Interviews: Movie Stars Sean Young, Dean Stockwell at Chicago Comic Con

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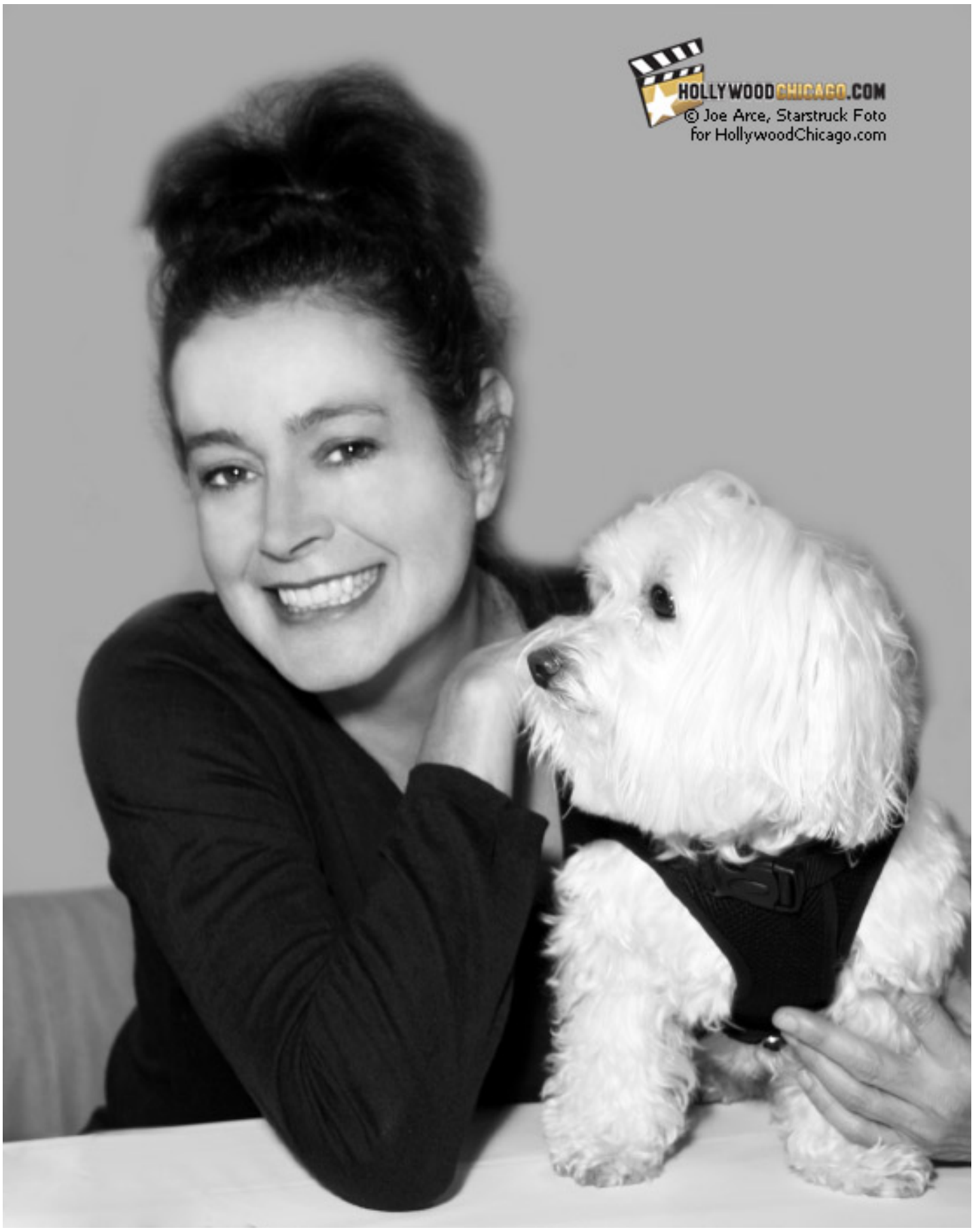
CHICAGO – Two mercurial and classic film actors appeared last summer at the Wizard World Chicago Comic Con, and between them have a wealth of impressive film titles on their resumes. Sean Young (“Bladerunner”) and Dean Stockwell (“Blue Velvet”) also represent different eras of cinema history.

While making an appearance at the event they talked to HollywoodChicago.com, and sat for portraits with photographer Joe Arce. This year’s Wizard World Chicago Comic Con will take place August 8th-11th, 2013, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Ill.

Sean Young of “Bladerunner,” “Stripes,” “No Way Out”

Sean Young has had both an exceptional career and one laced with controversy. She was born in Kentucky, but eventually found her way to the School of American Ballet in New York City. She began her show business ambitions as a dancer and a model, before landing a role in “Jane Austin in Manhattan” (1980). That was followed up quickly by the girlfriend role in “Stripes” (1981) and her famous supporting part in “Blade Runner” (1982). After winning acclaim in “No Way Out” (1987), she lost the role of Vicki Vale in director Tim Burton’s “Batman” (1988) due to an injury. For the sequel “Batman Returns,” Young lobbied for the part of Catwoman by confronting Burton and lead actor Michael Keaton in a homemade costume. It was this action and others in subsequent years that gained Young a reputation for being “difficult.”

But despite all that, Young continued to work in various projects over the years including “Ace Venture: Pet Detective” (1994), a role as dancer Isadora Duncan in the miniseries “Esenin” (2005) and two TV reality shows, “Gone Country” and “Skating with the Stars.” She also appeared on David Letterman in 2011, and produced a self-effacing video promoting her search for film roles.



Sean Young at Wizard World Chicago Comic Con, August of 2012
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: When you began your career, how did the discipline of being a dancer help in your transition to being an actress?

Sean Young: Once you've danced for four hours a day at Interlochen [Arts Academy in Michigan] everything else is easy. Because there is so much discipline involved in dancing that when people say, 'acting is so hard,' I observe it's mostly sitting around and waiting. After you've been training in dance, sitting around and waiting really isn't that hard.

HollywoodChicago.com: In your experiences over the years, what do you think is fundamentally unfair about the cattle call system for actress auditioning?

Young: Honestly, the damn shame of it is that most of the women who are on those cattle calls, poked and prodded behind their back, is that they are not aware of it. I look back on my career, and I realize that people were talking about me, and I didn't know it. The shame is that younger actresses are oblivious to the fact that these games are played, and if they are aware of it, they have to put up with it.

Here's a good example – Warren Beatty asks 99 women to sleep with him, and they all say 'yes.' I say no, and who does he focus on? Is he grateful for the 99 he had? He's all egotistical about the one who said 'no.'

HollywoodChicago.com: We were born six months apart in the early 1960s. What do you think defines our generation and what do you think we contributed to the landscape?

Sean Young in 'Blade Runner'
Photo credit: Warner Home Video

Young: We're sort of in-between the boomers and the jones generation, and just shy of Generation X. I'm not sure I have an answer for that, except in my career I felt held back by the Baby Boomers. Maybe our shining moment is ahead of us, because we still have to be leader for the people who come after us. Unfortunately, those boomers aren't going quick enough. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What did you discover when you played dancer Isadora Duncan that surprised you, and what did you learn about yourself?

Young: I read a lot about her, and she had a lot of financial problems at the end of her life, she had people bailing her out. But she never cared about money, even to the end. She had just written her autobiography when she died, and she just missed making money from that. I always thought that was kind of sad. It really taught me to appreciate what I have. I was guilty for taking it all for granted, because early success does that.

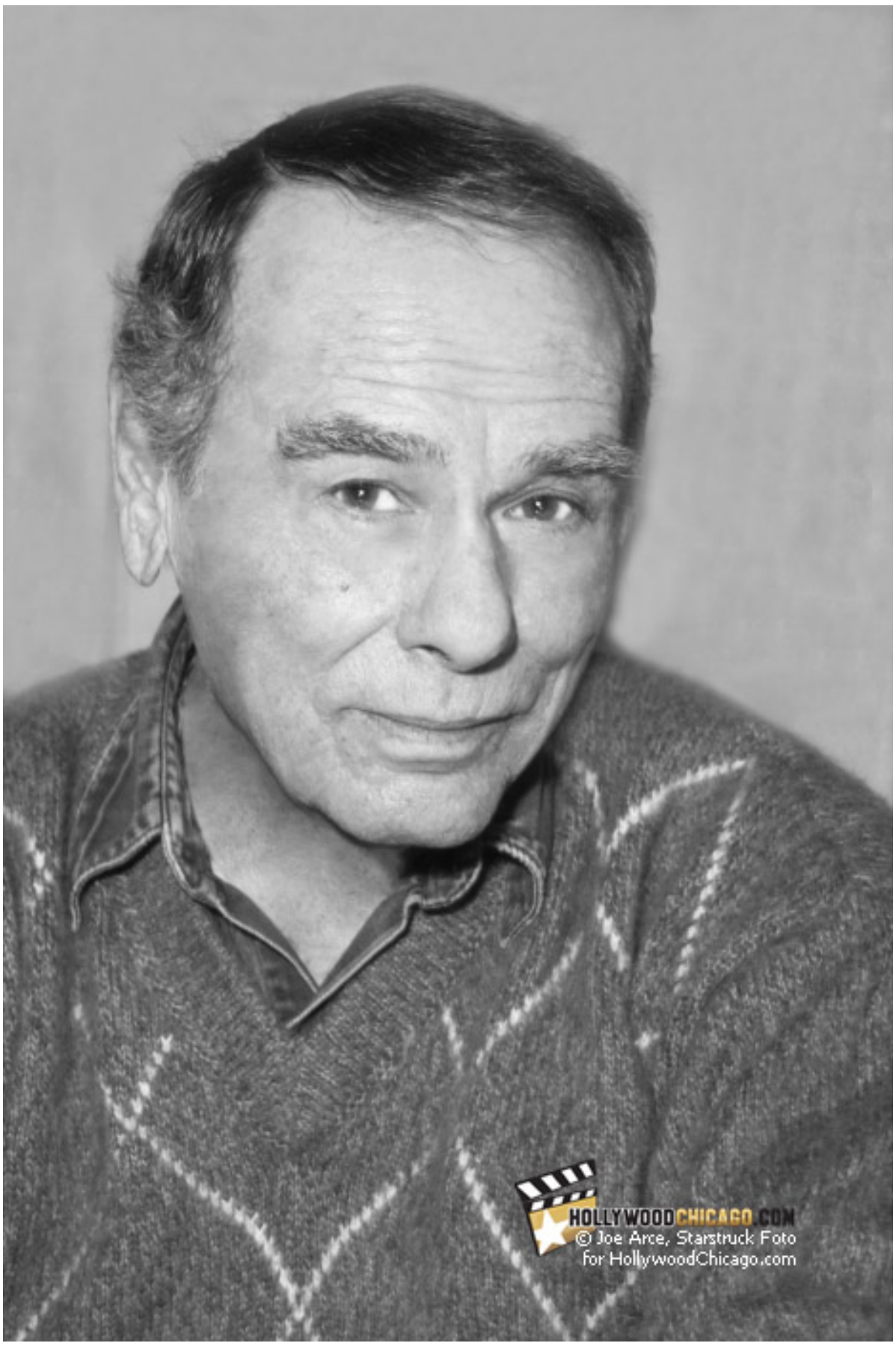
HollywoodChicago.com: Of all the stories we hear about you, and everything that has the possibility to be blown out of proportion, what gets blown out of proportion the most?

Young: When you get labeled as crazy, it's a hard thing to undo. But I have gotten upset at times, and it appeared crazy and sort of confirmed other people's impressions. What has been blown out of proportion is that early success didn't give me an accurate picture of the industry, and I reacted against that by pushing back. I'm starting to function on all cylinders right now and establishing a real balance, instead of expecting what is unrealistic and being upset about it. I'm working on acceptance and being grateful for all the things that are true. That's what got messed up with me, I didn't have the right aperture that I could understand the world.

Dean Stockwell of "Blue Velvet" and TV's "Quantum Leap"

Deservedly cantankerous when interviewed, Dean Stockwell is one of the few actors alive who worked in the Golden Age of the 1940s Hollywood studio system. His first major role as a child actor came when he was 11 years old, playing opposite Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra in "Anchors Away" (1945). He became the go-to child star in classics such as "Gentleman's Agreement" (1947), "Song of the Thin Man" (1947) and "The Secret Garden" (1949), often with another child co-star (and "West Side Story" mainstay), Russ Tamblyn. He successfully transitioned into young adult roles in "Compulsion" (1959), "Sons and Lovers" (1960) and "Long Day's Journey into Night" (1962).

After dropping out of show business within the 1960s counterculture, he worked infrequently in the 1970s, but staged a major revival in the 1980s with "Paris, Texas" (1984). "To Live and Die in L.A." (1985), "Married to the Mob" (1988) – for which he was nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Oscar – and most memorably as Ben, opposite old friend Dennis Hopper as Frank, in David Lynch's "Blue Velvet" (1986). He capped his visibility opposite Scott Bakula on TV's "Quantum Leap" (1989-93), and continues to have high profile roles.



Dean Stockwell at Wizard World Chicago Comic Con, August of 2012
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: Producer Richard Zanuck recently passed away, and the first film he produced, “Compulsion,” featured you in a supporting role. What do remember about him on that set?

Dean Stockwell: I never saw him, because he never came to the set. Producers very rarely came to the set, but for a first production job, I thought it was a pretty good film. He made a great move in hiring me. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You won an award at the Cannes Film Festival for that performance…

Stockwell: Yes, that was one of two shared Best Actor awards I had won at Cannes. The other was for “Long Days Journey into Night.”

HollywoodChicago.com: How was Orson Welles on that set?

Stockwell: I didn’t like Orson Welles at all. I thought he was an ass…[pause] idiot.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you see one of your child star films again, do you ever remember anything from those films that is weird?

Dean Stockwell in 'Blue Velvet'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Stockwell: No, not necessarily. When I worked – and I did many, many, many films as a child – I knew what the business was, intuitively and instinctively, and I acted as a pro. I never ran into weird situations.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you had a role in it, when did you know that Dennis Hopper's 'The Last Movie' was in trouble?

Stockwell: It wasn't in trouble, what was the trouble?

HollywoodChicago.com: The legend is that Hopper was out of control on the set.

Stockwell: Well, Dennis was out of control…at the hotel rooms. But he could create the energy to make an entire f**king major movie. In other words, it was personalized by his mad man period, so people can't really figure it out.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally what can you tell us about Russ Tamblyn that the rest of the world doesn't know?

Stockwell: That he's one of the greatest f**king guys on the planet, I love Russ. We've known each other forever.

Wizard World Chicago Comic Con will take place August 8th-11th, 2013, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois. Click here *[18] for more details and to pre-purchase tickets.*

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