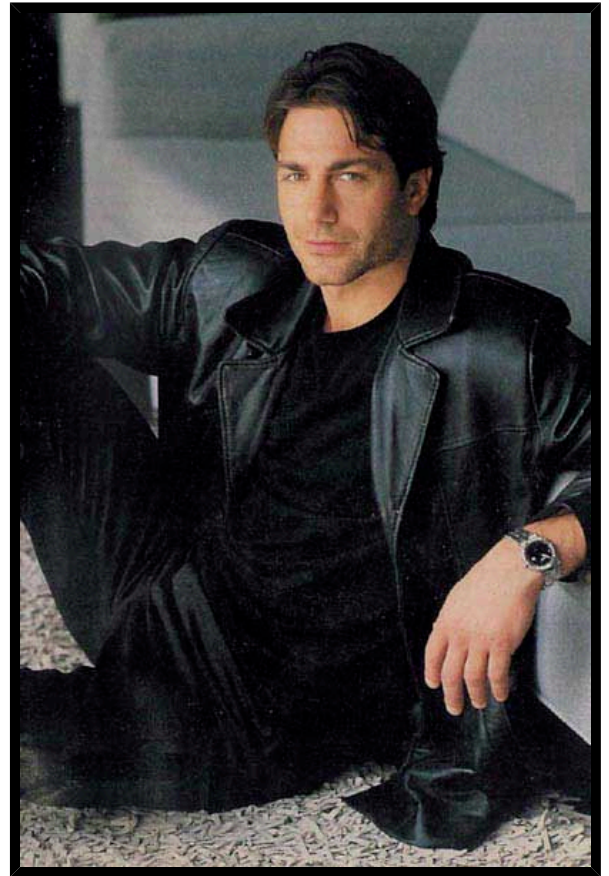


PASSIONS CENTRAL LIBRARY

Candid Bergin

By: Adam Kelley
Soap Opera Digest
Magazine
Dated: June 25, 2002



Passions's Michael Bergin Tells The (Nearly) Naked Truth About His Journey From Supermodel To Soap Star

With Marky Mark on the brink of Mark Wahlbergdom, Calvin Klein needed a new spokesperson for his underwear line. Brad Pitt, Woody Harrelson and a Red Hot Chili Pepper were all candidates. "But in the end, they decided not to go with another celebrity. They wanted a no-name model, and that was me," shrugs Michael Bergin (Nick), who stepped into Marky's boxer briefs in 1994 and immediately became a household name, at least in fashion houses. For Bergin, who was raised in a small town where "we knew who Cindy Crawford was, but that's about it," it was a tad surreal.

"I was definitely a little giddy at first," he recalls, reflecting on the early stages of his supermodel status. "It was like, 'Here I am standing in front of Calvin in my underwear.'" Of course, it wasn't long before he was standing in front of all of Manhattan in his skivvies, posed seductively in a Times Square sign so large – 96 feet by 70 feet – you could practically see his crotch from New Jersey. "I had no idea how big it was going to be," he laughs. "When the campaign was over, I asked if I could have it. They were like, 'You'd need a forklift and a truck.'"

Being nearly naked on such a big billboard entails certain practical considerations, the most obvious of which Bergin practically considered. "I thought about stuffing [my underwear]," he admits. "I probably

could have gotten away with it; I'm sure other guys in the business do. But on a big campaign like that there's, like, 20 people there besides me and the photographer, and they all would have known. Then, when [the shoot] was done, they'd all be like, 'We just came from Michael Bergin's Calvin Klein underwear shoot, and he stuffed.' It would have been a big lie. So, I didn't do it." He pauses. "Maybe that's why they had to blow it up to 96 by 70."

Being Calvin's poster child did change Bergin's life. He had been on the Milan-Paris-New York modeling treadmill all along, but suddenly, it was going a lot faster. "Phones started ringing. I didn't have to go on casting calls anymore. I was getting booked for things directly – all over the world." The money was great and the opportunities abounded. For instance, Darren Star cast him on a few episodes of CENTRAL PARK WEST in 1995, which marked the start of his acting career.

Other, weirder things happened, as well. A couple of years after the Calvin Klein campaign was over, Bergin was interviewed by *Sex And The City* author Candace Bushnell and became the basis for one of the characters in both that book and the HBO serial that it spawned. The characterization was not entirely flattering, which apparently has to do with a besotted ex-manager of the actor's who mistook his client's close, platonic relationship with designer Valentino for something even closer. "I ended up dumping him as my manager, and he was heartbroken and very jealous of my friendship with Valentino. He was best friends with Candace, and he told her all this stuff about me. So, the book has some jabs about a Calvin Klein underwear model hanging out with Valentino, and those were basically jabs at me."

Paradoxically, the actor eventually auditioned for the SEX AND THE CITY role that was based on him, the one known to that show's legion of fans as "The Bone." "I didn't get it," he laughs. "And they knew who I was; Darren Star had cast me before [in CPW]. But now I was older and jaded and they wanted a younger-looking model, so I didn't get the part. I was too old to play myself." He did nab other jobs, including four seasons as J.D. Darius on BAYWATCH ("I'd be in the middle of a scene, and I'd be thinking, 'Oh, my God, I'm on BAYWATCH.'") and the upcoming indie flick *Wolves Of Wall Street*, playing a long-clawed capitalist opposite Eric Roberts (ex-Ted, ANOTHER WORLD) and Jason-Shane Scott (ex-Will, ONE LIFE TO LIVE).

And obviously, there's PASSIONS. Bergin had never really thought about doing a soap before, but he and James Hyde (Sam) play on the same celebrity basketball and softball teams, and Hyde encouraged him to try out for the role of Brian. "They hired Chris Douglas," he recounts, "but then this part came up, and I guess they remembered me." Daytime is harder than the actor expected, and his first day was lousy ("I got locked out of my dressing room, and then the stage manager yelled at me for being late to the set"), but he says that he's now happy in Harmony.

"I'm having a great time. Nick is a fun character, and there's just something about modeling vs. acting anyway," Bergin muses, referring to America's cultural embrace of Zoolander-esque lampoons. "If you're involved in the male modeling business, nobody respects you. Everyone assumed that you're coasting by on your looks, not using your brain. I mean, don't get me wrong, there are some guys in the industry who are not the brightest light bulbs. But most of the people I met were like me – college educated – just normal guys who saw an opportunity and took it."

Just The Facts:

Born On: March 19, 1969

From: Naugatuck, CT

Must-See TV: Friends, Alias, The Practice

Single Offspring: Bergin and hairstylist Joy Tilk share custody of their 2-year-old-son, Jesse.

He Drives: A GMC Yukon

Cooking Specialty: "Um, toast ... grilled cheese ..."

Best Quality: "I'm a great father."

Worst Quality: Procrastinating

Now Reading: *Children Are From Heaven* by John Gray

Alma Mater: University of Connecticut (B.A. in business marketing)

[*Return to Library*](#) | [*Return to Passions Central*](#)

Page content and design copyrighted by Passions Central. Article from Soap Opera Weekly Magazine!

