

The Full Keanu

From mellowest guy on earth to onscreen killing machine



Keanu Reeves is back in action and back in the classic black suit for John Wick: Chapter 4, in theatres now.

*By: Ty Burr - Washington Post
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Photo By: Murray Close / Lionsgate*

RARE is the actor who gets to be a household name; rarer still are the ones with whom we're on a first-name basis. Perhaps rarest of all is that star who so permeates popular culture — part and parcel of the air we breathe — that they start naming molecular compounds after him.

Ladies and gentlemen, meet the keanumycins, a group of recently discovered antimicrobial lipopeptides that ruthlessly kill harmful fungus the way the stoic assassin played by Keanu Reeves in the John Wick movies dispatches incoming villains. Why weren't they named wickomycins? Even Reeves wondered as much

in a Reddit posting, but his response to the question is such a compressed bouillon cube of all that is Keanu that it proves the researchers' point and is worth quoting in full: "they should've called it John Wick ... but that's pretty cool ... and surreal for me. But thanks, scientist people! Good luck, and thank you for helping us."

There it all is: the earnestness, the goofy slacker-speak, the gracious and good-hearted honouring of other people's good works. At the age of 58 and with nearly four decades of movies under his belt, Reeves has become beloved as an actor who doesn't actually seem to act, a one-trick pony who can do just about anything — and an unstoppable onscreen killing machine who, in life, appears to be the mellowest guy on the planet. The man's a Zen movie star, our



National Dude, and with the release of the much-anticipated John Wick: Chapter 4, the affection in which a great many people hold him seems to be hitting a fresh peak.

A look back at a most paradoxical film career and public persona seems in order. What, truly, is the Tao of Keanu?

Over 40-plus movies, Reeves has been cast as the Buddha, the son of Satan, an alien emissary and the saviour of mankind. He has played lovers, fighters, teenage idiots (“clown work,” he has approvingly called the Bill & Ted franchise), a naive French chevalier and a gay hustler. From one angle he’s the Gregory Peck of his era, modest and true; from another, he’s the black Lab of movie stars, faithful but maybe not the sharpest in the play group. There is no fixed point by which to locate the man. So, where do you start?

In Toronto, maybe, where Reeves was raised. You can still hear the Canada in that oddly formal Valley-speak, and you can sense it in the attentive way he listens, really listens in both movies and interviews in the glossy magazine profiles (which alone explains much of his appeal).

After a rough-and-tumble upbringing, 22-year-old Reeves drove across the continent to Hollywood by himself in 1986 and had an agent within a week. (“I’ve just signed a new client, and I don’t even know if he can act,” his agent told a colleague, already tapping into the Reeves mythos.) Within a few months, he had a breakout role in *River’s Edge* as the one honourable teen pothead in a group dealing with a murdered peer. Go watch the movie: He’s already all there, the full Keanu.

Within a few years, Reeves had proved his range in the period film *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), in *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure* (1989), as jut-jawed surfer-lawman Johnny Utah in *Point Break* (1991) and in *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), Gus Van Sant’s poetic meditation on

street hustling and *Henry IV. My Own Private Idaho* crystallized Reeves’ bond with River Phoenix. As Siddhartha Gautama, the young Buddha, Reeves was the best thing in Bernardo Bertolucci’s loopy *Little Buddha* (1993), an experience that seems to have stuck with the actor in ways that may have expanded his spiritual life and persona, in part because he remains so private about it.

About that. Reeves has always gently but firmly drawn a curtain around his off-screen life. (“I’m Mickey Mouse. They don’t know who’s inside the suit,” he told *Vanity Fair* in 1995.) Public knowledge of certain losses — Phoenix in 1993, a stillborn child in 1999 and the child’s mother, Jennifer Syme, in an auto accident two years later — and Reeves’ refusal to engage in public displays of grief have kept the culture at a sympathetic distance. We’re drawn to those celebrities who let it all hang out, but we don’t really take them to heart. The ones who withhold get our respect.

In 1994 came *Speed* and an action role that was considered for Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks and Woody Harrelson before drastically changing Reeves’ image and bankability without changing who he seemed to be. That movie holds up fine, better than several that followed, but the *Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003) confirmed his box-office power (and industry rep as a tireless trainer) while positioning the persona as a dreamy, ass-kicking revolutionary for reality. The Buddha of the Multiplex, or maybe just *The One*.

In the wake of that success, Reeves was able to do pretty much what he wanted for a while, including projects personal (Richard Linklater’s *A Scanner Darkly*, 2006) and mainstream (Nancy Meyers’ *Something’s Gotta Give*, 2003). My own favourite entry from this period is the swooning, lunkheaded romantic drama *The Lake House* (2006), in which Reeves and Sandra Bullock — the other black Lab of movie stars — somehow fall in love while living in the same house two years apart. There’s a magic mailbox



involved; it's really dumb and also really great, and the two stars never once condescend to the material.

Which brings us to the John Wick series, which puts this most serene of actors through insanely elaborate long-take ballets of onscreen ultraviolence while, again, allowing him to somehow remain himself. Reeves lets his age show for the films: lank-haired, unshaven and absolutely exhausted, Wick is the opposite of a rippled superhero just as the actor playing him is the antithesis of the Rock.

The movies posit a global criminal bureaucracy that's all-encompassing and a little bit ludicrous, with bespoke villain hotels and job titles out of a steampunk novel (The Adjudicator! The Harbinger!). They're really postmodern samurai films, with Wick as a lone ronin facing an endless oncoming army, a notion that pulls so many facets of this unique star into one concentrated, irresistible figure. The movies would be far lesser vehicles with anyone else in the lead.

It would be nice if Reeves's post-Wick filmography were ... calmer. Maybe he can play a stalwart paleobiotechnologist who uncovers a strain of fungus-killing bacteria; it doesn't have to attack New York City. As he nears his 60s — heading toward the status of cultural and cinematic elder — he may let the spiritual side that he has rarely alluded to in interviews take more precedence and affect his choice of projects. Or not. It may be the last thing John Wick fans and studio bean counters want to hear, but Reeves has never followed the fans. That's why they follow him.

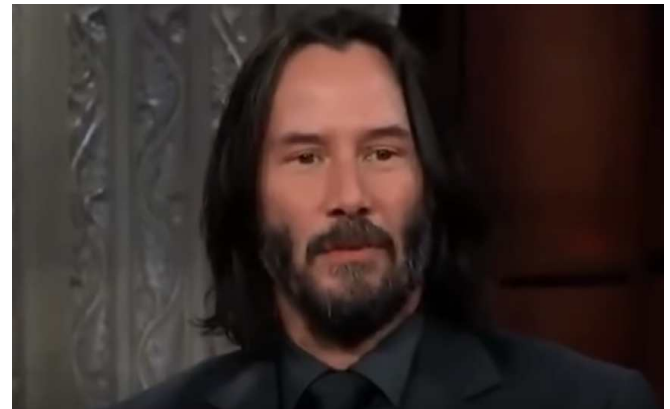
If you flip open a copy of the Tao Te Ching, the 2,400-year-old classic of Chinese philosophy, you may find any number of passages that seem applicable to this 21st-century Hollywood actor and to some of the characters he has played. "When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you." "The best fighter is never angry." "He is

free from self-display, and therefore he shines."

My favourite Keanu koan, and one that more movie stars would do well to heed, is this: "Act without expectation."



*** John Wick Chapter 4
Official Trailer**



*** The Untold Story Of Keanu Reeves
Biography Part 1
(The Matrix, John Wick, Point Break)**



*** Keanu Reeves: The Untold Story
Biography Part 2
(The Matrix, John Wick, Point Break)**



“Our very good Artist friend Perry Holmes had painted some pictures of Keanu Reeves and presented one to him when Keanu was in town filming ‘Russia’. Perry said this happened at the Hotel Fort Garry”

- Don G. Tirschmann

* www.ManitobaNeighbours.com




Perry Holmes Studios
— FINE ART BY PERRY HOLMES —

* www.perryholmesstudios.com

* [Perry Holmes Studio - YouTube](#)

mrperryholmes@gmail.com



MANITOBA NEIGHBOURS





* The Matrix Resurrections - Official Trailer


“ It had been reported that Keanu was very close to his sister Kim and that she had cancer. He was very generous and had spent three quarters of his earnings from the Matrix Trilogy for philanthropy, especially searching for non traditional methods of treatment for leukemia that his sister Kim had. In the process of his mission he founded his own cancer fund that could do a lot of good research.

I too had a life challenge with cancer and it was reported that through the generosity of many donors Cancer Care Manitoba Foundation has been able to grant more than 151 Million Dollars since the year 2000. This support has helped me and countless other patients with very positive outcomes. Wow very impressive.”


- Don G. Tirschmann

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