



ROSS LYNCH, THE DISNEY STAR WHO WENT DAHMER

The singer-actor-songwriter made a huge transition in his career by taking on the role of Jeffery Dahmer.

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Ross Lynch rose to fame on the Disney Channel's *Austin & Ally*, a saccharine tween comedy that wrapped after four seasons in 2016. A year later, he starred as the titular character in *My Friend Dahmer*, a strikingly different role and his first serious film project. "We think of Jeffrey Dahmer as one of the most notorious serial killers in American history. The way *My Friend Dahmer* paints him is not necessarily sentimental, but it's an honest take on how this young man became so deranged and detached," Lynch explains.

Channeling a serial killer during his troubled formative years was "a really interesting process," Lynch says, made more challenging by the wide range of other roles he played in a month-long span. Directly before filming *My Friend Dahmer*, Lynch worked on *Status Update*, a comedy about a magical app that makes social media updates come true (Lynch likens it to a modern-day John Hughes flick). He then did a stint in *A Chorus Line* at the Hollywood Bowl, and immediately after, *My Friend Dahmer* started shooting. As a result, Lynch really had to switch gears emotionally: "I went from playing the 'normal' high school kid in *Status Update*, who, instead of battling with temptations of killing things [laughs], struggles with liking this girl; then I played a kid in a ballet; and then I played a serial killer—but the whole time, Jeffrey Dahmer was in the back of my head."

Lynch prepared for the role via a video clip of Dahmer from after his arrest, talking about his motives and childhood. The actor watched it almost every morning on set before shooting, to emulate Dahmer. Setting and wardrobe furthered the transformation: “Once I arrived in Bath, Ohio and we were in the house that he actually lived in, I was in his clothing, [and] my hair was like his—I’d look in the mirror, and I could see him looking back at me,” Lynch says.

Besides figuring out how to depict a psychopath in the making, Lynch contended with some goriness—though, not nearly as grotesque as Dahmer’s later, truly harrowing crimes: the rape, murder, and dismemberment of 17 men that made him infamous. “I couldn’t be squeamish at all while handling this actual dead cat that we got from a taxidermist; you literally could not mask the smell,” Lynch says. “We soaked it in alcohol, we tried everything. This thing just smelled so bad. But for Jeffrey Dahmer, it’s what he did, all hours of the day; he wanted to be in his shed dissecting animals, playing with their bones, so I really wanted to approach the scene in a stoic manner.”

Lynch began acting in summer camp plays around age six, and also took dance classes. His first professional gig—dancing in a Macy’s fashion show—“gave me and my family faith that we could possibly take a whack at this industry, just see what happens,” he says. The family then moved from Colorado to Los Angeles. Lynch is also in a pop-rock band, R5, with his siblings Rocky, Riker, and Rydel, plus family friend Ellington Ratliff. The actor-singer-songwriter will likely be adding to his multi-hyphenate status soon: he’s interested in directing eventually, and, in the nearer future, hopping in the cockpit. “I’m pretty close to getting my pilot’s license—I really love flying planes. It’s very therapeutic.”



