

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Kristian Alfonso stars in the V.C. Andrews-inspired films "All That Glitters" and "Hidden Jewel," Saturday and Sunday on Lifetime.

Soap-opera veterans help fuel Lifetime's latest V.C. Andrews movies

If you're playing a heroine enduring plenty of troubles, it's fitting to be pitted against daytime-drama icons whose characters have had their own problems.

Two such actresses – "The Young and the Restless" staple Lauralee Bell and Kristian Alfonso, who ended her long "Days of Our Lives" tenure last year – have prominent roles in Lifetime's latest movies based on bestsellers by V.C. Andrews about several generations of multiple families. The four new films will run over two consecutive weekends, forming a virtual miniseries.

In "Ruby" (Saturday, March 20) and "Pearl in the Mist" (Sunday, March 21) Louisiana-bayou-bred Ruby Landry (played by Raechelle Banno, whose twin sister Karina Banno portrays Ruby's hateful sibling) faces off against her stern stepmother Daphne (Bell) while forcibly separated from her high school sweetheart Paul (Sam Duke). The last two stories, "All That Glitters" (Saturday, March 27) and "Hidden Jewel" (Sunday, March 28), feature Alfonso as Paul's domineering mother Gladys ... who threatens to use a secret against Ruby just as the latter thinks she's finally found happiness.

Now recurring as lawyer Christine Blair on CBS' "The Young and the Restless" (created by her parents) after starting on it in 1983, Bell admits she wasn't fully familiar with novelist Andrews, but she quickly

discovered how many others were: "When people asked why I was leaving town and which project I was for," she says, "as soon as I mentioned (Andrews' book) 'Flowers in the Attic,' everyone was like, 'Oh, yes! Of course!'"

"Since I grew up in a television family, we were always watching television," Bell notes, "I had the book, but I was just not a great reader." Once Bell became familiar with Andrews' Daphne, she immediately embraced the part: "She's so different from anyone else I've played. Once you see her high hairdo and the clothes, you get a sense of what this woman is about."

Similarly, in the first job she did after leaving her iconic NBC "Days of Our Lives" role as Hope Brady, Alfonso found plenty to appreciate about her Andrews character. Affirming "it's a complete departure" for her, she deems Gladys "really interesting and complex, and I thought it could be so much fun. I felt like I was part of a family from the moment I stepped on the set."

Since Lifetime's initial Andrews-based movies have repeated successfully, the new group also is likely to have many more showings in years to come. Though she had to quarantine for two weeks before she could film in Canada, Alfonso liked having so much prep time. "They put all my scenes together, so I shot for four full days. It went by so fast, because I was so busy."

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