



Theater Geek: The Real Life Drama of a Summer at Stagedoor Manor

Mickey Rapkin

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Before there was *Glee* or *American Idol*, there was Stagedoor Manor, a theater camp in the Catskills where big-time Hollywood casting directors came to find the next generation of stars. It's where Natalie Portman, Robert Downey, Jr., Zach Braff, Mandy Moore, Lea Michele, and many others got their start as kids. At age thirty-one, Mickey Rapkin, a senior editor at *GQ* and self-proclaimed theater geek, was lucky enough to go, too, when he followed three determined teen actors through the rivalries, heartbreak, and triumphs of a summer at Stagedoor Manor.

Every summer since 1975, a new crop of campers has entered Stagedoor Manor to begin an intense, often wrenching introduction to professional theater. The offspring of Hollywood players like Ron Howard, Nora Ephron, and Bruce Willis work alongside kids on scholarship. Some campers have agents, others are just beginning. The faculty—all seasoned professionals—demand adult-size dedication and performances from the kids. Add in talent scouts from Disney and Paradigm and you have an intense, exciting environment where some thrive and others fail. Eye-opening, funny, and full of drama and heart, *Theater Geek* offers an illuminating romp through the world of serious child actors.

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