

I made a TV star cry. It was unintentional. Really.

Fans may shed a few tears, too, when his show, 'The Good Doctor,' hits its series finale this month.

Pasadena, California » made a TV star cry. Not just any TV star, but a martial artist with a list of credits that includes a lot of action roles. A guy who could, with one hand tied behind his back, take me out in about two seconds. That guy is Will Yun Lee, one of the stars of 'The Good Doctor.'

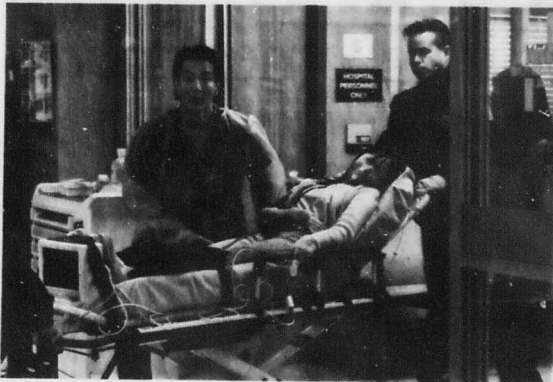
I didn't mean to make him cry. I was surprised when he did. I didn't think my question during a Television Critics Association press tour would elicit that response.

Lee portrays Dr. Alex Park in ABC's medical series "The Good Doctor." Like the majority of the current cast, he was not on the show — which centers on Dr. Shaun Murphy (Freddie Highmore), a young surgeon with autism — when it began. Lee joined for the last four episodes of Season 1 and has been in every episode of Seasons 2-7. I asked the producers what it's like writing a show that's seen a lot of turnover. Mostly good, said co-showrunners David Shore and Liz Friedman.

And then I asked "if any of the actors want to talk about what it was like coming into a show after it was up and running?" I was, in part, trying to give several of the actors on the panel who hadn't said much (if anything) a chance to talk. Fiona Gubelman (who joined the cast as Dr. Morgan Reznick late in Season 3) said she'd felt welcomed.

And then Lee replied: "I remember coming in at the end of Season 1, and ... he began, before quickly choking up. 'Oh my God, I feel like it's a horrible movie where I just see the lights and I just stop talking,' he said after a pause."

Lee started filming episodes of "The Good Doctor" in late 2017. In 2016, his then-3-year-old son, Cash, suffered a stroke, followed



Will Yun Lee portrays Dr. Alex Park in ABC's medical series "The Good Doctor."

by a second stroke seven months later. It took months to get a correct diagnosis — Moyamoya, a rare condition in which the blood vessels that supply blood to the brain become narrowed.

Cash underwent successful brain surgery after Lee joined the cast of the ABC series. His medical condition formed the basis for the February 2023 episode "Hard Heart," in which a 3-year-old came into the hospital after suffering a stroke.

And being on the set of "The Good Doctor" — which, of course, is meant to resemble a hospital — triggered Lee. At that time, "I was in the hospital a lot with my son," he said, grabbing his heart and pausing to collect himself as he started to cry. "Oh my God," he eventually said. "Now my wife's going to make fun of me all night."

Going from real-life medical stress to a medical drama was almost too much for Lee. "After the first episode, I was, like, 'I don't

"We've been lucky enough to be able to plan the ending we want to do."

DAVID SHORE

think I can do this show," he said, "and I was going to call my agents and say, 'If they want to bring me back, I don't think I'll be able to finish the show.'"

He did, of course, decide to stay. He recalled a Season 2 episode, directed by showrunner David Shore ("House"), that included "this scene where I literally cried for 12 straight hours. ... He cured me of being sad and crying all the time. And so here I am, seven seasons later. ... But obviously, I'm still crying."

Seems like bringing Lee to tears isn't all that difficult.

The end is near

"The Good Doctor" airs its third-to-last episode on Tuesday (9 p.m., ABC/Channel 4); its

penultimate episode on Tuesday, May 14; and the series finale is scheduled to air Tuesday, May 21.

Paige Spira (who plays Shaun's wife, Lea) said she was "really sad to say goodbye to people that you've built a life with for the past seven years." Executive producer Erin Gunn said she cried when she learned of the cancellation, but, at the same time, "You feel so grateful for getting seven seasons. It's definitely bittersweet."

Shore and Friedman clearly didn't want to talk about the cancellation. Shore eventually said, "Years ago, when I was doing another show, I was asked, 'Do you know how this show is going to end?' ... And I said, 'Yes, I know exactly how this show will end. One day, I will get a phone call from the network telling me the



SCOTT D. PIERCE

On Television

show is ending."

Which is the way most TV shows end. Including "The Good Doctor." The good news is that that news came before work began on the seventh and final season, so "we've been lucky enough to be able to plan the ending we want to do," Shore said. Friedman added that the writers came up with "a great finale" that will be "something that we think the fans will love."

The bad news is that they were given only 10 episodes to wrap things up, far short of the 18-22 in previous seasons — a situation Shore called "unfortunate." That's partly due to the actors' and writers' strikes that shortened the current TV season by months. But 10 is short — maybe 13 would've been expected.

The worse news is that "The Good Doctor" is as good as it's ever been. It's not running on fumes, its powering through to its final episode.

The show has changed over the years — both because Shaun (Freddie Highmore) went from being a naive intern to a confident surgeon, got married and became a father, and because it became more of an ensemble drama with storylines that didn't include Shaun at all.

Both Shore and Friedman said they are "sad" about the show ending. And Friedman said that she imagines "Shaun's going to continue his adventures without me. ... He's still going to be out there in the world. But there's always more stories, I think, when you have a great character ... but we'll find a way to give him a great ending."

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