

## Interview, Audio: Danielle Macdonald on Title Role in ‘Patti Cake\$’

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CHICAGO – How does a native Australian actress become a New Jersey hip hop artist? Practice, practice, practice... in formulating the character of “Patti Cake\$.” Danielle Macdonald, who had never rapped before in her life, portrayed the title Jersey Girl with a stellar determination, poignancy and heart.

“Patti Cake\$” features Danielle as that title character, that of a bartender with a talent for hip hop rhymes, and her friends Jheri (Sid Dhananjay) and Bob (Mamoudou Athie), who want to help her record those beats. Patti’s home life is difficult, as her mother Barb (Bridget Everett) is depressed and unstable, plus her beloved grandmother (Cathy Moriarty) is fighting a homebound illness. But Patti will not be stopped, despite her weight, the odds and her obsession with rapper O-Z (Sahr Ngaujah). The film was written and directed by Jeremy Jasper, making his debut as a feature filmmaker.



Danielle Macdonald Brings it Home as ‘Patti Cake\$’

*Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures*

Danielle Macdonald is in break out mode at the moment. She initially moved to Los Angles from Australia to take a role in Rachel Weisz’s short film, “The Thief,” and made her feature debut in director Zal Batmanglij’s “The East” (2013). She also appeared in “Every Secret Thing” (2014), and on television in “Glee,” “Pretty Little Liars” and “The Middle,” in addition to just being cast in the upcoming feature film,



"White Girl Problems." HollywoodChicago.com spoke to Macdonald about hurdling all the obstacles to get to her inner hip hop soul.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What part of Patti did you most relate to, and how do you think it comes out in your performance?

**Danielle Macdonald:** I related to her heart, the love she has for her friends and family, even through the difficulties with her Mom... that love is how they are able to connect. Also she is fueled by her deep love for her Nana (grandmother), and I related to her dreams and aspirations. Otherwise she is totally different than I am.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The key to Patti seems to be her acceptance of other people without prejudice. Where do you think that character learned the trait, given the background she has?

**Macdonald:** It's funny you ask that, that is another way that Patti and I intersect. When I grew up in Australia, it was totally normal of me to not judge people through where they're from, what situation they're in or what they look like. I know it may be different in America, but every country in the world has people who have prejudice against others, it just wasn't in my family at all. I brought some friends from America over to Australia recently, and one of them remarked on how my 80 year old grandmother was so open and accepting to everyone. That's what I know and grew up with, and I think we learn from who we are influenced by.

As far as Patti, even though her atmosphere at home was different, she grew up with her best friend, and they were both judged quite a bit. They were misfits, and I think that's why they didn't judge other people. It's almost good to be the misfit, because you know what? You're going to have a better worldview.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Writer/director Jeremy Jasper brought you to the Sundance Labs to learn the part of Patti. What was your experience in building a character like that from the ground up?

**Macdonald:** He had faith that I could do the role, and the Lab experience was basically my audition to see if we could get the film off the ground. We figured out who Patti was during that process – what drove her, and what was in her heart, desires and relationships.



Facing the Music: Danielle Macdonald in 'Patti Cake\$'

*Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since you do relate to Patti so much, what piece of advice would you give her, if you were to sit down at dinner, and got to know her life and background?

**Macdonald:** Well we are similar, but so different. She and I react to things very differently. She is far more ballsy than I am, but we do have the same level of confidence. Patti has the fuel, desire and passion, but she needs her support system around her to act. We'd probably talk about that, because I do have self-belief, but it took me a while to gain it, and I think Patti starts to gain it toward the end of film.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Let's talk about your performing of hip hop music in the film, which you'd never done before. When you began to learn how to do it, were you a fan of it? Did you base your beats and raps on anybody out there that is familiar?

**Macdonald:** Growing up, I tended to like every genre of music, hip hop included, and I liked the hip hop I heard on the radio. But it was different when I started to learn how to do it, because I was with people who knew everything about hip hop. They would start talking about terms and people that I didn't understand, and that was the hardest part. The thing about Patti is we had to find her own voice, because it wasn't just straight up rap. It was a mix of styles, and she had to have her own vibe, and the way she should sound. Should she go high in her

voice, or lower, speak it fast or slow? It was important to fill in those spaces.

**In the audio portion of the interview, the totally awesome Aussie Danielle Macdonald talks about getting the New Jersey accent right, the experience of being a Jersey Girl and working with writer/director Jeremy Jasper.**

*“Patti Cake\$” opens nationwide on August 18th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Danielle Macdonald, Bridget Everett, Cathy Moriarty, Mamoudou Athie and Siddharth Dhananjay. Written and directed by Jeremy Jasper. Rated “R”*



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