

## The Hot List: Emile Hirsch

By: Noelle Hancock

How happening is Emile Hirsch? His bio on IMDb says he's "often seen singing karaoke alongside Lindsay Lohan, Bo Barrett, Michelle Rodriguez and Nicole Richie at Beverly Hills hot spot Guys." But the actor insists he's not part of that crew. "It was one time!" Hirsch says.

He needn't worry. Hirsch may have played a horndog teen in love with a porn star in *The Girl Next Door*, but after his career-making turn as Christopher McCandleless in Sean Penn's recent *Into the Wild*, no one is going to mistake this twenty-two-year-old actor for a celebute.

With his fresh-faced good looks and unorthodox range ("I definitely like mixing it up," says Hirsch), he's our best chance at bringing Shia LeBeouf's boy-wonder era to a much-needed end.

Hirsch goes beyond Method acting for a De Niro-esque total immersion in his roles. "To replicate the real-life experiences of McCandleless, a tormented dreamer who wound up living off the land in the Alaskan wilderness, he dropped 41 of his already slight 156 pounds and gamely performed almost all of his stunts, including rock climbing and kayaking through white-water rapids. He also drifted down a river in frosty weather for a startling full-frontal shot.

No sweat for Hirsch, who endured three months of boot camp to prepare for a role as a gang leader in *Alpha Dog* and aggravated a painful childhood back injury to play a skateboarder in *Lords of Dogtown*.

Next up: Hirsch goes green screen as the lead in the Wachowski brothers' 2008 blockbuster *Speed Racer*, opposite Christina Ricci.

After *Into the Wild*, he's happy to shoot some scenes indoors, especially when he recalls working with a nine-foot-tall bear named Bart Jr. The beast brushed up against him on the *Wild* set, contemplating whether or not Hirsch was worthy of consumption.

"I was pretty uncomfortable the day we worked with the grizzly," Hirsch says. "After ten takes you think, 'OK, this bear is just going to get bored and improv. Improv my head off!'"