



INTERVIEWS INTERVIEWS - MOVIES

Nicole Oliver – Britney Ever After

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By: Jamie Steinberg

Q) What are the recent projects that you are working on?

A) Well, it is pilot season so most days are busy learning pages of dialogue for the latest, spy/romantic comedy/sci-fi offering from any one of the networks or streaming platforms! I am currently working on several animation projects...none of which I can talk about!! Pesky NDAs! But I am very excited because one of the projects allows me to explore a voice I don't normally get cast for. That is one of the things I love about voice work- the freedom to play roles that you would never be considered for in the live action arena.

Q) Talk about your audition process for *Britney Ever After*.

A) It was the same as any other on-camera project, but I didn't know the movie was about Britney Spears until the call backs. I had my suspicions, but the producers were keeping it a secret! The director, Leslie Libman, was really interested in what we could bring to the role to really flesh out the character's truth and motivation. Sometimes when you play a "real person," you can tip over into parody or a surface-only representation if you can't fill out the edges of the character with a sense of history, truth and direction. Leslie was always about keeping it centered and real.

Q) What kind of research did you do into playing Lynne Spears?

A) I devoured everything I could find on the internet and in book stores! I wanted to make sure I was as true to the character/person as possible, but in the end it was important to me to just be true to the idea of a mother who would do anything for her child. I can relate to that as I am a mother of two boys and I have tried to walk the path of parenting with the best of intentions to provide a safe environment for my children to thrive, explore and develop into contributing members of society. Parents are people though too...and we make mistakes. It's how we handle those mistakes, rebound in the tough times and come together as family that is important. I see Lynne Spears as a woman with three children and a struggling marriage (at the time), who was trying to make the best decisions she could given the circumstances she found herself in. That's all we can do as parents – love our children and forgive ourselves.

Q) What is the most challenging aspect of playing someone real?

A) Everything! This is a real person with a documented history and a lot of people who have their own opinions (and are not afraid to share them) about what the "truth" is. At the end of the day, all I can do is tell the story and be open to possibility. And have fun. I mean, I get to play imagination for a living and that is a true gift. In the case of *Britney Ever After*, the imaginings we are sharing are part of a pop-culture social media fueled reality....so ALL I can do is immerse in the project, enjoy the relationships we created for the small screen and the new ones I made during filming....and breathe and enjoy the ride, wherever it leads.

Q) Did you spend much time with Natasha Bassett to develop the mother/daughter bond?

A) I love Natasha! She is a beautifully nuanced actress and a sweet and wonderful person. We had tons of fun in our scenes together and, yes, we were able to spend some time together off set as well. I made Canadian Thanksgiving dinner for both Natasha and Nathan Keyes, who plays Justin. There was a great sense of family and togetherness on set and off and that is something that is not always the case.

Q) What advice did director Leslie Libman give you during filming that you took to heart?

A) Leslie gave us lots of space to play and explore, but when she knew what she wanted she was not shy to let you know! I think one of my favorite moments during filming was when she let me improv to the camera about Lynne and Britney's relationship. Leslie would feed me some ideas or questions about Britney and let me just go for it! That sense of freedom is a gift on any film set.

Q) What were some moments from the film that you are most looking forward to viewers seeing?

A) There are so many! One of my favorite days was filming the Kevin Federline/Britney marriage and reception – lots of playing, dancing...and laughing! I also am looking forward to seeing how some of the scenes between Lynne/Britney and Sam (Benjamin Arce) turn out. As an actor, there were so many layers and relationships to play and weave in and out from...I'm curious to see how it is assembled. Those scenes were really about, for me, a mother's unconditional love for her child and the feeling that there was nothing you could do to make the hurt go away. Our children grow up and become adults to the eyes of the outside world, but they never stop being your babies and that instinct to protect, nurture and make everything better is only complicated by the complexities of mature relationships, circumstances and outside pressures. So...yes, I am curious to see how that all comes together.

Q) You are a part of social media. Are you looking forward to the instant fan feedback you will be receiving?

A) Social media is a fabulously complicated communication tool and device!! I truly try and move through life from a position of grace and possibility. Social media allows people an opportunity to create community, express opinion and feel like they are connected and involved. So...I am curious to people's reactions...Not everyone has to like the project. I just hope people can appreciate the intent was not to malign, but to highlight the incredible journey of this dynamic entertainer and the comeback trajectory she has been on for the past several years. Everyone loves a comeback story. So.... yes, I am looking forward to articulate feedback and engagement.

Q) Is there something you want to be sure viewers know about the movie and your role?

A) The script I read and shot was a great story of a young woman whose life has been a "Heroine's Journey." Britney answered the call for adventure, endured tests of strength of will, setbacks, emotional and physical ordeals and is on the "road back." Britney Spears' music has always been a part of my world and I look forward to seeing where her music and life take us next!

Q) What do you think it is about *Britney Ever After* that will make it a classic Lifetime movie?

A) *Britney Ever After* is a female driven story about risk and redemption, love and life and the roller coaster nature of relationships. The challenges that Britney faced are relatable to and for other women across America and her handling of her journey is a reminder to never give up.