

POST-DOC

Former 'ER' star Noah Wyle on acting, otherwise known as 'getting everybody to buy into the same thing'

By *DAN CRANE*

Photography by *ELIZABETH WEINBERG*

I AM now at that age where I'm very conscious of how often I start down a 'kids today' diatribe," observes actor Noah Wyle, 43, who plays Tom Mason on TNT's hit sci-fi family drama "Falling Skies," which returned for its fourth season on June 22. Sitting front row center in the intimate, 53-seat 2nd Stage Theater in Hollywood, Wyle bemoans how the current generation of young actors seem to spend more time on their phones than learning their craft. "But I never fault anyone for being young or for not knowing anything," he says. "I can only fault you for not being curious and not wanting to learn."

Much like the character Dr. John Carter, Wyle's breakout role on the landmark medical drama "ER," he has always been eager to hone his chops. As a hungry young actor on the set of *A Few Good Men* (1992), in which he had a small role, Wyle says he never went to his trailer. Instead, he spent his off-hours watching veterans like Jack Nicholson, Tom Cruise and director Rob Reiner work. "That, to me, was every bit as valuable as any acting class or education. I got on-the-job training watching real pros ply their trade," he says. "Why anybody would turn themselves off, ignore or not value it is beyond me."

On "Falling Skies" (executive produced by Steven Spielberg, who served the same role on the first season of "ER"), Wyle wears many hats. Not only does he play the bookish history professor-cum-leader of the post-alien invasion United States, he was also credited as a producer on the show's second season.

"I'm very good at troubleshooting and problem solving on the fly," he says, which, on "Falling Skies," includes talking his fellow actors into taking a leap of faith that they are surrounded by aliens. "They can feel pretty silly acting scared in front of a group of adults," he says, laughing. "You just have to get everybody to buy into the same thing."