

## Interview: Linda Blair of ‘The Exorcist’ Reflects on the Devil Inside

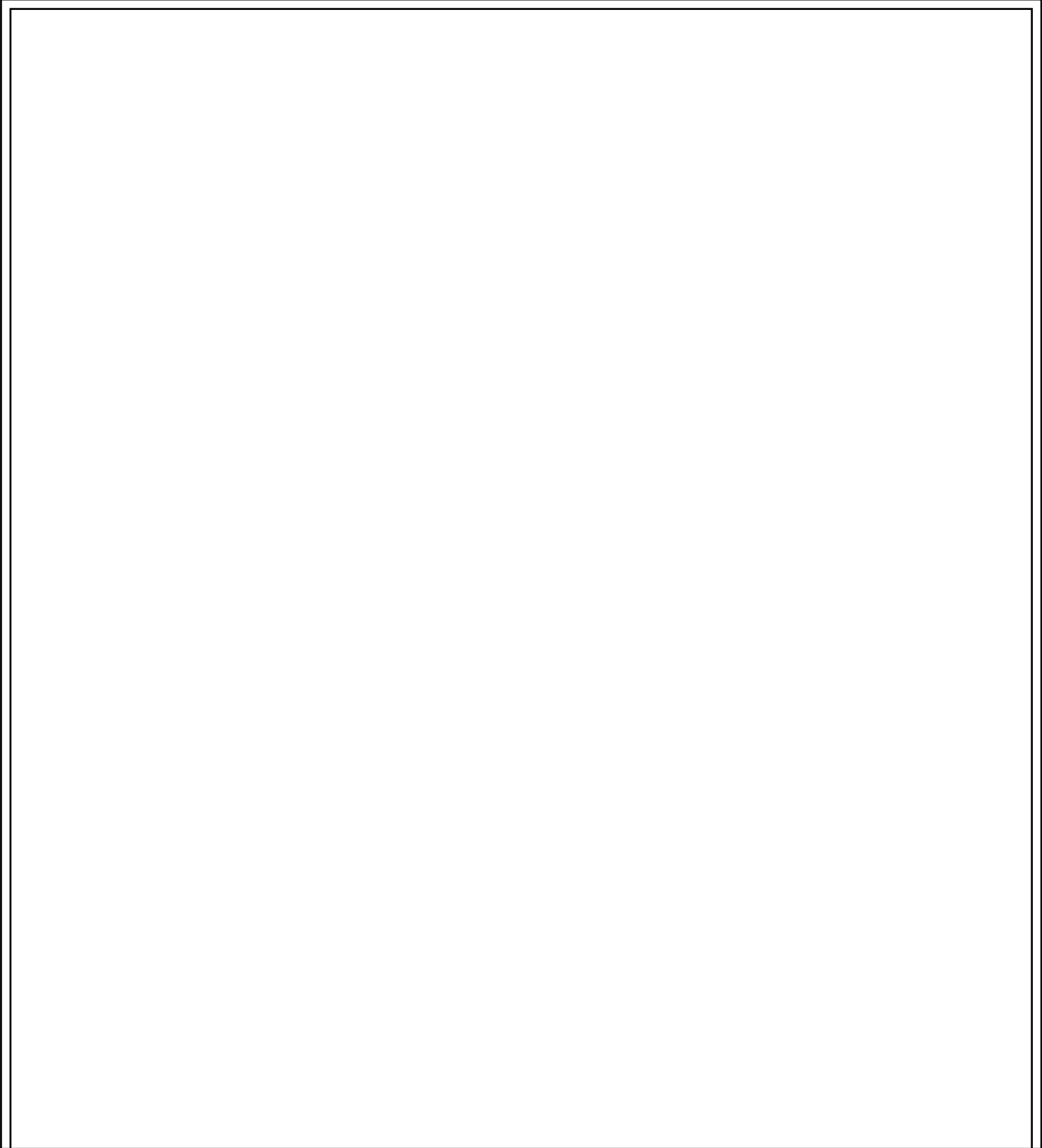
Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 15, 2010 - 8:06am

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CHICAGO – Linda Blair trades her celebrity for activism. Her WorldHeart Foundation is a literal pet project, as it rehabilitates neglected and abandoned animals on the streets of Los Angeles. Blair, best known for her unforgettable role as Regan in “The Exorcist,” recently appeared in Chicago at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show.

Linda Denise Blair was a child actor in the early 1970s when she beat out 600 applicants for the role of Regan in The Exorcist. Her portrayal of a little girl who was possessed by the devil was the sensation of the 1973 film year. She received a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress and an Academy Award nomination.

Her career since then has been checkered but has given her steady work. Notable roles after The Exorcist included the TV Movie “Born Innocent,” “Airport 1975” and a sequel that wasn’t as successful as the first, “Exorcist II: The Heretic.” In the years since she skewered her most famous character in “Repossessed” (1990) and “Scream” (1996), and has made several TV appearances.





Linda Blair Today: In Chicago at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show, March 13th, 2010

*Photo Credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

HollywoodChicago.com talked with Linda Blair at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show in March of this year, and she spoke candidly of her life within the world of *The Exorcist* and beyond.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You have devoted a large portion of your life to animal advocacy. In your opinion, what is the greatest crime against the animal kingdom now in our modern world?

**Linda Blair:** That a lot of people don't realize that the animals are in trouble, it's an American crisis. I saw it coming in 1997 when I started rescuing animals. In 2003, I started the Linda Blair WorldHeart Foundation because I felt that the people who had resources were not stepping up to the plate enough, to get us out of this crisis. Therefore, I started the foundation to speak out, for example, against dog fighting. My stature as a little white chick had people saying I couldn't be telling the truth. And it took a Michael Vick for everyone to believe me.

I've been working on a documentary on puppy mills. I served my country by rescuing during Hurricane Katrina and I've made my childhood dream my adult life's work. It is my goal to make changes in this country before I die on behalf of the animals.

**HC:** You seemed to work constantly starting at the age of five, with 75 commercials to your credit by the time you did *The Exorcist*. Looking back, do you appreciate what the experience did for your life or do you think you would have been better off having less of a hectic childhood?

**LB:** I wanted to be a veterinarian, but my mother's philosophy was by working and saving money I could pursue my dreams. She was ahead of her time, and that's what she always explained to me. I took riding lessons, piano, ballet, sailing and gymnastics. She gave me a very well-rounded life so I could make my choices. And my choice after I was 12-13 years old was to quit show business and go back to my original

desire to be a veterinarian. And the interview for 'The Exorcist' came along exactly within those three months at that time. And it changed my life.

The films that followed The Exorcist, were as difficult as that film, but they changed prime time television, like 'Born Innocent,' 'Sarah T. – Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic' and 'Sweet Hostage' with Martin Sheen. I couldn't understand at the time why I kept being put into these taboo projects. I was criticized and misunderstood because of them, but I was only doing what the business was making me do. Then I would go back to school, back to training with my horses, but I did feel like I was overworked. I am proud, however, of the projects that I was given that at the time made me so controversial. But it wasn't really who I was.

It does give me a platform now for the animals. As I got older, and I realized I could make a difference, and I had people out there that I admired like Doris Day, they were the ones shining a light on the animal crisis. It's my turn to step up to the plate because the animals need all of us.



Linda Blair in 1998 at the 25th Anniversary of 'The Exorcist'  
Photo credit: © 1998 Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto

**HC:** Exorcist 2: The Heretic was roundly assaulted by critics, but was also praised by luminaries such as Martin Scorsese and Pauline Kael. You're on record saying the constant rewriting was the problem, but how do you look at the film today?

**LB:** With The Heretic, they had discussed making a Part Two for a long time. They brought me a script that was very good, they brought in Richard Burton and Louise Fletcher and Director John Boorman. There were several re-writes, John Boorman brought in Rospo Pallenberg to work on the script, which I still don't understand. Pallenberg directed a lot of the film. Other people on the set were getting sick with a weird flu, I wasn't a part of that. There were so many factors that just didn't work in association with the film. It just wasn't the project that I signed on to do.

**HC:** Regarding the original version of 'The Exorcist.' What age were you when you realized the artistry of the film, and the subtle wrestling of belief vs. non belief?

**LB:** When I was 14, they put me in front of the world – from America to Europe, Australia and Japan. And back then we didn't have these quick interviews, everything was a massive press junket. It was a roomful of journalists. From city-to-city, they would ask young me about 'good vs. evil,' and the devil versus God. And I remember thinking 'why are these adults asking me these questions?' I would answer honestly, because that is how I was raised. I talked to my mother about it, but that's all I could do.

And then, years later, I did have the privilege of time and mileage to think about it. And one thing that I realize I have that many don't have, is a barometer on this planet of what people think. That's what people don't realize, The Exorcist has brought me everything from religion, to animal issues, to people that don't have a lot and through it I've seen it all and know it all.

**HC:** How did all that effect your own life?

**LB:** It has been an interesting life to live. I know how people think, whether I like it or not. I’ve experienced everything from those who follow God and have their beliefs, to those who don’t believe and of course the Satan worshipers. I’ve seen and heard from all of them. So it always astounds me that the world gets along at all, and what you have now is this battle of good versus evil, through full-blown terrorism, and the power of the fight through religion.

It goes back to the film and goes back to everything. I am saddened because there isn’t anything I can do politically and/or on a religious note.

*The Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show is back in Chicago, September 25th and 26th. [Click here for details.](#) [15] Linda Blair continues her work through the Linda Blair WorldHeart Foundation. [Click here for more information.](#) [16]*



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