

5 QUESTIONS WITH...

SER'DARIUS BLAIN

From tackling roles on the football field to navigating the exotic jungle in *Jumanji*, this actor and director shines.

BY JANE HUMPHREY

***Jumanji* was such an incredible sensation at the box office. How did you create your character?**

Well, it's no secret I'm not an actual teenager, so prepping for *Jumanji* required me to go back into my memory bank and remember all of the teen angst and need for acceptance that came along with that period in my life. It was fun to play with, and [director] Jake Kasdan really let us explore.

Were you a cinephile from day one? I fell in love with cinema when I saw *Hook*. I watched that movie every single day. I wanted to live in a fantasy land and never grow up while simultaneously saving the world just like Peter Pan. Then *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Glory* sealed the deal for me. Robin Williams, Will Smith and Denzel Washington were my heroes.

How do you best approach a role? I familiarize myself with my scenes but I don't overmemorize. It's made acting a lot more fun and adventurous and definitely adds color to the scenes in my opinion. I have a photographic memory and I read regularly, so that helps, and I go over my lines while I'm working out or cooking. Doing something active so it's in my body.

Any must-stops when in Texas? One of my best friends lives in Fort Worth and takes me out downtown to explore the scene, which is a lot of fun. Velvet Taco at 2AM is a must!

What's next? I've been on the road for 12 months straight on various projects, so I'm looking forward to resting for a couple of months and spending time with my family. I have a couple of prospective projects in waiting. Always on the hunt. 'Tis the life of an actor.



PHOTO BY LUVIN ERICSSON

When a show about second chances went for unexpected choices, an actor known for his football roles found himself dancing ballet.

LEAP OF FAITH

Ser'Darius Blain's first big leap was onto a middle-school stage. His latest is costarring in Fox's drama *The Big Leap*, which is all about second chances.

A strapping fellow (he played football player Young Fridge in the recent *Jumanji* movies), Blain was a painfully timid kid. One day as he helped his mom, a middle-school language arts and drama teacher, revise a play, she realized he'd memorized all the lines. So she persuaded him to audition.

He landed a role, and when the lead fell ill, Blain stepped in, performing to standing ovations. "As soon as it opened," he says of the eighth-grade production, "I felt like I was in my element."

For this series about a ballet-based reality show, Blain plays another football player, Reggie. "My character starts off as this brash, wild-child party boy," he explains, "and over time he realizes he is more than a circus act. Gabby really pulls that out in him — she sees him. And he sees her for the beautiful person she is."

Gabby (Simone Recasner) is paired with Reggie in the show-within-a-show. A talented high-schooler headed to NYU on a dance scholarship, Gabby finds herself pregnant. As a result, she abandons her dream and raises her son. Yet all she wants to do is dance, like the others vying for a spot on the show.

Expect buzz about body acceptance because Gabby looks like most women: curvier and heavier than the advertised ideal — especially in the dance world. Still, she has a quality many waif-like ballerinas don't: she's fun to watch because she's having so much fun.

The series, premiering September 20, features Scott Foley (*Scandal*) as executive producer of the show-within-the-show. His character has all the compassion of a starved snake — and spot-on intuition of what makes compelling reality TV.

The forces behind *The Big Leap* know what makes compelling drama. Liz

Heldens (*Friday Night Lights*) is creator, showrunner and executive producer; Jason Winer (*Modern Family*) is director and executive producer, and Sue Naegle (*The Plot Against America*) is an executive producer.

They cast the show far more inclusively than most dance competitions, hiring older dancers and, in Blain's case, a novice. He trained hard for five hours a day, five days a week, in ballroom, ballet and jazz.

"Turn-out is tough," he says of the basic ballet stance. "It sounds like a dying cat in my apartment every time I am rehearsing."

Although Blain has worked steadily since arriving in Los Angeles in 2009, if acting hadn't worked out, he would have been a chef. "I love rich foods," he says. "Thank God for metabolism — and five-hour dance classes."

—Jacqueline Cutler



LEMAOCEAN

Ser'Darius Blain Was Sure a Director Hated Him—Then They Cast Him on ‘The Big Leap’

BY ALLIE VOLPE | SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 6:00 AM | LAST UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 12:54 PM



Photo Source: Nathan Arizona

Ser'Darius Blain had aspirations to become a doctor. That is, until he competed in a talent and acting competition and changed course. Soon after moving to Los Angeles, Blain booked a role in the 2011 remake of “Footloose” and in the following decade, he appeared in the “Jumanji” franchise and on the “Charmed” reboot. Blain is now a regular on another series, Fox’s “The Big Leap” (premiering Sept. 20), on which he plays Reggie, a former NFL player-turned-dance show contestant.

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What was the moment you decided you wanted to be an actor?

I’ve always secretly loved [acting] from watching “Hook,” “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,” and memorizing those movies word-for-word. I was secretly like, Man, I wish I could do that. But I was so damn shy that I never told my mom. I never told anyone what I was truly dreaming about. I knew I was good at school, so I just stuck to that. My mom’s American, but my dad’s family is all from the Caribbean. You get taught to grow up and have a good job—a doctor, lawyer, engineer, something that provides for a family. You put away childish things at a very early age. But I got to a point where I started seeing the adults around me very unhappy and miserable. I was like, I wonder why that is. I realized that the one thing all of them had in common was they had never gone for their dreams. There’s nothing wrong with that. At the end of the day, I want to really live my life. I found acting and entertainment. I step on these sets and I’m in awe. I thought I’d book an acting job or two and say I had an opportunity to act when I was younger, but now 12, 13 movies and two series in, it seems like it wasn’t a fluke.

What advice would you give your younger self?

I would’ve told myself to start earlier. I probably would’ve also told myself to stop and smell the roses. I came into acting and entertainment with the mindset of trying to get everything right, so I never really lived in the moment. I did six or seven movies before I ever started taking pictures and trying to commemorate certain memories.

How did you first get your SAG-AFTRA card?

“Footloose,” baby! My first movie. I booked a feature film before I ever even booked a commercial, which is kind of backward. I moved to Los Angeles in April 2010 and I booked “Footloose” in June and hit the ground running from there.

Was there a learning curve adapting from film sets to a commercial or TV set?

I’m adapting even now. I’ve mostly done film in my career. I love the form of beginning, middle, end that film offers. I know exactly where my character’s going; I know where they’re starting. I think it’s a little bit easier to build that picture. With TV, it’s a little bit open-ended. You have to be really flexible and ready for your character to change between now and lunchtime. That becomes fun, trying to find the commonality as those changes are being presented to you, to find the constants of your character while also being fluid and flexible. I was never really good at booking commercials. I would book one every year. But [having] one line or no lines was really tough for me to be able to tell a story. How do you find an arc in a 30-second or minute-long commercial? Film and TV present two completely different challenges. In TV, you’re working with a different director every week and you have to know your character better than anyone else on set, especially when you’re part of a big ensemble. You’re self-governing at that point. You have to lean on your training and know what you want to do when you get in there, but be ready for it to change.

What is your worst audition horror story?

Jason Winer was the director of the first pilot I ever tested for back in 2011. When I came back from filming “Footloose,” I auditioned for this show called “Don’t Trust The B---- in Apartment 23” and Jason Winer was the director. It was down to me and Eric Andre, who is now a superstar. I remember being in this audition on the Fox lot and this little short director with this kind of squeaky voice was barking all these commands at me while I’m auditioning for this show. I was like, Is this guy trying to throw me off my game? I found out on my birthday that I didn’t get it. I was gutted. I actually skipped my own birthday party. I found a bottle of vanilla vodka somewhere that a friend had given me. My friends came and found me and dragged me to my birthday party three hours late.

Throughout the years, I continued to audition for Jason and never got the roles; [for] “Modern Family” at one point, “New Girl,” all these different shows. I was like, Man, this guy hates me. I had it stuck in my head that he hated me. When I got this final audition [for “The Big Leap”], I saw it said Jason Winer and I thought, Oh, my God, I’m not getting this one. Obviously, I booked it. We were having dinner one night and I told Jason, “I thought you hated me.” He was like, “I don’t hate you, but you weren’t right. As soon as you walked in for this one, I thought, He’s perfect for this one.” Now, he’s one of my favorite directors I’ve ever worked with. I realize now I wasn’t prepared. I wasn’t ready for what he was asking me to do back then. It’s funny how we live in our own heads sometimes and become our own worst enemies and don’t realize there are great things on hold for us.

What has playing Reggie on “The Big Leap” added to your acting skills?

We have a really dope creative team: Jason Winer, Liz Heldens, Sue Naegle, all these really great producers and writers that have had long track records with really great shows under their belts, from “Modern Family” to “Friday Night Lights” to “The Passage.” The show’s tone is so different from anything that I’ve done before because it has equal parts drama and comedy. It’s actually quite hilarious. I feel like the show gets funnier every week, but it’s still grounded in this really cool dramatic realness. I have some really cool scene partners in Anna Grace Barlow and Simone Recasner and Scott Foley. Everybody’s really prepared for the comedic sides. And the show moves, the pacing is a little bit faster than I’d originally read it on the page. It’s been fun playing with the comedy and finding the truth in the comedy and grounding it with drama as well. This has definitely stretched me in ways that I didn’t expect, especially when you’re talking about the dancing. I’ve been doing ballet! I go from playing football in this show to doing some really intense ballet and ballroom.

What’s the wildest thing you’ve ever done to get a role?

I was up for this boxing movie last year and it was down to me and one other person. I actually moved a personal trainer and nutritionist into my house and converted my son’s room into a guest room. I hired a boxing coach as well, and I was paying an exorbitant amount of money for a job I didn’t even have for three months straight while I auditioned for this thing weekly. It ended up costing me thousands and thousands of dollars. “The Big Leap” ended up coming back so I wasn’t even eligible to play the role anymore, and I broke my wrist in the process. I’m still rehabbing my wrist right now. I don’t regret it at all.

What performance should every actor see and why?

“What’s Eating Gilbert Grape,” [Leonardo DiCaprio](#). That entire cast. That’s one of my favorite movies ever. The entire series of “[Game of Thrones](#)” is a lesson in the power of stillness. Everybody has such an incredible presence on that show.

SKULL CRUSHERS AND DANCE HELPED ACTOR SER'DARIUS BLAIN 'LEAP' INTO TWO ROLES

INTERVIEWS

The actor hit both the weights and ballet studio to prep for two football parts.

By Scott 'Future' Felstead



Ser'Darius Blain was a competitive basketball player in college before a [serious knee injury](#) slam-dunked his prospects for progression in the sport, so he doubled-down and followed his passion for acting.

The 6'5" gentle giant talks about his acting influences, impressions of being part of the huge *Jumanji* cast, and how his character in his new show *The Big Leap* taught him that dance is a great tool for anyone hoping to [improve their balance and flexibility](#).

Growing up, the fledgling actor would eagerly help his drama-teaching mom write scripts for the school play, admiring Denzel Washington, Johnny Depp, and Leonardo DiCaprio on screen.

"Will Smith was my idol," says Blain. "I don't get starstruck very often, but if I were to meet him, I would probably pee my pants like a teenage boy [laughs]."

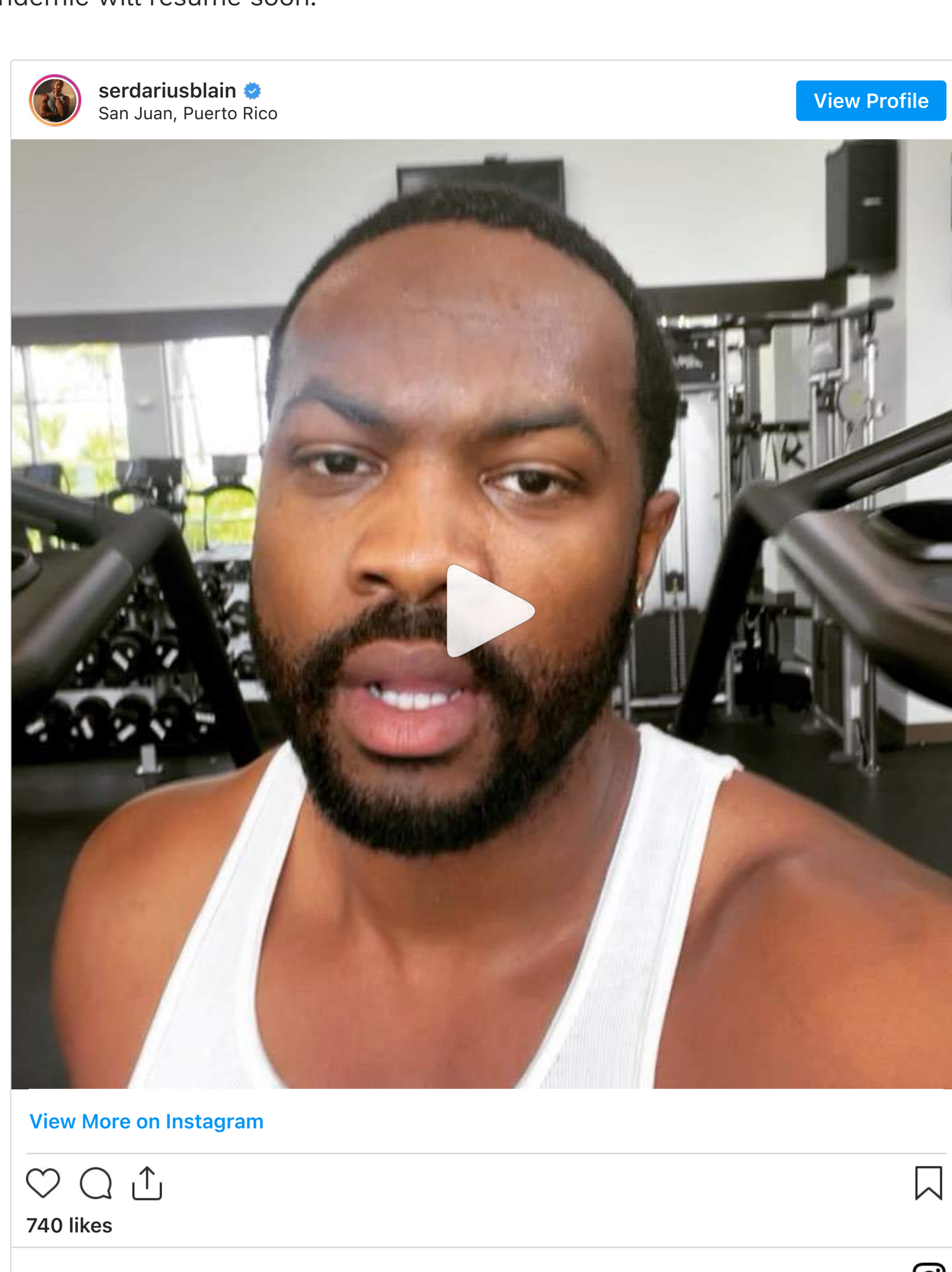
The 34-year-old says that he studied the way these actors focused on their characters, viewing them as heroes. While growing up, acting provided Blain with an outlet to express himself freely. He found performing to be a [real confidence booster](#) and in 2018, he landed a regular role in *Charmed*. Since then, Blain's career on-screen has gone from strength to strength.

SER'DARIUS BLAIN IS EMBRACING THE GRIND



While playing the younger version of Anthony "Fridge" Johnson in the previous two *Jumanji* movies, a role that he shared with comedy powerhouse Kevin Hart, Ser'Darius Blain made sure to keep his ears open on set and soon found himself in awe of both Hart, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's intense work ethic. "These guys are making decisions about six other projects that they've got going on at any one time, while being completely focused and locked into the current project, which was *Jumanji* at that time," says Blain. "Kevin is making decisions about his clothing line and *Real Husbands of Hollywood* and the LOL Network, and he's launching all these different things at the same time, and then he's still able to bring creativity. The Rock is the same way too. They were able to bring creativity and be completely focused on *Jumanji*, so when I worked with them, I was like, 'Wow, I'm not doing enough,' so it kind of kicked my hustle into overdrive."

The talented actor confirmed that he expects to reprise his role as The Fridge for his third *Jumanji* appearance, hoping that production halted by the recent coronavirus pandemic will resume soon.



THE ACTOR ADAPTS TO ANY ROLE

Ser'Darius Blain has form when it comes to committing to the character. Starring as a trained assassin alongside Bruce Willis in the upcoming movie *The Fortress*, Blain bulked up to 250 pounds and is passionate about taking on whatever shape is required to make each scene as convincing as possible.

Another soon-to-be-released movie, *American Underdog* also had Blain reaching for the weights. "With *American Underdog*, I play a semi-pro football player," he says. "In the arena league, a lot of times, guys will play both sides of the ball — they'll play offense and defense. My character is supposed to be a linebacker who also plays tight end, so I definitely bulked up for that one, and I went up to about 257 pounds." Blain says that on that project, he [trained for a wider frame](#) for realism, since he would be up against 270-pound defensive linemen. "That involved a lot of skull crushers and kettlebells and more heavy lifting, and I reduced my cardio." Blain says that the real challenge for him is to hold weight, because he loses it very quickly.

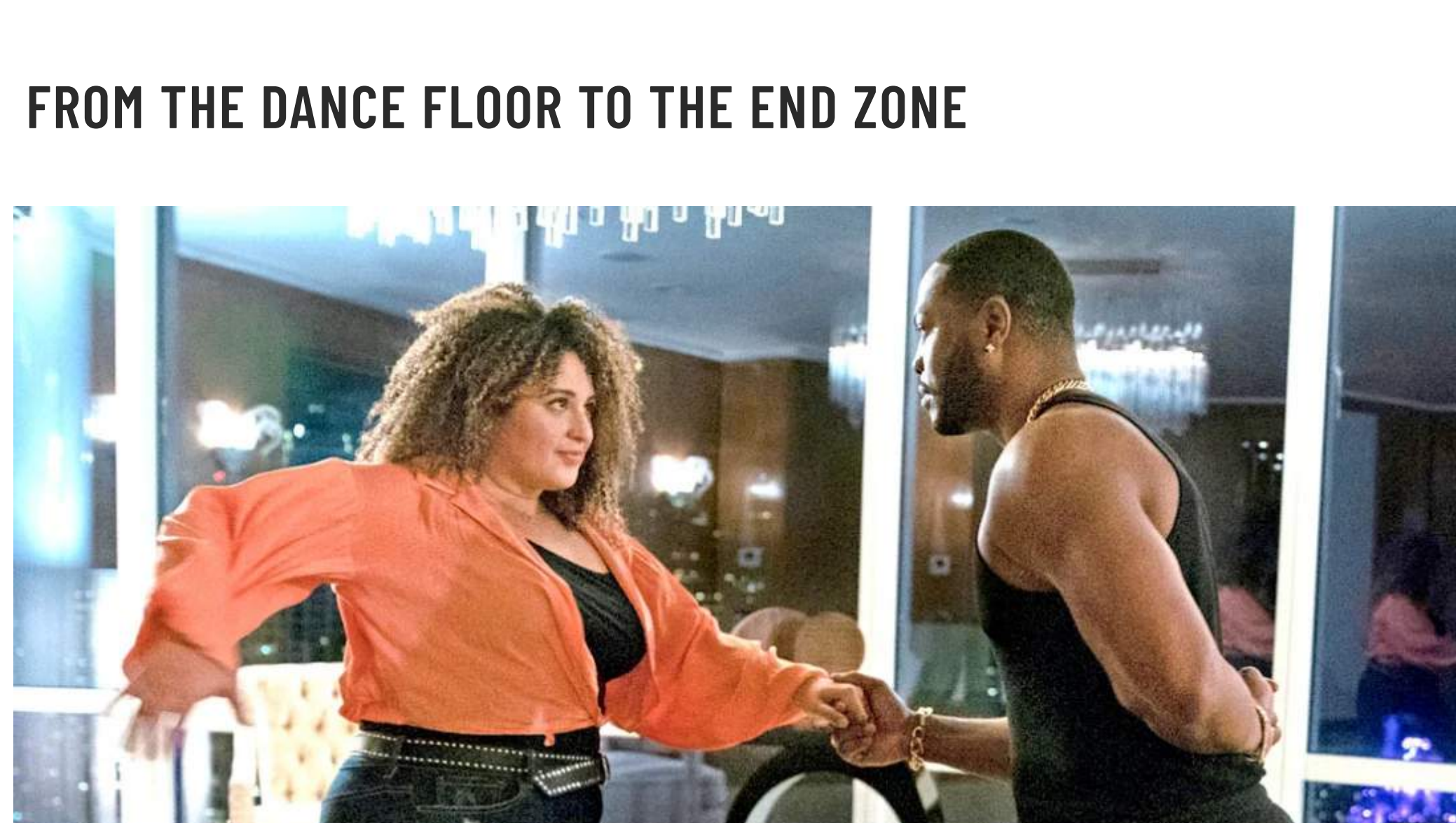


MAKING THE 'BIG LEAP'

For his role in Fox's *The Big Leap*, premiering Sept. 20, Blain plays a football player who must balance both his masculine and feminine side. The show is a musical comedy-drama, and the plot sees him entering a reality dance competition. "This big tough guy, he's a party boy and a little wild, but in my off-time, [my character is] doing ballet," laughs Blain. "I had to learn how to do a Sisson (in which the dancer jumps and splits their legs like a pair of scissors before landing) and all this other stuff. We have this term, it's called a 'sous-sus,' it's a ballet move, and every time we did it, I tried to make the character look tougher." The actor would shout out macho quips for comedy effect during shots, while [executing the intricate movement](#) that requires him to turn out both heels, giving the impression of a single foot. "I think we should all be in touch with the masculine and feminine because that actually empowers us," he says.

Similar to the process for contestants who enter *Dancing with the Stars*, Blain was put through [bootcamp-style training](#) with a private instructor in order to pick up the moves before filming even began. "It's changed my gym routine," says Blain. "Now, I want to stay limber, so I start with half an hour of stretching. I've been focusing on Pilates and elongating the muscles whereas before I was just going for brute strength and [lifting heavy](#). With this character, it has caused me to focus on my flexibility and go through the full range of motion when I'm working out. I'm doing a lot of cable work, lots of lunges to get those hip flexors opened up and to strengthen the hamstrings and things like that. You don't realize that every single muscle and ligament is engaged when you are dancing."

FROM THE DANCE FLOOR TO THE END ZONE



In *The Big Leap*, Ser'Darius Blain portrays a Detroit Lions tight end, and he will represent a football player once again for his role in the upcoming movie, *American Underdog: The Kurt Warner Story* (out December). In order to bring the correct level of swagger to these physical roles, Blain observes those around him; from his brother who played football, to his *Jumanji* colleague, The Rock, picking up on their charisma and replicating this in his own way.

"A good friend of mine, Braylon Edwards, who played for the Jets and the Browns has got this tremendous confidence, and I've kind of based my [American Underdog] character on him a little bit, even down to growing out the beard," laughs Blain. And, while this may come as a surprise to some, but not others, dance has long been a go-to training method for football players because it's a great way to improve coordination. "I've got friends, NFL pro ballers, who actually take ballet classes to stay limber," says Blain. "Dancers are true athletes. I'm an athlete as well, and I like to be the best at anything I put my athletic hand too, and dance definitely kicked my ass, for sure."

New Fox dance drama 'The Big Leap' set in Detroit, gives underdog characters second chance

Julie Hinds Detroit Free Press

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In the premiere episode of "The Big Leap," a laid-off Motor City autoworker (Jon Rudnitsky), now juggling several jobs to survive, is eavesdropping on his ride-share passengers.

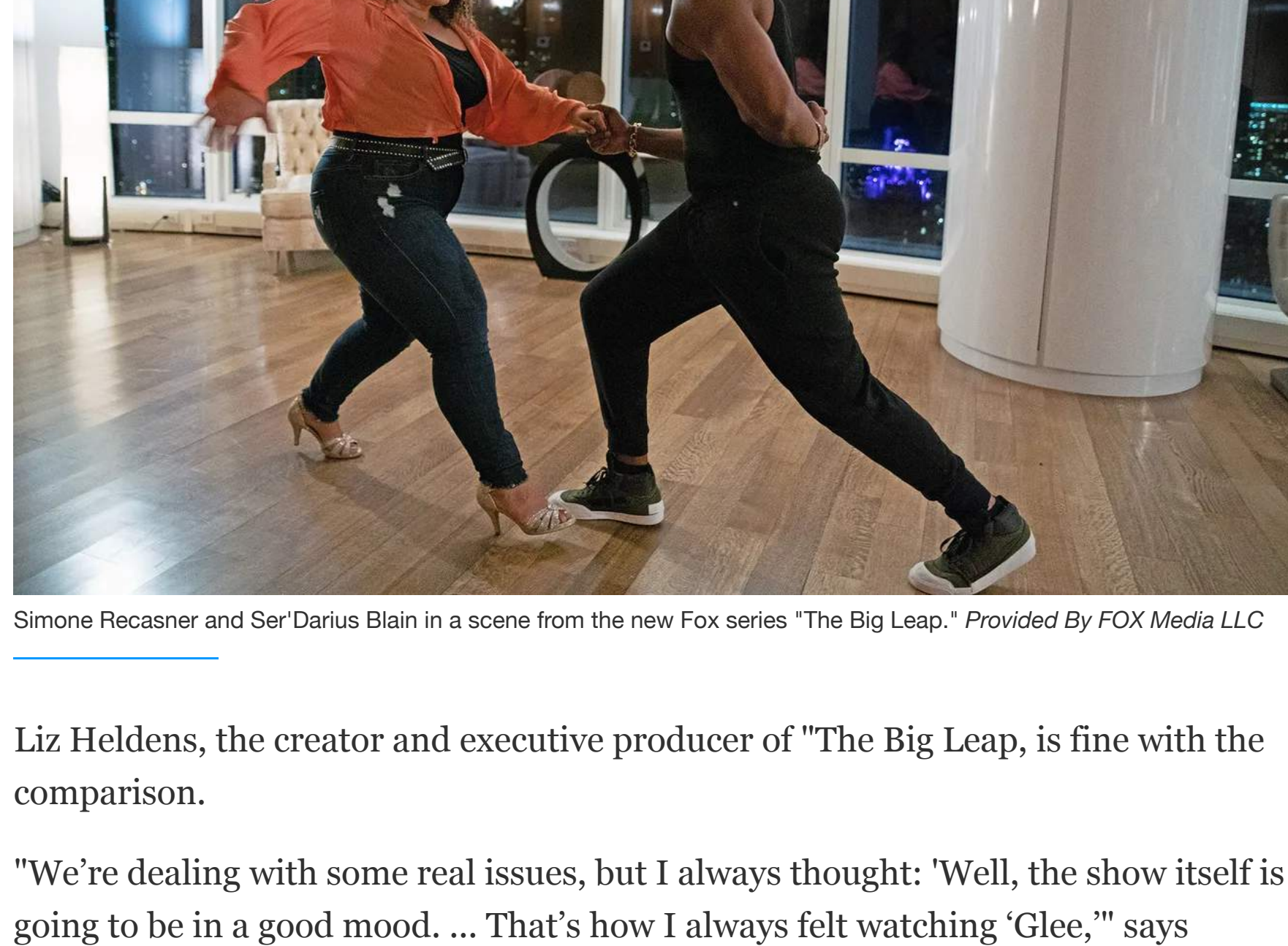
"They dropped me in Detroit three days ago to save this stupid dance show," gripes one of them, a jaded TV producer (Scott Foley) desperate to salvage his own career.

To clarify, Foley's character is bad-mouthing the show-within-a-show, not the actual series that launches at 9 p.m. Monday on Fox. "The Big Leap" is a scripted dramedy about a reality show that gives amateur dancers the challenge of a lifetime: learning the choreography to the classic ballet "Swan Lake" and then performing it on TV.

In real life, Foley, whose credits include hits like "Grey's Anatomy" and "Scandal," thinks the new series has a shot at connecting with audiences in 2021, a year that has retained the stress levels of 2020.

The action unfolds in "a hopeful world and I think that's one we all aspire to," he says.

Already, "The Big Leap" is generating major hopes for the Fox network. It has been called one of the fall season's "can't-miss new dramas," by [Entertainment Weekly](#). And back in April, Fox executives greeted the pilot with an enthusiasm that "has been compared to the reaction at the network to the 'Glee' pilot more than a decade ago," [reported Deadline](#).



Simone Recasner and Ser'Darius Blain in a scene from the new Fox series "The Big Leap." Provided By FOX Media LLC

Liz Heldens, the creator and executive producer of "The Big Leap," is fine with the comparison.

"We're dealing with some real issues, but I always thought: 'Well, the show itself is going to be in a good mood. ... That's how I always felt watching 'Glee,'" says Heldens. "You had a feeling that everything was going to be OK, and there was a buoyancy to that show."

Now the big question is: Are TV viewers ready for "The Big Leap"? Well, they certainly can relate to the problems faced by the lead characters, which range from unemployment and crumbling marriages to ageism and self-destructive behaviors.

Yet the show treats these likable underdogs, who are seeking a second chance at their dreams, with notable kindness and humor.

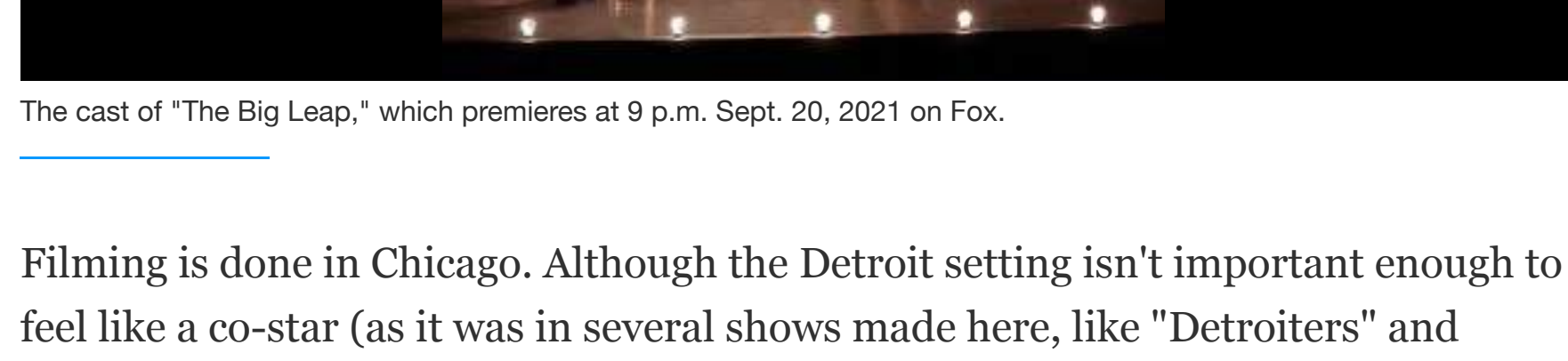
"I think the best way to describe it would be a feel-good comedy with heart, but then you could also say a feel-good drama," says actor Kevin Daniels, who plays the elegant host of the reality show.

The journey of "The Big Leap" began around 2015. Inspired by a British reality show about amateurs tackling a production of "Swan Lake," Heldens envisioned a fictional version that would explore the personal lives of the contestants.

"I just thought that was the best idea," she says by phone. "It seemed like a really good container to tell stories about people who were kind of down on their luck or had been punched in the face, one way or another, by life."

The project, which eventually landed at Fox, always was meant to be set in Detroit, a great American city on a similar comeback journey, according to Heldens.

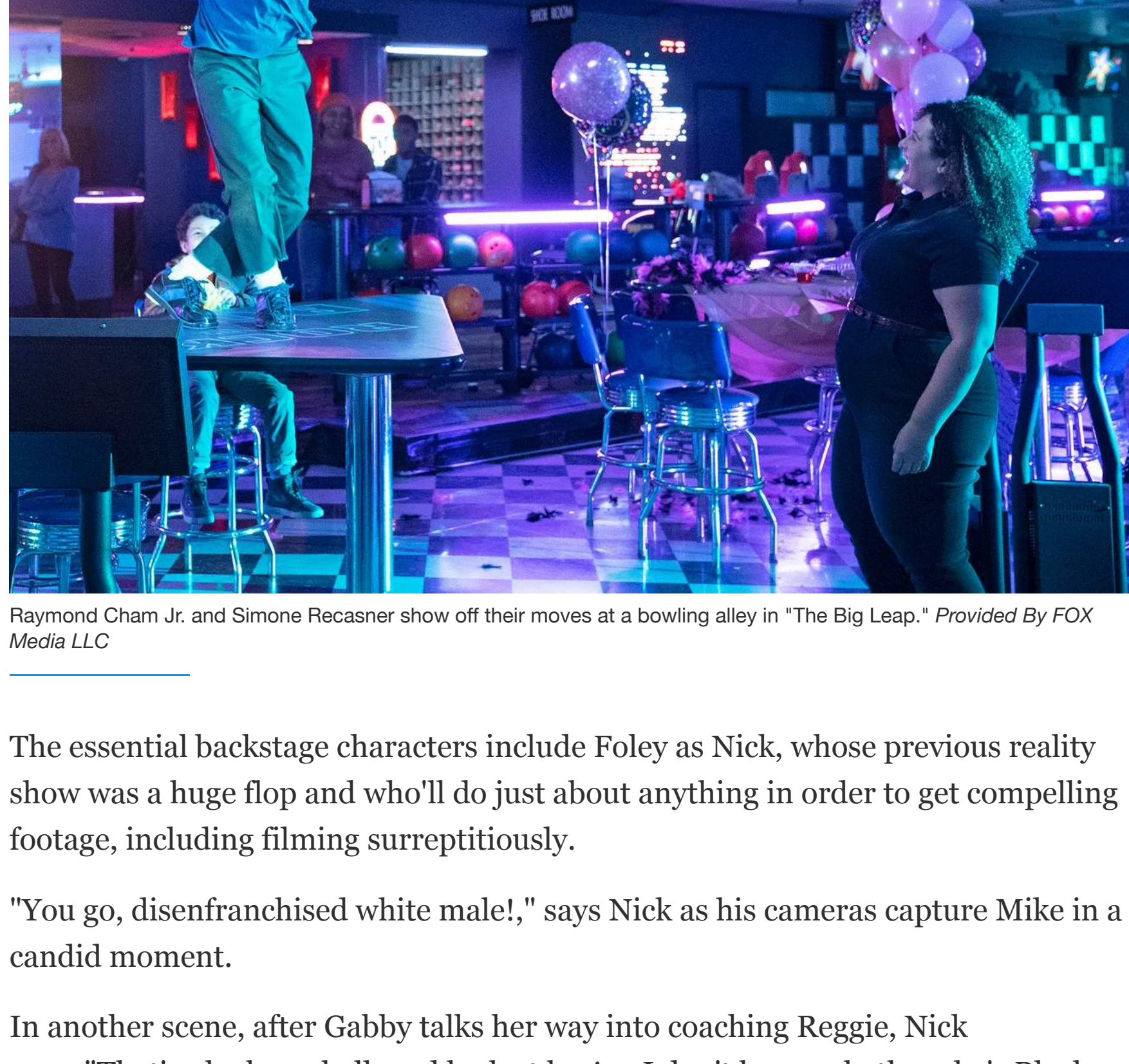
"That was always a big selling point," she says.



The cast of "The Big Leap," which premieres at 9 p.m. Sept. 20, 2021 on Fox.

Filming is done in Chicago. Although the Detroit setting isn't important enough to feel like a co-star (as it was in several shows made here, like "Detroiters" and "Detroit 1-8-7"), the characters' story lines are peppered with local details. They include:

- Gabby (played by newcomer Simone Recasner), a dance champion in high school, whose college plans were sidelined by a teen pregnancy and who feels insecure as a woman with curves.
- Justin (Raymond Cham Jr), Gabby's gay best friend whose hip-hop dance skills may or may not mesh with the demands of ballet.
- Reggie (Ser'Darius Blain), a tight end for the Detroit Lions who has been suspended for driving under the influence. He is recruited for the show for his star power, especially after a video of him spotted naked and tipsy in public goes viral.
- Julia (Teri Polo), a suburban mom and former ballet dancer who is trying to become a social media influencer with a message — "aging is a wonderful, wonderful journey" — that she barely believes herself.
- Paula (Piper Perabo), a vice president of restructuring for an auto company who also is a cancer survivor.
- Mike (Jon Rudnitsky), a blue-collar guy who is struggling to win back his wife and complains that "the auto industry shipped my job to Mexico and there was a global pandemic."



Raymond Cham Jr. and Simone Recasner show off their moves at a bowling alley in "The Big Leap." Provided By FOX Media LLC

The essential backstage characters include Foley as Nick, whose previous reality show was a huge flop and who'll do just about anything in order to get compelling footage, including filming surreptitiously.

"You go, disenfranchised white male!," says Nick as his cameras capture Mike in a candid moment.

In another scene, after Gabby talks her way into coaching Reggie, Nick says: "That's plucky as hell, and look at her! ... I don't know whether she's Black or white or what. You know what she looks like to me? She looks like America, and America needs a win."

In the host chairs are Daniels as Wayne, an empathetic former dancer who came up with the show's concept and who bonds with a nervous Julia in the second episode, and Mallory Jansen as Monica, a verbally abusive choreographer who throws a chair at one of the contestants in a heated moment.

"Oh my God, I love her so much!," says Nick afterward.

More: Jeff Daniels on his 'American Rust' character: 'There are guys like him all over Michigan'

Heldens, whose previous credits include "Friday Night Lights" and "The Orville," says "The Big Leap" received the go-ahead for a pilot in early 2020.

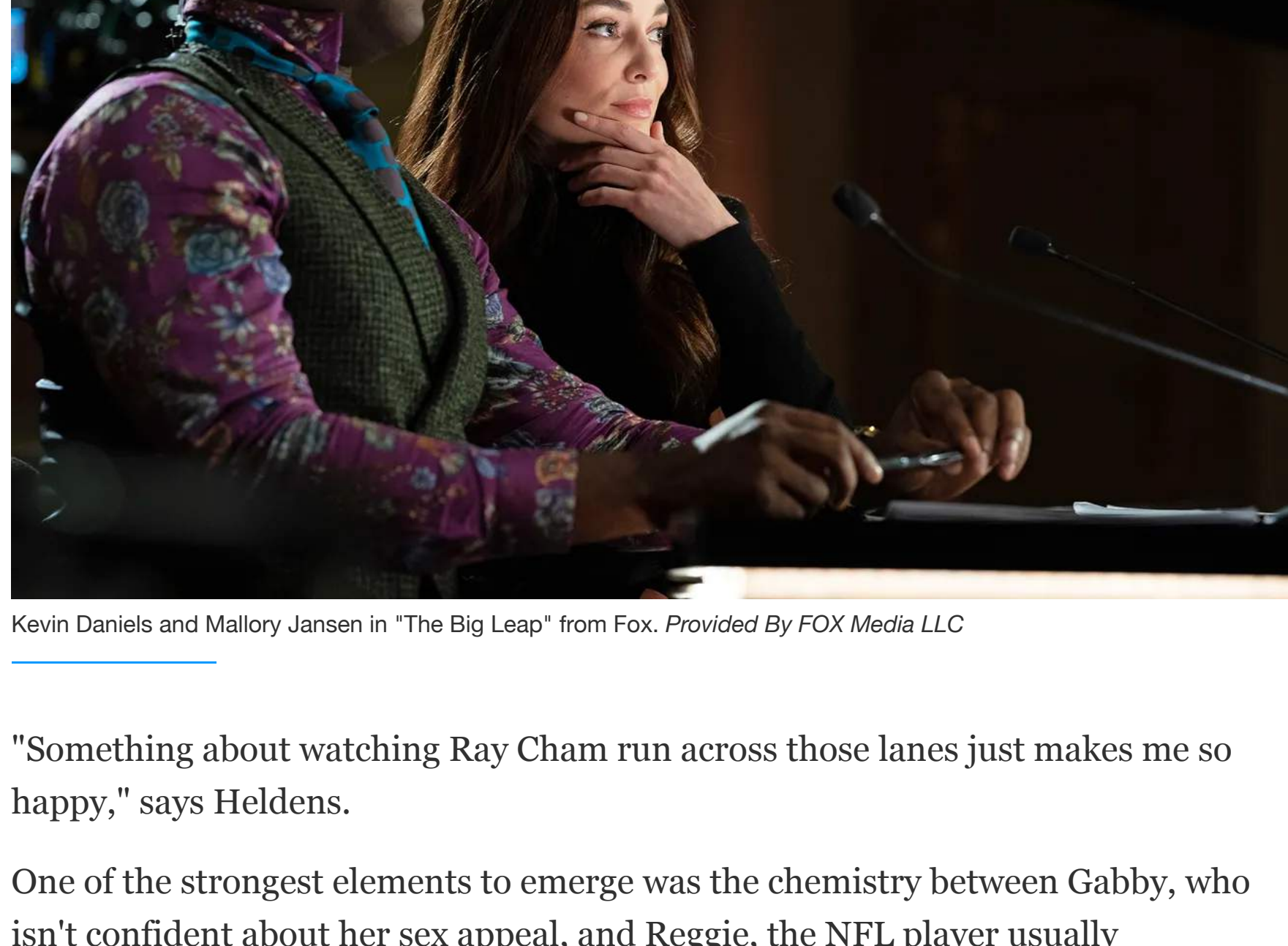
"We were in Chicago on the ground getting ready to shoot, then that week happened ... (when) Tom Hanks got coronavirus and the NBA shut down. I'm going to remember it for the rest of my life," she recalls.

"Every morning, Jason Winer (the director) ... and I would look at each other and be like: 'Are we going to shoot? What's happening?' ... That whole week was like this grooving, terrible feeling of dread. Not only were we not going to shoot, but the country was really in trouble."

Work resumed in winter 2020 until it was paused again by a positive COVID-19 test. But the network liked what it saw from several days of shooting that had been completed. Filming resumed in February on a few unfinished scenes.

If there was a silver lining to the yearlong process of making the pilot, Heldens says it was the time it allowed to really think over the scenes and tweak the show's themes.

Some of the obstacles wound up improving the action. For instance, a bowling alley dance scene with Gabby and Justin originally was supposed to happen inside a Home Depot, but "no national chain would let us shoot in there." The substitute location proved even better than what was planned.



Kevin Daniels and Mallory Jansen in "The Big Leap" from Fox. Provided By FOX Media LLC

"Something about watching Ray Cham run across those lanes just makes me so happy," says Heldens.

One of the strongest elements to emerge was the chemistry between Gabby, who isn't confident about her sex appeal, and Reggie, the NFL player usually surrounded by women.

"I've had a lot of fun with the Reggie character, actually," says Blain, who played athletes in "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle," and "Survivor's Remorse" on Starz.

"He's one of those guys whose whole life, he's always been sort of a spectacle, being an athlete. He's kind of a larger-than-life party boy. But honestly, behind all of that, he happens to have a heart of gold. His relationship with Gabby, as it forms, is bringing that side of him out more."

The Indianapolis Colts and Pittsburgh Steelers fan says that his favorite wide receiver ever is a Lion, Calvin (Megatron) Johnson. Blain hasn't heard from anyone associated with his on-screen team, but says it would be "really cool" if he did.

"I don't think anybody knows anything about the show yet. Maybe as the show develops and gets more popular, we'll get some Lions shout-outs."

As for filming that viral clip when Reggie is apparently in the buff, Blain laughs and says: "That didn't take too long, but it was nerve-wracking. ... Our director, he shot that on his cell phone in about 15 minutes."



Scott Foley plays a reality show producer in the new Fox series "The Big Leap." Provided By FOX Media LLC

While the show references the COVID-19 pandemic as something the characters are emerging from, it won't be dealing with the subject as an ongoing concern.

"The show addresses, to a certain degree, what we've been through. We mention it. We mention the need for hope and the sort of despair that we've all felt," says Foley. "But it also takes us away from that and takes us to a world where we want to live."

Foley definitely isn't disappointed that his character, Nick, is not involved in any actual dancing.

"I talked to the executive producer the other day, and she said at the top of their list in "The Big Leap," no weekly goodbye to a character that we may come to like. Daniels, who's had recurring roles on "Atypical" and "Modern Family," described this as a show about finding unity among differences, something that would be hopeful for our divided country.



This image released by Fox shows Piper Perabo, Jeff and Jon Rudnitsky in a scene from "The Big Leap," premiering Sept. 20, 2021 on Fox. Jean Whitehead, Fox Media LLC Via AP

Heldens says "The Big Leap" is currently in production in Chicago. Shooting on all 11 episodes is expected to wrap near the end of October. She credits Winer with the deft handling of the show-within-a-show format and says "every actor in this cast is fantastic."

One more thing. There are no scheduled eliminations in the reality show depicted in "The Big Leap," no weekly goodbye to a character that we may come to like.

Daniels, who's had recurring roles on "Atypical" and "Modern Family," described this as a show about finding unity among differences, something that would be hopeful for our divided country.

"How are you going to do a production of 'Swan Lake' with a cast of disparate dancers who have varying dance abilities and few classical training elements? How do you make something entertaining and enjoyable without a train wreck?"

You can't do it unless you figure out how to work as a team, a premise that Daniels loves. "It's like, we can only face all of our problems together."

Contact Detroit Free Press pop culture critic Julie Hinds at jhinds@freepress.com.

'The Big Leap'

Series premiere

9 p.m. Monday nationally; 11:30 p.m. on Fox 2 Detroit after Lions game

Fox

FOX Chicago

October 2021

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November 2021

https://open.spotify.com/episode/57KpQg8awzBVISUeSsScN4?si=P_X8AW10TQCGOkUrecaCRg&nd=1

The screenshot shows the Spotify mobile app interface. On the left is a dark navigation sidebar with the Spotify logo and menu items: Home, Search, Your Library, Create Playlist, and Liked Songs. The main content area has a green background. At the top right of this area are 'SIGN UP' and 'LOG IN' buttons. Below the navigation is a podcast episode card for 'Rewriting Hollywood'. The card features a portrait of Ser'Darius Blain and text: 'MOTUKAWA PRESENTS', 'REWRITING HOLLYWOOD', 'A PODCAST ON EXISTENCE AND SOCIAL IMPACT', 'SEASON 2 EPISODE 19', 'SER'DARIUS BLAIN', 'Actor | AMERICAN UNDERDOG', and 'LISTEN ON SPOTIFY & APPLE PODCASTS'. To the right of the card, the text reads 'NEW PODCAST EPISODE', 'Ser'Darius Blain: AMERICAN UNDERDOG, THE BIG LEAP, and overcoming adversity', and 'Rewriting Hollywood'.

Sirius Pop2k

November 2021

<https://soundcloud.com/alexditrolio/serdarius-blain-being-shy-cooking-the-big-leap-american-underdog-and-more>



The screenshot shows a SoundCloud player interface. On the left, there is a red play button icon. The main title is "Ser'Darius Blain Being Shy, Cooking, The Big Leap, American Underdog, and more!" in white text on a dark background. Below the title, the artist's name "Alex Di Trolio" is displayed. To the right of the title, it says "15 days ago" and "# Entertainment". Below the title and artist name is a white waveform representing the audio track, with a progress bar at the bottom showing "0:08" on the left and "41:08" on the right. On the right side of the player, there is a photograph of a man, Ser'Darius Blain, wearing a grey sleeveless vest and light-colored pants, leaning against a yellow barrier.