

Interviews: Three Actresses at Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on February 4, 2012 - 4:07pm

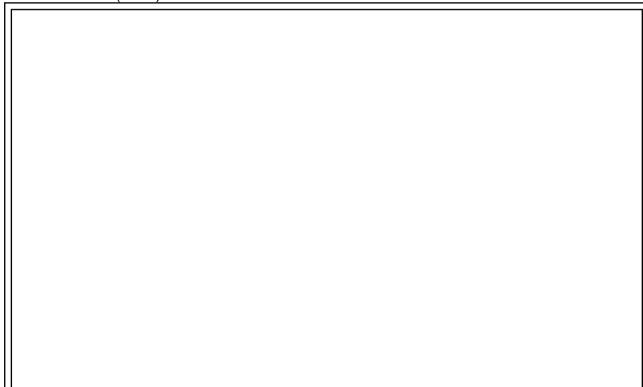
- Amber Smith [2]
- Deal or No Deal [3]
- Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show [4]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [5]
- Interview [6]
- <u>Joe Arce</u> [7]
- Lingerie [8]
- Lonette McKee [9]
- Patricia Kara [10]
- Patrick McDonald [11]
- <u>Sparkle</u> [12]
- The Women of Brewster Place [13]

CHICAGO – The Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show (now The Hollywood Show) provides a showcase for celebrities to meet their admirers, and get a little insider information about favorite movies and TV series. Lonette McKee ("The Women of Brewster Place"), Patricia Kara ("Deal or No Deal") and Amber Smith ("Lingerie") were three actresses who participated in a 2011 show.

HollywoodChicago.com was on hand to interview all three women, and photographer Joe Arce covered the event and provided Exclusive Portraits.

Kunette McKee, "The Cotton Club," "The Women of Brewster Place," "Malcolm X"

The multi-expressive and multi-talented Lonette McKee is an actress, screenwriter, director, singer and music composer/songwriter. She was born in Detroit, Michigan, and broke out as a child music prodigy at the age of seven. She recorded her first album at 14 years old, and wrote the title track for the film "Quadroon" when she was 15. Stage, screen and TV roles followed, including "The Cotton Club" (1984), "Brewster's Millions" (1985), "The Women of Brewster's Place" (1989) and "Malcolm X" (1992). Recently, she had a recurring role on TV's "Third Watch" and was featured in the film "ATL" (2006). She continues to perform her music, teach acting and recently was the writer/director on the film "Dream Street" (2010).



L	11





HollywoodChicago.com: How does your life as a musician keep evolving and fulfilling you, and which do you prefer, composing or performing?

Lonette McKee: Composing. By far, it's my number one love and passion. I find it's most fulfilling, because when I'm writing and creating a thing, it's from me, it's from my soul, spirit and my connection to the god-force. And even if I didn't have an audience for it, I would still be sitting at home playing keyboards and programming, because it's my creative expression. I have to do it. So to me it's not work, while

HollywoodChicago.com: You also are an actor, and an acting instructor. What is the most recent thing you've learned in your own relationship and evolution as an actor?

McKee: At this point in my career, I finally learned to not care what I'm looking like on screen. That's not hanging over me any more, because when you're in your fifties you're never going to look like you're in your twenties anymore. You can't compete with your younger self. Your spirit, what comes from the inner part of you, is the expression. And that is kind of freeing, in a way. I'm still going to know the right lighting, because I'm a filmmaker, but it's not about being cute or pretty, but rather how it's going to be a good shot.

HollywoodChicago.com: Your film debut was in 'Sparkle,' about the 1960s girl group revolution, which is now somewhat of a cult film. In what ways was it 'Dreamgirls' before 'Dreamgirls'?

McKee: It was that, but it was more 'Supremes' than 'Dreamgirls.' Joel Schumacher was the screenwriter on it, and it's quite possible Michael Bennett [producer/director of 'Dreamgirls' for Broadway] used the film as the basis for the stage production.



HollywoodChicago.com: 'The Woman of Brewster Place' was a once-in-a-lifetime production and cast. How did the ensemble respond to director Donna Deitch ['Desert Hearts'] and what kind of spirit did she add to the overall production?

McKee: She was great. Donna was very sensitive to us as actors, she gave us a lot of time on set and multiple takes. Paula [Kelly] and I were playing gay girls, and we had to get affectionate with each other and show that emotional connection. We had to find that, and I had to find my character. One thing Donna told me, which helped me, was that she didn't want me to play it like a gay girl, just play it. And that really was useful.

HollywoodChicago.com: You have a close relationship with the great Spike Lee. What do you think is his greatest contribution to the social progress of cinema through his provocative films?

McKee: I think the breakthrough he made as a black filmmaker is his greatest contribution to society, especially to African-Americans, because he broke through the glass ceiling. Because he consistently made quality films, that mostly made money, he was one of the few black filmmakers who wasn't locked down in so-called 'urban' movies. He can get to the heart of what people feel, thought and don't dare say, especially on screen. But he is able to do it.

HollywoodChicago.com: What saddens you and gives you hope about your old home town of Detroit, Michigan?

McKee: It's bad, in the inner city it's bad. But what people don't realize, that outside of that inner city square mile, that you have some of the most beautiful, fabulous neighborhoods in the country. Artistic neighborhoods, like the one I'm in, Ferndale, has movie theaters, cafes and restaurants. It's the coolest area.

HollywoodChicago.com: What were your feelings about the process of the Barack Obama campaign, and what were your specific reactions on the day he was elected?

McKee: Well, the day he was elected, I was driving back to Detroit from Jacksonville, Florida. I was in the South. My boyfriend pleaded with me to drive through to Charlotte, North Carolina, which had a large African American population. He said I had to make it, don't try to get a hotel between Jacksonville and Charlotte on election night. I figured out why. Whenever I stopped to let my dog out – who was traveling with me – I would ask at the gas station or rest stop, who was winning the election? And the people would always say they didn't know, even if I mentioned my interest in the presidential election. I had to get out of there. What shocked me was, this was both black and white people in the South.

We made it to Charlotte at around midnight. As I walked down the hallway of the hotel I was staying in, I could hear his acceptance speech blasting from TVs from every room. It was a great moment in history.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since, like President Obama, you have a mixed race heritage, did you have a crossroads moment where you had to decide about your heritage, as he did?

McKee: Theoretically, I should be a bridge to the races. When I was a kid, my mother used to tell me that I had the best of both worlds, that I could do anything because I had those two worlds, black and Native American. The reality is, of course, you get the worst of both worlds. We've come a long way, but there is still a lot of institutionalized racism.

HollywoodChicago.com: What can you tell us about the magnificent Richard Pryor, that the rest of the world doesn't know?

McKee: He's kind, smart, really shy and sensitive. And really a genius. Thank god I never had a romantic relationship with him. It was always just friends, and he always treated me with utmost respect and protection. I never saw his demons, personally he never showed them with me.

💢 Patricia Kara, "Deal or No Deal"

Model, actress and TV personality Patricia Kara is Chicago born and bred. After attending Columbia College here, she began a career in commercials, modeling and hosting work, which included covering the Golden Globes for the TV Guide Channel. in 2005, she was chosen to be a model on the prime time game show "Deal or No Deal," usually representing the number 9 case. She worked on the syndicated version as well, and continues her prolific hosting career.

Page 3 of 6



Interviews: Three Actresses at Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show Published on HollywoodChicago.com (http://www.hollywoodchicago.com)



HollywoodChicago.com: Let's talk about Chicago. Where did you grow up in the city, what was your journey through it and where did you end up?

Patricia Kara: I grew up around the Lincoln Square neighborhood, a very Greek area, as I am Greek. I went to the St. Scholastica Academy and Columbia College. I started modeling in Chicago, which led me into acting, because the agencies started sending me to auditions for acting and hosting, which I mainly do now. I have also lived in Florida, New York City and Los Angeles.

HollywoodChicago.com: What drove your ambition to be a performer?

Kara: It was something I knew that I wanted to do, and I always felt comfortable with performing. My sister supported me in this ambition, and told me I had to do it, not to hold back and live my dream. It's brought me where I am today.

HollywoodChicago.com: What role, job or person was your key to the first big break in the business?

Kara: I go back to my sister, and she led the way when I was first starting out, asking the right questions when I was going through the agencies. She is a hairdresser, and would always mention me to clients she had, if they were photographers or anywhere near the business. She held my hand through the early process, so I really owe it to her.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally, at what point in your career did you suddenly step back and ask yourself, how did I get here?

Kara: Probably in the midst of 'Deal or No Deal.' I didn't know what I was getting into, they actually told me before the audition that it was a co-hosting position. When I got there, I thought it was a model's reality show of some sort, because they weren't telling us anything. When I got it, I figured it would be a couple days work. Who would have known it would turn into five years? It changed my life and opened up other doors.

Amber Smith, "L.A. Confidential," "Sin City Diaries" "Lingerie"

Amber Smith is a familiar model and actress, anchoring a 2006 Michelob Ultra Amber Lite Beer campaign, and appearing in such diverse films as "L.A. Confidential," "The Mirror Has Two Faces" and HBO's "The Rat Pack." Recently, she had the lead role in Cinemax's "Sin City Diaries" and a supporting role in the second season of "Lingerie."





HollywoodChicago.com: What role, job or person was your key to the first big break in the business?

Amber Smith: I auditioned for the Martin Scorsese film, 'Casino,' which was my first audition, I didn't even know enough not to read the stage directions and other people's lines, but I ended up auditioning with Robert DeNiro and Martin Scorsese. I didn't get that, but the rumor that I got close to it really helped me a lot. It was casting director Ellen Lewis who really championed me.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the best advice someone has ever given you regarding acting, and in what performance have you used that advice?

Smith: That rejection isn't personal. If you analyze it, they have a film with X-amount of dollars to spend, they have to hire the person they want, even though five people may be great. I put myself in their shoes when I don't get a part, it's their money and they have to spend it the way they want. I don't take it personally.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you are in the HBO family in productions of 'Sin City Diaries' and 'Lingerie,' how does the corporate end of that company treat those particular shows and the people the in them?

Smith: They are very family-like and treat us well, they've even wanted me to communicate any roles I'm up for, since they want to make sure their level of quality stays the same.

HollywoodChicago.com: At what point in your career did you suddenly step back and ask yourself, how did I get here?

Smith: I've been in both good and bad situations for that. The bad thing is that it's a rough business, and once somebody said something to me around some friends that was really rude. It was regarding some photographers who were outside the venue, and the doorman said that it was people like me who bring the rats here. When my friend told me to say something back, I realized that I had just gotten used to people



saying nasty things to me, that it didn't phase me, even though it wasn't right. I had been in Los Angeles too long, and felt like a piece of meat. Because my self esteem had gotten really low, I thought that was normal behavior. I left the business for a year, and when I came back I didn't tolerate things like that any more.

In the good way, when I got into modeling, I never understood that I shouldn't be at the top. I was constantly asking my bookers for the most money. That attitude of not knowing and the entitlement thing, pushed me forward faster.

The "Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show" is now "The Hollywood Show" and will be in Chicago on March 24th and 25th, 2012. <u>Click here for details.</u> [14]



By <u>PATRICK McDONALD</u> [16] Senior Staff Writer HollywoodChicago.com <u>pat@hollywoodchicago.com</u> [15]

© 2012 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 23 2024 - 10:54pm):

http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/17336/interviews-three-actresses-at-hollywood-celebrities-memorabilia-show

Links:

- [1] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq
- [2] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/amber-smith
- [3] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/deal-or-no-deal
- [4] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywood-celebrities-memorabilia-show
- [5] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content
- [6] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html
- [7] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joe-arce
- [8] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lingerie
- [9] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lonette-mckee
- [10] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patricia-kara
- [11] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald
- [12] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sparkle
- [13] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-women-of-brewster-place
- [14] http://www.hschicago.com/
- [15] mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com
- [16] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT