

Imaginary Advice, Episode 6

“EPISODE ONE”

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[IMAGINARY ADVICE]

Hello! And welcome to Episode One of the Baldwin-cast. I’m your host, Jim Legget.

Once a week, I’ll be here discussing the cinematic work of a group of brothers—I mean, possibly the most famous group of brothers in film—the Baldwins. Youngest to oldest, that’s Stephen Baldwin, William “Billy” Baldwin, Daniel Baldwin and of course, most famous of the Baldwin brothers, Alec Baldwin.

Film by film, we’re gonna be dropping in on the Baldwins at different times in their lives: crossroads, crisis-points, breakthroughs...So, slowly, hopefully, my aim is to build up a kind of...living portrait of the Baldwin family, both on and off the screen.

I think my ultimate goal is to explore the question of, what does it *mean* to be a Baldwin? And I want to start by trying to identify those key films that try to—
[door unlocks and squeaks open]

[Jim, whispering:] Hey! I’m sorry. [door closes] Sorry, sorry, sorry!

[Jim, close to mic, quietly:] I’ve just woken up my wife. [paper shuffling] Sorry, just um...[quiet clattering in background] Bear with me as I uh...[walking down steps]

[BEEP]

Ok, downstairs now... [breathing heavily]

I’m going to take the best part of an hour to set up everything in my son’s bedroom but, you know, apparently-apparently I was just [doing air-quotes] louder than I...uh... [turning pages]

And he’s not in his bedroom, I should say. He’s in Valencia, my son—all grown up. Kids of his own, actually. The wife, Anna, she’s Italian. She’s lovely.

[pause] Two kids: Arthur, um, four, and Rosa. She's just turned two now, I think. I mean, I've only seen photos of the wee'un but uh, well...she looks as lovely as her mum. [pause]

Uhhhh...

[BEEP]

[suddenly energetic] OK! took a little refreshment break there but now I'm all set up again at the kitchen table. I'm just going to keep talking and I'm gonna worry about editing all of this later.

We should be OK down here. I mean, the microphone I'm using it's uh, well, I mean, it's um, it's excellent. I don't need to talk too loud for it to uh... [breathes] You know... [breathes laboriously]

It was a retirement gift, actually, which uh, which I made to myself. I uh, wanted to do something for me. It's a lovely thing—I mean, it cost enough. It's a lovely thing. Uh...

[BEEP]

The Baldwins have had a lot of iconic roles over the years: Stephen in "The Usual Suspects," of course; William in "Flatliners;" Alec in "Glengarry Glen Ross;" but it's not just about the big hitters on the Baldwin-cast. Alec does tend to hog the limelight, but I promise this isn't going to turn into the Alec Baldwin-cast. [laughs]

No, I really want to treat all four brothers equally. That's, um, that's very important to me. Particularly when there are so many great, great Baldwin roles that seem to be completely unknown to the general public: "One Tough Cop," "Double Tap," "Nine Dead," "Art Heist," "Slap Shot 2," "The Craigslist Killer," "Stripperland..."

[breathing anxiously]

The, er...

[BEEP]

OK, so I just had to pause the recording again there just to um, to check the car. There was a noise coming from out front. Uhh, don't worry, I'm back now!

It's just that we had a—we had our wing mirror smashed off a little while back. We think it was just kids, you know, messing about.

They do tend to gather here because of the fields. It's just nice and dark at this end of the street... No streetlights, you see. Um, so, you can understand —[chuckling nervously] it's hard not to react when you hear a noise. So, I went outside, but um...didn't seem to be...uh...

I mean, ideally—of course, like, I wouldn't be recording this in the middle of the night! But, when you reach my age you don't...I mean, that was one of the inspirations for starting the Baldwin-cast in the first place. You know, I like to keep busy at night and that way I can also—I can keep one eye on the car, just in case, uh...

[BEEP]

[in big showman voice:] Welcome!-no—

[BEEP]

[in big voice:] Good evening! [back to normal voice:] No hang on, it-it might not be night where you uh—

[BEEP]

[in big voice:] Salutations and welco—

[BEEP]

[excited tone:] Welcome to the Baldwin-cast. I'm your host, Jim Legget.

We're going to be kicking off our podcast series with a review of the film "Backdraft" from 1991, starring William Baldwin as the young firefighter trying to prove his worth in the tough Chicago Fire Department.

Now, I have always known that "Backdraft" would be my way into this podcast series, because, well...I believe that "Backdraft" sums up an essential part of what it means to be a Baldwin. After all, William Baldwin's character, Brian McCaffrey, is a person who has grown up his entire life in the shadow of a more successful older brother, um, Stephen Bull McCaffrey, played in this instance by Kurt Russell.

So, you can see the significance is uh, is right there on the surface. I mean, these particular brothers are both *firemen*, of course, uh, they're not brothers who are *actors*—but of course, they are also actors because they're actors that are *playing* firemen—what I mean is that there are parallels between the world of that story—*Backdraft*—and William's struggles as an actor, as a brother—not acting in a role as a brother, but as a brother in real life. Being a brother to the Baldwins in real life. I-I think what I'm trying to say is... [long pause]

[BEEP]

[takes a deep breath]

OK. [breathes] So, I'm back.

I think I last turned on the recorder back in...uh, July, was it? I mean, a bit-bit of a false start.

But um, here we go. Welcome back to Episode One of the Baldwin-cast. Episode One. Reviewing the film "*Backdraft*." I think now that the nights are a little cooler, I think this is going to be much, much easier.

[long breath]

[meow in background]

I know, Terrance!

[more quietly:] Terrance has been a little bit sick. He's our-he's our cat. But um, he's better now. Aren't you, Terrance? [another meow]

I must admit I've also been in the wars a little bit. Had a bit of a fall. Spent a bit of time in hospital. Nothing serious. I was just trying to uh, I was just trying to pin a photo onto the noticeboard in the kitchen. Nice family photo taken at my son's wedding. Next thing I know—pain down my side—I end up lying on the floor.

Bit of a mess, if I'm honest. But, I had a lot of thinking time in hospital, time to think about the future, and to think about what's important to me.

[a little louder again:] Time enough, in fact, for me to plan out the first *fifty* Baldwin-cast episodes and I must say, it is looking pretty exciting!

[deep breath]

So, I think it's just uh, coming up to midnight here. I just have to...hang on, one second.

[BEEP]

OK, I'm back. Sorry about that.

I think I must have first become a fan of the Baldwins after seeing a picture of them all together in a magazine. I remember thinking, my God! It's like looking at four versions of the same person if they all made slightly different decisions in their life. And, I must admit, I have always loved that idea—you know, that somehow, at every major crossroads we reach we create a parallel universe of some kind. One version of us goes one way, and one version of us goes the other.

[meow in background]

I mean, you could say, if you wanted to, that uh, when I had my-my funny turn back in the summer that was me splitting into two people. And one of those people...died and the other survived. And I'm the one that survived, which is nice. Then again, [meow] there's probably another version of me that never had that stroke in the first place because they took better care of themselves when they were growing up. Now, we could call that the William Baldwin timeline instead of the Daniel Baldwin timeline.

See, I've been thinking recently about a, uh, group photo with like—if you can imagine!—[chuckling] with like four different versions of me. So, I could see, you know, what kind of difference it would have made if I'd just laid off the booze a bit. [chuckles] Or uh, you know uh, to see what would have happened if I'd just gone a bit harder. You know, pushed it all the way from Daniel Baldwin all the way into Stephen Baldwin. Maybe one of me would have found God, who knows.

But, uh...anyway that's the-that's the rough background to the Baldwin-cast. I just-I see the Baldwins as-as one person but one person that went in four directions. I mean, roughly the same direction, as actors, but have now headed out further and further away from each other. I mean, they're still the same person, but a person telling different stories, and you could say that those stories are the films that they make, and if you add the films together, that makes the story of your life, which is different, but [garbled] effectively... the-the-the same person: [close to mic, distorted:] The Baldwins.

[BEEP]

OK...

[long, wavering breath]

So, this-hello, this is uh, me picking up the uh, the podcast again. Just had a quick listen to get myself back up to speed. I uh, paused the recording uh, last night. I just uh, I think I was just a bit too tired to do it justice. But I'm feeling a lot better tonight. So, let's talk Bagdraft-Backdraft!—

[BEEP]

Good evening and welcome to the Backdraft. The Bald-Cast! JESUS FUCKING CHRI—

[BEEP]

[pause; in showy voice:] Hello! And welcome to the Baldwin-cast. This is a brand-new podcast that I first began way back in the summer of 2015, but uh, [chuckles] after a few false starts...I'm really, really happy to finally be bringing this to you.

In the years since I uh, first attempted the Baldwin-cast I have had quite the journey, as have the Baldwin brothers, and-and it's great to be able to finally sit down with you, the public, and discuss my love of Baldwin Brother movies.

This year saw my wife and I actually move out of our family home in High Wickham and relocate to a lovely little village in the lake district. Bad phone reception [chuckling] and no shops for miles but some lovely views in the daytime.

At night, though, as it is right now, it is so *absolutely* black outside—you'll have to take my word for it—so, so dark. No light for miles in any direction. But here I am, your hobes-your host, Jim Legget, broadcasting into the night, talking about one of my favourite Baldwin Brother Broovies, Brackdraft. "Backdraft."

I do love films that are about fire, actually. Always have. Fire lighting up the sky, it's always an exciting thing to see on film. Like the Baldwin Brothers, of

course—so full of fire. Uh, like the uh, the glitzy world of expensive Hollywood parties they attend. So full of fire and life, aren't they? And, er, life, as well.

So many beautiful women, you know, always on their arms, despite being so fat and old and drinking too much—not that it's anybody's job to tell you when you've had too much to drink. That's nobody's business! Nobody should tell anybody else how to live their life, should they? [getting closer to the mic] It's a God-given right that we have in this country to do whatever the hell we like. [pause]

[BEEP]

Aaaand...that's what...that's what "Backdraft" is-is-is saying to me. It's saying to me, uh...

[BEEP]

That's why, um, "Backdraft" is such an excellent entry point into this big, beautiful, burning building that is the Baldwin brothers. Backdraft-Brackdraft-it says uh, it-w-what-what does it say?

It says-so, it says, "Look at this big burning world of Hollywood, full of lights and danger and look at these fat men fighting it, shouting at it, escaping from it, holding these beautiful, smoke-damaged women with lovely long legs, and yes, of course, some of the Baldwins are escaping from that building with more burns than others, but they're all making it, aren't they?"

Having a group photo taken together, with that lovely little smirk that they do, you know, all of them in a row, looking into the camera like the photographer was an eighteen-year-old girl caught running from the shower to the bedroom of a youth hostel. You know the look. It's a smile that says: [speaks in a low growl] "bring it."

And [laughs] and every Baldwin perm—

[BEEP]

Every Baldwin perrrrma—

[BEEP]

Every Baldwin per-mm-utation has it. In every parallel universe, there's a Baldwin running into that big burning house of Hollywood and looting the star prize.

I mean, what a charmed family.

[breathes for a moment]

I mean, it's no wonder that Daniel was found all those years ago, running through the halls of that big hotel in New York, stark bollock naked shouting "BALDWIN BALDWIN BALDWIN" over and over again. The power of that surname is irrepressible.

[long pause]

[quietly:] Hang on, I've got to piss—

[BEEP]

[long pause, breathing] Hello. I'm back. I uh...[pause] I think I just fell asleep for a little while there.

[deep breath, low laugh]

Gosh, though. It is um, it is still dark outside though. [pause]

[trying to sound casual] So...in conclusion, I give "Backdraft"...three stars out of a possible five. It's a-it's a great example of the genre.

I mean...[breathes] I mean, if I had one problem with the film it's that in real life, you can't see anything inside a burning house. You can't. Actually, in reality, it's uh...it's pitch black inside a house on fire. From all the smoke. I mean, that's what they tell me anyway.

But, you know, I understand. I understand why they do that. Cos uh...cos you can't put that on the big screen, can you? People wouldn't pay to see that. You know, just, people running into darkness...

[BEEP]

[melancholy piano music]

[Ross:] That's all from Imaginary Advice this week. Thanks for listening. This episode actually went up slightly later than expected because I've been working on a residency in Liverpool for the last week, where I had like a week to make a short film and everything kind of ran over time, basically.

But, uh, if you want to watch that short film it's called "Palindrome" and I've put a copy of it on the Imaginary Advice tumbler, which the... which... how do you... what's it... what's the web address, again?

[reading:] ImaginaryAdvice.tumblr.com. Seems obvious now.

I'll be back again in uh, about two weeks' time with another fresh start.

Happy New Year.

[piano music fades out]