

THE ACTORS

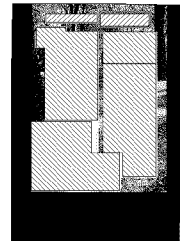
have had some dark episodes, but now they're lighting up prime time.

What does it really mean to be a Baldwin brother? Like the Kennedy and Bush boys, the Baldwins are an American dynasty that, when mentioned in casual conversation, can drive a wedge between otherwise tolerant and loving people, so strong do feelings run on the four brothers from Massapequa, Long Island. For decades, they've been the butt of jokes, the champions of civil and philanthropic causes, and the searing stars of just about every form of drama imaginable, including nearly 300 movies and television shows. Now, two of them have major parts in a pair of bona fide TV hits, Alec on NBC's *30 Rock* and William on ABC's *Dirty Sexy Money*. Hanging around William, youthful and fit at 44, and Alec, the eldest brother (who turns 50 this April), on a bright fall day in Central Park, it's easy to get the sense that being a Baldwin isn't quite what it seems. "I'm waiting to wake up one day and have all of this anger and hostility and have a therapist tell me my upbringing was all fucked-up," William says. "But I just don't feel that way."

Then again, that's coming from William, whom Alec half-jokingly describes as the least "murderous" of the bunch growing up. Whereas the drama in Alec's own life appears to trump that of Jack Donaghy—the fast-talking, ultraconservative NBC executive he plays on *30 Rock* (in season one he claimed to have overcome a peanut allergy through willpower)—William's conduct is much more scandalous on-screen than off. As *Dirty Sexy Money*'s Patrick Darling VI, he's New York's attorney general, hard at work balancing a senate campaign and an extramarital affair with a transsexual lover. "All my friends from high school and college send me e-mails and leave voice mails playfully teasing me," William says about scenes in which he kisses the actress Candis Cayne, a real-life transsexual. "She's way hotter than all of their wives. *All of their wives.*" *Dirty Sexy*

Money's success does have a price, though. William and his wife of 12 years, the singer Chynna Phillips, moved with their three young children from Bedford, New York, to Beverly Hills seven months ago, since the show is shot in L.A. "I'm just not happy about the fact that I always made a promise to myself that I wasn't going to raise my kids in Hollywood," William says.

The Baldwin brothers were raised in a modest brick-and-olive-green house on the third fairway of a nine-hole public golf course. It was here that the Baldwin pedigree was honed. "We did every first there," William says. "A thousand football games, a thousand baseball games. We had our first beer there." Alec was the politician and fatherlike



figure, Daniel the most natural athlete, Stephen the most mischievous, and William the most levelheaded. "William should have been the priest of the family," says sister Beth, who is in town catching up with her brothers. (At 52, she's the oldest Baldwin sibling.)

These days, it's clear that Alec enjoys riffing with whoever has the quickest mouth in the room. To talk to him is to talk to the dozens of people he deftly impersonates. Explaining that there is plenty of ad-libbing on *30 Rock*, he says, "Tracy Morgan improvised a line one day and I thought everyone was going to have a heart attack. He yells to me some lines that I should tell my girlfriend"—a Democratic congresswoman played by Edie Falco. Without missing a beat, Alec is jiving like Morgan: "Jack, tell her she's your fried peanut butter and banana sandwich and you're like Elvis and you're gonna eat her up." (The line that led up to this was, "Tell her that you want your privates and her privates to do a high five!")

Any time he's discussing the Emmy-winning show, Alec appears on the verge of breaking into full-throated cackles. This despite the events of last spring: After apologizing for the angry voice mail he left for Ireland, his daughter with Kim Basinger, he asked NBC's producers to nullify his contract so that he could devote himself to the cause of parental alienation. (He is now writing a book savaging the family-law system in the U.S., to be published later this year.)

So what is the state of the union between the Baldwin brothers these days? "There were very close personal relationships he had in his life that suffered at the expense of his marriage," William says of Alec's time with Basinger. "Since their relationship ended, things have sort of gotten back to normal again." And of the Baldwin bunch in toto? "The days of literally throwing haymakers at each other are long gone," William says. "But there are times when we throw verbal and emotional and psychological haymakers at each other for sport."

But no one quite understands a brother like the eldest sister. When asked what led all her brothers to become actors, Beth, watching Alec and William walk across the leafy lawn with their arms around each other's shoulders, says, "I think at some point they said, 'If he can do this,'" referring to Alec, "'we can do this.'"—MICHAEL MRAZ





LIFE STUDIES

**THE
NATURALS**

Alec and William were both class presidents of their Long Island high school.
On Alec: Ralph Lauren jacket. Blue Dunhill polo. Ermenegildo Zegna pants. Calvin Klein boots.
On William: Ralph Lauren blazer and sweater. Dunhill jeans. Banana Republic boots.
Fashion Editor: Alvaro Salazar.

Photographed by Max Vadukul