

Garrett Morris on *2 Broke Girls*



An Ex-SNL Star Breaks Out on *2 Broke Girls*

After years away from the spotlight, *Saturday Night Live*'s Garrett Morris is back on a hit TV show. We talked to him about his drug habit, his comeback, and the controversial comedy on *Girls*. —BENJAMIN SVETKEY

GARRETT MORRIS DOESN'T like to dwell on the past. In particular, he's not crazy about discussing the years between 1975 and 1980. It's not that he isn't proud of his groundbreaking role as one of the original Not Ready for Prime Time Players in the first five seasons of *Saturday Night Live*. It's just that some memories—like the invisible mind-controlling robot he thought was stalking him in his dressing room at Studio 8H—he'd rather forget. "I was doing a lot of drugs back then," he says, relaxing with a self-rolled cigarette on the patio of a Hollywood jazz club. "I was freebasing cocaine. And when you freebase, you see all sorts of strange things crawling up the walls."

Happily, the wildest thing Morris does in his dressing room these days is nap. After three decades of bouncing between schlocky horror movies (like *Severed Ties* and *Black Scorpion II: Aftershock*) and don't-blink TV guest spots (on shows ranging from *Diff'rent Strokes* to *Hill Street Blues*), the 75-year-old Juilliard-trained actor is finally proving that he is indeed ready for prime time. He plays Earl, the charmingly rambunctious cashier on *2 Broke Girls*, CBS' raunchy hit sitcom about a couple of ambitious but cash-strapped waitresses (Kat Dennings and Beth Behrs).



Kat Dennings, Beth Behrs, and Morris

"Garrett brings a lot of history with him," says executive producer Michael Patrick King (*Sex and the City*), explaining why he cast Morris. "He's been around. That's one of my favorite attributes about him. We can make jokes about his character getting fired from Earth, Wind & Fire, and you believe it. He feels authentic. More importantly, he's an expert comic. He knows his way around a joke."

That expertise was underutilized by *SNL*'s early writers, which may be one of the reasons Morris spent so much time doing drugs and imagining invisible robots. Though he appeared in some classic skits—most notably as baseball player Chico Escuela ("Baseball been *bery bery goo* to me") and as the newsreader for the hard of hearing on "Weekend Update"—he was more often given bits involving racial stereotypes, like the infamous "Tarbrush" sketch, an ad parody for a toothpaste that dulled African-Americans' supposedly too-shiny teeth. (The bit got pulled—mercifully—at the last minute.) Thirty-five years later, Morris still has a knack for stepping into controversy; during CBS' press tour in January, reporters pounced on *2 Broke Girls* for its edgy racial humor. "It's just like *Saturday Night Live*," he says. "I got at least three letters from the NAACP complaining about things on *SNL*. But I never saw it as racist," he says, taking a last drag on his cigarette. "I just saw it as comedy." ■

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Jeffrey Dean Morgan

With his '60s-set Starz drama *Magic City* about to premiere, EW asked the refreshingly self-aware Jeffrey Dean Morgan, 45, to reminisce about a couple of his career-changing roles (like *Grey's Anatomy*'s Denny Duquette)...along with some others he'd like to forget.

—LYNETTE RICE



WATCHMEN The Comedian 2009

I read the first two pages of the script and I'm like, "I'm dead, man! I die on page 2!" But my agent said to just keep reading it. That was a hard movie to do because of the makeup and costume. I age from 17 to 60 in it! But that was a game changer as far as my movie career goes. Do I wish it made \$900 million? Yeah, I do. But it wasn't what movie fans were expecting, unless you were a fan of the *Watchmen* graphic novel.

SUPERNATURAL

John Winchester 2005–08

It has a crazy fan base that refuses to let John Winchester go. It would make more sense to bring him back from the dead on a show called *Supernatural* than *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Grey's* managed to do it... I would never say no. Do I think it's going to happen? I do not. But I would go back.



MAGIC CITY Ike Evans PREMIERES APRIL 6

Ike is a family man. He's desperately in love with his wife. But he also has this passion for this Miami hotel, and because of that passion he makes some questionable decisions. He becomes partners with a guy named the Butcher [Danny Huston]. It turns out to bite him in the ass. He thought he was going to have a silent partner he could eventually buy out, but he's not going to be silent.



GREY'S ANATOMY Denny Duquette 2006–09

Denny and Izzie were lightning in a bottle. I can't remember a recent show where it caused such a reaction. Certainly [creator] Shonda Rhimes wasn't aware, so in hindsight she probably wouldn't have killed me. She brought me back, for God's sake! She called me in New York when I was on a movie. I said, "I'm dead! You know that, right?" But it was a no-brainer. If she called me today with anything, I would say yes. I will go to my grave knowing that Denny changed my life.

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

Xindi-Reptilian 2003

I had to pay my bills. I knew I'd play some guy saying some stuff. Then I got a call saying I needed to go in for a prosthetic fitting. I remember them dripping goop on my face, and I had straws sticking out of my nose. I couldn't eat lunch. I was claustrophobic. I'd go home in tears. This was the job that made me want to quit acting.



ANGEL IN RED Sharkey 1991 When I came to L.A., I wasn't an actor. I was just moving a friend here. But I met with a casting director and I thought, "Hey, I'll give it a go." I got a lead in a Roger Corman movie. I played a killer pimp. I didn't know what a mark was, but I loved it. I felt like I found a grand purpose, and frankly, I got that movie so quick I thought [a career in acting] was going to be easy. "I got this f---ing wired! What's the struggle?"

THE BURNING ZONE

Edward 1996–97

I played a virologist. We did 10 episodes before the creator [left the show]. I went to the head of the studio and told him to f--- off, not thinking they would get rid of me. They replaced me with Bradford Tatum, who's now in *Magic City*.