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Q&A: Gosling and Stone on â??La La Landâ?? & their movie romance

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

By AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

NEW YORK (AP) â?? Bogart and Bacall. Tracy and Hepburn. Stone and Gosling.

The hugely charming Los Angeles musical â??La La Landâ?• seals it: Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling have entered the ranks of great cinematic couples. Their easy rapport together was first hinted at with â??Crazy, Stupid, Love,â?• and carried through the crime drama â??Gangster Squad.â?•

Those, though, were only appetizers to Damien Chazelleâ??s â??La La Land,â?• in which they star as two flailing aspirants trying to make it in LA. Stone plays an actress, Gosling a jazz pianist. They sing. They dance. They patter like Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn.

Ryan Gosling, right and Emma Stone dancing in a scene from their upcoming movie, *La La Land.* (P Robinette/Lionsgate)

This image released by Lionsgate shows Ryan Gosling, right, and Emma Stone in a scene from, â??La La Land.â?• (Dale Robinette/Lionsgate via AP)

â??La La Land,â?• a resurrection of joyful 1930s studio musicals on contemporary LA streets, is an impassioned argument for the movies, in all their widescreen glory. And part of that vintage Hollywood experience includes big olâ?? movie stars.

In an era that has struggled to produce them, Stone and Gosling stand apart as two of our best answers. In â??La La Land,â?• theyâ??re our version of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, maybe not quite as light on their feet (who is?), but more natural and funnier.

How far will they push their on-screen chemistry? â??Do you think people would let us do anything together again?â?• Stone asked her co-star during an interview earlier this fall. â??I donâ??t think weâ??d be allowed.â?•

After greeting warmly (Gosling had been shooting â??Blade Runner 2049â?•), the actors sat down to reflect on why they go so well together, their own tortured paths to Hollywood success and just how deep their movie love runs.

AP: Did either of you hesitate about working together again?

STONE: That was an exciting aspect that it was our third thing together. The characters also have by the end five years between them and I think weâ??d probably known each other that long by that point. Itâ??s kind of nice to not have to find that when the story depends so much on the connection between the two of them.

GOSLING: Itâ??s also nice when you know the people youâ??re working with. Most of the time, everyoneâ??s a stranger. Itâ??s fine. Thatâ??s your job to make it seem like you have a relationship. But it certainly makes it a lot easier when you have one. And you listen to the way that person says their line more closely. You watch the way theyâ??re playing the scene because you know each other. Youâ??re more engaged in the scene than you would be otherwise.

AP: Did you feel a connection right away on your first film together, â??Crazy, Stupid, Loveâ?•?

GOSLING: Weâ??ve been asked to improvise a lot in the films that weâ??ve done together. I think even in our first audition we were asked to improvise. That just kind of connects actors in a way that just saying dialogue doesnâ??t do.

AP: Emma, you started in improv comedy.

STONE: That was the thing I loved to do the most. I thought I was just going to do comedy forever. Iâ??ve always really loved to improvise but maybe strangely less so as time goes on. (She laughs.) Sometimes itâ??s nice to have a script nailed down. But comedy improv is pretty different from dramatic improv. Comedy improv is a lot of heckling.

AP: You both seem to a certain degree like comedic actors at heart.

STONE: Itâ??s the best. Itâ??s my favorite. Not to the exclusion of other types of films, but I do love comedy. That will always be my first love. (Turns to Gosling.) What do you think?

GOSLING: Well I donâ??t have as much experience with itâ?¦

STONE: But youâ??re so good at it.

GOSLING: Whatâ??s nice about it is you want to feel that whatever youâ??re doing is working. With comedy, itâ??s funny or itâ??s not.

AP: The film portrays some soul-crushing auditions. Were they familiar?

STONE: The first audition was inspired by Ryanâ??s story.

GOSLING: Yeah, where I had to cry and this lady took a call in the middle of it. And then just told me to go on, â??Pick up where I left off.â?• That was part of what was great about making this film was Damien encouraged us to bring our experiences to these characters.

AP: Were they traumatic experiences?

GOSLING: Yeah, but it was so nice to see it realized in a movie and see Emma doing it. We made some lemonade out of lemons.

AP: Did either of you ever think about giving up?

STONE: I definitely thought about it. It was like a twice a year thing. Every six months there was a little meltdown. Iâ??ve also thought about giving up in the middle of shoots before. â??Well, after this one, Iâ??m just never going to work again. Thatâ??s going to be fine. Iâ??m never, ever going to work again because this is clearly not for me.â?•

GOSLING: About two week before shooting. â??Can I still get out of this? They have time to find someone else.â?• It can be very discouraging. Itâ??s kind of built in a way to discourage you. In some ways now being outside of it, I realize how inefficient it is, the auditioning process. It seems to reward people who are good at auditioning, which doesnâ??t really have anything to do with what happens when you get on set. The kind of people who are really great in a film I think youâ??ll find are for the most part pretty bad at auditioning. Yet they never feel they need to tinker with that system at all.

AP: How do you feel about being part of a proudly big-screen film like â??La La Landâ?• at a time when television is seen as eclipsing the movies?

STONE: I donâ??t think films are less than TV now, but there are some amazing characters on TV, so I understand why people want to do TV. When movies are at their full glory, I think itâ??s pretty mind-blowing. What do you think, Ry?

GOSLING: When I first met with Damien, it wasnâ??t about this. It was just kind of a general meeting. He has a very infectious love of movies but also of the experience of going to the movies. He talked a lot about wanting to make movies that you couldnâ??t watch on your iPhone, that you really wanted to

see in a theater with an audience.

AP: Your love of movies seems clear, since youâ??ve previously acknowledged stuffing DVDs down your pants.

STONE: You put DVDs down your pants?!

GOSLING: (laughing) VHS. Look, in these kinds of situations, youâ??re encouraged to say anything. And itâ??s celebrated. And then you pay the price for that later.

STONE: Was it to be closer to your favorite movie?

GOSLING: No. It was one story a long time ago where I had to hide an R-rated movie from my parents. It was very intimate. This is the danger of this kind of thing that you do because it haunts us.

AP: Well, itâ??s a very vivid example of movie love.

GOSLING: I do love movies but I love making them more. Iâ??ve never found something professionally that engages me as much as that. You work with such a large group of people and itâ??s this constant problem solving process that gets you to this end, whatever that is. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesnâ??t. Itâ??s always a crapshoot.

STONE: For me, watching movies is what makes me want to make movies. Iâ??m so inspired by watching movies. The process of making it is engaging but I get so reinvigorated every time I see a great movie. Then I feel like Iâ??m the character in the movie for the rest of the day. Then I realize I canâ??t play that same character I just watched.

AP: What was the first film that you mimicked that way?

STONE: â??The Jerk.â?• Also â??Hocus Pocus.â?• It was a combination of â??The Jerkâ?• and â??Hocus Pocus,â?• so it shows my age and not my age. (Turns to Gosling) What was yours?

GOSLING: â??Hocus Pocus.â?•

*Featured photo: Ryan Gosling, left, and Emma Stone posing for a portrait to promote their film, â??La La Land,â?• at the Shangri-La Hotel in Toronto, Sept. 12, 2016. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

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