

The Women of Kung Fu:

Nicole Oliver

Playing In The Sandbox

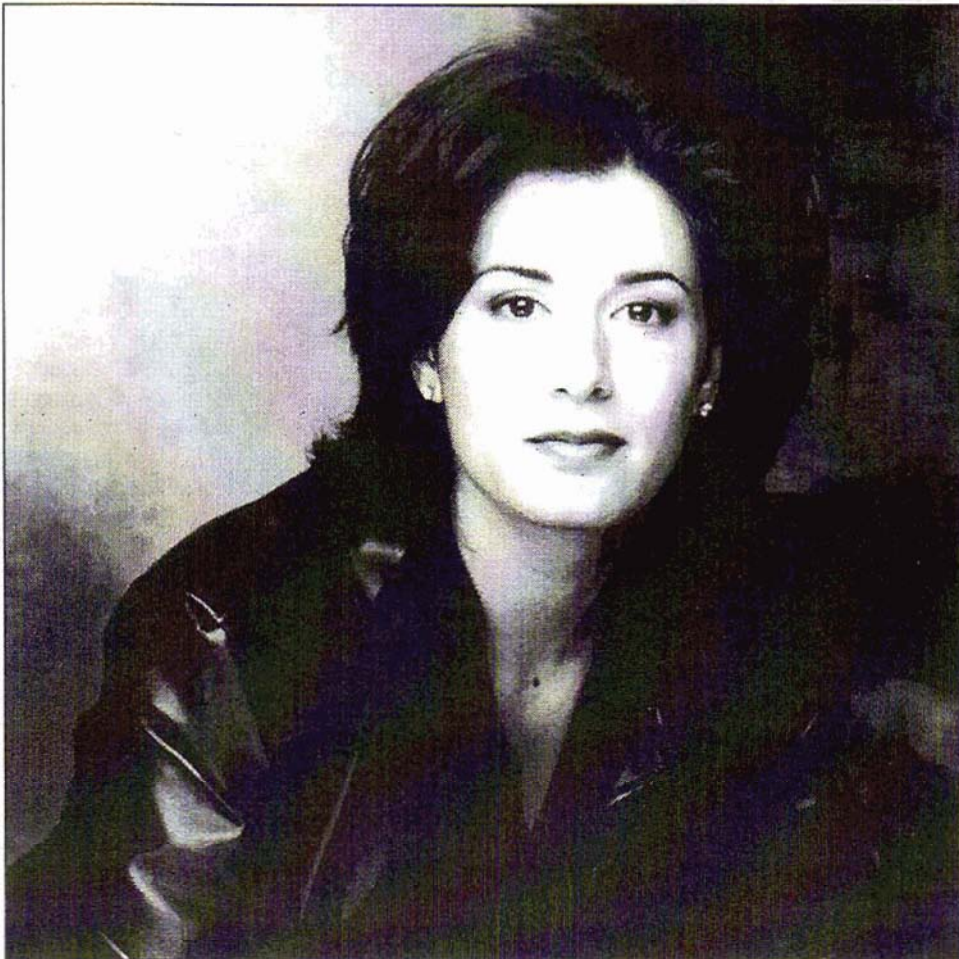
Nicole started out as a ballet dancer because, according to her mom, Nicole would not stop clapping with the music. Her first performance at three years old was a dance recital in front of 1000 people wherein Nicole sat down on

the stage, stared at all of the people, and peed her pants. Fortunately, Nicole was soon weaned of this habit! However, her professional pursuit of ballet was dashed when Nicole blew out her left knee at the age of twelve.

In grade 12 Nicole became involved in a school play, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. After someone suggested that Nicole audition, she was offered one of the lead roles and was forever after "bit by the bug." The original plan had been law school, but Nicole told her dad that she wanted to be an actress. Both parents supported Nicole 100% with the philosophy, "The worst thing would be to live your life wondering what would have happened if..." Nicole went to theatre at Toronto's York University, then she was off to England to attend the British-American Dramatic Academy in Oxford.

Nicole's first paid professional performance was at age 16 when she worked at the NAC in Ottawa for \$211 weekly. She still has her first paycheck! Her first "real" acting job was Kelly on *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues*. Nicole originally auditioned for the rock-and-roll singer (Tyler) in the pilot episode. She sang for Michael

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Sloan but was not cast as Tyler. Ten months later Tyler was no more, and Michael remembered Nicole. She read for "Kelly Blaine" (later named "Kelly Blake") which led to her first job, a shower scene with Chris Potter, and a recurring character!

Nicole's favorite *KF:TLC* episode is *A Shaolin Christmas* because she had the opportunity to work with the women from the



show: Kate Trotter, Belinda Metz, and Victoria Snow. The episode was nicely written and a lot of fun from the first moment of joking with Strenlich in the Santa outfit all the way down to the final moment. Nicole praises the great directing of Terry Ingram.

Nicole's favorite *KF:TLC* scene is where Kelly goes after Peter with the knife (*Plague*). Nicole claims it was just fun to do as an actress, to be able to "go nuts!" She enjoyed the incredible freedom and physicality of that scene. She adds that Chris was good to work with and that Peter's moments during that scene were great. The episode demonstrated real concern between the two characters, and Nicole loved the finale where Peter was holding Kelly.

If Nicole could have written a Kelly Blake scene, she would have

included more physicality, like tracking someone and following through on an arrest. Nicole laments that Kelly was always held hostage, stuck in a cave, or used as bait to catch Peter. However, Nicole realizes that if Kelly had been more physically involved, it would have been *The Kelly Blake Show*. Still, it would have been nice to have the opportunity to "kick butt!"

When asked how Nicole and Kelly are alike, Nicole claims, "We are both very passionate. When Kelly was angry, she went all the way. We both have a lot of love for those in our lives; we both care about the people around us." Nicole and Kelly are also very different. "I do not whine anywhere near the way Kelly does. I am also a woman of the 90s. I would not tolerate half of the garbage that Kelly put up from Peter."

For Nicole the most touching moment on *KF:TLC* was when the final episode (*Requiem*) was shot. "For me personally I got my start on that show, and I had worked with a lot of the people on the set for the past three to four years. The show had grown together as we



grew together. And now it was over just as we finally got it." Nicole remembers the incredible moment when cast and crew were standing around while Peter says his farewell soliloquy in the precinct; during that final goodbye, the looks on the crew's faces told so much. Chris had not told the

others about the speech he had written himself concerning Peter's journey; Michael Sloan and Director Jon Cassar decided to just spring it on everyone. The scene ended in a river of tears, not



rehearsed, representing what was truly happening at that moment.

Since *KF:TLC* ended production, Nicole has guest starred in such series as *Stargate*, *Deadman's Gun*, *PSI Factor*, *FX: The Series*, and *Outer Limits*. Her favorite performance was her role in *Outer Limits* with Brent Spiner, who was a delight to work with in this episode. The role was a real dramatic "talking head" piece with lots of conversation which allowed a long period of time with one character. Nicole enjoyed working as one character for an extended period of time providing her the opportunity to really develop the performance from beginning to end.

According to Nicole the best thing about acting is, "I get to play for a living. All the games that I played as a little girl—the stories I would dream up with my Barbie doll and toys, playing in the sandbox. And I actually do it for a living!" The worst thing about acting is "waiting...for that next role. In most professions, a person can see progression: where you started, how doing things lead to the next thing, promotion, or a better pro-

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duce films and other media. I'm a firm believer that a person can accomplish anything if s/he is prepared to succeed with determination, hard work and dreams. That's one of the most valuable lessons I ever learned from Kung-fu.

"I'm also working on my book about Northern Shaolin Kung-fu and Tai Chi. I've always wanted to write about the history, philosophy and benefits of these magnificent arts, other than the self-defense aspects. There are plenty of fight manuals. I'm not ignoring the self-defense aspects in my book, I'm just not focusing on them. The book is almost completed and should be available later in 1998.

"And I still enjoy stunt performing (I worked most recently on SPY GAME and in the movie, ESCAPE FROM L.A.). I continue to teach Kung-fu and Tai Chi privately and to small groups. I love to teach, which is to share with others. Teaching also reminds me of where I came from and how I began my Kung-fu journey. Happily, it brought me to KF:TLC, and to the colleagues and friends who helped me be a part of and contribute to that dream." ☉



Mike doing a white crane stance

Michael Dawson's Favorite Episodes...

My Favorite KF:TLC Episodes to Work On:

Tournament, Temple, Dragonswing II, Gunfighters, Rite of Passage, Sacred Chalice of the I Ching, A Shaolin Treasure, Who is KCC, Requiem My Favorite KF:TLC

Episodes to Watch:

Lacquered Box, Aspects of the Soul, Temple, Retribution, The Promise, Storm Warning, Requiem... and many more...

Martial Arts Systems and Styles:

Northern Shaolin, Tai Chi Praying Mantis, Seven-Star Praying Mantis, Northern My-Jong Lohan ("18 Law Horn"), Wang and Chen style Tai Chi Chuan, Pa Kua, Hsing-I, traditional weaponry and Chi Kung.

Favorite TV Shows:

Kung Fu (old and new), Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, Columbo, Star Trek (Classic), Nightstalker, Dr. Who, Batman: The Animated Series

Favorite Films:

Kung Fu (TOS pilot), The Empire Strikes Back, Blade Runner, Circle of Iron, Planet of the Apes, Excalibur, The Last Temptation of Christ, Immortal Beloved, John Carpenter movies, any of the old Hammer and Universal horror films.

Hobbies:

Comic book and toy collecting, watching movies, swimming and camping. ☉

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ject, But as an actor, a person can audition for something six months ago and be given a job in something else. There is no consistency. An actor often does not know what people are thinking or saying about the performance. There may be no feedback for six months to a year. And by then, you're on something else." Nicole quickly adds, "But I still wouldn't do anything else!"

Nicole's birthday is February 22 and her favorite color is forest green. Her favorite movie star is Susan Sarandon; her favorite TV star is Christine Lahti, who Nicole feels is very dynamic and a very powerful female role model. In the area of comedy, Nicole loves watching Tea Leoni (Mrs. David Duchovny), who reminds Nicole of a young Lucille Ball. Nicole's favorite TV shows are *X-Files* and almost anything on the A&E network. She claims to be a "closet" action-freak and loved *Air Force One*. Older movies she counts among her favorites are *An Affair to Remember* with Cary Grant and *The Godfather*. When asked if she had any other favorite things, Nicole replied, "I love the ocean. The smell of the beach and water is so peaceful and relaxing."

After being asked if there was anything she would like to say to *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues* fans, Nicole replied, "Their support is incredible. As a Canadian actor in a country that is known for being overly polite and not trumpeting its performers, or supporting the artists as much as Americans, it is extremely flattering and makes you feel really good about what you are doing that people care to take the time to watch and write. The fans keep me playing in the sandbox." ☉