

Jay Mohr is one of the few young actors in Hollywood who has both acting chops and a funny bone—and that's exactly the problem.

wanting mohr

by **B.J. Sigesmund**

HERE'S MORE OR LESS WHAT JAY MOHR EXPECTS FROM AUDITIONS: "You go in, and they know who they want already. So you're really a nuisance and an annoyance to them." Mohr's frustration notwithstanding, look at the situation from the casting agent's point of view: Mohr was superb as the venal, back-stabbing agent Bob Sugar in 1996's *Jerry Maguire*, but before that he was a stand-up comedian and "Saturday Night Live" regular, and since then he's played chilling (*Suicide Kings*), charming (*Picture Perfect*), cruel (*Paulie*) and campy (*Mafia!*). It's hardly surprising that Hollywood doesn't know exactly what to do with him.

"I'm in a very odd holding pattern," he admits.

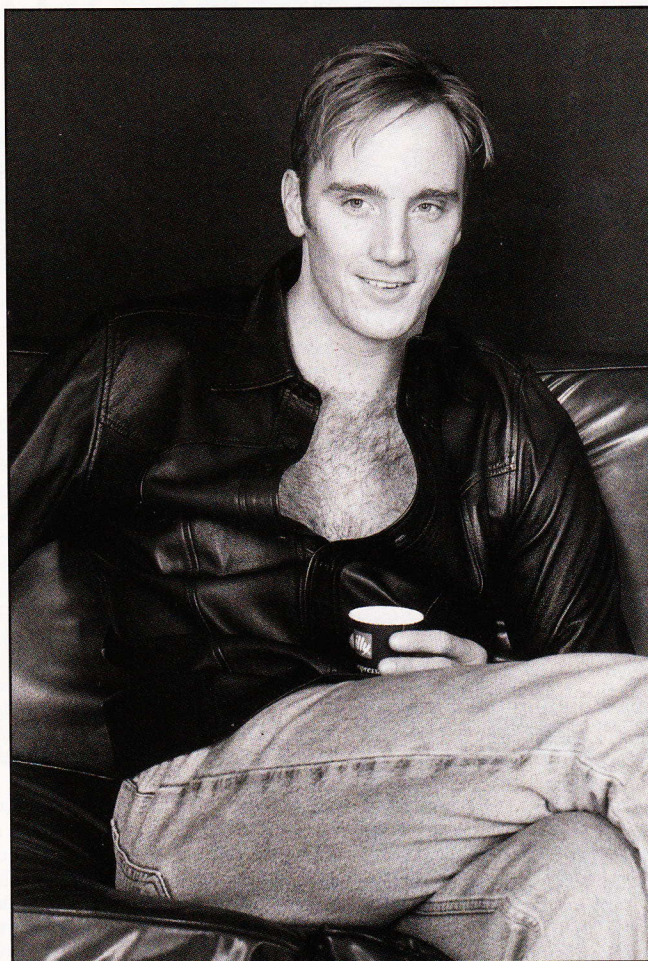
photographed by **Bob Frame**

Of course, too many more *Mafias* and Mohr won't have to worry about that grueling audition circuit ever again. So when he mulls over an offer now, he holds conference calls between his agent, his manager, his lawyer and his father—"because he has no financial interest in me whatsoever." Mohr has read for several leading-man roles, a duty he takes with extreme seriousness. "You prepare and go in there and try to knock the fuckin' ball out of the park. Each time I think to myself, 'I'm going to do so well that you're going to wrestle for weeks over whether or not to give me this part.'" But leading-man roles seem to be ones casting agents can't quite see him in yet. "I'm only going to get the part if Brad Pitt or Ed Norton falls through—maybe," he says matter-of-factly. Don't get him wrong—Mohr gets offered big parts, just not any he wants. He turned down the "chance" to play another Bob Sugar-type sports agent, for example. He also said no to a role on a sitcom that promised him "ridiculous, Sammy Sosa-like money."

The only movies Mohr and his advisory council have been able to agree upon lately are ensemble pieces. He's currently on-screen as a gay man dying of AIDS opposite mom Ellen Burstyn in *Playing by Heart*, and you'll soon see him as an '80s East Village stud who spends New Year's Eve on a date with Kate Hudson in *200 Cigarettes* and as a soap opera star alongside Scott Wolf and Katie Holmes in Doug Liman's offbeat follow-up to *Swingers*, *Go*.

At 27, Mohr has more than a dozen years of showbiz behind him. He started doing stand-up when he was a teenager and continued performing routines while waiting tables after he graduated from high school in Verona, New Jersey. He debuted on "SNL" at 22 in 1993 and spent two years there that seem to have been practice for future frustration. "I was naive. I thought that when I was hired, I'd be used," he says. What he did get out of "SNL" was the opportunity to bump into some of his favorite actors. "You're with John Malkovich and he doesn't know where the bathrooms are," Mohr says with a chuckle. "Or you're taking a piss and Alec Baldwin walks in. 'Hi, Alec.'"

Mohr inevitably started thinking about seeking out the type of dramatic roles that had made many of "SNL"'s guest stars famous. That led to his audition for *Jerry Maguire*, and the giant success of that film whetted his appetite for bigger, leading-man



roles. The next year, he starred opposite Jennifer Aniston in *Picture Perfect*. However ambitious he was for recognition, Mohr had to think twice about stardom after being witness to the fanaticism the highly popular "Friends" star had to deal with daily. "People lined up on the street at seven o'clock in the morning, five deep, to watch her get out of a car and walk into a trailer," he says. While he gets recognized every day—people shout out "Bob Sugar" in airports and whisper while he shops for groceries—he admits that he hasn't yet had any problems with fans. "I'm not as handsome as Brad Pitt or Leo DiCaprio so I don't have screaming lunatic girls outside my hotel room. Thank God. My wife wouldn't like it either."

Mohr recently married Nicole Chamberlain, a former model who left the business to concentrate on acting and writing. Her one-woman show in L.A. called "Next!" was about the frustrations models have with—you guessed it—the audition process. "In Los

Angeles, acting is the only gig in town," says Mohr. "No matter what restaurant you go to, every person at every table is having the same conversation—about acting or writing or directing or producing. And 90 percent of them," he laughs, "are full of shit."

"But then," he adds, "if you go to Washington, D.C., 100 percent of them are full of shit." Politics interest Mohr—he happens to be a big fan of Jesse "The Body" Ventura, the ex-wrestler Governor-elect of Minnesota who believes that taxes are

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too high, standards of education aren't high enough, and whether or not indi-

vidual Americans choose to get high isn't a concern of his. Mohr says he'd vote for a commander-in-chief who knew his cannabis. "I want a president who gets up there and goes, 'Oh, man, when I was in college, we got so high one time, we made peanut butter and Chapstick sandwiches.' I want a guy with some good stories."

Mohr can see getting into politics one day himself, but he isn't beating a path to the Beltway just yet. "The next step for me is to be the guy that's already attached to a project," he says. With that in mind, he's not looking forward to flipping through *Movieline's* Young Hollywood issue when this interview appears. "Some actor like Ryan Phillippe will probably get 11 pages and my segment's going to look like a fucking haiku."

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