

KEIR

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GILCHRIST

TV'S UNITED STATES OF TARA ACTOR IS PLAYING
CRAZY IN HIS NEW FILM PROJECT

He's a young Canadian actor who grew up in Toronto, still lives in the city with his family when he's not off shooting, and is starring this year in an edgy teen comedy in which he wards off the affections of one high-school hottie while vying for the attentions of another. No, we're not talking about Michael Cera but Keir Gilchrist, who plays the mildly depressed protagonist at the heart of *It's Kind Of A Funny Story*, the new film from *Half Nelson* duo Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden.

"No, I don't know Michael Cera," laughs the 17-year-old actor when we meet him in, appropriately enough, Toronto during the city's yearly film festival. "But I know plenty about Michael Cera because we have the same representation so I hear about him all the time. I thought *Scott Pilgrim* was one of the best movies this year." Is there something in the city's water that's spawning cool young actors? "I know, I'm really excited right now," says Gilchrist, reclining on a hotel sofa in a lime-green Fred Perry shirt and black jeans. "Some great music's coming out of Toronto, a lot of actors... movies are being shot here. It's a cool city, the most multi-cultural city in the world..."

Spoken like someone who's never set foot in London. In fact, Gilchrist was born in the big smoke, and spent his first six years in north London while his mum studied for her PhD. His father's parents are Scottish, so occasional trips up north resonate in his childhood memory. Gilchrist's cherubic face looks like it might land him in a spot of bother in the rougher parts of Glasgow but they've served him well in a screen career that's heading in the right direction: up.

It's Kind Of A Funny Story is based on a much-praised 2006 novel by Ned Vizzini, with Gilchrist landing his highest-profile film role to date as Craig, a despondent teenager who seeks professional help for the stresses in his life and ends up checking himself into an adult psych ward overflowing with loveable lunatics like Zach Galifianakis (*The Hangover*) and Emma Roberts. "I don't think it was really that much of a stretch for me, at all," says Gilchrist. He's not being boastful, just explaining

Rainbow jumper and shirt both by PRADA





“THE CHARACTER WAS SO INTERESTING, IT BARELY CROSSED MY MIND THAT HE WAS GAY”

that he found it easy to tap into Craig’s issues: parental pressure, academic overload, suicidal feelings that are more attention-seeking than authentic... “I pretty much was Craig at one point in my life so it wasn’t difficult to find him. But I’m out of high school now – that definitely got a lot of the stress I used to feel out of the way. I’m feeling a lot better now.”

Acting professionally since he was 10, Gilchrist has been making waves for the last three years in the Showtime series *United States Of Tara* as Marshall Gregson, starring as the out and proud son of a housewife with dissociative identity disorder (Toni Collette). Season three is shooting in LA as we speak; and this is the first year in which Gilchrist won’t need his mum around as chaperone, having turned 18 in October. Does he feel like a role model for gay teens? “It’s definitely not what I signed up for originally and I remember after the first season came out, I thought the character was so interesting that it barely even crossed my mind that he was gay. Then it came out and I was getting all these people contacting me, feeling very inspired by it. It’s fantastic that it’s now become that.”

Gilchrist understands that finding great roles like Marshall and Craig can be a long waiting game, and says he’s in no rush to find his next project. “I don’t often get excited about projects and I can be very lazy if I’m not excited, which is a terrible quality to have,” he admits. “But when I do find something I like, I get very invested. I want the next thing to be something as fun and hard as playing Craig was.”

*Cardigan, shirt and tie by PRADA. Left: Band T-shirt and VANS Keir’s own, denim shorts by PRADA
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