



THE NOT SO COMMON ROAD TO L.A.

Writer, actor and
producer: Alex Lyras

By Zoé Patra

ALEX LYRAS FINDS AN L.A. RHYTHM

Native New Yorker Alex Lyras, a highly skilled writer, actor and producer, took the road less traveled to L.A. to further his career in entertainment. His life-long passion with writing and acting awakened at age 13 on a trip to Athens, Greece where he found his favorite place to be was sitting in the 3,000 year old ruins of the 18,000 seat Theater Of Dionysus. It was there that he felt for the 1st time the passion to pursue the life of an actor.

Anyone sitting down for a chat with Alex feels his gift of visionary magic and appreciates his amazing sense of humor. Zoé Patra had a chance to rap with Alex about his life in the biz.

ZP: When did you decide to move to L.A. and what ultimately brought you here?

aL: I had done two solo shows in the New York theater scene that earned me rec-

ognition. I wasn't sure Hollywood would dig'em cause they were a tad eclectic, but they were hits over here too, and lead to TV development deals. I moved to L.A. because I was very politely invited.

ZP: Was there a learning curve for writing TV?

aL: Yeah, it's faster. And you're getting notes from multiple execs. But my experiences weren't bad. Most notes made the script

stronger. It's the stress of "we want it by tomorrow" that's hard. But I am finding that the more TV I write, the more I want to make time for theater. It was between TV pilots that "The Common Air," my third solo show, came to life. The Elephant Theater helped me produce it, and then it moved to The Asylum and ran for about five months.

ZP: And you still found time for writing other



projects?

aL: You have to make time. In this biz, always have 7 irons in the fire.

ZP: What are you currently immersed in?

aL: Two screenplays, one to sell and one to make myself, and I'm tinkering with a play that updates Plato's Symposium. But after the overwhelming response to "The Common Air," I've been mostly focused on getting it Off-Broadway in NYC. I am in the city currently filming a romantic comedy called "Heterosexuals," written and directed by Robert McCaskill, my TV writing partner. I'm an executive producer on it, so writing is on hold for the next 27 shooting days.

ZP: Having moved to LA from New York, what advice would you give others doing the same to begin a career?

aL: Work more than you play. Acting and writing are crafts. They require discipline and maintenance. When you're beginning, you have to build on what you learn without a break, or else your skills go soft. Nothing worse than soft skills.

ZP: What's the best way to strengthen one's skills?

aL: Find a teacher or a class or coach you connect with. There are hundreds of great ones. And the city itself is full of places to hone your skills. Go to every screening you can get to. Try stand-up at an open mike. Buy French new wave films at Amoeba music watch them five times. Pick up plays and screenplays you respond to, and do readings of them at your apartment with friends. And most importantly, expand your circle beyond other actors. Los Angeles is one of the world's cultural capitals. It lures some crazy talented people: architects, painters, chefs, photographers, dancers. Find the people who inspire you. Support them, and they will support you back.

ZP: How would you describe the process behind your writing?

aL: How much time do you have?!



ZP: Fair. Okay, how is your process different in L.A. than it is in NYC?

aL: L.A. is so physically magnificent that it takes more discipline to stay in write. I've been finding some awesome happy mediums, though. Writing on an isolated beach like Zuma works for me, or lately, riding my bike to the Hollywood bowl on Tuesdays and Thursdays for classical music. I buy the cheapest ticket, sit in the very last row so as not to bother anyone else (it's never full), and write for a few hours while the LA Philharmonic fills the air with symphonies. Last week it was Dvorak and Mendelsohn. This week it's Tchaikovsky and Wagner. Some call it reclusive, I call it feeding my passion. Being around the things that stir my imagination, that get my heart racing, that is the first trigger of my process.

ZP: You have an incredibly magnetic and creative presence. From where do you draw your inspiration?

aL: From everywhere. Inspiration comes from appreciation. I find it in Beethoven, Miles Davis, Wilco, and Radiohead. I find it in David Sedaris and Milan Kundera and Eckhart Tolle. LACMA, MOMA, the Getty. Eating at A.O.C., Hungry Cat and the Malibu Seafood shack. I love hiking the canyons, and strolling around the cactus section at The Huntington Gardens. Road trips to Joshua Tree, snowboarding at Mt. Baldy, wine tasting in the central coast, Shakespeare at the Globe in San Diego. It's literally endless. If you're awake and aware and appreciative it is impossible not to be inspired. Just remember that it can be found in the littlest thing. A favorite quote from Nietzsche is: "A thought, even a possibility, can shatter and transform us."