



Photography by Fadil Berisha

STEPHEN BALDWIN

on Fame, Family & Faith

By Ava Roosevelt

“Fame comes more naturally with age, of course.” - Stephen Baldwin

A few years ago, Matt Rich of PlanetPR®, the publicist we have in common, suggested a luncheon with Stephen Baldwin. An American actor, film producer, director, activist and author, Stephen is the youngest of the seven siblings. His brothers, Alec, Daniel and William, all actors, are collectively known as the Baldwin Brothers.

Stephen was raised in the Catholic faith. He attended public school where his father was a sports coach. Later he attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

He is best known for a starring role in the double-Oscar winning *The Usual Suspects* as well as *Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas*, and cult comedy classics like *Bio-Dome* and *Threesome*. Stephen also starred in the television series *The Young Riders* and as himself in the reality shows *Celebrity Big Brother 7*.

What I did not know, Stephen, a multi-talented tour de force, owns several motorcycles and has participated in numerous celebrity races and frequently performs his own car/motorcycle stunts in his films.

Past experiences of numerous rendezvous with other celebrities taught me to manage my expectations carefully. When Stephen and I met at Michael's Restaurant in New York, I was in for a surprise. I was immediately struck by his charm, intelligence, and low-key demeanor, not to mention those blue eyes! After we finished lunch, Stephen insisted that he walk me down Fifth Avenue to my next appointment. When you are in public with SB, as our publicist code-named him, you quickly realize you are not his sole admirer. A dozen women and men stopped and asked for his autograph and selfies. Despite inclement weather, he complied with grace and patience, endearing him further to me.

AVA: When did you learn how to deal with fame?

STEPHEN:

Pretty early, I watched how my brothers managed it. I started in the business with a TV show, a Western, when I was just 17. Of course, back then I thought fame was really cool. Looking back on it now, I could have handled my celebrity as it was, a little more humbly. Fame comes more naturally with age, of course.

AVA: Do you embrace it? Or do you shy from it?

STEPHEN:

I better embrace it! Listen, for better or worse, I am in Show Business. Yes, I have my personal missions, my faith, my family, but I make my core living from the entertainment industry.

AVA: Of all the places you could live, why did you choose a hundred-acre farm in Orange County, New York?

STEPHEN:

“God works in mysterious ways.” Usually, a person as energized as myself would go nuts exposed to all that peace and quiet. Everywhere I look on the farm, there are horses, about 60 of them. As you know, you cannot have too much anxiety around them. They keep you honest and they keep you humble. Have you ever had a horse look at you sideways when you are acting the fool?

AVA: Have you ever been in competition with your brothers?

STEPHEN:

Because of our age difference, I have never really competed against them for an award or a part in a film. We all have our own distinct paths. We did some ensemble work, here and there, and that was a little bit competitive. It is in our nature.

AVA: Who influences you most in your family? Who do you feel closest to?

STEPHEN:

My wife influences me constantly, in the best possible way. The smartest thing I ever did was to marry Kenya 34 years ago this July!

AVA: Your book, titled *The Unusual Suspect*, details events from your personal life, career, and your history with substance abuse. Did you turn toward faith as a source of inspiration?

STEPHEN:

Yes. That is a very open and honest look at who I was then. It took a lot of personal strength, and as they say I have “done the work.”

AVA: Did you become a born-again Evangelical to overcome the demons of your past?

STEPHEN:

All my childish misbehaving required the Holy Spirit to calm me down. I will tell you a story that probably only four people on earth know about how Faith came to me. My lovely wife has always been spiritual and Christian.... One day we hired a housekeeper and after working for us for about a week, she turned to us and said, "You are going to be re-born in the Faith of our Lord. You will become an Evangelical Christian," and that was it. It was a little slow for me, but it was the confluence of events that led up to 9/11 which became the tipping point.

AVA: I enjoyed meeting your wife Kennya in Washington. DC. I seldom saw her without her Bible. I was struck by how close you two are. Do you credit faith in helping you achieve this level of intimacy?

STEPHEN:

Of course, faith has brought us much closer together and I am thankful each and every day for her faith and direction. She is incredibly beautiful inside and out. In Brazil she was a well-known model, and her father was quite a famous musician and a song writer. I really hit the jackpot in every sense of the word with my wife. As we near our 34th wedding anniversary, we both believe with all our hearts... the best is yet to come!



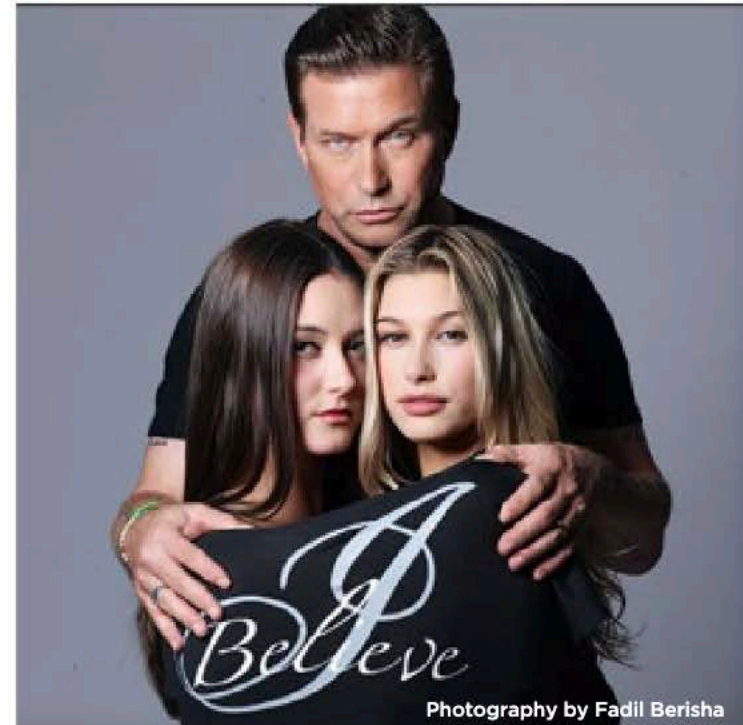
Stephen Baldwin with his daughters, Alaia Aronow and Hailey Bieber

AVA: Your two daughters both had careers as models and are now married. Alaia to Andrew Aronow and Hailey to Justin Bieber. Do you help your daughters avoid the pitfalls of fame? Is faith present in their lives as it is in yours?

STEPHEN:

Yes, I have seen faith active in their lives. As for giving advice, I have a pretty strong rule with family members that I only give suggestions when someone asks me for it and sometimes, they have to ask me twice.

AVA: You shared with me the stunning image of your blue-eyed granddaughter Iris, now three years old. As an American, what do you most hope and wish for her in the future?



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STEPHEN:

Peace, stability, freedom, and a strong nation that can protect its citizens. Yes, these are the things I wish for all children.

AVA: It is a known fact that sticking to your beliefs was not well received in Hollywood. Looking back at your illustrious career of over one hundred films, what could you have done differently?

STEPHEN:

Perhaps I could have kept a few things a little closer to the vest, but I'm certainly not ashamed of my convictions and faith. I also wish that I had studied business. I see fellow actors who have gone through slim times, as far as work, and they have been clever enough to learn other ways of making money such as real estate. Yeah, I wish I had become a little smarter about finance and business.

AVA: Please tell us about your upcoming projects and what motivates you to get up in the morning?

STEPHEN:

I am heading out to LA in a couple of weeks. I will be taping the first 20 episodes of a comedy-opinion podcast titled, "Cheesy Films we Hate to Love." The best part is that I get to have my favorite actors/friends on set to talk about the worst film they ever made! We all have one, some of us have more than one! Be on the lookout for the show in the next few months. Wherever you download your podcast, just search for my name or ONE BAD MOVIE.



Photo of Stephen & Ava by Christopher M. Twardy