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## Interview: Brad Bell, 'Husbands'

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on July 2, 2013 - 10:00am in [Celebrity Sightings](#) | [Local Cast and Crew](#)



Since its 2011 premiere, the online series and recent CW Seed addition *Husbands*, a twist on the classic newlywed sitcom that's been dubbed the "world's first marriage equality comedy," has been gaining a loyal following. And its showrunner and star, Dallas native [Brad Bell](#), has been making a cheeky name for himself in L.A. and beyond.

Bell recalled an instance where he was sitting at a coffee shop doing the usual headphone/laptop thing when an attractive man approached him. Sadly, he said, the man didn't want his phone number, but ended up boosting his ego anyway by asking him if he's the person who plays Cheeks, the controversial tabloid personality in the show who can wear sparkly necklaces like it's no one's business.

I might have guessed it: the name for Bell's alter ego spawned from what he described as people's "polite" way to describe him.

"I was a little unrefined then," he said. "...Depending on how people know me, people tend to see different aspects of Cheeks."

The character of Cheeks has given Bell a platform to satirize celebrities while showcasing his writing talent. All of this for some reason made me nervous to talk to him.

But it's all for the cause.

There was that instance when I waved at Bell during this year's [ATX Television Festival](#), where he served as a panelist, while he was crossing the street. I was slightly disheartened when he didn't wave back. When I asked about it during my interview with him, he said he didn't see me, but would have waved back if he had. After spending more than 30 minutes with him on the phone, I completely believe him because of his friendly and humorous personality.

"Getting recognized still kind of weirds me out because I'm not expecting it," said Bell, adding that the L.A. thing is to pretend that celebrities don't exist.

It was this idea of celebrity, where visions have the potential to become reality, that attracted him to L.A. as a child. The palm trees and beach didn't hurt either.

Bell said he left Dallas for L.A. in 2004 with an aunt, who helped him find a place to live, despite his mother's thoughts at the time that it may not be a great idea.

"Was I supposed to grow up and live down the street?" said Bell, who added that he continues to visit his family in Dallas.

Eighteen-year-old Bell's first L.A. gig was bagging groceries at a Whole Foods while studying film at Los Angeles City College. He later became a graduate of The Second City Training Center. Shortly thereafter, Bell started his own YouTube channel in an effort to "circumvent the conventional path" to a professional writing and acting career, and created the character of Cheeks.

Bell's "cheeky" video reaction to 2009 Miss USA pageant contestant Carrie Prejean's response to the question of marriage equality caught the attention of veteran television writer/producer [Jane Espenson](#) (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Caprica*). Espenson contacted Bell in 2009 and the two began a series of meetings that eventually led to a friendship and professional partnership.

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It was over dinner one night in a restaurant that Bell said the idea for *Husbands* originated. He said for some reason they kept switching tables. The event reminded him of an episode of *I Love Lucy*, which sparked a conversation about how that show was controversial when it first aired because of its interracial marriage, but that it's "harmless" now.

Over the course of a night, and with Espenson's input, Bell wrote the first script for *Husbands*, which saw the drunken Las Vegas marriage between Cheeks and professional baseball player Brady ([Sean Hemeon](#)).

The fictional marriage may not have been "totes planned" by Bell, whose original concept for the series told the story of a single, gay twentysomething and his female best friend living in L.A., but the casting of actress [Alessandra Torresani](#) was. Bell said he had Torresani (*Caprica*) in mind for the role of Haley before the show's concept because they were friends. The role of Brady, however, was more difficult to cast.

"It was tedious," said Bell. "We needed them to be believable as a baseball player, naive, but someone who was also charismatic enough to buy that Cheeks likes him." Bell reviewed headshots and reels from more than 1,500 actors in three days, since the series didn't have a casting department.

"I started to lose my mind," he said. "Every human being started looking the same."

Hemeon was the last actor to audition for Brady, Bell said.

With casting complete, *Husbands* began filming in July 2011 on location in L.A. and premiered the following month on the video podcast network [Streamin' Garage's Roku channel](#). The first season's success was further strengthened by \$60,000 raised on Kickstarter to fund the series' second season.

In March, it was announced that the third season of *Husbands* would air on The CW's digital and social platform, CW Seed this fall. Here's the [most recent trailer](#) for the show.

