

TELEVISION

Rick Schroder Comes Into His Own With *14:HOURS*

By Iris Wiener

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After 30 years of success in the entertainment industry, Rick Schroder has finally come into his own. Born in Brooklyn, Schroder started modeling and doing commercials at a very young age. At 8, he starred in *The Champ*, for which he became one of the youngest recipients to receive a Golden Globe. At 12, Schroder took on the role for which he is most well-known, Ricky Stratton of *Silver Spoons*. With projects like *Crimson Tide* with Denzel Washington, *Across The Tracks* with Brad Pitt, the *Texas* mini-series with Benjamin Bratt, and A&E's *The Lost Battalion*, Schroder has proven his versatility as an established actor. He went on to join the cast of *NYPD Blue* in 1998, serving as one of Andy Sipowicz's most complex partners, Detective Danny Sorenson. Most recently, Schroder made his directorial debut with *Black Cloud*, a film he wrote, directed, acted in and produced. He is currently independently distributing the film.

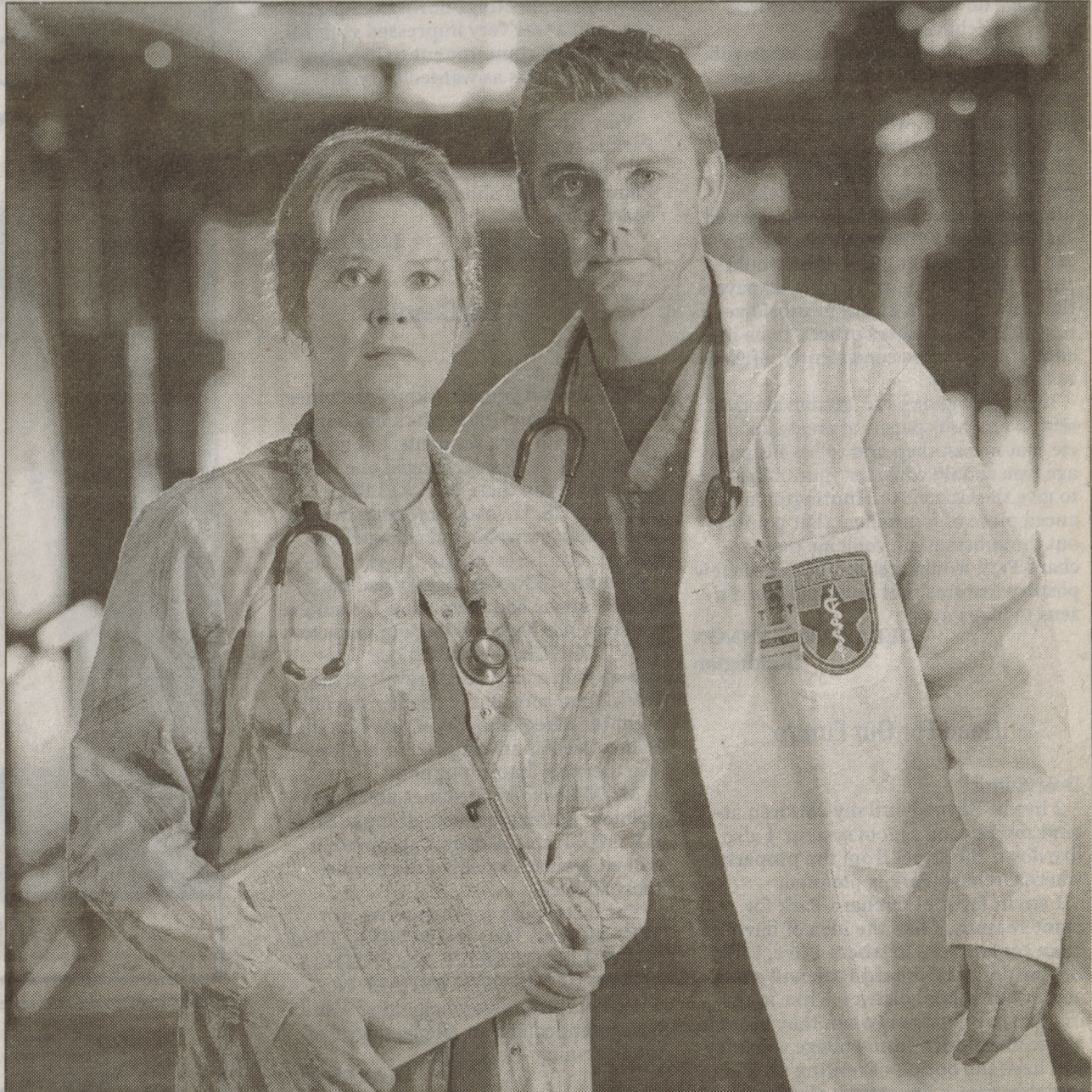
This week brings Schroder's first foray into medicine (which will be followed up by his second when he joins the cast of *Strong Medicine* this summer). In TNT's Original Johnson & Johnson Spotlight Presentation *14:Hours*, Schroder plays Dr. Foster, a fast-talking, intelligent young surgeon who is forced to make quick, life-altering decisions during 2001's Tropical Storm Allison. TNT tells the story of the disaster that devastated Houston, Texas with immense flooding, and the heroic efforts of doctors, nurses, municipal workers and volunteers to save almost 600 patients in 14 hours.

Schroder recently spoke with **The Record** about his work in the powerful film.

Is there a lot of pressure to play a character in a specific way when it is based on a real person?

I heard from quite a few people of the 'surgeon personality,' which made me very confident - so much so that it was used in giving my character an arrogant personality. And sometimes the advice could be turned into tension, and I would use it with the dynamic between the doctor's staff and the nursing staff. And trying to bring that flavor to the character without alienating people because of his arrogance was a bit of a tightrope that I walked.

Dr. Foster's arrogance is shown early on in a messy



your fingers inside a giant piece of chocolate cake.

I just remember eating way too much cake. Luckily there was a trashcan there so I could get rid of it. It was a

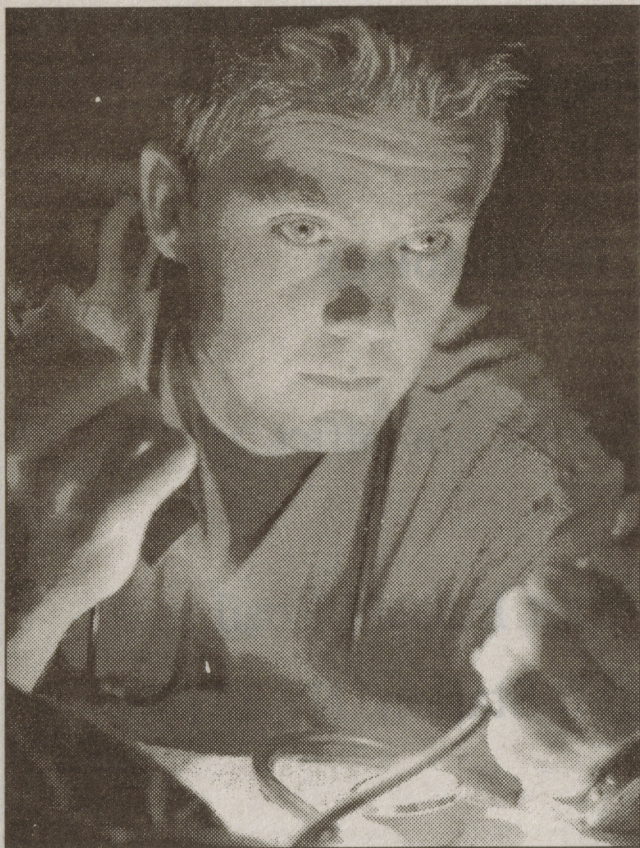


Photo Courtesy James Dittinger

In addition to his role in *14:Hours*, Schroder will soon be starring in another medical series, when he joins the cast of Lifetime's *Strong Medicine*.

Photo Courtesy Greg Heisler

Rick Schroder stars alongside JoBeth Williams in the TNT's Original Johnson & Johnson Spotlight Presentation of *14:Hours*. Schroder, who was raised in New York City and has family in Smitttown, is known by many for his earlier roles as Detective Danny Sorenson on *NYPD Blue* and as Ricky Stratton of *Silver Spoons*.

very comical scene. Dr. Foster just has a sense of entitlement to it - it was in the fridge for everyone to have, and then he didn't even apologize for it. It was quite a funny introduction to my character.

How do you take the role of a doctor, a role that has been done so often, and make it original for both you and your audience?

Well, it was new for me because I've never played a surgeon or a doctor. But just being in surgery and saying that dialogue like, "Scalpel please," or "Stat!" was all original for me. I'm not sure I made it new. I think we all know who Dr. Foster is, I wasn't trying to reinvent the wheel with this character, he just is what he is. But a big challenge for me was humanizing him in a way that shows that doctors are just people. They do extraordinary things of course, but they are people with limitations. I guess sometimes we think that they can fix everything, and, just like with policemen, that they can protect us from everything, and it's just not the case.

Does it bother you that many people still think of you as little Ricky Schroder?

Not really, I'm proud of my whole career, even the stuff I did when I was just a little boy. I don't look back on my past and cringe. I'm really happy with my career and where I've come from, as well as of where I'm headed. I guess *NYPD Blue* helped me make that transition into an adult actor, and now to be given a role of a doctor, it really shows that I've accomplished what I wanted to in an adult career.

Are you pleased with the way *14:Hours* depicts the real-life events of Tropical Storm Allison?

Yes, and it's also a quite entertaining experience. Williams, who is the head nurse in the film, is really likeable. I think the relationship between her and I is cool, because we're at odds in the beginning, but by the end we work together to evacuate the hospital. And it's got pretty good special effects for this size movie. I was really glad with how it turned out. It's just a simple story, and it's not complicated, so it's not like you have to sit down and think about a whole lot of stuff. You don't have to figure anything out, it's pretty straightforward.

What's next for you?

I hope to do more directing, writing, and producing down the road. I have an indie project that I'm putting together, a western. There's my new role on *Strong Medicine*. I'll be directing some episodes of that show, and directing a movie for Lifetime, so I'm excited for that. I'm writing treatments for country music videos. I directed one last year called "Whisky Lullaby" by Brad Paisley and Alison Krauss, which became a big hit. I like country music a lot.

I hear you're no stranger to Long Island?

Yes! I grew up in Staten Island until I was 9 years old, and I have family in Smitttown. Hello to everybody out there!

14:Hours airs on TNT April 3 at 8 p.m.