

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams

Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44



Born in Atlanta, Georgia on December 10, 1985, Raven-Symone' Christina Pearman got an early start in showbiz when she was signed by the Ford Modeling Agency while she was still in diapers. At the age of five, Symone signed a recording contract with MCA Records as a solo artist. After appearing in TV ads for everything from Cool Whip to Jello, she was invited to join the cast of "[The Cosby Show](#)." She's best known for the Emmy-nominated comedy series "That's So Raven" on the Disney Channel where she played the title character Raven Baxter, a teenager who periodically has psychic visions of the future.

On the big screen, she was last seen starring in College Road Trip opposite Martin Lawrence where she played an overachieving high school student who decides to travel around the country to choose the perfect university to attend. Raven's other film credits include The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement, Dr. Dolittle and Dr. Dolittle 2.

As for her musical career, she has released four solo albums so far, most recently "Raven-Symoné" on Hollywood Records. An innovative entrepreneur, she created a "how to" online destination for teens and 'tweens, [RavenSymonePresents.com](#). The site features an easy to use video player and playlist where users can discover new content. The video clips

Interview with Raven Symone

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Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

feature Raven-Symoné personally demonstrating an array of useful tips and project ideas for her fans and supporters.

Furthermore, Raven devotes much of her free time to her humanitarian concerns, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which fulfills the dreams of children with life-threatening medical conditions. She's involved with Girls Incorporated, too, a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring young females to be strong, smart, and bold by providing vital educational programs, particularly in high-risk, under served areas. Additionally, she is involved with the Aviva Family and Children's Services, an organization that provides life-saving and life-affirming support to thousands of children and families located in Los Angeles.

Here, Raven talks about her new DVD, Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue, where she reprises her recurring role as the voice of the fairy Iridessa.

Kam Williams: Hi, Raven. Thanks for the time. The last time we spoke, you were making a movie with Martin Lawrence.

Raven-Symone': College Road Trip!

KW: Right! How'd you enjoy playing Iridessa again in Tinkerbell and the Great Fairy Rescue?

RS: I love playing Iridessa. I've been playing her since I was 18 years-old, and it just gets better each time.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles asks, how much of Iridessa is so Raven?

RS: [Laughs] How much of Iridessa is so Raven? Well, Iridessa is the kind of girl who makes sure that all the t's are crossed and all the i's are dotted but, at the same time, she would help a friend in need. She has a couple of traits like mine, but while I'm very adventurous, I'm mostly the type of girl who doesn't want to get into trouble. So, what normally happens is I'm the

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instigator. I'll tell a friend, "Go see what's around that corner," while I stay behind and watch out. I'm more like that, but I think there's a little bit of me in every character I portray. I think of myself as very nice and very loyal when it comes to my friends, so those are qualities Iridessa and I have in common.

KW: How challenging is it doing an animated character? I assume you were all alone in a sound studio with no one to act opposite.

RS: That's the interesting thing about voiceovers. Usually, there's no one in the room with you but the writer, the director and an engineer. And then, it's up to the animators and the editors later to make it all seem very natural, as if the cast members were friends forever and had all been recorded simultaneously.

KW: How hard is not having other actors to play against?

RS: The director will usually read the other actors' lines to you. But the cool thing is that you can make any kind of wild gestures and exaggerated facial expressions you want, which is good, because the more you contort your body, the more emotion you generally get out of your voice. I'm also able to repeat each line of dialogue up to a half-dozen times, trying different inflections, if necessary.

KW: I see that the next installment of Tinkerbell is already slated to be released in September of 2011. How long do you think the franchise can continue?

RS: For a really, really long time, I hope, because I think it's a wonderful DVD series to collect. I've always wanted to be a part of the Disney vault, and the longer it's extended, the more I may be able to be a part of that history.

KW: What would you say is the message of this installment of Tinkerbell?

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams
Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

RS: It's loyalty, friendship, caring and understanding on both sides, the fairies and friends' side, and the family's side. In the story, Tinkerbell meets a human for the first time, and the little girl's father doesn't believe his daughter when she tells him that fairies exist. In real life, we tend to doubt a child who says something like that, and part of the message here is that imagination is something we shouldn't kill in kids at such a young age.

KW: Larry Greenberg says, "I'm a fan. I'm 40 and I love watching "That's So Raven". He wants to know whether you think fairies will invade the entertainment world the way that vampires and werewolves have?

RS: You know what, Larry. You're 40. I don't need you to tell anybody that you're watching "That's So Raven." [LOL] No, I really appreciate you're support, sir. The cool thing about fairies is that it's not really a fad, because Tinkerbell was one of the first characters created by Disney. The fairy and princess worlds have never gone out of style. They'll always be there, given that there will always be kids in kindergarten, and little girls who want to be princesses. So, I don't see fairies as a fad, but as a staple of our entertainment world.

KW: Children's book author Irene Smalls says, with so many career options, singing, acting, producing, etcetera, which part of the business do you enjoy most?

RS: I enjoy the outcome of each project. After each one is done, I love learning from kids, teenagers and adults, how it might have connected with their lives. Whether it's helping them deal with a relationship with their father (College Road Trip), getting through those difficult years in high school (That's So Raven), or overcoming weight or beauty issues, I love when my work resonates with someone in a meaningful way, because that's what I do it for.

KW: Irene says she's observes that you have never been typecast as the "black girl" in any of the roles you've played She wants to know, how you avoided being narrowly typecast?

RS: Well, I try not to pick roles that separate my color from the story itself. Does that make sense?

Interview with Raven Symone

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Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

KW: Yep.

RS: So, when I do pick a role, I'm just a human being. I don't think it's necessary to over-exaggerate the fact that I'm an African-American. I'm a human first. Just thank God that in the roles for which I've been picked, it's not about the color. It's about the story. And hopefully, that story is so universal that it will connect with everyone, including an alien. I don't really want it to be that serious of a situation. Underlining it, I know I'm African-American, and I'm proud of that. And I think it's very important that more of us be cast to tell normal stories. But I try to not stress over it.

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman says that she loves you and love watching Raven re-runs. She goes on to say "I love that she shows good home training."

RS: [Giggles] Bernadette must be from the South.

KW: No, she's from New York. Her question is, how many times a week do people still recognize you as the little kid from [The Cosby Show](#) ?

RS: Every day. And if it ever stopped, I'd be really scared.

KW: Bernadette also wants to know, if you were to mentor a 13-year old girl trying to follow in your footsteps, what would be your most important piece of advice for her?

RS: To understand that this is the entertainment business. It's a business, not real life. Performers are trying to make money. When they go home, they probably behave totally differently from how they do on TV and from what you read about them in magazines. I would mentor her to be smart and business-minded, if she wanted to be in the industry. But I probably would be happier if she didn't want to enter show business at all, because there are so many other fields where smart females are urgently needed where they can make a critical, socially-significant impact than by doing anything entertainment has to offer.

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams
Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

KW: She goes on to say, “You played a clairvoyant in your Raven role. Have you ever sensed that ability in yourself in real life?”

RS: Yes, I have. I don’t really like to talk about it too much, because it’s a little personal for me. But I’m a very spiritual person, and I believe that there are amazing special gifts that people are blessed with. It just depends on whether you want to listen or not.

KW: Bernadette observes that you’ve done everything but produce a film. Is that in the cards?

RS: I have produced a film, College Road Trip with Martin Lawrence, and there are many more to come.

KW: Finally, she notes that you’ve had such incredible professional success at such a young age, and so she wonders whether potential romantic partners are intimidated by that.

RS: [Laughs] I don’t know... I don’t know.

KW: Editor/legist Patricia Turnier [of Mega Diversities] asks, what is your advice for aspiring actresses who want to enjoy longevity like you in show business?

RS: Make it about the business, and not about your personal life. Understand that it can end at any moment, take it one day at a time, and have fun.

KW: Patricia [Turnier] also says “A lot of child stars find it difficult to live and grow up in a fish

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams
Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

bowl. How did you avoid all the craziness and stay so grounded?

RS: I grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. I went to public school. I failed algebra and had to go to summer school. My parents, for a reason I won't divulge, put me on punishment for a year. So, I had a normal life my entire childhood. I only moved to Los Angeles at 15. My Mom evaluated me psychologically at 21, declared me semi-sane, and let me start handling my own business.

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

RS: I'm sure there is, but I can't think of one off the top of my head.

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

RS: Last night.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

RS: Dr. Wayne Dyer's "The Power of Intention." <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1401902162?ie=UTF8&tag=thslfofire-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1401902162>

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What are you listening to on your iPod?

RS: I listen to a lot of Robyn, Nina Simone and underground music. I feel like my music IQ is

Interview with Raven Symone

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Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

growing.

KW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

RS: I see a female that's in a dream world.

KW: If you could have one wish instantly granted, what would that be for?

RS: That people would tell the truth, and stop lying to ourselves.

KW: The Ling-Ju Yen question: What is your earliest childhood memory?

RS: Last week. [LOL] I have a horrible memory. Actually, my earliest childhood memory would have to be my first day of kindergarten. I remember what my hair looked like, and I think that's why I was so happy. We didn't have that much money, so my mother braided it with newspapers and curled it up the night before. I wore this black outfit, and both my parents and my tutor from *The Cosby Show* came with me to school that morning.

KW: Have you ever wished you could have your anonymity back?

RS: I have my anonymity. That's the cool thing. There's a part of me that people will never know. And I love that. I even named that person. Raven-Symone' is pretty much my alter ego. It feels good to have the real me that's not scrutinized and questioned.

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams
Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

KW: What is the recipe for your favorite dish?

RS: Gumbo, with lobster, scallops, snow crab, shrimp, chicken, turkey sausage, bacon fat, butter, water and special seasonings my late grandmother gave me which I can't tell you because I want to keep her secret. You boil all the ingredients with some roux for about two hours. It's so good!

KW: The Uduak Oduok question: Who is your favorite clothes designer?

RS: Anything that fits me [Laughs]. I like Willow, she's an Australian designer. And Wayne Cooper.

KW: The Nancy Lovell Question: Why do you love doing what you do?

RS: Because I can make people smile, and I get to act crazy on TV. That's fun!

KW: The Tavis Smiley questions. First, what do you want your legacy to be, and where are you in relation to that at this point in your career?

RS: That she always told the truth, that she did a wonderful catalogue of family entertainment as well as truthful stories as I get older, and that she tried her best to be respectful. As far as my progress towards this legacy, well, I've spent 23 years of my life in this industry, and I've tried to do things that way only about 20% of the time.

KW: The second Tavis Smiley question. How introspective are you?

Interview with Raven Symone

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Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

RS: I'm introspective every day, every moment of the day. I'm a very spiritual person. Every day I look within myself, because that's where I get my strength from. If you don't look within, I don't see how you can survive in this world, because it wasn't made for the weak-minded.

KW: Got a message for your fans?

RS: If you want things to change, speak out.

KW: Well thanks for another excellent interview, Raven, and best of luck with all your many endeavors.

RS: Thank you very much, Kam, I appreciate that. Have a wonderful day!

Filmography:

1994 Little Rascals, TheThe Little Rascals

1998 Dr. Dolittle

1999 Zenon: Girl of the 21st Century

2001 Dr. Dolittle 2

2003 Cheetah Girls, TheThe Cheetah Girls

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams

Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

2003 Kim Possible: A Sitch in Time

2004 Zenon: Z3

2004 Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement, TheThe Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement

2004 Fat Albert

2005 Kim Possible: So the Drama

2006 For One Night

2006 Cheetah Girls 2, TheThe Cheetah Girls 2

2006 Everyone's Hero

2008 College Road Trip

2008 Tinker Bell

2009 Good Hair

2009 Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure

2010 Revenge of the Bridesmaids

2010 Tinker Bell and the Great Fairy Rescue I

2011 Tinker Bell and the Mysterious Winter Woods

Television

1989 Different World, AA Different World

1989 to 1992 [The Cosby Show](#)

1990 ABC TGIF

1990 Muppets at Walt Disney World, TheThe Muppets at Walt Disney World

1992 Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, TheThe Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

1993 Queen: The Story of an American Family

1993 to 1997 Hangin' with Mr. Cooper

1995 Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales for Every Child

1996 Bill Nye the Science Guy

1997 Space Ghost Coast to Coast

2001 My Wife and Kids

2001 Proud Family, TheThe Proud Family

2002 to 2007 Kim Possible

2003 to 2007 That's So Raven

2004 Fillmore!

2005 Higglytown Heroes

2006 Suite Life of Zack and Cody, TheThe Suite Life of Zack and Cody

2007 Cory in the House

2008 American Dad!

2010 Sonny With a Chance

2011 Great State of Georgia, TheThe Great State of Georgia

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams
Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

Discography

1993: Here's to New Dreams
1999: Undeniable
2004: This Is My Time
2008: Raven-Symoné

Awards and Nominations

BET Comedy Awards

2005 - Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2005 - Best Performance in an Animated Theatrical Film for "Kim Possible: So the Drama" (Nominated)
2004 - Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

Black Reel Awards

2004 - Television: Best Actress for "The Cheetah Girls" (Nominated)

Image Awards

2008 - Outstanding Performance in a Youth/Children's Program (Series or Special) for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2007 - Outstanding Performance in a Youth/Children's Program (Series or Special) for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2007 - Outstanding Actress in a Comedy Series (Nominated)
2006 - Outstanding Performance in a Youth/Children's Program (Series or Special) for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2005 - Outstanding Performance in a Youth/Children's Program (Series or Special) for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2004 - Outstanding Performance in a Youth/Children's Program (Series or Special) for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2002 - Outstanding Youth Actor/Actress for "[[Dr. Dolittle 2]" (Nominated)
1996 - Outstanding Youth Actor/Actress for "Hangin' with Mr. Cooper" (Nominated)

Kids' Choice Awards

2008 - Favorite Television Actress for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2007 - Favorite Television Actress for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2006 - Favorite Television Actress for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2005 - Favorite Television Actress for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2004 - Favorite Television Actress for "That's So Raven" (Won)
2002 - Favorite Female Movie Star for "Dr. Dolittle 2" (Nominated)

NAMIC Vision Awards

2008 - Best Performance - Comedy for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2005 - Best Comedic Performance for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)
2004 - Best Comedic Performance for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

Interview with Raven Symone

Written by Kam Williams

Sunday, 13 March 2011 21:44

Teen Choice Awards

2006 - TV - Choice Actress: Comedy for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

2005 - Choice TV Actress: Comedy for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

2004 - Choice TV Actress: Comedy for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

Young Artist Awards

2005 - Michael Landon Award (Won)

2005 - Outstanding Young Performers in a TV Series for "That's So Raven" (Won)

2004 - Best Performance in a TV Series (Comedy or Drama): Leading Young Actress for "That's So Raven" (Nominated)

1994 - Best Youth Comedienne for "Hangin' with Mr. Cooper" (Nominated)

1993 - Outstanding Actress Under Ten in a Television Series for "The Cosby Show" (Nominated)

1991 - Exceptional Performance by a Young Actress Under Nine for "The Cosby Show" (Won)

1990 - Outstanding Performance by an Actress Under Nine Years of Age for "The Cosby Show" (Nominated)

Young Star Awards

1999 - Best Performance by a Young Actress in a Mini-Series/Made for TV Film for "Zenon: Girl of the 21st Century" (Nominated)

Radio Disney Music Awards

2007 - Favorite TV Star Who Sings (Nominated)

2005 - Best Actor/Actress-Turned-Singer (Won)

Teen Music International

2009 - Album of the Year for "Raven-Symoné" (Won)

2009 - Best R&B Album for "Raven-Symoné" (Won)

2009 - Best Soul Female Vocal for "Typical" (Won)

2009 - Best Female R&B Vocal for "Girl Get It" (Won)

2009 - Best Female Pop Vocal for "Anti-Love Song" (Won)

2009 - Best Female Pop/Dance Vocal for "Double Dutch Bus " (Won)

2009 - Best Performance Urban/Alternative for "Keep a Friend" (Won)

2009 - Best Pop Album for "This Is My Time" (Nominated)

Source: www.wikipedia.org

About the author of this article: Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications around the U.S., Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada, and the Caribbean. He is a member of the New York Film Critics Online, the NAACP Image Awards Nominating Committee, and Rotten Tomatoes. He is a contributor to TheLoop21.com, eurweb.com and so on. He is also a columnist for

Interview with Raven Symone

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