

## BROADWAY

# Foster-ing A Career On Stage

By Iris Wiener

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Hunter Foster is one of Broadway's hidden treasures. By day, he's your regular, good-humored guy with qualms similar to those of most New Yorkers ("I can't stand traffic, and I can't stand people that walk slowly," he laughs). But nightfall brings Foster into the most coveted musical on Broadway. As Leo Bloom, *The Producers'* sweetly naïve accountant looking for the fast road to the top, he injects the show with a poignant hilarity unlike any other on the New York stage. Broadway fans know him best for his original work in *Urinetown* as Bobby Strong, and in *Little Shop Of Horrors* as Seymour - two roles that garnered him many rave reviews and a top-notch name on Broadway. In 2004, Foster was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical for his whimsical role opposite an infamous human-eating plant. The humble actor recently spoke with the **Half Hollow Hills Newspaper** about stepping into the shoes of one of the biggest roles to hit the Big Apple.

Now that you've been Leo Bloom, can you die a happy Broadway performer? What has this experience been like for you?

It's been great! I love Mel Brooks and Mel Brooks movies. His stuff has such a great style and it's so funny, it's so great to be doing material in such a wonderful show. It's really a neat thing to be a part of something that's going to go down in history, and to know that you were a part of that and you were above the title on one of those groundbreaking shows is unbelievable!



mainly would say that you're the quintessential Broadway actor. You're not the 'famous guy,' but you're known for having integrity and keeping it about the art.

I just want to keep doing stuff. I don't want to be the guy where people are like, "Whatever happened to that guy?" I was looking at a tape of the 1991 Tony's. They were announcing the nominees for the Best Supporting Actor and I was like, "Who...?" I just want to be able to keep doing things and not give up, and keep going as long as I can. People won't forget me!

**Thus far you have chosen roles that suit you really well. Many people have trouble seeing anyone else in a role after you've been in it. What do you personally look for in a role before taking it on?**

I like roles that have an honesty and hope about them, and a lot of roles that I've done have been about these characters that have this sort of hopeful outlook on life. There's a lot of musicals that way, but it seems that a lot of the characters I go for have this kind of hopefulness, and are yearning to make things better, or making good in themselves or the people around them. But...I *would* like to play an evil character.

**Is there any role currently out there that you would like to get your hands on?**

Not one that's necessarily *evil* evil,

**Compelling stage actor Hunter Foster has carved himself a place in the who's who of Broadway by starring in a number of well-received roles including his current gig as Leo Bloom in the Mel Brooks hit *The Producers*.**

maybe just someone who is...*(laughs)*. I don't know; if there is good and evil in the world, everything is kind of gray; it's always about what you want, and some people want things that are not necessarily the right things. Some people just want bad things. You know, Dracula is seen as evil, but really that's who he is and he's got to drink blood or he's going to die, so that's what he does.

**Speaking of Dracula, I hear there was some blood sucking in your past.**

I wrote a play when I was in third grade about Dracula and I performed it. I was Dracula- it was four pages long, but it was a play!

**What else would I have found you doing as a child? Any crazy duets with your sister (actress Sutton Foster, *Little Women*)?**

I had a band when I was 10 that I was singing in. So I was always doing performance somehow. We were bad, it was right when Michael Jackson was big - you can imagine. My sister and I didn't know a lot about Broadway musicals growing up. I knew I wanted to be kind of a rock singer or be in a band, I wanted to be an actor. Everyone thinks we were probably singing show tunes around the house, it was never really like that.

**Because of all the hype over Matthew Broderick as Leo Bloom, did you find that there was an added pressure to taking on the role?**

It's three years old, and I think the focus isn't on *The Producers* anymore, it's much more pressure doing something like *Little Shop* or *Urinetown*, it's much harder creating a role or reliving a role. Seymour was more difficult because so many people had seen him before. But of course, Matthew [Broderick] and Nathan [Lane] were the most identifiable couple of any show, and when they came back and made \$3 million in one day, everyone wanted to see them. You always get the sense that people don't want to come see it unless they're in it. But there's no pressure greater than opening a brand new Broadway show.

**Have you found that you're similar to Leo in any way? Any major differences?**

*(Making reference to a comical trait of his alter-ego)* I have no blue blankets lying around! In real life my guilty pleasure is reality television. I'm addicted to it. It's like crack, I know I've got to get off it but I can't. I watch *Survivor* and *My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss*.

I guess that, sometimes, I'm pretty shy like Leo, especially around someone like

Ula. I would probably act the same way he does around her in real life.

**If acting were no longer in the picture, what would your fans find you doing?**

When I was a kid I wanted to be a writer and write novels. I wanted to be a journalist. I even wanted to major in journalism, or maybe even psychology.

**So what can New York expect from you in the near future?**

In the spring I'm doing a play at the Kennedy Center, *Mister Roberts*. But people should know that *The Producers* is still great! We have good people in the show. I saw it originally with Matthew and Nathan, and when I got cast in the show I came and watched it without them, and I realized that the show works no matter who is in it. Matthew and Nathan are great, but the show stands on its own.

Catch Part 2 of our *The Producers* coverage next week, when we speak with Foster's recent co-star Brad Oscar, and the recipient of the prestigious lead role in the West-End production.

*The Producers* is playing at the St. James Theatre in New York. For tickets call Telecharge at 800-432-7250 or visit [www.producersonbroadway.com](http://www.producersonbroadway.com).