

TELEVISION

# Macy's *Wool Cap* Fits Just Right

## Actor William H. Macy stars as Jackie Gleason's *Gigot*

By Iris Wiener  
info@longislandernews.com

William H. Macy is perhaps one of the most unobstructed, pervasive actors to grace the entertainment business today. Most remember him for his role as Jerry Lundegaard, the desperate catalyst in *Fargo*, but since the 1996 indie hit, Macy has brought his earthy talent to many films, including *Boogie Nights*, *Magnolia*, and *Seabiscuit*. Macy has also flourished in his many roles on the small screen, most notably in the Johnson & Johnson Spotlight Presentation and TNT Original film *Door To Door* which earned him two 2003 Emmy awards for his acting and writing. As *Door To Door*'s Bill Porter, a determined salesman with cerebral palsy, Macy raised the bar for actors everywhere.

November 21 brings the TNT premiere of Macy's latest venture, *The Wool Cap*. A heartfelt drama perfectly fit to ring in the new season, *The Wool Cap* tells the story of Gigot, a mute superintendent who is tortured by his past but finds new life when he befriends Lou (newcomer Keke Palmer), a bright young African-American girl who is abandoned by her mother. As co-writer, producer, and lead actor, Macy feels very close to this project. With great excitement, he recently spoke with the **Half Hollow Hills Newspaper** about this recent journey.

**The Wool Cap** is based on the story *Gigot*, written by Jackie Gleason, who also starred in the 1962 movie adaptation. Why did you decide on this story for your next project?

William H. Macy: Steven Schachter (director, co-writer) and I were looking for something we could do with Johnson and Johnson and TNT again after *Door To Door*. J&J has a very specific kind of film that they're looking to make - it has to be life-affirming and family entertainment, so that sort of narrowed the search of what to do. Everyone who remembered *Gigot* just loved it.



I would imagine there would have to be a lot of changes, since the story was originally written many years ago.

We needed to update it, because it's naïve. It's a beautiful film, but it is too naïve for today's audiences. It came from a gentler time, audiences today demand more. I don't know where the idea for a Christmas movie came from, but when we talked about the theme of the thing, we wanted to go a little bit deeper. First question – how did he lose his voice? And that's when we came up with this whole back story thing, and then the theme started to reveal itself to be about forgiveness.

**The *Wool Cap* features some difficult subjects. Did you run into any challenges when trying to include these elements in a “family” movie?**

That's one of the things I loved the most. I was really impressed in J&J because they decided to sponsor this film. It does have some prickly elements to it, elements that they wouldn't normally be a part of. It has drugs, alcoholism, homelessness, a little girl without a mother, a single parent family... It has all of these things, that if not handled correctly could be quite unseemly and ugly, and J&J put a lot of faith in us that we would tell this story in a way that they would love it, and I was impressed with it.

**What was it like to act without using any words?**

I knew very little about doing it, but I had a bunch of tutors when it came to the few scenes when I used sign language. It was liberating and fun. I said to all the actors on the set, “Look, as I do this stuff, as I indicate what I'm saying here, if you don't understand what I'm doing, say it, don't just follow the script. If you don't get it, tell me you don't get it. Say it on camera too.” But we found that it was pretty clear.

**It must be difficult to play men such as Gigot and**

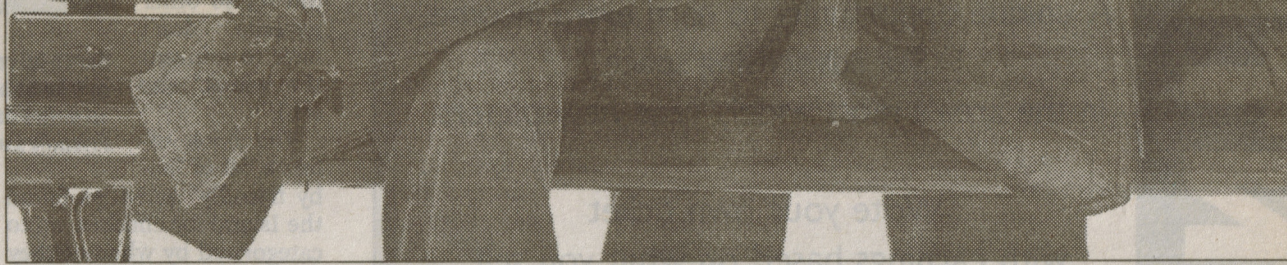


Photo Courtesy Gregory Heisler

**William H. Macy will star in *The Wool Cap*, a film that tells the story of a mute superintendent who is tortured by his past but finds renewed life alongside a new friend.**

**Bill Porter, and not take any of their frustrations and emotions home with you.**

It's a mark of professionalism, to leave your work at work, and not to take it out on the street with you. But it does put you in a mood. Interestingly, playing Porter was liberating, it made me feel great, he's such a light in the world, he delights people so much that I felt great playing that role. With Charlie Gigot, I tried to keep myself as quiet as possible on the set. I had this goal to say as little as I could without anyone noticing. I tried to not speak on set so that no one would notice it, and I pretty much got away with it, but it did put me in a weird mood. I realized that we all talk a lot more than we need to.

**In your business, it seems to be difficult for many people to hold onto their integrity. What is your secret?**

It would be disingenuous if I didn't say that I'm the luckiest palooka, just a couple of films have come my way. They were great films from great directors, great writers, and I got to play the role, and that's nothing more than being at the right place at the right time. I made a rule a long time ago: do the good stuff, don't do the bad stuff, and that's pretty much the beginning, mid-

dle and end of my philosophy of choosing scripts. I think I'm good at reading scripts, I try to read them all in one sitting. Sometimes I try to read it without knowing what role they want me to play, just so I can experience the movie in my mind's eye. I try to read them really fast so that I can see the movie as it unfolds, and that reveals a lot. I try to do films that are true, that speak to the human condition. I don't particularly like the pessimistic movies or the ones who say that it's all a joke, the ones who don't believe in America. There are some movies out there that are really sort of cynical in their tone. I don't like to watch them, so I don't know why I would want to act in them.

***The Wool Cap* is definitely a choice that is in step with your beliefs. What do you want people to take away from this film?**

I think the lesson here is that we have to get hip, families come in all different shapes, colors, and sizes these days. The family unit is not what we traditionally think of anymore, and we have to look at the new reality of what a family is. There's a lot of kids out there who need parents, and the shortage out there is not parents, it's love. I'm really proud of this film and I hope it does well.