



television

NO CAPE? NO PROBLEM

FROM STAGE ACTOR TO SCREEN-
WRITER TO GEEK GOD, CLARK GREGG
SOARS WITHOUT SUPERPOWERS

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06

Clark Gregg isn't a superhero. He doesn't even play one on TV. And yet, the veteran actor has become the poster boy for Marvel, thanks to his turn as Agent Phil Coulson, the unassuming government suit who never loses his wit or stoicism, whether he's assembling egocentric Avengers or staring down a giant alien automaton with nothing more than a megaphone.

Looking back it's hard to believe that it all started with a few quips in *Iron Man* (2008). Audiences instantly connected with

Gregg's character—so much so that he has earned the rare distinction of being drawn into the comic books *after* debuting on film. Six years and four feature films later, Gregg (TSOA '86) is again starring as Coulson on the hit ABC show *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, which garnered more than 1 million Facebook fans before the first episode even aired last September. Yet long before this popularity, Gregg toiled in background scenes and behind the camera—evolving from actor to hyphen-requiring actor-writer-director.

Those last two endeavors are also reaping the dividends of

Gregg's newfound success. He recently wrote, directed, and starred in *Trust Me*, his second independent film (after 2008's *Choke* based on the Chuck Palahniuk novel). Featuring Sam Rockwell, William H. Macy, Felicity Huffman, Allison Janney, and Amanda Peet, the dramedy premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival. "That's a whole other level of rewarding," he says.

Gregg cut his teeth as a founding member, and later artistic director, of the off-Broadway Atlantic Theater Company, which formed in 1983 out of an NYU summer workshop taught by

PHOTOS FROM LEFT: COURTESY MARVEL; (2): COURTESY HOT TONS

Macy and playwright David Mamet. He spent his first decade out of school with Atlantic "doing theater for next to nothing" before moving to Los Angeles, where he took bit parts in films and on TV.

His first writing job was no small gig: penning the screenplay for *What Lies Beneath* (2000), the supernatural thriller starring Harrison Ford and Michelle Pfeiffer. After a string of mostly one-off appearances, Gregg landed multi-episode runs on *Sports Night* (2000), *The West Wing* (2001), *The Shield* (2004), and *The New Adventures of Old Christine* (2006–



CLARK GREGG'S MOST POPULAR CHARACTER, MARVEL'S AGENT COULSON, MADE THE JUMP FROM THE BIG SCREEN TO COMIC BOOKS. THE ACTOR SHARED HIS EXCITEMENT OVER THE COULSON ACTION FIGURE BY TWEETING: "AND NOW THIS AGING FANBOY CAN DIE HAPPY."

10). "The best stuff that happened for me [has been] since I turned 40," he says.

His biggest break came when director (and neighbor) Jon Favreau offered Gregg the small, nameless role of "Agent" in the star-studded *Iron Man* film. He had some trepidation based on experience. "I thought, I really want to do this, but I just know it's gonna get cut out or [cut down to] just one line, and then I'll feel embarrassed," he remembers with a laugh. Fortunately his wife, actress Jennifer Grey, encouraged him to accept the part because of his lifelong love of comic books.

Gregg's on-screen chemistry with Robert Downey Jr. resulted in Favreau adding scenes for "Agent," and soon Coulson was born. The character evolved in the film's sequel and even further in *Thor* (2011), when it became clear that amidst all the demigods and monsters, viewers identified with Coulson's mortal underdog. "There was something about that role in a world with superheroes—an average guy in a suit who had an ability and a willingness to be sarcastic and speak

truth to superpower—that made him someone the fans connected with," he surmises.

So when it came time to assemble Earth's mightiest heroes for the blockbuster *The Avengers* (2012), it was Coulson who brought the bickering team together. In Joss Whedon's script, his tragic demise by supervillain stabbing gave them something to avenge. "I really

"There was something about that role—an average guy who had an ability to speak truth to superpower—that the fans connected with."

loved that it grounded the movie in something real and human. And then it came to the day to shoot it and I was a mess," he says. "I kept making jokes to the camera that I was waiting for some rewrite pages from the governor."

Moviegoers were even more distraught over Coulson's fate. Refusing to accept his death, viewers flocked to Twitter and started a protest using #Coulson-

Lives—which they also printed on T-shirts, carved in the sand, and painted on bridges around the world. Marvel took notice and created *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* "[The fans] are responsible for bringing Coulson back to life," Gregg says.

The mystery surrounding Coulson's resurrection was the driving force of the show's first season, which debuted as TV's

highest-rated new drama in years. Now it's Gregg who's doing the heavy lifting, spending long days on set as No. 1 on the call sheet. "If I had lost track of the blissed-out 11-year-old who read these comics and loved this world, I wouldn't be having this much fun," he says. "I get to fly amazing vehicles and do battle with tremendous alien creatures...it's a really good way to be fiftysomething." ■

the insider

BEST OF NEW YORK

by Renée Alfuso / CAS '06

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"For sound, vibe, location, and atmosphere, hands down, there's no place quite like it, in particular Stage 2. I spend way too much time there!"

—Jared Scharff (STEINHARDT '01)
Saturday Night Live house band guitarist

ALICIA KEYS



► Audio Alfresco

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CENTRAL PARK
CENTRALPARKNYC.ORG

"I saw the Global Citizen Festival there, with Neil Young, Foo Fighters, and the Black Keys. More than 60,000 fans together in the heart of the city—really awesome and inspiring."

—Emily Lazar (STEINHARDT '96)
The Lodge recording studio founder and chief mastering engineer

MUSIC can be found throughout the Big Apple—and not always where you might expect. From awesome acoustics to tunes with a view, those in the know from NYU share their favorite spots. Plus, six songs to put anyone in an Empire State of mind.



ALEXZ JOHNSON

► Rad Rags

ISSEY MIYAKE
119 HUDSON STREET
TRIBECA
ISSEYMIYAKE.COM

"I've been wearing his clothes for years. They fit my style and body, and give me a certain confidence that makes me feel like a rock star!"

—Susan Hilferty
Tony Award-winning costume designer and chair of the design department at the Tisch School of the Arts

► Obscure Odeum

42ND STREET SUBWAY STATION
TIMES SQUARE
MTA.INFO

"There's an amazing old-time African-American banjo-and-string band called the Ebony Hillbillies, usually between the 1/2/3 and N/R/Q lines."

—Michael Beckerman
Carroll and Milton Petrie Professor of Music at the College of Arts and Science



Lyrical Landmark

CAFE WHA?
115 MACDOUGAL STREET
WEST VILLAGE
CAFEWHA.COM

"It's where Jimi Hendrix was discovered in 1966. In eighth grade, I snuck down there and saw him play guitar with his teeth."

—Emily Armstrong
Archivist for the Downtown Collection at Fales Library



Cyber Soundtrack

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/IV

"This video game has a radio station called 'The Journey.' The Philip Glass song 'Pruit Igoe' and an untitled track from Aphex Twin's album SAW II steal the show."

—Andy Nealen
Assistant professor in the Game Innovation Lab



► Rocked, RIP

CBGB (1973-2006)
315 BOWERY
EAST VILLAGE
CBGB.COM

"In the summer of 1975, a few fellow NYU film grads and I approached owner Hilly Kristal about shooting his Unrecorded Bands Festival. He kindly consented, and the first night, we shot then-unknowns Blondie, Talking Heads, and the Heartbreakers."

—Pat Ivers (TSOA '76, '89)



New Amsterdam Anthems

"The Only Living Boy in New York" (1970)

Simon & Garfunkel
"TIMELESS, PASSIONATE, AND MAGICAL—A MUST-HAVE."

"New York Groove" (1978)

Ace Frehley
"CAPTURES THE FEELING OF CROSSING THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE."

"Walk on the Wild Side" (1972)

Lou Reed
"DEFINES THE URBAN UNDERBELLY EXPERIENCE."

"New York State of Mind" (1976)

Billy Joel
"YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT NYC MUSIC AND NOT THINK OF BILLY."

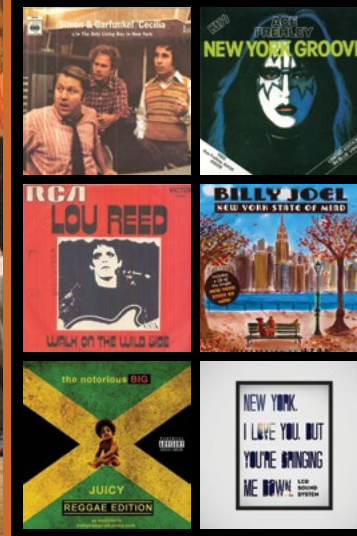
"Juicy" (1994)

The Notorious B.I.G.
"MOST HIP-HOP HAS A SHELF LIFE, BUT NOT BIGGIE."

"New York, I Love You but You're Bringing Me Down" (2007)

LCD Soundsystem
"WHAT NEW YORKER HASN'T FELT THIS WAY AT TIMES?"

—Jeffrey Rabhan (WSUC '92)
Chair of Tisch's Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music



CULTURE

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technology

The Reel World

A POP CULTURE LOVER HAD AN IDEA AND DECIDED NOT TO SIT ON IT

When Gadi Harel (STEINHARDT '93) moved into Los Angeles's Hancock Park neighborhood in 2011, he had no clue that the Cunninghams' *Happy Days* home was right behind his own. After years in L.A., "It was the most exciting Hollywood encounter I'd had," Harel recalls. "Fonzie lived above that garage!"

A friend, charmed by Harel's exuberance, then suggested a visit to the *Brady Bunch* house in Studio City. "That one blew my mind," says the Israel-born, Princeton-raised 42-year-old, who

started wondering where his other favorite characters had lived. Harel decided: "If I find 100 addresses, I'll make an app."

He found far more than that—Reel Estates (99 cents) now boasts 600 locations and counting, sprinkled from coast (Madeleine's San Francisco apartment in *Vertigo*) to coast (the *Jersey Shore* house). When the actual (Pasadena) and fictional (Ossining, New York) coordinates conflict, as with the Draper residence on *Mad Men*, both are listed. Users can search by title or let the "Map Me" feature surprise them with a nearby hot spot. Pop culturalists will especially love the "trivia" button (exam-

ple: three Manhattan buildings were necessary to create Glenn Close's loft in *Fatal Attraction*). Harel is best known for co-directing the cult horror hit *Deadgirl*, so it's no surprise that two of his favorites are the dwellings in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Poltergeist*. "It's exciting to find a new one," says Harel, who thanks crowdsourcing for tips. Conversely, those wild goose chases can be buzz kills. Bummer

in point: "I spent months looking for the Tanner house from *Alf* [supposedly in the San Fernando Valley], only to find out that the actual home [in Brentwood] no longer exists."

—Helly Guerre



CREDITS

ALUMNI HONORS



At this year's Academy Awards, the Oscar for Best Picture went to *12 Years a Slave*, produced and directed by **STEVE McQUEEN** (TSOA nongrad alum), while writer **JOHN RIDLEY** (GAL '87) took home Best Adapted Screenplay for penning the historical drama... **MARTIN SCORSESE** (WSC '64, STEIN-

HARDT '68, HON '92) earned a Best Director nomination for *The Wolf of Wall Street*, written by fellow nominee **TERENCE WINTER** (WSUC '84) and executive produced by **GEORGIA KACANDES** (TSOA '85) and **IRWIN WINKLER** (STERN '56)... Also vying for the top prize this year were *Amer-*

ican Hustle, the 1970s-era crime drama produced by **MARK KAMINE** (TSOA '92) and **RICHARD SUCKLE** (GAL '91); Somali pirate thriller *Captain Phillips*, produced by **MICHAEL DE LUCA** (TSOA '95); and true-life AIDS drama *Dallas Buyers Club*, produced by **ROBBIE BRENNER** (TSOA '93)... Meanwhile at the 65th Primetime Emmy Awards, *Breaking Bad* was named Outstanding Drama Series for the show's final season, with gold statuettes going to creator **VINCE GILLIGAN** (TSOA '89) and producers **STEWART A. LYONS** (TSOA '72, STERN '79) and **THOMAS SCHNAUZ** (TSOA

'88)... For the fourth consecutive year, Outstanding Comedy Series went to *Modern Family* and its writer-producers **PAUL CORRIGAN** (TSOA '94), **BRAD WALSH** (TSOA '94), and **BILL WRUBEL** (TSOA '93)... HBO's Liberace biopic *Behind the Candelabra*, written by **RICHARD LAGRAVENESE** (TSOA '80), won for Outstanding Miniseries or Movie... **JESSIE MOTT** (STEINHARDT '02) and **ALEX JOVANOVICH** (STEINHARDT '10) were among the artists selected to participate in the Whitney Museum of American Art's 2014 Biennial.

—Renée Alfuso

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