

# Life & Style

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## HUNTINGTON VILLAGE

# Astin Charms Readers At Book Revue

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Long Island got a taste of Middle Earth on Thursday when everyone's favorite Hobbit brought the Book Revue a rare treat. Sean Astin, also known as Samwise Gamgee, the lovable and quiet hero of the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, spent the evening signing copies of his latest adventure, *There and Back Again: An Actor's Tale*. Penned with the help of Joe Layden, the book is Astin's personal memoir from his early days in Hollywood to the movie role that changed his life. Despite the enormity of the press surrounding the trilogy, Astin's first-hand story of what took place on the set has never before been told.

"When I started this book I had built up this reservoir of emotional energy, because I had thought of what I wanted it to be for so long," Astin said, excitedly, before the signing event. "Once it sort of came time to pull the trigger on it, I had to get a collaborator [Layden] involved. He brought his incredible experience into helping me to figure out how to shape and structure it. Soon after, it was just a matter of getting everything out that was in my head, and it wasn't really that hard," he laughed.

However, Astin was quick to add that the book had a journey of its own. "I had just graduated from UCLA with a degree



Long-Islander Photo/Michael R. Sisak

to a show business legacy back with my

Sean Astin, the Hollywood actor who has starred and co-starred in such films as *The Goonies*

in English. When I went to New Zealand, I took a stack of books with me that were all about the history of Hollywood, and I was poring through them because I had applied to the graduate school of theater, film and television of UCLA, and was rejected." Astin said, remembering the let-down. "I was crushed, and I was hurt, really hurt, and I just tried to figure out what my destiny was. So while we were working on *Lord of the Rings*, I was poring through these books and living through this incredible experience, studying the ways that people would structure their own books. I think it just etched in my mind, my own narrative in the kind of tonality of those books, and it just came out of me."

According to Astin, the autobiography brings the readers into a discussion with the actor, giving them an even more realistic sense of the *Lord of the Rings* experience. "The book is very conversational and it's like that for a reason. Joe took out his tape recorder and he would ask me one question, and I would talk for five hours, sort of giving him the preface, and the preface to the preface to the preface, before I could get to the question," he said animatedly.

An acclaimed cinematic underdog, Astin is pleased with the fact that he has been able to use his stories of triumph to catapult him to the respectable stardom he has reached. "I think the book is a living testament to the fact that I like the underdog character, and sort of appropriated it for myself in my own life and career, even though it may not always be applied to me," the *Toy Soldiers* star reminisced. "I've been doggedly determined to have to carve out a way for myself, but I've also been born in-

parents [John Astin and Patty Duke], and made lots of money and had a good career that brought with it some challenges. But I was a relatively intelligent, hardworking, thoughtful person who had the right kinds of values instilled in me as a young person, so I don't know if I'm really the best suited for this pull-yourself-by-your-bootstraps, working-class narrative, but I like it! And so I use it. And it feels right, it feels comfortable," he said, big green eyes open wide, and a huge grin brightening his face. "I think I have a healthy perspective about who I am."

*There and Back Again: An Actor's Tale* is an obvious labor of love, as well as a defining landmark in Astin's career. "I think the operative word for the title of the book is *An Actor's Tale*. I had so much anxiety throughout the making of the *Lord of the Rings* that was self induced, and I didn't want that to be sort of purposeless, so I've challenged that frustration into this book," Astin said with a quiet complacency. "Hopefully, actors and people who want to get their kids into acting will be spared from living through that kind of anxiety if they sort of see my experience through the way I constructed it here."

As hundreds of fans decked in *Goonies* and *Lord of the Rings* T-shirts awaited their few moments with Astin, one couldn't help but speculate as to whether or not they'll see Sam again. "Well, maybe we can do a television series with Sam as the mayor of Hobbitan, and sort of the political life of Hobbitan. You probably should put it onto the Internet and then people will track me down!" he chuckled as he headed into a gigantic cheer only befitting a Hobbit hero.

Rudy, and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, came to Huntington Village on October 14 to meet and greet fans while signing copies of his new book, *There and Back Again: An Actor's Tale* at Book Revue. (Below) Astin takes a moment away from signing to post for a photo with an avid fan.

