

Actor Heath Ledger found dead

By Kristen Johnson
Features Editor

Cate Falkowski, a freshman in the College of Liberal Arts, still remembers the many years in middle school when she celebrated Heath Ledger's birthday with her friends. The girls would decorate their classroom and buy cake, throwing a party for their favorite actor.

After news hit the masses on Tuesday about Ledger's death, even a past teacher of Falkowski's called her to see how she was handling the tragedy.

"Oh, God, I just finished crying my eyes out - I've been a fan of his forever," Falkowski said. "It's just out of nowhere."



Ledger

Ledger, the 28-year-old Australian born actor, was found dead in a Manhattan apartment on Tuesday. Police said he was found lying naked in bed with prescription sleeping pills, discovered by the housekeeper and massage therapist who had visited the location for an appointment.

"Honestly, they're saying it was accidental, but I don't think it was," Falkowski said. "He was always (seemingly) depressed to me; I wouldn't be surprised if it was suicide."

Jason Doty, an instructor for Purdue's Film Video Studies, disagrees and said Ledger was not one of the typical actors associated with regular drug use.

"I think when you're in the spotlight, there's a lot of attention, a lot of pressure; I think an outlet of that could be drugs, unfortunately," Doty said. "I wouldn't assume he was a drug user though, because at this point it's all speculation."

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Ledger began his acting career at age 16 in Sydney, but performed his first well-known role at age 19 in "10 Things I Hate About You." He built his reputation steadily through television and movie roles, starring in "Brokeback Mountain," "Monster's Ball," "A Knight's Tale," "The Patriot" and "Lords of Dogtown."

However, as Doty said, his most likely biggest movie role is still to be witnessed this summer.

"Here's the tragic thing: He

hadn't been in that huge of a film that could have made his career," Doty said. "Batman' could have done that for him."

Falkowski said she is happy to know that he was able to finish filming for "The Dark Night," expected to be released this summer.

"He was so excited for that role as The Joker," Falkowski said. "I know the movie's premiere is going to be really bitter sweet."

Falkowski said that everyone in her McCutcheon hallway was shouting about Ledger as she wept in her room.

"I have an exam - I can't even think about it," she said. "I just feel really bad for his daughter."

Outside of his film career, Ledger had a two-year-old daughter, Matilda Rose, with Michelle Williams, an actress from a multitude of movies and television shows such as "Dawson's Creek."

"You see him on screen and you think an actor that young, that wealthy, that talented - it really takes people for a loop," Doty said. "He seemed like a perfect guy."

Associated Press contributed to this story.