



Hollywood & HINES

FROM HER HOMETOWN IN FLORIDA ALL THE WAY TO TINSELTOWN, ACTRESS/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER CHERYL HINES SAYS HER EXPERIENCES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA HELPED PAVED THE WAY FOR HER SUCCESS IN THE FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY.

By
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» You won't meet more of a "straight shooter" than Cheryl Hines. Spend even a few minutes with her and you'll see that Hollywood hasn't spoiled her Florida charm one bit. Born in Miami and raised in Tallahassee, Hines may be easily recognized for her dazzling smile, but she's infamous for her lightning-quick wit — a talent that's served her well in her highly improvisational role as Larry David's wife in HBO's loosely scripted comedy "Curb Your Enthusiasm."

This eight-season mega-hit (HBO's longest-running scripted series) has been showered with accolades, including thirty Emmy nominations and a 2002 Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series — Musical or Comedy. But before Hines headed to Hollywood, she spent a handful of formidable years in Central Florida, where she studied at UCF and worked at Universal Studios, experiences that proved to be critical milestones in her forthcoming successful acting career.

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T Texture: Congratulations on *Serious Moonlight*, your directorial debut. I understand that you studied Theater Performance at the University of Central Florida (UCF), but did you know then that you'd like to direct one day?

ch Cheryl Hines: No, actually. I never thought of directing back then. I was really focused on acting. But when I changed my major to Communications (Radio and TV) it made me think outside of the acting box a bit. It was a good experience learning how to produce a segment and I have carried that knowledge with me to other projects I've worked on.

T What drew you to UCF in the first place?

ch I was living in Tallahassee and my older brother moved to Orlando after graduating from Florida State. At that time they were about to open Universal Studios and my brother kept sending me articles about studios opening in Orlando and told me I had to move down there because this is where all the TV and film production was going to happen. So, I moved.

I had known since I was in middle school that I wanted to act. I remember I had a journal from my senior year of high school where we had to write about where we wanted to be in ten years. I wanted to be making a living in acting.

T Did you achieve that goal?

ch I did achieve that goal. I was a working actress at Universal Studios within ten years.

T So it's true that you once had a stint as a "victim" in the bygone *Psycho Soundstage* attraction. How did that experience contribute to your overall career success?

ch It was good training for what was in store for me. I had so much fun at

Universal. It gave me quite a sense of accomplishment to be a working actress. It helped me stay confident about my career choice.

When I auditioned, the studio wasn't open yet and over a thousand actors showed up. I remember it like it was yesterday. We all had to wear numbers on our shirts like marathon runners. It was a grueling process but that's part of life as an actor.

T Orlando's film industry has come a long way since Universal Studios opened in 1990. Central Florida now boasts 10 state-of-the-art soundstages, a new 22,000-square-foot multi-purpose facility at Full Sail University, and the only professional motion capture studio on the east coast with fully integrated film, video and audio facilities (House of Moves). What's your perspective on Central Florida as a viable and competitive location for the film-production industry?

ch I think Central Florida is a great film location. With the facilities that they are building, it's going to make more and more sense for big projects to come there. I honestly would love to come back there and do something. I did a movie in Hollywood, FL and it was so exciting for me to be shooting a film in Florida.

T Places such as Orlando's Digital Animation and Visual Effects (DAVE) School are consistently graduating film professionals who head straight to work on huge blockbuster films such as *Avatar*. Do you get the sense in L.A. that these schools are positioning Central Florida as a breeding ground for serious film-production talent?

ch I think technology is changing so quickly that if someone is looking for a career in filmmaking that has to do with special effects, they need to go

somewhere to learn the latest process. Because Orlando has the facilities to teach people that technology, of course it's going to be a breeding ground for bigger projects.

T In your career thus far you've acted, produced, and directed. Which do you enjoy the most?

ch I certainly love acting—that's my first passion. I really like producing as well. It's very gratifying in a completely different way.

T Looking at your career path, it's obvious that comedy has been your forte, even scoring you a 2006 Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for "*Curb Your Enthusiasm*." Why do you think that's been your strength?

ch I have a tendency to see the humor in most situations, even in dire situations. That can actually be annoying to people but it's also unusual. My leg could be bitten off by a shark and I'm sure I would find something funny about it.

T What projects do you currently have in the works?

ch I have a reality show coming out on NBC in September called "*School Pride*." We're going to schools around the country, renovating them, encouraging the community to come and grab a paint brush and fix the school. It's been a very exciting project. The show was born from life experience. In real life, I cold-called a school in Compton and met with the principal there. We renovated the school and then went to a different school and renovated that one.

Hines is the executive producer and creator of "School Pride." For more information, visit www.nbc.com/school-pride.

