

The Haddonfield Sun

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From Haddonfield to Stars Hollow: Scott Patterson talks music, coffee and HMHS

The Sun spoke with *Gilmore Girls*' star Scott Patterson about growing up in Haddonfield and where his next phase of life is taking him.



Actor and musician Scott Patterson (pictured above) grew up in Haddonfield in the early 1970s. Photo courtesy of Michael Becker Photography.

Editor's note: The Sun spoke with actor Scott Patterson in the midst of touring with his band, SMITHRADIO, about growing up in Haddonfield and what the next phase of life after the "Gilmore Girls" revival holds.

Scott Patterson remembers riding his bicycle with his childhood friends to admire the sprawling homes on Lane of Acres in Haddonfield. He said his childhood dream was to own one of those properties, but it always felt grievously out of reach.

"It was always the fantasy of owning a home up there," Patterson said.

These days, Patterson, now 58 years old and a successful actor and musician, said it's funny to think that "fantasy" is a feasible reality for him.

Patterson launched his acting career in the 1990s, starring in films and appearing in guest spots on television shows such as “Seinfeld” and “Will and Grace.” Patterson truly gained notoriety as an actor, however, starring as Luke Danes on “Gilmore Girls” from 2000 to 2007 and most recently in the show’s 2016 Netflix revival “Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life.”

Prior to walking the streets of “Gilmore Girls” fictional town Stars Hollow, Patterson roamed the streets of Haddonfield during the early 1970s of his childhood. Looking back, he has this vivid memory that comes to mind when he thinks of Haddonfield. He remembers just how haunting the streets could feel at night. He said the silence and elm trees often sent his overactive imagination into overdrive.

His childhood was “pretty typical of any child growing up [in Haddonfield].” His summers were spent at Wedgewood Swim Club where he’d swim almost daily. Patterson’s mother acted in Haddonfield Plays and Players.

“From what I was told, she was quite gifted; also, from what I was told, my father was not,” Patterson said with a good-natured laugh. “The one time my father was cast in anything, he ran out on stage and forgot his one line.”

His adolescence was filled with music. He said his family owned a coffee table with a record player in it, and whenever he heard The Beatles, he found himself jumping on top of that table singing.

Over the course of his school years, Patterson was involved in a variety of musical clubs, joining the choir and performing in the high school band.

“I enjoyed singing with other kids—communal singing,” Patterson said. “I didn’t take it terribly seriously. I did go to the practices, and I liked performing.”

In eighth grade, Patterson played baseball on the Haddonfield Junior High School team. His coach, Richard Eastwick, had just started coaching at the school that year in 1970, and he remembers Patterson warmly.

“He was a happy kid; he was always smiling,” Eastwick said. “I think he was everybody’s friend.”

Eastwick said Patterson must have shown some athletic prowess because he had him play shortstop and pitcher while on the team. Looking back, Eastwick said he recalls Patterson had a funny way of pitching.

Most people throw a curveball with their fingers sort of diagonal on the laces, but Patterson threw his with his fingers parallel. When he saw Patterson’s method was working for him and he was throwing good pitches, Eastwick said he thought better than to correct him again.

Attending Haddonfield Memorial High School was a “strange trip indeed,” Patterson said.

“I just remember it being so concentrated and competitive academically,” Patterson said. “There was a lot of stress and anxiety about getting good grades. That was the primary focus for mostly everybody.”

Patterson recalls his classmates vying to take Advanced Placement courses and accelerated math classes. He said he thinks attending HMHS gave him an advantage.

“I remember that entire experience growing up in that town as being highly competitive on every level,” Patterson said. “It sent me out into the world with a real sense of purpose.”

Patterson said some of his best memories are from high school. He said his friends were part of a “diner culture” and often hung out after school at Ponzio’s Diner in Cherry Hill. The irony that his most notable acting role was starring as a diner owner when so much of his childhood was logged at South Jersey diners isn’t lost on him.

“I think it’s quite fitting,” Patterson said.

However, these days acting isn’t Patterson’s primary focus. Following the “Gilmore Girls” reboot, Patterson said he reaped immense pleasure from interacting with fans and started craving more contact with his audiences.

“When you are in front of a camera year after year, you’re not getting access to your fans,” Patterson said. “You’re not able to interact with them in any real or consistent way.”

For that reason, Patterson, a guitarist, decided he wanted to pursue a different avenue. Patterson has been on a 21-day U.S. tour that came to an end on Saturday, Aug. 5. The “Atomic Love Acoustic Coffee House U.S. Tour” has been Patterson’s litmus test for the songs he’s written over the last five years.

Each night features a different acoustic set from Patterson’s writing catalogue at an intimate venue. He said the audiences’ reactions have been helping sculpt the album he wants to make when the band goes into the studio.

Patterson said he’d like to create an acoustic album. The themes of his songs are “relationships gone bad,” “relationships gone crazy” and “extreme loneliness because of relationships.” SMITHRADIO’s music is inspired by the records of the 1970s, which Patterson said had a sense of spontaneity.

“They were simple, they were effective and they were very powerful,” Patterson said.

Music isn’t the only thing occupying Patterson’s time these days, however. He said when he returns home to Los Angeles following the tour, he’s getting to work on his coffee brand, Scotty P’s Big Mug Coffee Mug.

Patterson said he’s downing coffee all the time, having even just having finished drinking a Dunkin Donuts’ coffee on his way from New York City to Providence when he chatted with The Sun. He said the next few weeks will be spent tasting roasts and whittling down his favorites.

“We’re working hard on it,” Patterson said. “We want to roll it out with the right blend.”

While his music and coffee brand are his primary focus right now, Patterson isn’t counting out acting. He said he’s always looking at offers, but he wants his next role to be something completely different to anything he’s done previously.

Though it's been more than a couple of years since he was last in town, a return to Haddonfield isn't out of the question for Patterson. When asked if he'd ever return to his alma mater if they wanted to recognize him, he said he'd happily travel to Haddonfield if HMHS ever came calling. Patterson has also been giving some consideration of late to fulfilling his childhood dream and purchasing one of those Lane of Acres homes that once seemed so far out of reach.