

BACK TO BUSINESS

After singing and acting in the Nickelodeon series *Big Time Rush* to making the finals in *Dancing with the Stars*, **JAMES MASLOW** is now tackling the exciting world of drama. BY MEGAN PORTORREAL

Photographer: QUAVONDO
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hen James Maslow first auditioned for the funny Nickelodeon show *Big Time Rush* back in 2007 when he was only 17 years old, he didn't predict it would take off as quickly as it did. In

fact, I didn't either. I was a freshman in college by the time the show aired in 2009 (two years, four screen tests, and a couple pilots later) and when I caught wind of the new live-action television show, I was intrigued, as were millions of others—in fact, the official debut episode drew in more than 6.8 million viewers. The next thing I knew, *Big Time Rush* merchandise was everywhere, concerts were selling out left and right, and the band was playing in the middle of Times Square—a dream venue for every singer/songwriter... ever.

"Not only did they have us play that concert in the rain, which made it feel like such an epic rock moment," Maslow recalls when I ask him for his favorite BTR memory, "but they also had us broadcasted on every major screen in the area. It was our first show, and was a pretty cool way to kick off the band."

Although I might have just missed the *Big Time Rush* fandom phenomenon age bracket (had I only been a few years younger, I would have had posters of the group hanging on my bedroom walls), one thing was obvious: Maslow was special. Now 24 years old, with perfectly toned arms, covetable brown hair, and a dazzling, white-toothed smile, the singer/songwriter (and now movie actor) is adored by over 3 million Twitter fans and counting—a number that skyrocketed during his time on ABC's hit dance competition show, *Dancing with the Stars*, earlier this year.

"I felt really lucky to have been on the show and to have had such a great dance partner," Maslow says of the beautiful Peta Murgatroyd, who has been dancing on the show for seven seasons now. Together, Maslow and Murgatroyd's chemistry was electric, and Maslow's fans flocked to Twitter to express their love for the duo. Ever since, Maslow and Murgatroyd have become dear friends.

While Maslow learned a lot during his time on the

show, perhaps what he took away the most is to never doubt yourself and to just have fun. "You know, you prepare, prepare, prepare," he says, "but when it comes time to perform, I learned to just have fun. That's something I've always tried to do and that experience really reminded me of that because if you're not enjoying it, it's going to show, and that's when you're going to screw up. If you just go out there and have fun and trust that your partner and your preparation is going to work, it usually does."

Since his run on *Dancing with the Stars* ended in May (he finished in fourth place), Maslow has fully turned his attention to acting, particularly in the original series *Sequestered* and a new Lifetime movie, *Seeds of Yesterday* (based off of the V. C. Andrews novel of the same name). *Sequestered*,

which premiered this previous August on Crackle, is a suspenseful drama following the trial of Malcolm Miller, a man accused of kidnapping and murdering the governor's daughter, and the jury that is given the difficult task of deciding Miller's fate. Threats, conspiracy, and tangled webs ensue.

"Filming *Sequestered* was fun," Maslow says about the experience. He plays the character Kevin Mohr, a "young, cocky billionaire" who's a bit "over-the-top" and maybe a little too confident.

"I only filmed for a short period of time, and I hope, if we do a second season, that I get to film more because it was so much fun playing Kevin. I kind of felt like I was channeling Ari

Gold from *Entourage* at times," he laughs.

Aside from getting the chance to play such a dramatic character, Maslow also enjoyed filming with his co-star, Jessie Bradford, who plays Danny Firmin. "Jessie is great and it was so cool to meet him and get to know him," Maslow says. "We're still friends. I hope he and I get to act a little more together in the future."

Seeds of Yesterday, Maslow's first feature film outside of *BTR*, is also quite the drama. The Lifetime production follows the plot of the fourth book in V. C. Andrews' Dollanganger series and touches upon Andrews' recurring themes of family secrets, love, and loss.

"It was an interesting experience because it was one of the darkest roles I ever played," Maslow explains of the film. "It's very exciting. I looked at this film as an opportunity to do something different and show my fans and the rest of the world

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that I can do something other than comedy. As much as I love comedy," he reassures me, "I'm passionate about doing more dramatic roles in the near future."

Not only did V. C. Andrews' status of a New York Times bestselling author draw him to his role in *Seeds of Yesterday*, but he was also excited about joining the cast. "I loved working with Heather Graham, Rachael Carpani, and Jason Lewis," he says. "It's really great to work with new people and I'm very blessed to have a cast that was as passionate as doing a great job as I was."

Speaking of passion, when asked if he was more passionate about singing—be it solo or in a group—or acting, Maslow pauses. "I'm passionate about both, so it's hard to pick just one," he says after some thought. "At the moment, I'm busier with acting, between having just filmed *Sequestered* and *Seeds of Yesterday*, and now I'm filming another movie, *Wild for the Night*, so acting's my priority. However, I've been singing for the longest, so I try to prioritize one at a time to do each very well."

While on the subject of priorities, it's obvious fitness is high up on his list as well. After all, sculpted abs don't just happen over night, no matter how much we wish they did. So what's his secret?

"Exercise to me is a priority every day, or at least four or five times a week," he explains. "It's a lifestyle." Apart from simply looking great, Maslow also says exercising makes him *feel* great. There's a great confidence, he believes, that comes along with it. Aware that staying fit requires much discipline, Maslow dedicates time to exercise before or after working, which is usually either really early in the morning or really late at night. "It's harder to work out when filming," Maslow laughs, "but I try to make time."

For the future, Maslow hopes to release new music; he cites John Legend as musical inspiration and would love to work together with him or Ariana Grande, who is a friend of his, someday. He also has serious plans about upping his social media game.

"I want to get back on YouTube," he says matter-of-factly. "I think I'm going to get back on that and make it a more consistent thing." Maslow admits to having only dabbled in it previously, but has realized how YouTube has begun to replace television in much of the youths' and particularly his fans' lives. Now, he's eager to get back on YouTube to connect with his fans on a more personal level. "It gives me an opportunity

to do whatever I want," he says further, admiring the freedom of it.

By now, I start to realize: singing, acting, dancing... what *doesn't* this guy do? I prod: what about Broadway?

"I love theater!" he says. "I grew up in theater. I think it would be amazing to go to New York and do a three- or six-month run someday."

Broadway—without a doubt—would be perfect for the 24-year-old, who could make use of his plethora of skills all at once and easily sell out shows, like he did while on tour with *Big Time Rush*. It's safe to say that we both realize it's only a matter of time.

We chat again briefly one evening after our photo shoot, and when he calls, I can hear train whistles blowing in the background. He wasn't lying when he said he is always on the move. "I just left the set of *Wild for the Night*," he explains. "So far, it's great. I'm so excited for this film."

The film, directed by Benny Boom, is an indie thriller following Maslow's character, Wyatt, a man seeking revenge for his sister's murder. Since filming began, Maslow has been keeping his fans updated by posting in-character selfies and cast photos on his Twitter page. The film is projected to release sometime in 2015.

With the New Year on both our minds, I ask Maslow if he has a special resolution for 2015. He pauses for a moment to consider this. "I want to learn to allocate more time to my friends and family," he says sincerely. "As passionate as I am about work, I realized it's important to enjoy some downtime, too, and to make more time for them. I just want to enjoy life."

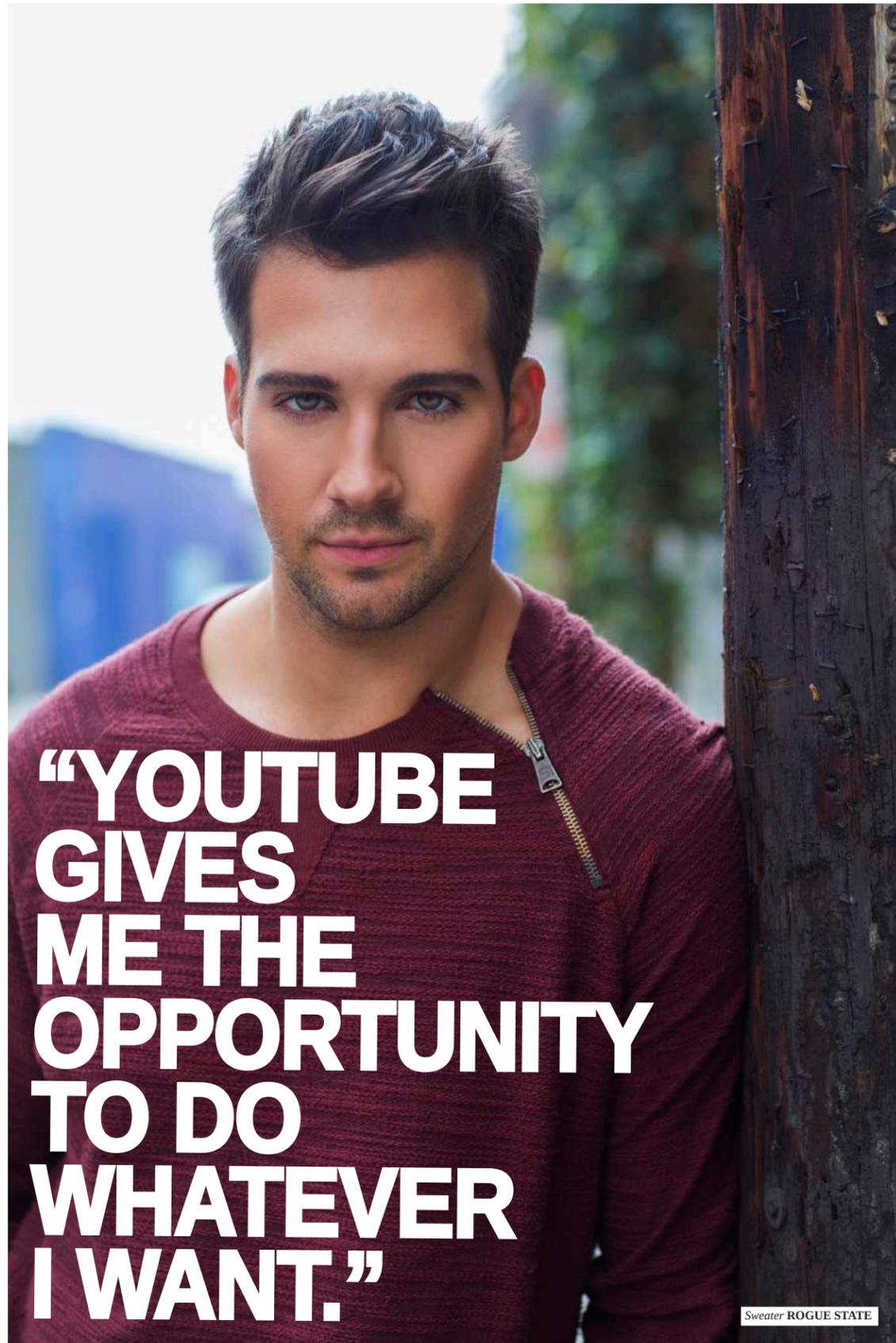
Before he speeds off into the night, he admits that although the future is compelling, sometimes it can be a very scary thing.

"There's no way to predict what you're going to do in the entertainment industry," he says. "It depends on what roles are available and what

you audition for and what music you write. But I couldn't be happier with how this year has come together, and I'm really looking forward to next year."

After hearing the sincerity and the smile in his voice, I can only guarantee him that we are, too. **BY MEGAN PORTORREAL**

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