

The cocktail lounge near Universal Studios is noisy with the chatter of one group of people who look like tourists hoping to see a Face, and another group of people who look like they've just signed such a Face to a multi-picture deal.

Neither bunch looks particularly like Daphne Zuniga's crowd, and if you didn't know that she was co-starring in Mel Brooks' soon-to-be-released comedy *Spaceballs* (as Princess Vespa), you might guess that she was a college student forced to sit in this place for a sociology research paper.

Zuniga's friendly smile is casual but reserved, suggesting a sort of intellectual preppy who doesn't open up too easily, as if she *wants* you to ask questions but hopes they don't turn out to be too dumb.

That's not really surprising, considering that she has a background that's a little complicated. Not unsettling, but at least varied.

Her mother is a Unitarian minister, and Daphne was raised in Berkeley during that college town's most tumultuous years. Then, early in her high school years, her mother began a ministry in Woodstock, Vermont (pop. 500).

So where does that kind of move leave her now, socio-political- and philosophy-wise?

"Oh, I'm like really-really conservative, and I love Ronnie Reagan and . . ."

The Valley Girl parody comes and goes quickly, and Zuniga hastens to set the record straight. "No, just kidding. *Just kidding*. Quite the opposite, actually. My dad was a philosophy student; my mother was getting her master's degree. When you grow up in that environment, it's natural to question authority, to stand up for what you think is right. We had walkouts and sit-ins all the way through elementary school. I remember a teachers' strike when I was in the 7th grade. For three months we didn't go to school. We stayed home and read books and did book reports. Growing up there, you learned about taking action to change the system.

"Then we moved to Woodstock, a small town, very conservative, mostly farmers. I didn't fit in right away. They were all jocks and didn't really know what to do with me."

Daphne Zuniga as a princess from outer space, stranded in the desert with her prissy droid (Lorene Yarnell under the metal, with the voice of Joan Rivers).



PETER BOWEL

Daphne Zuniga Does Schtick

**She Was So Sweet in *The Sure Thing*...
Now She's Out in Space**

But by the time Zuniga moved to Vermont, she had already begun pursuing acting in a fairly serious way, with classes and her first role in a school play in Berkeley at the age of 12.

"It was *H.M.S. Pinafore*. I played a male role, an admiral," she recalls. Non-sexist casting?

"No, it's just that no boys wanted to do it."

Leaving Woodstock after graduation, Zuniga attended the American Conservatory in San Francisco, worked in children's

theater and summer stock, and then moved to Los Angeles to attend UCLA.

"I started doing student films, and then I got an agent. I never graduated, because I left in the middle of my junior year. I was beginning to get work, and there wasn't enough time for everything."

Zuniga's eyes brighten as she starts to talk of her professional acting career, short and meteoric as it has been. It's her most comfortable subject, and she discusses enthusiastically her first film role with only a hint of sarcasm.

"It was a 'don't miss' horror film called *The Initiation*. I got to play two roles, twin sisters. It was great. A victim and a killer. I got to murder people and run around and scream a lot. In the end, I fought myself, and I even got to die on screen!"

She proceeded from dying on screen to various other roles, including that of a social worker in the Lucille Ball television movie

continued on page 14