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Augusta native Rachel Nichols continues revamping her career as it starts to take off.

Rachel, Rachel

INTERVIEW BY LIZA DARVIN

Tyler Perry is recognized by the *LA Times* for having “the talent to move beyond the world of *Madea...*” in *Alex Cross* (2012). As co-star of this James Patterson detective thriller, do you feel typecast as Perry’s police colleague who’s targeted and tortured—the ‘tough-as-nails action girl’? It’s an honor to earn a reputation as a woman who’s totally believable in an action role. That’s hard to do. It started with *Alias*. Working with Jennifer Garner, who is both a

woman and so well established as an action hero, was a platform for me. Those fight sequences were my first taste. And then I got lucky with a bunch of physical roles [*GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra*, *Conan the Barbarian*, and *P2*, where she’s abducted in a parking garage and ‘kicks ass’ to get away] after that. It will never impede me from doing anything else. I don’t think people will be like, “Oh, she’s



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INTERVIEW

an action girl, she can't do drama."

You didn't beat up anybody in *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants II*. But how malevolent do you dare to go?

If I play an absolutely terrible human being, I'm not going to say, "I identify with her homicidal behavior." If I think it's a cool role, then I can build the character on my own, even if it's a Patrick Bateman-from-*American Psycho*-type of female character. Once you react to it, then you go to work making it your own.

You're a star and an executive producer of *Raze*. Tell us about that.

It's this very weird combination of *Fight Club*, *Gladiator*, and *Hostile*, but with all women. It's Zoë Bell—arguably one of the best stuntwomen in the world and the darling of Quentin Tarantino—and myself. It's intense. It's awesome. For those guys who like to see chicks fight, it will be something for them.

Take us closer inside the set.

Fight scenes are like a big, long dance—you learn them part by part by part before putting it all together. It's funny—the first fight scene I ever had was on *Alias* and I had to fight this character Zoë was doubling for. I came up really early from a punch. Zoë hit me in the face. I think to this day I am the only actor she has ever hit. We get to rematch each other in *Raze*!

While Season 2 of *Continuum* premieres in May in Canada, the U.S. debut of Season 1 premieres January 14 on Syfy. Congratulations! You star as Kiera Cameron, a futuristic law enforcement officer. What's it like, returning to TV after *Criminal Minds*?

For *Criminal Minds*, when you're doing Season 6 and it is a well-established show with a big group of people, there isn't a lot of pressure to perform. No one was expecting me to do anything. But then if you are the lead of a brand new show, the pressure is absolutely on. I happen to perform well under pressure, so I like pressure.

***Continuum* envisions 2077 as a cultural wasteland where corporations are running our government. Totally fiction, right?**

Sci-fi is brilliant because you can make a show that is very political without having to talk about it *being* political. The future on *Continuum* looks really bleak. Does it really worry me? No, but it's something I think about, what it will actually look like.



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WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT?



Being in NYC now, how did Hurricane Sandy impact you?

I've never seen a natural disaster anything like this—*ever*. I'm [near Columbus Circle] and never lost power at all—nothing. But friends of mine are devastated—some down-town are out of their homes for weeks, oth-

ers in New Jersey have lost their family homes—*gone*... It's awful.

My friends loaded their cars with supplies and brought them to people [who've lost so much]. I want to help, but I don't have a car [in Manhattan], and the thought of me pulling up in a black Lincoln Town Car seems wrong. I guess I could always take a cab. I'm trying to get people to focus on hurricane relief on Twitter.

We understand you like to 'e-personify' your world.

I now name *everything*. When I go to the Apple Store, I know I'll be there longer than I should and will buy more than I need, so I try and find the cutest guy with the best name to help me, and name whatever I get after them. I don't tell them, so unless they know who I am and follow me on Twitter, they probably have no idea I've secretly stolen their name. My iPad is "Curtis." When I went in to

get my iPhone, his name was Richard, and I thought, "Great! I can name it 'Dick!'" My computer was "Bud," but he couldn't handle his liquor, so after he got sloshed one night by red wine he got wiped clean, so now he's the "Artist Formerly Known As Bud."

I do hope in 2077 there is clean, running water and food more appetizing than something squeezed out of a container!

Do you ever see yourself producing or acting in a project that films in Maine?

Not a lot of stuff shoots in Maine! Movies go where there are tax breaks. I did *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants II* in Connecticut, but that's as close as I ever got [to Maine]. If you cut taxes, they will come!

Do your parents from Augusta get to tag along on some of these exotic shoots?

They always come to visit me. They came to Prague when I was shooting *GI Joe*; they came to Bulgaria when I was shooting *Conan*. You know your parents love you if they come to frickin' *Bulgaria* and see you while you're on set!

When were you here last?

August. I split my time between LA and

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INTERVIEW



About her *Esquire* shoot with Joseph Gordon-Levitt (*The Dark Knight Rises*, *Looper*) and Mike Vogel (*The Help*, *Pan Am*):
"Oh my God, that was eight years ago, maybe? I was fresh off the boat! Which is funny, because that photo pre-dates everything. It was before *Gi Joe*. And I'd just worked with Mike Vogel on *McCanick*, the movie I did in Philly. Zoe Saldana was part of the shoot, too. Joey, Zoe, and Mike are lovely, really nice, awesome people. I always want to see those people do well."

New York, but I've *never* missed a Christmas. That's thirty-two Christmases in Maine, going on thirty-three.

I still sleep in the same bed that I slept in when I was growing up. Sleep is better there than anywhere else in the world. My bedroom is pretty much the same. I had rainbow wallpaper until I was thirteen, when we changed the color and the fabric.

You mean, no 'N Sync posters on the wall?

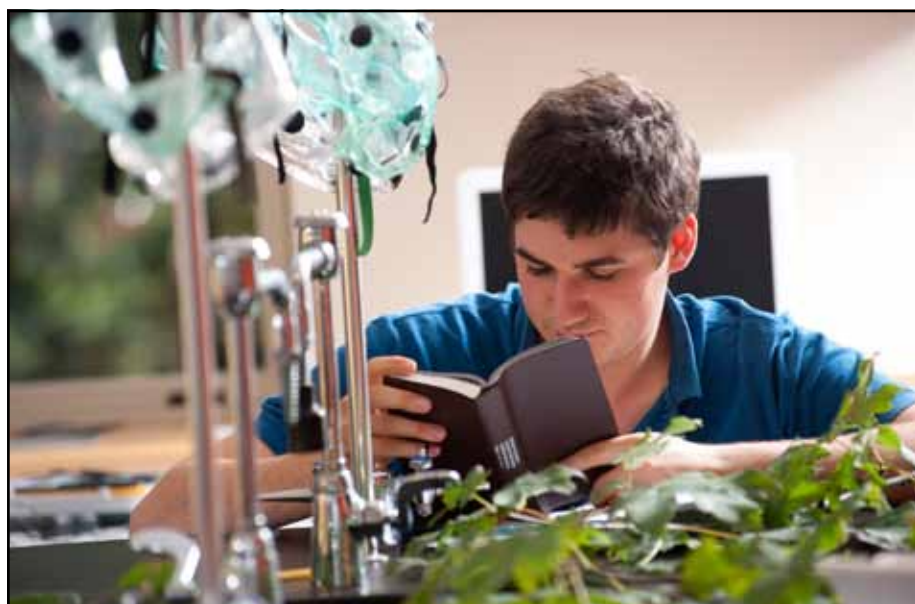
No! Though it would have been New Kids on the Block... There is no Joey McIntyre staring at me from above my bed!

What's your dream role?

If we were doing an Old Hollywood movie and I could be Veronica Lake... I love Old Hollywood and the old studio days. But it's less about playing a certain character and more about the story being told. So my dream role may end up being a fictional character from a completely fictional time that I don't even know about yet. We'll have to wait and see. ■

» To read our previous interviews with Rachel Nichols, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2011/03/leading-lady, and portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2009/06/good-maine-girl.

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