

Nicole Oliver

Interview conducted by Phil Davies Brown
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Nicole Oliver is a casting director's dream come true. Graceful, beautiful, pretty, sexy, strong, emotive, able to do her own stunts, voice over work and presenting too.

I caught up with the talented actress, who took some time out from her busy schedule, to tell us genre fans about her wide and varied experiences, which range from playing against Brent Spiner, to voicing a talking toothbrush.

This talented lady likes to be challenged, so I set her some questions. Read on to see how she fared.



Nicole: "I was bitten by the acting bug during Grade 12".

How did you get into acting?

I was bitten by the acting bug during Grade 12; I auditioned for, and won the role of, Sandy in the play *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. All I remember about my opening night is saying my first line and then bowing at the end! It was a hypnotic experience; probably the most frightening and yet rewarding thing I had done to that point in my life. After that experience, I knew I wanted to do more so, I informed my parents that I wasn't going to be a lawyer (as I had previously proclaimed!) but instead decided a life in the theatre was for me. Luckily my folks were very supportive; the worst thing I could say about the choices I made in my life, according to my father, was "What would have happened if...". So, I auditioned for and was accepted into the Theatre program at York University in Toronto, Canada. After graduating, my first big audition was for a recurring role (Detective Kelly Blake) on *"Kung Fu: The Legend Continues"*, and I booked it and haven't looked back since!

You worked as a stunt performer on *Darkman II*. Did you train as a stunt person?

I received some stunt training (swords, knives, tumbling) during my undergraduate degree at York. The Stunt Coordinator on *"Darkman"* was my Stunt Coordinator on *"Kung Fu"* so he knew what I could do and thought it might be a fun part for me! It was a blast to be one of the "guys" and drive around the city at night acting like a thug and shooting off firearms. However, I can safely say I have no desire to jump from tall buildings, set myself on fire, or flip my car in midair; I'll leave that to the professionals! I have the utmost respect for what Stunt Performers do. They make everything look effortless but there is a lot of skill, knowledge and planning behind every move they do.

You have worked on many fine TV shows over the years, are you a fan of TV shows dealing with the paranormal, sci-fi and horror?

I love shows that deal with the unexplained. I am a bit of a conspiracy theory nut and love listening to Art Bell on the radio! I love to be scared but my friends tease me because I watch those types of programs with my hands covering my eyes or plugging my ears most of the time! I have this theory that horror films are just not that scary if you can't hear the creepy music etc. that accompanies the killer! (Plugging my ears helped me get through most of the Friday the 13th films!)

Is TV harder to shoot than Film?

TV and film are just...different. Each day of work, on a film or TV set, there is a goal to accomplish "x" amount of the total number of pages that make up the TV episode or film script. If you are working in television, your daily page count is probably at least 2x that of film. So, I like film because there is usually more time to explore every possibility of a scene and do multiple takes and rehearse a little more with your fellow actors. But the pace of TV can also be very addictive!

Do you have a favourite show that you have worked on and why?

One of my favorite shows to work on was *The Outer Limits*. I was able to play 2 completely different characters on 2 episodes over the 6 or so seasons it was on the air. In *"The Deprogrammers"* I was a woman who, with the help of Brent Spiner (best known for Data on *Star Trek*), rescued my husband from alien enslavement and in *"Judgment Day"* I played a host of a reality show called *Judgment Day* that let family members hunt down and deliver justice to the people who had hurt/killed their loved ones (with Molly Ringwald and Chris Elliott). Each episode was like a mini movie, with its own unique cast. The scripts were fun and I got to work with some really talented people.



Nicole: "I think people love escape and love to be frightened".

Canada has become the only place to make genre shows, do you find it's easier to work in Canada now?

I don't think it's any easier to work here than Los Angeles or London. There is such a diverse local talent pool in any major film centre (Toronto, Vancouver etc.) in Canada that provides a lot of choice to Producers. Also, as a Canadian, I not only have to compete against my fellow countrymen for juicy parts, but on any Service Production, that is any production based in the U.S. etc that shoots in Canada, I also have to fight against US actors for Lead roles etc.! So, no, it's not easier.

You have done a lot of voice acting too. Is that more challenging, as you only have your voice to convey a range of emotions?

I love voice acting. And yes, it is challenging to only have your voice to convey what your character is feeling. Of course, there will be pictures animated to your voice after, but you need to get the right tone so it all makes sense when all the elements are put together. I enjoy being able to play a wide range of roles with my voice. In real life and so "on camera",

I am a woman and so that's what I play- moms, lawyers, wives etc. all of the same age range. But I have played a 9 yr. old boy, a 70 yr old woman a Sorceress and a talking toothbrush in voice-over... and sometimes all in the same show!

Why do you think horror and sci-fi shows are so popular?

I think people love escape and love to be frightened...to feel that extreme adrenaline rush that comes when you experience the unexpected or the unknown.

Have you ever been to a convention to meet fans of any of the shows you have worked on?

When I worked on "Kung Fu; The Legend Continues" I went to a few conventions (mid 90's). It was always, and still is, lots of fun to meet the fans.

You have worked various roles in the industry, is acting the one you enjoy most?

I love to act. It is a real treat to be able to make a living doing something that gives you such personal fulfillment.

Is there anything else you would like to do in the industry that you haven't had the chance to yet?

I love to challenge myself, which is probably why I got into this industry in the first place. The stereotypical response to this question is that "I 'd like to direct", and there is an element of truth in that, but I think I'd like to keep challenging myself to try different areas of the industry. I'd love to do a musical again or get back to my roots and perform Shakespeare on stage again. I'd also like to, at some point before I leave this planet, develop and create an original...something...be it a short film, feature, documentary. I just hope to have my eyes open wide enough so I can see the next opportunity to "branch out" when it presents itself.

What will you be working on next?

I have just completed a feature called "The Foursome". It is a golf comedy starring Kevin Dillon (Poseidon Adventure, Entourage). It's about 4 guys who reunite at their 20th college reunion and over a round of golf reflect on their past and future; I play Lori Towers, one of the wives of the foursome and a "has-been beauty" who is desperately trying to rediscover who she is and what her purpose is now. She's a very funny character and I had a blast playing her. The film should be released Spring 2007. I am also hosting a reality show for Life Network (Canada) called "Crash Test Mommy". The premise of the show is that for 48 hours, Mom's biggest critic (husband, sister, mother-in-law etc) gets to take charge of the house and the kids, because after all, how hard can motherhood be? We are presently shooting seasons 3 and 4. This is my first hosting gig and I am really enjoying learning a whole new side of the industry.

"Thank you ever so much for taking part in this interview Nicole. And we wish you the very best of luck in the future."