

Establishing Rapport with 'The Girl Next-Door'

Haley Strode has proven her skills on both screen and stage, effortlessly executing dramatic and comedic roles for which she has received significant praise. With charm, sharp intelligence and a vibrant personality, Haley is a multitalented actress who has showcased her talent across the board.

She was last seen onscreen co-starring as Marcia Keeler in *Gangster Squad* where she shared the screen with Josh Brolin, Giovanni Ribisi, Ryan Gosling, Sean Penn and Emma Stone. And her impressive list of television appearances includes a recurring role on *Important Things with Demetri Martin* as well as guest appearances on *Mind of Mencia*, *Lewis Black's: Root of All Evil*, *Pack of Wolves*, *CSI: NY*, *Castle*, *Whitney*, *Vegas*, *L.A. Noir* and *The New Normal*.

Bringing her charisma to the theatre stage, Haley received rave reviews for her performance in the Katselas Theatre Company's production of *Le Ronde de Lunch*. The comedy, written by Peter Lefcourt, was awarded Stage Scene L.A.'s Best Production for 2009-2010. Her previous theatre credits include *Oxford Shakespeare's Twelfth Night* as Viola, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Hippolyta, *Othello* as Desdemona, *Romeo and Juliet* as Juliet, *A Streetcar Named Desire* as Stella, *Noises Off!* as Brooke, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* as Cecily.

Here, Haley talks about her new sitcom, *Wendell & Vinnie* where she plays a next-door neighbor named Taryn opposite Jerry Trainor and Buddy Handleson. The show is set to premiere on Nick at Nite on Saturday, Feb. 16 at 8 PM ET/PT. (Check local listings)

Kam Williams: Hi, Haley, thanks for the time.

Haley Strode: Of course, Kam!

KW: What interested you in *Wendell & Vinnie*?

HS: Taryn is the kind of role I've always wanted to play: the eternal optimist, sweet and thoughtful, but fiery when she needs to be. She's got it all, and then some. I was enamored, and after reading the entire script, I fell in love. It's classic sitcom through and through. One thing I absolutely loved about the show from the beginning was that not only are the characters hilarious, but they're also incredibly relatable. When a poignant moment unfolds, as it does in every episode thus far, it has the



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

ability to pull on your heartstrings. It'll make you laugh and cry, and it's one of that kind of show that I love and grew up watching, like *Cheers*, *Friends*, and *Frasier*. A lot of our writers actually worked on and have won Emmys on those shows.

KW: Tell me a little about the sitcom?

HS: The show revolves around a 30 year-old man-child, Vinnie Basset [played by Jerry Trainor], who is living the bachelor's life in L.A., when he suddenly becomes the prime caretaker of his bookworm, brainiac nephew, Wendell [played by Buddy Handleson]. The two form a sort of odd couple duo, being that Wendell, on many occasions, can be more discerning and responsible than his uncle. And with the help of their next-door neighbor my character, Taryn, and Vinnie's sister, Wilma [played by Nicole Sullivan], a support unit is formed to help raise Wendell... and sometimes Vinnie. [Laughs]

KW: How would you describe your character, Taryn?

HS: As I said, Taryn is the kind of girl that has it all. She's the quintessential girl next-door. In the pilot episode, we see her struggling with a new town and existence really, because she's newly divorced. There's definitely a vulnerability there, mixed with the fire she possesses to turn down Vinnie's advances from the beginning. But once she meets Wendell, and sees how much Vinnie loves his nephew and wants to be a good parent, the side of her that wears her heart on her sleeve becomes intertwined in the family unit.

KW: What message do you think the show is trying to deliver?

HS: I think ultimately the message is that no matter what life throws at us, no matter what our circumstances are, surrounding ourselves with people who love and support us is the key to leading a happy and fulfilled life. Family doesn't have to be conventional; it just has to have love and laughter at its core.

KW: You recently played a serious role in *Gangster Squad* where your husband [Giovanni Ribisi] dies, leaving you a single-mom. Which do you prefer, drama or comedy?

HS: This is a great question, I'm asked this a lot. While I love working on dramatic characters and stories, it's comedy that I love the most. For me, it's incredibly rewarding to make a person laugh. Laughter is one of the greatest parts of life.

KW: What was it like working with such an accomplished cast that included not only Giovanni Ribisi, but Sean Penn, Ryan Gosling, Josh Brolin, Nick Nolte, Anthony Mackie, Michael Pena and Robert Patrick?

HS: It was truly an incredible experience. I've been a huge fan of Giovanni's for a long time; he's such a chameleon. It was an honor to work with him, as well as the rest of this stellar cast. Being that it was male dominated, it was often fun feeling like a part of the 'boys club' that took place on set. Such a talented, fun and luckily for me, welcoming group of men that made the entire experience a memorable one. Our director Ruben Fleischer, was the most welcoming of them all. I can't say enough about how wonderful it was to work with him and watch him work.

KW: What would be your dream role?

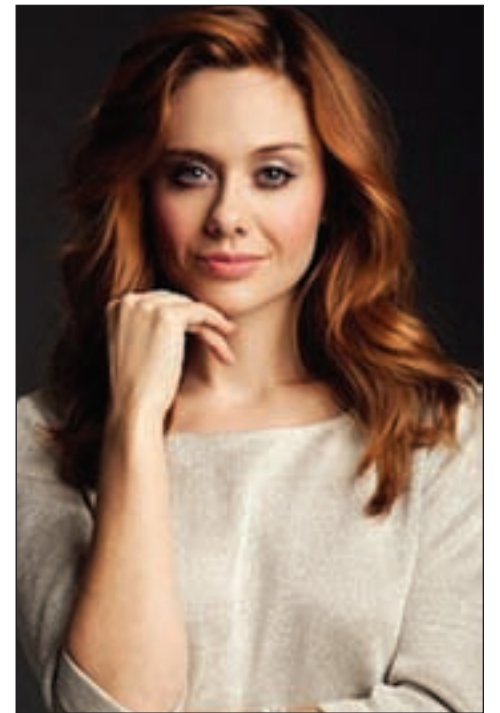
HS: I've often tried to imagine my dream role and what that would truly mean. I'm not sure I've reached a clear picture of it yet, but I have always said the reason I wanted to act was ultimately to develop characters that evoke emotion and consequently change lives. So many incredible actors do that for me. It's something I've known about myself for as long as I can remember.

KW: What directors would you like to work with?

HS: Cameron Crowe, Michel Gondry, Charlie Kaufman, Wes Anderson, Jonathan Dayton, Rob Reiner and many, many more.

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

HS: I wish someone would ask me about my big brothers so I could talk about how proud of them I am and all their accomplishments. My oldest brother owns and operates our family's fifth generation farm alongside my father, and is a member of the Kentucky Agriculture Leadership Development Program. Only 22 are chosen to travel worldwide to study and teach different methods of farming. They'll be heading to



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Washington, DC in the fall to speak to legislators about how to improve methods of agriculture in our country. My other brother, Matthew, is a general surgeon in Georgia, halfway through his residency and working on research that will hopefully be used to help children with specific deficiencies. This month he'll be presenting a paper he wrote on this at a national surgical conference. My brothers are incredible and I couldn't be more proud of them.

KW: The Tasha Smith question: Are you ever afraid?

HS: Yes, but I always manage to rework my fear into drive.

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

HS: Extraordinarily so!

KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

HS: Today, on set. There has not been one day I've left without my cheeks and stomach hurting from laughing so hard. It's the greatest workout routine ever.

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

HS: A badass pair of heels, and cookie dough ice cream

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SEATTLE 2013

THE SKANNER.com

If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Thursday February 14

BOOK, BAKE AND BLING SALE TO BENEFIT NW HARVEST. Find the perfect Valentine's gifts for your loved ones. Enjoy a cup of coffee while you browse our large collection of books, jewelry, crafts and yummy baked goods. Ballard Oddfellows - Alki Lodge #170, 1706 NW Market

St. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

AYRON JONES AND THE WAY PLAYS A BENEFIT FOR SEATTLE TEEN MUSIC. A show with a portion of the proceeds going to Seattle Teen Music. All ages, \$10 at the door, \$7 for high school and college students with I.D. \$8.00 in advance. The Vera Project, 305 Harrison St. For more info call 206-956-8372.

Saturday February 16

FAMILY FESTIVAL AT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM. Join us for a big family festival to celebrate the opening of Seattle Art Museum's special exhibition. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. SAM Downtown, 1300 1st Ave.

Saturday & Sunday February 16 & 17

LION DANCING, FIREWORKS AND FESTIVE ENTERTAINMENT CELEBRATE VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR! Join us and experience the cultural roots of Vietnam through music and dance performances, hands-on activities, Vietnamese food and much more. Seattle Center Armory and Fisher Pavilion. Saturday 10:30 a.m. - 7 p.m. Sunday 11 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday February 23

THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESENTS AN AFTERNOON WITH MADELINE ALBRIGHT. Come join former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright for a discussion about her memoir *Prague Winter: A Personal Story Remembrance and War, 1937 - 1948*. From 2 - 3:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 1119 Eighth Ave. Free doors open at 1:15 p.m.