



## Interview With Actress Nicole Oliver, “Britney Ever After”

By Ruth on February 18, 2017  
in Interview, movie, Music, television

This past summer, I was pleased, awed, and inspired to interview the ponderously talented and incredibly astute Nicole Oliver, and when I noticed that Nicole was appearing in a Lifetime movie based on the life of Britney Spears, I hoped for the opportunity to interview her yet again. Just last week, she and I chatted in depth about her role of Lynne Spears in this film, which will premiere tonight (February 18th) on the Lifetime Network. In addition to this much-anticipated biopic, Nicole was able to inform us of a couple of other things she has on the horizon for this year, as this looks to be a most eventful year for this busy mom, wife, and actress, including new challenges about which she is only able to hint.



**RH: It looks like you have been busy since we last spoke.**

NO: It's been great. It's such a blessing. Trying to juggle everything can be cuckoo sometimes. Careful what you wish for. So I should just shut up buttercup and enjoy the ride. {laughs}

**The next big thing for you is *Britney Ever After*.**

Yeah, it's been a really quick turnaround which is sometimes unusual in this business. That's a testament to the people in charge.

**Is this the first time you did a movie that was based on real-life characters?**

Yeah, I think this is the first time I've done something that is based on a real person who is still alive.

**I'm thinking that for me, that would—**

—freak me out?? {laughs}



**Yeah, I'm thinking that would put a lot of pressure on me. Especially if they're still alive. It's one thing if they're dead, but I'm thinking that when the people are still alive, it might be kind of intimidating.**

You can never go into this with prejudice. You have to look at the script and do your research. I certainly did my research and read what I could get my hands on. I scoured the internet and took it all with a grain of salt. For me, the beginning of it was that she is a mother. I'm a mother. She has a child in the business, and I have children in the business. So right there, it was more about what we had in common than what we have that is different. Those differences are actually just perceptions. While I might perceive that I'm nothing like this woman, if someone else were to compare us, maybe there would be some similarities. But that's what I started with. We are both mothers. And the other thing is that we both love our family.

You know, there are so many people who have opinions. Some say, "Her mother was responsible for Britney's downfall." Well, I could look at my own kids. My big joke is, "I'm sure you're going to go to therapy and blame it all on me." That's kind of what kids do, but I'm not saying that's what Britney did. That was just more of a reflection in the form of a joke on my kids. {laughs}

The story that is there is that her daughter wanted to sing and dance. So she got the chance to do it for Disney with Ryan Gosling and Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake. So obviously the casting director knew what they were doing. They chose great, talented people to play these roles.

But I think a lot of parents—and I feel a lot of this when I work with kids in movies—no one goes into this business wanting to try to screw up their children, right? You don't sign your kids up for hockey thinking you're going to give them bad knees, bad backs, and that they're going to be washed up at seventeen. As parents, we just want to be able to provide as many opportunities for our kids. And man, if you express an interest in something, I'm gonna do my best as a parent to see that you have an opportunity to explore that. I think that's a basic rule for almost all parents. You could say, "How much money do you have?" "How much time do you have?" "Are you a single parent?" The questions are endless, but just speaking really generally, most parents want to key into their kids' interests and try to give them every experience possible within that interest.

What I discovered is that she has two other kids, and she had a husband who had a drinking problem—he was battling this demon. And he's spoken about it a lot publicly. At a certain point, her daughter was sixteen, seventeen on the road. Legally for actors, if the child is sixteen and working as an actor, the parents aren't welcome on set. When you're away on a distant location, from eighteen on, the parents aren't welcome on set. So the whole thing with *Oops, I Did It Again* and the tour she started with NSYNC, Britney was eighteen. She had her friend travel with her so she'd have somebody there to be with her. She {Lynne Spears} needed to go and make money, and she had two other kids to raise who were not eighteen. They were younger. So those were some realities I could understand. Not the husband as an alcoholic part, but I've had alcoholism in my family and my husband's family. There are not very many people it hasn't touched one way or another. You do what you have to do for your family in order to survive. If we could all clone ourselves, that would be great, but we can't. We make the best decisions in the moment. Hindsight's twenty/twenty, and people are always going to comment and think they could have done better. But I've always maintained that until you've walked a mile in that person's shoes, you really cannot judge.

**The media has not been kind to Britney nor her family. When it was announced that you were going to be in this film, my immediate response was, "Oh, I don't like Britney Spears," because of all the garbage that's out there. And then I thought, "Now that's not the right mindset to have in all this. I don't even know the story."**

The script that I got to read, Ruth—the script that I shot..... Here's my caveat. I haven't seen it all put together. You go into a project. You get a script. You read it, and you go, "Oh, this is interesting. I like that. I like the themes." For me, the themes are redemption, comeback, honesty, and dealing with personal demons. It has great, palatable scenes that are part of any story of success about real people. And the story was an opportunity to play a woman that was fighting for her daughter's sanity and a chance for her to live. That's how I approached it.

**I knew that going into the movie with preconceived notions was not a good thing, so I am making the conscious decision to go in with an open mind. There will be people who are going to judge it from the get-go, and they are not going to get out of what they would have had they decided to be more open-minded.**

You know, “Haters are always going to hate.” I don’t know who said that first, but I’m gonna quote it here. When you’re dealing with a real person and a beloved person, it is a little bit frightening ’cause you have an intense reaction. Her fans are incredibly faithful—wow, what a blessing. And she, being Britney, has expressed that she’s not supporting the project. The film that I made is the story of a girl who is chasing her dreams. It’s kind of like *The Wizard of Oz*. She got caught in a tornado and banged her head. So why are we gonna talk about faults? I think it’s a more interesting pursuit to watch it in terms of the influence of the media and the input of inside pressure—all those things. We are fragile, beautiful creatures. People who perform and have a desire to put themselves out there..she’s certainly not the first performer to have a public breakdown. And after having babies, I mean, just wow.

I know, for me, and I’ve talked about it... I had post-partum depression after both of my boys, but it took me three and a half years to actually fess up to it and try to do something about it. I was hosting and producing and directing a reality show with a six-month-old and a two-year-old. But I was fine. I could do it. And there were people who depended upon me, so you put one foot in front of the other.

I look to Britney as a warrior, and the fact that she is on a comeback...she’s still out there and doing all the rest of it. I’ve gone to her concerts. I love her music. In fact, I often say that my quick vocal warm-up is to sing Britney Spears on the way down to the studio. {laughs} It’s fun. It’s music that makes you feel bubbly, frisky, perky and playful. Then to discover that these people who create this illusion are having some struggles—it can be tough for some. It is a story of love and triumph and redemption. Everyone loves a great comeback story, right?

All of us who went into the making of this movie—it was not about trying to belittle her or make fun of her journey at all. It’s a really great journey and one that maybe will repeat again and is probably repeating now with somebody else not necessarily famous. I think she’s a warrior woman, and that’s how I went into it. As a mother who loves her daughter and just wants what’s best for her. I’m sure there may have been some missteps along the way, but nobody is perfect and you did the best you could do. In the end, all you need to answer to is yourself and your family and just look in the mirror.

**What you just said really makes a strong case for watching the film. I am certainly looking forward to seeing the movie, and maybe some of my readers who may have felt as I did might be more willing to give the movie a try.**

You know, it’s so tough. Social media is fantastic. It’s a blessing. It’s a part of our business, and it’s the bane of our existence. I look back growing up, and man, I’m so glad I didn’t have social media. Look at my kids! They can’t make any mistakes, and when they do, those mistakes are there forever and ever and ever. It used to be that you had to deal with your own personal baggage. No one else had to see it or even know about it. But social media has changed all that.



You know, these famous people are people too. And while they provide pleasure and guilty escapes—and sure, they make money for it—they also put themselves out there. It's never as easy as people try to make it seem. There's a real person there and a real story. And my grandma and parents both said that same old proverb I mentioned earlier—"Walk a mile in someone else's shoes, and then we'll have a conversation." I think that's an important thing to keep in mind. You can have your opinion, but it's so easy to be a Monday Morning Quarterback and sit back and judge a person's life by the gloss of the magazine page or the glimpse of a music video. For that perfect moment when they're made up. "Oh look at them. How easy, easy, easy."

Just the other day, I was remarking on the fact that our movie stars who die, we tend to remember them at a certain point in their life. I was watching Mike Myers in *Wayne's World* with my boys, and Mike Myers is so young and fresh-looking in that movie. And that's because it was like thirty years ago. I realized that's how I always think of him. That or *Austin Powers*, which was just a decade later. He's written a book now and you see him out there all over the place. His hair's gone brown again, but he let it go white-gray for a while. And I remember seeing him and I was shocked. But that's the thing about entertainment—we hold them at this certain moment forever. The fountain of youth is from our memory. We think that they should somehow still be that. I know that's a little deep.

Back to the film—Leslie Libman, what a fantastic director. She's an incredible director because she's so easy to work with. And she's a really great actress as well, and she brings that into her directing style. She was always open to suggestions and to trying new things. If she wanted something, she'd let you know. She created a really great environment for playing. And there were lots of women on the set too, which was amazing. Like one of our camera operators—she was fierce. Most of the department heads were women. The assistant director team were women. The executive producer was a woman. We were women who were telling a woman's story. So it's not about exploitation. It's a story that—if you take away Britney—it's the story of a young girl who is going after her dream and has some challenges along the way. We'll see how the movie all comes out, but I'm hopeful. Although I don't know Lynne...I would have loved to have met her and to talk with her mother to mother..but all I could do was portray a woman who loved her daughter because that's what I took from it. It might sound simple, but that's the truth. And all you can do as an actor is play a truth.

**The film *The Philosophy of Phil*—that movie you talked about last time.**

It's coming out this year, I think.

**Do you have any idea where this film will be featured?**

The idea I believe is that it will be featured in film festivals. And that is the place for it, I think. It's a unique script. Greg Kinnear directs and stars in it. It's a quirky script, so I think that's the best fit for it.

I also have *Wonder* coming out in April.

**I was going to ask you about that because you were filming that when I published my first interview with you.**

Julia Roberts is in it, and that one will be a feature film. When you're not playing a lead, and you're playing a supporting character, you typically have no idea when and where it will come out. I could end up on the cutting room floor—I don't know. I can say it is a beautiful script and a great story. I loved working with the cast. It was a beautiful project to be a part of with a really great message. I look forward to watching it on the roll-out.

**And then, of course, there's *My Little Pony: The Movie*.**

{laughs} It's gathering steam! It's with Kristin Chenoweth, Zoe Saldana, Taye Diggs, Liev Schreiber, and me and Andrea Libman, Ashleigh Ball, Tabitha St. Germain, Emily Blunt, Tara Strong—all these great people are in the movie. I think it's supposed to be out Fall 2017. That's what they have announced. In fact, they started a twitter account for the movie. It's real. In fact, there's a blue check. It must be real, Ruth. {laughs}

**That's right! Exactly! {laughs} I assume there's nothing else coming up you can talk about?**

No, not that I can talk about, but this is an exciting year for me. One of the things I'm trying to do is challenge myself and push my boundaries and get a little uncomfortable. I'm not stopping acting or all the things I'm doing, but my tease would be to look for me this year to put another hat on and try some different things. And I'm really excited about it

'cause there's some stuff moving forward with that right now.

**That's cool. I know you had mentioned last time that you wanted to direct a short film. So maybe that will happen for you this year.**

There is some great stuff coming up. I'll be on some new shows I'm not allowed to talk about yet. The film I did, *Marrying the Family*, did really well at the film festivals. So we'll see where that goes. Then I have two feature films coming out this year and *Britney Ever After* this month {tonight}. And it's pilot season, and I'm busy. I'm still able to memorize about fifty pages a week. Woohoo!

**Are you still doing public speaking?**



Yes, I still am. And I'm actually teaching. And I've potentially got a couple more public speaking events lined up this year. I've got my fingers in a lot of pots of paint, and I'm looking forward to see what the canvas looks like at the end of this year in December. It will be my reflective painting.

**I love the fact that you are so busy and doing such a wide variety of things. I do that too.**

I think it just feeds my soul. It keeps me interested. It keeps me on my toes. Like I have said before, I love possibility. And there's so much of it. I'm about embracing possibility and positivity. I've got two teenage boys, so it's good to put that vibe out there.

**What conventions do you have coming up that you can mention?**

I'm going to be going to Everfree Northwest in Seattle May 12-14.

**Right. My daughter and I are going to go as well.**

Oh are you? Great! Make sure you contact me!

**Oh trust me—we will.**

The seventh season of *My Little Pony* is airing on TV. And the feature. There's no sign of things slowing down with that franchise anytime soon. Everything always evolves and changes. You don't want things to stay the same. What has stayed the same is the incredible creativity of the fans and their sense of generosity and their sense of selflessness and their willingness to embrace a very simple but poignant idea—Friendship is Magic. And it's one that I think we all so desperately need to embrace today. No matter where you fall in the political spectrum, we all need to embrace this idea that friendship is magic.



I agree completely. In so many ways, I am tired of the political rhetoric and I try to stay away from it.

It's exhausting. I don't look at twitter after a certain time of night any more, and I scan through my notifications, but I don't really tweet politics. The only thing I would tweet—I'm a huge supporter of feminism and women's rights, so if any woman does anything for a first, I'm going to trumpet that regardless of what her political party is. Social media is exhausting. I appreciate having a phone conversation with you.



While I was initially "on the fence" concerning watching *Britney Ever After*, after chatting with Nicole, I don't think I'd want to miss it. Because I know that Nicole only agrees to projects about which she is passionate and excited, it makes me even more intrigued in the case of this movie. Ever since I first connected with Nicole, I have greatly respected her opinion and ideas, and even on the rare times when we may not agree on something (I don't know if that has ever happened, but it probably will one day), I consistently view Nicole as a grounded woman, wife and mother who seeks positivity and shares pragmatic wisdom whenever she can, even if it may not be the "popular" thing to say. While Nicole is probably more of an active feminist than I ever would be, I am so grateful to have strong women like her in the arts who champion correct and uplifting causes and are not afraid of opposition in the face of things about which they are passionate.



Furthermore, the one thing that can never be questioned about Nicole is that she completely immerses herself in everything she does, and no matter what, her heart is always in the right place. She makes no excuses for the woman, person, and artist that she is, and she reaches out genuinely to those who need a kind word or a helping hand. My daughter, Martha, is a true *My Little Pony* fan, and when I asked Nicole to say "hi" to her at the end of our chat, Nicole graciously did so and also told Martha to clean up her room! That act of kindness made Martha's night, and as her mom, it made my night as well. It is further proof of the warm-hearted, unselfish, humble, benevolent woman that Nicole is. Be sure that you tune into the Lifetime Network tonight (February 18th) to see Nicole portray Lynne Spears in *Britney Ever After*. Also, consider checking out all of Nicole's links below, for one thing I can promise you is that you will find rainbows, sunshine, and of course, regular updates about her works!