

Interview, Part Two: Why Hollywood's Addicted to 'Juno' Scribe Diablo Cody, Star Ellen Page

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on December 7, 2007 - 1:05am

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Editor's note: This interview contains explicit language.

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CHICAGO – The sale of Diablo Cody's "Juno" script has become the opening of her career can of worms.



"Juno" screenwriter Diablo Cody.

Photo credit: ViewImages

In Oct. 2007, it was announced that [Fox Atomic purchased](#) [18] Cody's script for the comedic supernatural thriller "Jennifer's Body". Mason Novick and Jason Reitman are both on board as producers. Cody added: "I think [Reitman is] done with high school movies."

While Cody has been painted with "the new Tarantino," Page has been flattered by being likened to Meryl Streep and Audrey Hepburn.

"That seems outlandish. I don't feel special," Page said as if she's not a flourishing Hollywood star. "I'm just doing what I love to do. That's a crazy thing to think about. Having an opportunity to do this is an enormous gift. Getting all this attention just weirds me out."

Cody laughed – and we won't know why – except to say it was a "private joke" on the topic of Page's modesty.

Page returned to her diffident direction: "It's nice when people give you compliments, but it's not always easy to take compliments. I have really awesome friends who are 10 times cooler than me doing really [amazing] things they don't get attention for."

Cody said maternally: "You should learn to take compliments, girly, because you're gonna be getting some." Page pressed on: "I just run around for 30 days talking. Thanks, but what am I?"

Cody interrupted: "I'm sorry about this bloody rag. It's out of control." Cody was referencing her ever-bleeding finger in our interview.



"Juno" star Ellen Page as Kitty Pride in "X-Men: The Last Stand".

Photo credit: EllenPage.net

Back to Page's retiring persona, she said: "Insults are fine. I don't care what people think of me. Criticism [usually] feels honest." Returning to maternal mode, Cody became protective when asked for criticism on Page's performance of her adolescent, pregnant character.

"I would criticize nothing about her," Cody retorted. "Ellen's one of my heroes. She's one of my favorite actors."

Speaking of her motherly instincts, we shifted gears and discussed that vital topic in her personal and work life. Cody is a stepmom.

"That's very important to me," she said. "I honestly don't think there's any character more vilified in folklore or film than the stepmother. The reason I have a problem with it is not just because I am one but because a very, very large percentage of American children have one."

As for the disapproving perception often associated with a stepmom in society today, Cody said: "I don't see how that's sending an uplifting or healthy message to anybody to tell them they have a villain in their family or to tell them they're abnormal or tainted.

"If I could create a positive portrayal of a relationship between a stepmother and a stepdaughter – particularly at this fraught adolescent time [in the film] – maybe that will impact somebody. I always say evil stepmothers aren't born. They're made. There are bitchy stepmoms out there just like there are bitchy moms."

She continued: "As a stepmother, you feel like 'if society's going to treat me like a villain, I'm going to fucking act like one'. And then the cycle continues. So let's break the cycle!"

Speaking of breaking cycles, the timing of our interview was smack dab in the middle of the [current writer's strike](#) [19] by the Writers Guild of America (WGA).



Diablo Cody on strike on Nov. 7, 2007 in Los Angeles.

Photo source: Diablo Cody's ["The Pussy Ranch \[20\]"](#) blog

Cody is a card-carrying member of the WGA. She supports its national exclamation aimed at awarding the same residuals to writers for online sales as others already receiving such benefits. Cody's support of the strike, though, isn't at all for benefits she wants personally.

"I'm very pampered as a writer. I get recognition. I'm well paid," Cody said. "The strike benefits all of us. I'm not really supposed to be talking about it, but the new-media issue and residuals issue affect everybody. I do feel like a lot of writers get the short end of the stick in general, but not me.

"I wish every writer can have the treatment I've had so far in my career. I have no complaints [personally], but I have complaints on behalf of my peers."

Beyond "Jennifer's Body," Cody is also in bed with Toni Collette ("The Sixth Sense"), Steven Spielberg and Showtime. She says Spielberg conceived the concept of a mom with multiple personalities and Cody pitched a story to him based on that plotline. Showtime bit and Cody says she's looking forward to meeting with Collette.

"Slutty," Page offered. Confused, this critic said: "Collette's slutty?" Page purified: "No!" Cody's media training stepped in: "That's why you can't just randomly say that in interviews. That's just her all-purpose adjective. It just means 'cool'."

Cody has also penned a female "Superbad" screenplay she coins "Girlie Style". As it's a college sex comedy with female protagonists, by now the pattern has clearly emerged about her topical fixations on sex and women.



"Juno" screenwriter Diablo Cody.

Photo credit: Scott Walker

"I'm a feminist," Cody declared. "I wish I didn't have to be. Initially I was insulted when people would ask me about writing great roles for women. I just wanted to write great roles. I felt like I was [bowing] to the patriarchy if I just wrote 'women's pictures'. But now being slightly more seasoned – lightly salted..."

In reaction to being "lightly salted," Page popped back in with a titter: "Nice. A touch of thyme! A pinch of dill!"

Cody again sported her grave hat: "I do feel like I have a responsibility to write strong roles for women because I'm seeing so many amazing actresses – or as I like to call them 'actors' – who are being squandered. I don't like the term 'actress'."

Page concurred: "When people ask me what I'm doing and I say I'm an 'actor,' the old bald white man will say: 'Oh ho ho ho. Don't you mean actress?'"

Cody pursued: "The term 'actress' sounds like it's from the silent film era. Like: 'Actress Clara Beau!' It's cheesy. I say actor. In interviews like this, I find myself having to default to 'actress' because when I say 'there are no good roles for actors,' it gets misconstrued that I'm talking about men."

Beyond *talking* about men, what about *writing* about them? Though time will be the ultimate judge, Cody asserted: "I'll write about boys. I'm certainly not averse to it. I myself am kind of a dude, so the fact that I'm able to tap into any woman's psyche is shocking."



Ellen Page.

Photo credit: George Pimentel, WireImage

To conclude our interview, we returned to where it all began for Cody – blogging – and the burdens and blessings inherent in it.

"You can't just drop your blog because something [bad happens with it]," Cody stated. "Do you have any idea what kind of shit I've been through in cyberspace?"

She added: "How do I deal with that? I make a lot of money and laugh. Sorry. That's a douche bag answer. I've been through a lot with it, but I don't care because it's four people in Minnesota who are bitter and ugly. They can eat a dick. They can collectively eat a dick."

Page related: "It's the same with what I do. I don't even write anything personal about myself. I just act. Hardly many people even know who I am yet, but a few do. I just get automatically judged. People are just judgmental in general."

"The Internet gives everybody a voice. I think that's gross. Only the most articulate members of society should be allowed to voice their opinion," Cody said sarcastically. But she concluded seriously: "There are a lot of illiterate trolls on the Internet who can just eat a dick."

[Part one of this interview can be found here.](#) [17]

By **Adam Fendelman**

Publisher

HollywoodChicago.com

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Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 3:20pm*): <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/2007/12/interview-part-two-why-hollywoods.html>

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