

Eugene & Daniel Levy

DOUBLE
TALK

THE COMEDY ICON AND HIS SON CHAT ABOUT THEIR FUNNY FAMILY AND HOW COSTARRING IN THEIR HIT SERIES *SCHITT'S CREEK* BROUGHT THEM CLOSER THAN EVER *By* **GILLIAN TELLING**

At first Eugene Levy had no idea that his son Daniel's concept—a TV series about a wealthy family who lost all their money and had to move to a small town—would wind up being a success. Eugene, famous for comedies like the American Pie movies and Best in Show, was just happy that Daniel, a former MTV Canada host turned screenwriter, was interested in working with him. “He'd spent so much of his life establishing himself on his own that it was really exciting,” says Eugene, 72. “It could have been any idea, and I'd have said, ‘All right!’” Now their co-creation Schitt's Creek is about to start its fifth season on Pop TV. “It's been remarkable,” Daniel, 35, says of working with his dad and his sister Sarah, 32, who also appears on the fan-beloved show. “At the end of the day, we're all in it to have fun.”

‘You can be funny and loving: Great comedy doesn't have to be at anyone's expense’

—DANIEL LEVY

What was your dynamic like when Daniel was growing up?

EUGENE We moved back to Canada in the '80s when my wife, Deborah [Divine], got pregnant, because there was something about raising kids in a showbizzy environment that was a little scary. Toronto was a place they could have a normal life. But I would ground Daniel a lot.

DANIEL Yeah, I got into trouble. I don't think I even did anything that bad! I remember as a teenager I'd be like, “Some of these kids are going to rehab! I just didn't do my homework!”

So you were a tough parent.

EUGENE If you crossed the line, there was going to be some sort of punishment. It's the way I was brought up, and it's the way I started bringing up my kids. And it worked, because we've honestly never had a problem with our kids. It was kind of fun as they started getting older and began making us laugh. There

were more times Daniel had us laughing than I ever had anybody laughing. **Has playing father and son brought you closer?**

EUGENE Honestly, with adult children you usually don't see them on a regular basis. Lives become separate—it's just fact. But for the past seven years, it's been almost an everyday thing. That just doesn't happen a lot.

DANIEL Having this chapter in our lives that we share? Even when it's done, we'll always have that. That's really a special thing.

Fans love that Daniel's character David has had relationships with men and women, but his family and the locals don't seem to care about his sexuality.

DANIEL That was absolutely intentional. I had no intention of showing homophobia or bigotry on the show. If you talk about it, you're giving it weight. If you can just show people how life should be, then they can't help but open themselves up to it. If you're force-feeding someone a lesson, you're going to face resistance.

Who's the most famous person who has said they love *Schitt's Creek*?

EUGENE Elton John. Carol Burnett has mentioned it a few times.

DANIEL Mariah Carey tweeted about it. I freaked out. I had her posters all over my walls when I was a kid.

EUGENE I've had my fair share of people come up and talk to me about *Best in Show* or *American Pie*, but recently it's been people saying, “I don't want to bother you, but I just want to say I'm a huge fan of... your son.” I never get over the fact that I get to be on-set with my two kids. ●



Families, On- and Offscreen
Left: Catherine O'Hara, Eugene Levy, Daniel Levy and Annie Murphy on *Schitt's Creek*. Right: Deborah Divine, Eugene, Sarah Levy and Daniel (in 2004).

