

# ***MEAT LOAF***

## **-BIOGRAPHY-**

Whether he's on tape, stage, or screen, Meat Loaf's presence is always felt. He may be typically recognized as the Grammy Award-winning musical titan who sold over 43 million copies of the classic album, *Bat Out Of Hell*, but he's truly an actor at heart. In fact, as far as creative pursuits go, acting actually came first for Meat. To date, he's appeared in over 55 films and television shows ranging from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Crazy in Alabama*, *Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny*, and *Fight Club* to *House, M.D.*, *Masters of Horror*, Hallmark's *Citizen Jane*, *Monk*, and *Glee*. However, acting became part of his oeuvre while he was attending high school in his native Dallas, Texas.

"I really just wanted to get out of study hall," chuckles Meat with a smile. "I couldn't sit quiet for 45 minutes so I enrolled in drama class as an elective when I was a sophomore. By my senior year, I was actually taking it very seriously." After moving to Los Angeles, Meat began making a name for himself as a local musician. In 1968, he gained immense notoriety as part of the Los Angeles production of the counter culture musical, *Hair*. It revved up both his stage and music careers all at once.

Shortly after, he relocated to New York and moved audiences in *Hair's* Broadway production. Living in the Big Apple in the early '70s, he continued to cultivate a unique acting style while appearing in productions of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in Central Park and other plays at the Manhattan Theater Club, Kennedy Center, Circle in the Square, and off-Broadway.

He was also the 13<sup>th</sup> actor ever to be put on salary full-time at the city's illustrious Public Theater and he had a stint working at Café La Mama. At the Public Theater, he acted in a rendition of *As You Like It* directed by celebrated director Joseph Papp. Collaborating with the likes of Lee Strasberg, Meat learned from some of the best names in show business.

"I'd be rehearsing one play during the day while doing another at night," he says. "I studied method, method image, and the Meisner Technique. I just needed to know everything I could about the craft."

In 1975, he made his big screen debut in the cult phenomenon, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* as Eddie. The movie played a part in further establishing Meat as a versatile force in both film and music as he continued to evolve as a performer. He describes his enigmatic style best. "I like to play characters who are ever so slightly quirky. They're real. I enjoy those offbeat and relatable characters. I never want to play someone who's straight ahead and on the nose."

One of his most notable "offbeat" roles includes Robert Paulson in David Fincher's 2000 masterpiece, *Fight Club*. Alongside Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, and Helena

Bonham Carter, he proved riveting as the former bodybuilder and cancer survivor, giving the hyper-kinetic and violent film a poignant, emotional center. "I loved that character. I even created a certain walk for Robert, and Fincher reshot a scene to effectively capture it," he enthuses.

Meat humanizes every role he accepts, adding both dimension and depth to their DNA. "Whether it comes to music or acting, I want people to be able to pull me out and step in," he reveals. "When I'm doing a role, I want the viewer to step into my shoes and have the same feeling that I'm having. I want to disappear, and I want people to understand the emotion that I'm going through. It's about preserving the tension and feeling between the audience and myself. I want them to connect to the emotional level as opposed to just watching me."

His acting even often informs what he does musically. Ever since the timeless *Bat Out Of Hell*, Meat has approached his musical output like he would a movie. Legendary producer of *Hang Cool Teddy Bear* Rob Cavallo appropriately dubbed Meat, "an actor who acts like he can sing."

"I interpret a song the same way I would interpret a script," Meat goes on. "There are beats in a script. I try to capture the emotion of the song. The band usually has to learn to do that with me. I don't speak in musical terms; I speak in acting terms." Over the course of his career, he's shared the screen with the likes of Liam Neeson, Steve Martin, Michael Keaton, Antonio Banderas, William H. Macy, Laura Dern, Samuel L. Jackson, Debra Winger, Val Kilmer, and countless others. "I love working with giving actors. Acting is about reacting. I'm constantly looking to learn and find the truth that's hidden in the character. You've got to have coaches on your team too. It's better to have two minds analyzing a role."

Ultimately, the characters will always come first for Meat Loaf. He wants them to become immortal in the minds of viewers, and they most certainly do. "If I finish a scene and I don't know what happened, it's going to be okay," concludes Meat. "It's the best compliment when people don't know I played the character. Meat Loaf as they know it is completely gone, and the character takes over."

That's why you'll feel it anytime Meat Loaf is in front of an audience.

— *Rick Florino*,