

Whisen with Mary-  
Louise Parker

# Patrick Wilson as Joe Pitt

**How he fits in:** An up-and-coming Mormon lawyer, he's befriended by Roy Cohn. Both Joe and his wife, Harper, struggle to deny that he's gay. It's not working.

**When last we saw Patrick:** On Broadway: *The Full Monty*, *Oklahoma!* Upcoming films: *The Alamo* and *The Phantom of the Opera*

You've been best known for singing, dancing, and acting in musical comedy. So how did you get the part of Joe Pitt?

When Mike Nichols came and saw *Full Monty* and called me in, I didn't know if they were casting *Angels* or not. But at

that point in your career, you don't expect to get parts like that. I brought the plays and read them, and of course was floored. When I went in to meet with Mike and Tony Kushner, I didn't expect anything. I hate auditioning; always have. I really felt pretty comfortable because—this is the honest truth—I didn't expect a part like this would roll my way. I just didn't.

**It was a lark.**

Yeah. I got to meet Mike Nichols and Tony Kushner, and I get the best audition material ever written. As soon as I was finished Mike said, "Do you want to do this?"

**They just offered it to you right there?**

I said, "Absolutely. But I am getting ready to do *Oklahoma!*" I spent months negotiating my *Oklahoma!* deal and switched agents in the middle of it, so I certainly did not want to go back and say, "Oh, by the way, Cameron, I need to be out on every third show." I've had a long relationship with [producer] Cameron Macintosh and didn't want to do anything to damage that. So I told Mike. He said, "We'll work around your schedule; let me worry about that." So I walked out and called my agent, hugging. I said, "I don't know enough about these movie auditions. But he just kind of said, 'Do you want to do this?' Is he lying to me?" [Mike] went to bat for me, and whatever conversations happened behind closed doors, I don't know. I'm sure it cost him money.

**Did you find it really hard to do both the film and the play at once?**

It wasn't easy. First of all, *Oklahoma!* was a much harder show physically than I'd ever, ever imagined it would be. If nothing else, swinging a girl around your shoulder eight times a week, just chiropractically—it's dumb to make that an adverb—but it's just hard on your body. If you're in the middle of a scene and you've got to go to a night shoot, you don't want to be thinking about your Joe Pitt lines as you're saying Curly's. It's easy to joke about. But those are the moments when somebody gets hurt, when you zone out for a second. I was so busy, I had no choice but to focus on the work. I didn't have time to dillydally. I was up at 6 every day, for the most part, and working all day. As soon as they called wrap, I was hauling ass to get out of makeup, and they brought a sandwich for me and I'd run to the theater.

**Joe is a great character.**

He has trouble speaking from his heart—articulating how he really feels. Obviously, that's a given—the guy's in the closet. When he says "The Lord said this and this and this," this stuff comes out of him like a book. It's the same thing with Republicanism and McCarthysism and talking about Reaganomics. Those are the codes he has lived by. Part of his journey is breaking away from all those things that are just rote. ▶