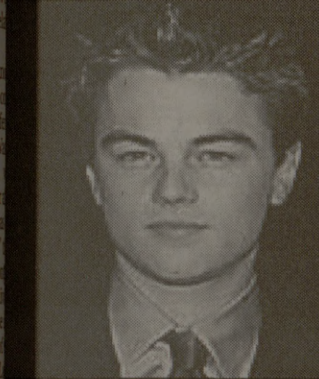


★ Star Gazing: Leonardo DiCaprio ★

By Leah Templeton
The Battalion

★ His Life ★



Teenage girls call him a heart-throb, gracing the covers of more Teen Beat and Big Bopper magazines than even Jonathan Taylor Thomas, but Leonardo DiCaprio, 23, has just undergone a transformation that has taken him from typical troubled teen roles to engaging leading man status. With the success of *Titanic*, DiCaprio is the hottest actor around, earning a Golden Globe nomination and most likely an Academy Award nomination. However, Leo is not your typical actor who will play just any role — he prefers dark, complex characters, and is up to any challenge.

Leonardo Wilhelm DiCaprio earned his name before he was even born when he kicked his pregnant mother as she was looking at a Leonardo da Vinci painting. DiCaprio was born shortly after on November 11, 1974 to his German mother, Irmelin, and his Italian father, George. The couple divorced before little Leo was even one, but have managed to raise their son together. Still, his parents' unusual background is a major influence on his life.

George DiCaprio produces underground comic books out of his garage, and his mother, whom Leo lived with until just last November, was a legal secretary, but now handles Leo's affairs. The DiCaprios are self-proclaimed hippies, and Leo recently explained to People magazine that, "Whatever I did would be something they'd already done. I mean, my dad would welcome it if I got a nose ring." Although, Leonardo says that his upbringing was not what many think of as typical hippies, "We're not the hippie family who only eats organic and the children meditate and go to a school of the arts. But we're not apple pie and Republican either."

An interview with DiCaprio found on the Internet at dicaprio.com/biographical_info.html gives insight into Leo's average life before he became famous. In Los Angeles, Leonardo attended John Marshall High School, but always seemed to have a lack of interest in school, and preferred entertaining other students. DiCaprio remembers that, "I used to, like, take half of the school and do break-dancing skits with my friend... lunchtime." Yet Susanna Mejia, a classmate of Leo's, recalls him being, "kind of a dork, like a little wimpy guy."

★ His Career in Acting ★

DiCaprio started acting at age five in the television show "Romper

Room," but was a bit of a wild child and was fired because of uncontrollable behavior. After countless auditions and being rejected, a ten year old Leonardo became discouraged and wanted to quit acting. However, his father helped change his mind when he gave him some simple advice, "Someday Leonardo, it will happen for you. Remember these words. Just relax."

DiCaprio searched for an agent and was troubled when one thought he should change his looks and his Italian name should be replaced with the more American sounding Lenny Williams. After finally signing with an agent, DiCaprio made over thirty commercials, including one for Matchbox cars. Even though Leonardo was 14 at the time, he looked like a little kid, which allowed him to play roles younger than he was. He also made educational films, including "How to Deal With a Parent Who Takes Drugs" and "Mickey's Safety Club." These after-school specials led to guest spots on television shows such as "Lassie" and "Roseanne."

Which brings us to how most "children of the '80s" first came to know Leo, watching "Growing Pains." DiCaprio played Luke, a homeless student that Mike felt compelled to bring into the Seaver home. Though the part won him recognition and gave him training as an actor, sitcoms were not exactly what Leonardo was looking for. In a profile on People Online, DiCaprio says this of the experience, "I got to know what I don't want to do. I had these lame lines. I couldn't bear it actually. Everyone was so bright and chipper."

After a forgettable film debut in *Critters III*, (there was a *Critters II*) DiCaprio was picked over 400 other actors by Robert DeNiro to star in *This Boy's Life*. Leonardo played Tobias Wolff, a troubled teen in the '50s who is abused by his stepfather, played by DeNiro. Only 17 at the time, critics were impressed with the way Leo held his own against a veteran like DeNiro. *This Boy's Life* opened the door for DiCaprio, and more movie offers poured in. His next role was that of Johnny Depp's younger retarded brother Arnie in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*.

Leo, then 19, played the role with such tenderness and captured the character's wholesome and sweet spirit so well that the part won him an Academy Award nomination. Though Leonardo lost out to Christian Slater for the role of the young reporter in *Interview With the Vampire*, he jumped right into his next project, *The Quick and the Dead*. The film, which was a western, also starred Sharon Stone and Gene Hackman. The movie was heavily hyped, but proved true to its title and ended up doing poorly at the box office.

Next up for DiCaprio was *The Basketball Diaries*, where he played the poet Jim Carroll whose life the movie is based on. The film, which also stars Mark (Marky Mark) Wahlberg was also not a commercial success, but DiCaprio received critical acclaim for his portrayal of the drug-addicted basketball playing poet. He even found an unlikely friend in Wahlberg, who was originally worried about the chemistry between he and Leonardo. "He's West Coast, I'm East Coast," Wahlberg told Entertainment Weekly. "He's more into being an actor, I'm more about being myself—so it was weird. But the

weirder thing is, we just clicked. We would go out to a club and dance or chase girls or whatever."

These roles finally led to Leonardo's first bona fide hit, *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. This updated version of the classic tale of the star-crossed lovers proved to be a success, especially with the female audience. This was Leo's first turn in a romantic movie, and even though he wore a luau shirt through most of it, he portrayed the character's passions and complexities perfectly. Claire-Danes, who played Juliet to DiCaprio's Romeo was even smitten, she told People magazine, "He's really charismatic, very perceptive and very charming."

Leaving behind the troubled teen roles, DiCaprio finally overcame his years of "growing pains" when he accepted, somewhat reluctantly, the role of Jack Dawson in *Titanic*. James Cameron, the film's director, remarks that, "I had to convince him there was going to be enough of a challenge." In case you are one of the few who have not seen *Titanic* at least once, here's the gist: DiCaprio plays the romantic hero, a young artist who is traveling in lower class. He rescues the unhappy Rose (Kate Winslet) who feels trapped in an engagement that is expected in her upper-class society. Then the ship strikes an iceberg, and, well, you know... *Titanic's* success has secured Leonardo's status in Hollywood as a leading man. Winslet describes him as "absolutely awesome." She goes on to tell People magazine that, "Leo's a natural, the actor of the century. Nobody can get near him at this point."

DiCaprio has turned down many roles because he feels they are "too commercial" or "too mundane." For example, when offered the role of Robin in *Batman Forever*, he refused saying it was too mainstream. This need for more challenging and darker roles is what sets Leo apart from the other actors of our generation. Leonardo would rather be patient with the parts he accepts. "I want to take my time with each role and that's how you plan a long career rather than doing it all at once in a big explosion."

★ What the Future Holds ★

So what's coming up for Leonardo? Well, it's not a comedy. Leo can next be seen in *The Man in the Iron Mask* where he portrays King Louis XIV and the king's twin brother Philippe. Also, look for Leo in a new Woody Allen film, *Celebrity*, in which he plays a rock star. Finally, in *Bombshell*, he will play Theodore Hall, in the true story of a teenage biophysicist who was the youngest contributor in the development of the atomic bomb.

Leonardo DiCaprio has the unusual talent of being able to play the boy/man roles so well, that he basically has his pick of movie offers. But don't look for him to settle into a certain stereotype any time soon. DiCaprio enjoys the diversity of acting, and says that, "The best thing about acting is that I get to lose myself in another character and actually get paid for it. It's a great outlet. As for myself, I'm not sure who I am. It seems that I change everyday."

Zuka Juice offers a health garden of blended fruits

By James Francis
The Battalion

College students are accustomed to making late-night trips to fast-food restaurants, where they feast on fries, hamburgers and anything else *cooked in a deep fryer. But sometimes students do not take the time to think of the alternative, such as meals or drinks which provide nourishment to their bodies.* Soon enough, Texas and the Bryan-College Station community will be booming with a healthier choice of places to stop and enjoy a tasteful drink.

Zuka Juice (grand opening today) is the first of its stores to be established in Texas, with a second one to be opening the first week of March across from University Drive. This year alone, the health-chain will open 53 stores in Texas. But a store such as this does not come about by itself.

The man behind the juice bar is Dave Duffin, president of Zuka Juice, who opened his first store in 1995 Provo, Utah. From a press release discussing the eation, operation and background of Zuka Juice, the word "Zuka" is defined as "1. A state of mind that mobilizes peace and harmony in a karmic, tribal way. 2. Great juice."

In the report, Duffin said, "We're thrilled to be bringing the Zuka tribe to College Station and to the state of Texas. We have no doubt that the town is going to love our brand of fruit-blended smoothies."

Although some people may wonder what the great importance of fruit juices represents, Zuka Juice fran-

chise owner, Clark Nelson, said the store can sometimes offer a three-course meal.

"Zuka is more than happy to answer the call from consumers who want an alternative to the fast-food scene and its lack of nutritional content," he said. "It's not uncommon to see people come in several times a day to grab a smoothie for breakfast or lunch and then come back in the evening for dessert after dinner."

Along with a refreshing and new taste for beverages, Zuka Juice offers a unique setting for customers while they enjoy their drinks. The store's walls are covered with Zuka tribal artwork and murals, which allows visitors to get a total feel of exotic fruit drinks in an extraordinary environment.

But the success of Zuka Juice also can be attributed to Duffin spending two years in Jamaica, where he continually worked on creating new fruit-blended drinks. In the creation of the chain of Zuka Juice stores, Duffin also took on the responsibility of including recruits from Baskin Robbins, Boston Market, Mrs. Fields, Little Caesar's, HealthRider, Pro-Image and Bain & Co. With these successful business minds backing him, Zuka Juice almost was guaranteed prosperity.

As the popularity of juice bars continues to increase, Zuka Juice will be on the front lines, riding a wave of Tropical Passion and Cranberry Cooler.

Grand-opening customers of Zuka Juice on Friday night, between the hours of 7 p.m. and closing will receive a free sample of some of the store's most popular smoothies.



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