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SINCE FEELING IS FIRST

If you've seen *Field of Dreams* or *Con Air* (and if you love American popular culture, we know you have), then you have seen a couple of the many performances of Steve Eastin, one of the few character actors in Hollywood blessed with that elusive chimera: steady work.

But what you may not know about this talented and versatile actor is that he is also a talented and versatile acting coach. The Steve Eastin Acting Studio in Toluca Lake, California, only blocks from the lots of Disney, Warner Brothers, and Universal Studios, attracts students longing to learn more about Eastin's approach.

You don't have to be in Toluca Lake very long before you hear young actors whispering the phrase over pints of Bass at Timmy Nolan's. "Choiceless awareness," they say. "There's no other way. You have to get your head out of it and just feel." So we took a trip to Eastin's acting studio to find out about this philosophy.

"Descartes said, 'I think therefore I am,'" Eastin told us, "but we have to reverse that to 'I am therefore I think.' A good actor has to get back before the 'think' to the 'I am.' Miles Davis used to pay his musicians not to rehearse. He wanted the first blush. That's what we want from our actors, the first blush. This is choiceless awareness. Eastern thought has the term *sartori*, the space between the end of one thought and the beginning of the next. That's where you want to be. We've seen this philosophy manifest itself in different ways throughout our culture. For example, John Cassevettes used to say, 'Love is the ability of not knowing,' and Dr. Pinkola-Estes talks of the *rio abajo rio* or the river beneath the river where the arroyos of creativity flow."

"Our poet's have written about this, haven't they?" we asked him. "'Much madness is divinest sense,' Emily Dickenson wrote. 'Much sense the starkest madness.'"

"Yes, that's it," he told us. "Our poets have been talking about this for awhile. I think e.e.cummings had it best."

Ah yes, we remember...

"since feeling is first who pays any attention to the syntax of things will never wholly kiss you; wholly to be a fool while Spring is in the world my blood approves, and kisses are a better fate than wisdom."

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