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## Q&A with Christopher Daniels

I caught up recently with "The Fallen Angel" Christopher Daniels, whose face hasn't been seen on TNA Impact for over a year. In a phone interview, Daniels, who attended *The Wrestler* premiere in Los Angeles last month, discussed the movie, his career and his thoughts on former TNA star Curry Man (wink, wink).

### What were your impressions of *The Wrestler*?

Well, first of all, the first 30 minutes of the movie I had a hard time enjoying because I kept going, "Hey, I've been there. Hey, I've wrestled that guy. Hey, I know that person." I think one of the things that I read someone said hit home: "It could have been called anything," in terms of *The Wrestler*, or *The Baseball Player* of *The Football Player*, just the idea of a guy trying to keep his career going and that universal idea of trying to get your previous glory. I think it kind of transcended wrestling as whole, just that idea of doing the one thing that you like to do and when you realize that it's time to hang it up or it's not what it was when you were a younger man. That to me was pretty profound, and just the fact that I'm a wrestler, those are things that I know I'm going to have to look at with the harsh light of reality in a few years. I look at that all time, especially at 38, and I see that the guys that I consider my peers and the guys that I wrestle with, nine times out of 10 they're younger than me. And sometimes many years younger than me. So I'm always looking at it in terms of how long am I going to be able to perform at a certain level. I've had this discussion with my wife. I've thought about where I want to be when I'm done falling down for a living, as I like to call it. This movie definitely put it into perspective – a sort of exaggerated perspective – but it makes you think about it. And my wife was in tears at the end of it, literally, because she said that she could see parts of my life in that movie, some of the sad parts of it. Just the idea of putting so much into this career and wondering what's going to happen at the end of it.



**Do you think it was realistic portrayal for the most part of what life is like for a wrestler at that stage of his career?**

I think it was slightly exaggerated. At the premiere I was talking to Dallas Page about it, and one of the first things I said to him was, "What veteran who theoretically had been at WrestleMania or main-evented – because that's how they're portraying Mickey Rourke's character [Randy "The Ram" Robinson] – would blade himself in a small independent wrestling show? I don't think that's exactly how it would go in a locker room that I've ever been in." And the first thing out of his mouth was "Terry Funk." I said, "OK. When you put it in that perspective, yeah, I guess I could see that." But there's a scene that they do at CZW with Necro Butcher where there's some pretty hardcore stuff that he does, and

### About Kevin Eck

The *Baltimore Sun's* Kevin Eck blogs about professional wrestling. Listen to Eck Wednesdays at 3 p.m. on WNST 1570 AM.  
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this point.” But maybe I’m wrong. And I think part of that lends itself to the idea of how much did [Robinson] love this business that he was willing to do this basically on his own accord. There’s not a scene where they go, “You have to do this” or “We want you to do this.” It was pretty strong. I read a couple things before I watched the movie that said some of the stuff he does was pretty graphic, and it’s pretty graphic, especially the scene with Necro. It’s CZW, so if you’re familiar with CZW at all, you know what I mean.

**I’ve heard that Mickey Rourke did a lot of his own stunts in the movie, and also bladed himself for real.**

I don’t know if the whole scene with Necro is like that; it’s hard to tell. I know the one scene that I questioned early on – where he cuts himself – I know that was him. I think Ernest Miller [who plays Robinson’s in-ring rival] was the one who told me that he knew that was Mickey’s idea.

**What impact, positive or negative, will *The Wrestler* have on the industry?**

I think it has the possibility to do both. There are parts of it that are very negative as far as wrestling goes in the sense of how it treats its wrestlers. It sort of looks at it in terms of like it’s a dead end. Even if you’ve had the success that Mickey Rourke’s character had, you could end up the way he did. A lot of that also has to do with the choices the character made, but you may not see that delineation as you’re watching the movie. Especially if you’re not familiar with the world of wrestling as a whole, you could think, “Oh, is this what happens to all the wrestlers who are successful, they end up working behind a deli?” The positive to me is that I felt a kinship to Mickey Rourke’s character in the sense that I really love this business and I’ve sacrificed a lot to get to where I’m at and I probably will sacrifice more in the future. I think it shows how hard it is on us, our desire to give the crowd what they want and make them feel they got their money’s worth. It doesn’t make it look easy. It showed that it’s hard on us, not just physically but also mentally, the things that we give up with our families. It’s not an easy thing to go out and do what we do for a living. It drains on you. I think you definitely get a sense of that, so that to me was a positive because it validates it to people who might not know how hard this is. It shows them that this isn’t a cartoon.

**No matter what, it has to be better for the industry than *Ready to Rumble*, right?**

*(laughs)* Yeah, I would have to say so. But almost as good as No Holds Barred.

**I still think it’s pretty amazing that a movie about pro wrestling and a guy playing a wrestler are getting nominated for awards.**

I think that has a lot to do with Darren Aronofsky and Mickey Rourke. You can tell first of all that when Darren put this together, he really had a respect for the business as a whole. At the premiere, and I know he’s also said this in print, he said that he didn’t set out to make a movie that sort of glorified pro wrestling or that glorified the guys at the top or who used to be at the top. But the spotlight has been shown on how hard it has been for these guys to be pro wrestlers. He’s mentioned guys like Roddy Piper and Greg Valentine in the press as far as what they thought of the movie and how it sort of mirrored their experiences in the past and where they are now. I think the work that Darren put into it and the work that Mickey put into it, that’s where all the buzz is. These guys put a lot of effort into the movie. Mickey Rourke does a fantastic job. I had a chance to go up to him and tell him just how much I appreciated his work and what I thought of the movie, and he came back to me and said, “Hey, the stuff that you do as a wrestler, I have nothing but respect for.” That was another little validation to know that this guy who is a world famous actor who probably will go on to get an Oscar for this appreciated the stuff that I’ve done, that we as an industry have done. He knows now that it’s not just fun and games.

**Let’s move on to your career. We haven’t seen Christopher Daniels on**



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**television since the Feast or Fired thing in 2007. So what has Christopher Daniels been up to?**

I've been doing some stuff overseas. I got the opportunity to go to New Japan a couple of times. In October I was over for a pro wrestling expo. I'm always happy when I get a chance to go over to Japan just because I feel like, if I can have good matches with the Japanese and show them that at this point in my career I'm still willing to go out there and put it on the line, I feel like it's a positive step in my career. As far as the states, I didn't do as much this past year as I wanted to do, but it gave me a chance to recuperate from some nagging injuries that I had and to just kind of watch wrestling from the edge of the bubble rather than being deep in the thick of it.

**We all know that loser leaves stipulations and retirement stipulations never hold up, so is there any legal loophole that will allow "The Fallen Angel" to return to TNA?**

Well, I have been trying. It's not like I walked away from TNA and haven't called them back. I've been very adamant about trying to get back in. I don't think there's a legal thing that says I can't be rehired, but I just haven't yet. I guess it just goes to the point that so many people are trying to get into TNA these days, and I'm not sure of it's going to happen for me or not. Fingers crossed.

**After you left TNA, a masked wrestler from Japan showed up named Curry Man. Did you get a chance to see him? If so, what are your thoughts? Have you ever met him?**

*(laughs)* I've talked with him briefly over the phone. I sort of helped get him in there. It was my recommendation. With the New Japan deal [with TNA] – I was still with New Japan before I got fired – they asked what guys would be good to bring over, and I told them Curry Man would be a good guy. I didn't realize he was going to stay over as long as he did, though. I was hoping that I'd be able to meet him when I finally came back to TNA, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen now. I'll have to meet him when I go to Japan again.

**We will ever see the two of you as a tag team?**

Well, you never say never. I wouldn't mind tagging with him. I don't know if I could dance that good, though. He might have to do all the funny moves and I'll have to wrestle.

**You've been with TNA pretty much since the beginning. Did you believe back in the early days in 2002 that the company would even be around in 2009, much less a solid No. 2 company?**

I never thought that we were in danger of closing. For all the scuttlebutt in the first two or three years about TNA closing up shop, I never believed that. And that had nothing to do with my belief in the talent or my belief in the people behind the scenes. I just never felt like when I was there wrestling that the hammer could drop and I'd be out of a job again. As far as the level of success, any step that TNA took, it always felt like it was a small step, but it was a small step forward. I always felt like the smart thing that TNA did was that they never let their reach exceed their grasp, so to speak. They never tried to take on too much at one time. For as long as people were saying, "Oh, they need to be on a prime-time network, they need to be a two-hour show," it seems like it took forever for us to finally get to that position, but in all honesty, we took that step when we felt we were ready for it. I don't know exactly what went on behind the scenes, but the truth is that Spike came along at a good time for us, changing nights from Saturday to Thursday came at a good time, going from one hour to two hours came at a good time. It's been a progression rather than a regression. As long as we keep doing that slow but steady build rather than trying to take a huge jump forward and maybe stumble, I think it's to TNA's benefit.

**When you were in WCW in the dying days, I remember some vignettes with you wearing a hooded robe and talking to Vampiro, but it was dropped pretty quickly. Where was that thing headed?**

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They told me a couple different things. All I knew for certain was that it was supposed to be a play on the relationship between Darth Vader and The Emperor from the *Star Wars* movies. The idea was that I was going to be The Emperor to Vampiro's Darth Vader. I don't know exactly why it fell apart. I did what they wanted me to do. And then the next time I showed up, they said we weren't doing it. So somebody didn't like it or it didn't come across the way they had planned. You can only do what they ask you to do. I don't know what else to say about that one. I wish it had gotten a little bit more time to it. There were a couple of other ideas that I had heard that were sort of played off of it which never came to fruition.

**You really had some bad luck in WCW with injuries and timing, didn't you?**

I was actually under contract twice with WCW. The first time was the thing with Vampiro. I was actually hired right before Vince Russo and Eric Bischoff came back. Kevin Sullivan had hired me at the beginning of 2000. I was doing my last tour of Japan when I found out that Kevin Sullivan had been fired and they were going to bring back Vince Russo and Eric Bischoff. So the night that they did the [the first show under Russo and Bischoff] in Denver was supposed to be my first night under Kevin Sullivan. But Vince didn't know me at that point and Eric Bischoff didn't know me at that point. It kind of got put on the back burner. And then when I finally came in they had the idea to do the thing with Vampiro. The second time, a year later, right after Sid broke his leg on television, they did the angle where me and Mike Modest were wrestling and they had Scott Steiner come in and "break our legs," with the idea that he had broken Sid's leg and that was going to be something that he went with. But I got injured [for real] in that match. I landed on my head – one of my favorite memories ever, and people still remember it to this day, which is awesome – and lost feeling in my arm for like six weeks. As I was recovering from that, WWE bought WCW and that was the end.

**Ultimately, things worked out for you, though.**

Yeah. The positives to my WCW career, despite the fact that I never actually got in the ring more than twice, is that I met some good friends and I met some people that helped me get to where I'm at today. Bob Ryder and Jeremy Borash are two people that have been very influential in the things that I have done with TNA. Those guys were there and put in good words for me. So if it wasn't for WCW, I wouldn't be here today.

**Earlier you talked about how you have given thought to how many more years you can wrestle and what you're going to do when you do hang it up. Do you have a time frame? And do you think you'd stay in the business, perhaps as a producer, or would you look to do something outside of wrestling?**

I actually do want to stick around in wrestling in some way, shape or form. If I had my choice, I would like to get into the commentating side of it. I've done some stuff in the past with TNA and I feel like I could contribute to the product in that way. If I couldn't do something on air, I've talked in the past about doing stuff behind the scenes as far as producing or what not. I do feel as if I have something to contribute to wrestling when I'm done falling down for a living, like I said. What I get a chance to do is still up in the air. I don't have a timetable as far as like, "Oh, I'm going to retire in 'X' amount of years." I've always said as long as it's still fun I'm going to keep doing it. I've been extremely lucky in terms on injury. Very few injuries over the course of, this is the beginning of my 16th year. I know a lot of guys that have had a lot shorter careers and a lot more injuries, so I knock on wood every day. As long as I can keep doing it at a certain level, have fun and be safe and healthy, I'm going to keep doing it. When the day comes when I can't do that, then I've got avenues that I can explore.

*Photo 1: Ernest Miller (left), Christopher Daniels (center) and Diamond Dallas Page at The Wrestler premiere in Los Angeles last month.*

*Photo 2: Mickey Rourke (left) and Christopher Daniels at the premiere.*

*Photos courtesy of Marc Kruskol/MJK Public Relations*