

Stars shine for screening

Dane Cook, Jessica Alba greet fans, help raise money for charity

By Betsy Pickle
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Actors Jessica Alba and Dane Cook proved to be good luck at a local benefit Tuesday night.

The stars of the new comedy "Good Luck Chuck," which opens in theaters on Friday, flew to Knoxville Tuesday to introduce their film to fans at Regal's Pinnacle 18 at Turkey Creek. The screening raised \$260,000 for Variety, the Children's Charity of Eastern Tennessee.

The amount bested last year's Variety fund-raiser with Will Ferrell and "Talladega Nights" by about \$10,000, according to Dena Pinsker, Variety's executive director.

Before taking the stage inside the lobby for official remarks, "Sin City" star Alba and actor-comedian Cook signed autographs and posed for photos both for fans who'd paid \$75 to attend and onlookers who waited in the parking lot to see them.

The stage presentation included remarks from Regal Entertainment Group CEO Mike Campbell, who unveiled a set of commemorative tiles that will be placed on the theater's Walk of Fame, and Knoxville Mayor Bill Haslam, who proclaimed it Jessica Alba and Dane Cook Day.

Cook seemed impressed by the official act.

"I've never had a proclamation except, 'You're fired,'" he told the crowd of about 1,000.

Both Alba and Cook expressed appreciation for the warm reception and complimented each other for their work in the film. Cook plays a dentist who falls for penguin-expert Alba but has to move carefully because every woman he dates breaks up with him and immediately finds her true love.

For the past few years, Alba, 26, has been on nearly every "sexiest woman" list imaginable, though she modestly told the News Sentinel in an interview in the VIP tent prior to the official activities that she doesn't know why.

As for what she looks for in a partner, she said, "I think someone with a sense of humor is big, big, big, big. And someone who's introspective is nice. ... And someone intelligent."

"I like a woman that's fiercely independent, I really do," said Cook, 35. "I like a woman that has her own thing going on. I don't care for needy-type people. I want a girl who's like, 'I'm gonna go hunt, and then I'm gonna bring my own (stuff) back to the meal.'"

Cook is renowned for being a pioneer in communicating with fans on the Internet, but Alba says his popularity is more than virtual.

"He has a huge following in life," she said. "I walk around with this guy and girls are, like, throwing their breasts at him everywhere he goes."

"They literally take their breasts out, their implants, and they throw them at me," said Cook. "Like it's a pie fight."

"Yeah, but when they're real, they just kind of wiggle them in your face," countered Alba.

"She's embellishing," said Cook.

"That happened today at 'TRL,'" said Alba.

"Yes, I have some nice fans, but she has some great fans, too," said Cook.

One of Cook's local fans paid him an unusual tribute. Rebekah Tompkins, a University of Tennessee freshman from Kingsport, made a bust of the actor in pottery class and gave him the likeness as a gift.

"I love Dane," she said after the excitement of talking to him. "He's, like, my favorite. This is the most exciting thing of my whole life."

Tompkins spent eight weeks working on the bust.

“It’s not a very good replica, but he is doing the SuFi,” she said, referring to Cook’s trademark hand gesture. “So that’s cool.”

Alba found it ironic that she was cast as a penguin expert.

“I don’t like birds, but I really liked the penguins,” she said. “I think it’s ’cause they don’t fly.”

She has a long list of creatures she’d rather not encounter.

“I don’t like reptiles,” Alba said. “I don’t like rodents. I don’t like insects. I’m scared of bulls. I’m scared of llamas. I’m scared of ostriches — and most birds that fly indoors. And monkeys — I don’t like monkeys either.”

“I just don’t like the South African fruit bat,” said Cook. “Other than that they’re all my friends.”

News Sentinel film critic Betsy Pickle may be reached at 865-342-6442. Enjoy The Pickle Dish at <http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/pickle/>.



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