

Actress Interview

Definitely One to Watch: A Few Moments with Upcoming Actress Michelle Tomlinson by Owen Keehnen



Michelle Tomlinson is one young actress who is definitely making her mark. Though the native of New Mexico is a relative newcomer to films she is already generating a great deal of attention... and winning fans galore. Her breakthrough came in the 2007 cat-and-mouse horror flick 'The Cellar Door'. The movie won 3 awards at the Shriekfest in Los Angeles including Audience Choice, Best Actor (James DuMont) and the 'Pretty/Scary One to Watch' Award for Michelle in her performance as Rudy. She followed that with a role in the zombie flick 'Brain Dead' by 'Witchboard' and 'Night of the Demons' director Kevin S. Tenney. Michelle has also just wrapped shooting the horror-comedy 'George's Intervention' with a stellar cast that includes Peter Stickles and Lynn Lowry. Some of the Ms. Tomlinson's other film credits include 'Indelible', 'Second Class Citizen', 'Welcome to My Darkside', 'The Seer', and 'Boston Strangler: The Untold Story'. Ms. Tomlinson was kind enough to take a few moments from her hectic schedule for this exclusive racksandrators.com interview.



Michelle, why don't you start us off with a visual and describe the room or place where you are answering these questions?

My fabulous little apartment in L.A. with my cat Shooter purring in my lap! My place is decorated with a lot of art from New Mexico as well as some of my Mom's original creations.

First off, congrats on all the awards that Matt Zettell's 'The Cellar Door' has received and especially to your Pretty Scary One to Watch Award. Is it a little statue or a certificate or what... and where do you keep it?



It's an awesome tombstone statue that looks like black marble with a little grey woven into it with white letters. It's a sweet looking award! I keep it on my computer desk for inspiration. 'The Cellar Door' is a psychological horror/thriller in which your character (Rudy) is caged by a serial killer played by James DuMont.

What things attracted you to the character?

The biggest attraction was the wide range of emotions Rudy went through. Happy, fearful, terrorized, victimized, frustrated, enraged and vengeful. I loved the cat and mouse elements of the story and the many ways she tried to lure Herman into letting her out of her cage. She rocked and was a lot of fun and challenging to play.

Was it hard to get into the headspace of your character?

There were a few challenges. I don't care to show my vulnerabilities very much and there were several scenes where Rudy was extremely vulnerable and scared out of her mind. Actually being in the cage and experiencing the tight space helped a great deal by making the circumstances much more realistic.

What were the best and most challenging things about filming the movie?



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I don't know if there was a best because every single day on set was AMAZING. Every single person was a joy to work with and it was a strong, cohesive team. I'd get home at the end of the day thrilled at how the day went.

The most challenging moment for me was when Rudy talked about her family with Herman. She was talking about when her Dad died; her mom's horrible cooking was no longer funny. The night before we shot that scene, I found out my own Father only had roughly six months to live. Even though it was through a character, I could barely choke out that line, of putting Rudy's Dad's death in a past tense as I knew mine was around the corner. I've never mentioned that in an interview before.... Pretty intimate detail. But that was truly the most challenging scene for me to separate me from her in that one moment.

And if you could have one behind-the-scenes moment from filming 'The Cellar Door' preserved and put into a time capsule what would it be?

It would be at my apartment, believe it or not! James DuMont (Herman) did a voice over job for a Home Depot Commercial on the radio. It was about six days into shooting the film where I'd been stuck in a cage the whole time. My clock radio alarm went off at 6am. It was James's Home Depot Commercial; I'd never even heard it before. So I literally woke up to hearing HIS voice! I shot straight up in bed and couldn't figure out at first where the hell I was - if I was on set or at home or what was going on. It was hysterically funny.

So if you were going to cage someone in the movie business and hold them there until they divulged all their industry secrets, who would it be and what especially would you want to know?

Hmmm.... It might sound crazy, but Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson. They're two people who have managed to have extremely successful acting careers, production companies, children, and you never hear scandalous things about them in the press. I'd want to know how they find balance in all of their endeavors. I'm sure they have help, but you can have the best help money can buy and still be a spastic mess. They have it together on every level and that's an inspiration to "me" on every level.



I also want to hear about your work as Claudia Bush in Kevin S. Tenney's ('Witchboard', 'Witchboard 2', 'Witchtrap', 'Night of the Demons') film 'Brain Dead'. How did that role come about?

Backstage West. It's an awesome periodical for Actors to utilize to not only learn more about the Industry, but a way for us to submit ourselves to projects being cast. I submitted for it, auditioned and very luckily landed a kick ass role with a kick ass Director!

What attracted you to Claudia?

She's tough, brass and bold. She doesn't hold back on anything.

Tenney is such a seasoned veteran, what things did you learn by watching him in action that would be especially helpful to all the fledgling filmmakers reading this?

I've been lucky to have a lot of quality conversations with Kevin. He's truly an amazing human. One of the things he told me is as a Director, people will always question and challenge your decisions. So as a Director, it's important to be crystal clear with your vision and have people around you who are also crystal clear. He's a great leader and can keep his humor and keep his cool.... even when shooting in 120 degree weather. He's very

humble and FUN. The Director has the responsibility of setting the tone on the set. Kevin's set was fun and professional.

Since we're talking advice, if a young woman came up to you and asked for advice about breaking into the horror film business what things would you tell her to do?

Target different Directors she wants to work with and what types of horror she's interested in. Study the types of films that are out there right now and figure out what type of character she'd be in them. The heroine? The nosy neighbor? The slutty cheerleader? Understand her type and where she fits in. Take headshots that would match those types of characters so she and her rep can submit her on them. Networking events like Shriekfest in Los Angeles are a great way to meet people in this genre. It's a relationship based business.



I also want to hear about your work as Sarah in J.T. Seaton's new horror-comedy '**George's Intervention**' with Lynn Lowry, Peter Stickles, Victoria DeMare, and Lloyd Kaufman. What attracted you to that project?

J.T. did! I met him through myspace, of all places, through a manager of mine at the time. My manager had given me a script (different film) that J.T. had written and I loved it. I kept in touch with J.T. in hopes of working with him in the future. When he had auditions for George's, he contacted me directly to come in and read. It was an awesome experience - again, everyone was super cool to work with on that project.

Do you have any other upcoming projects that you would like all the racksandrazors.com readers to know about?

I just shot a Comedy where I play a vapid ditzy ex-stripper character! Who would think it, right? (Pathetically Cheap Adventures of Xtra-Man) It's in Post right now.

There's a sequel to '**The Cellar Door**' that's currently in Pre-Production. The script ROCKS and I'm beyond excited to be shooting that this Spring. It's nothing like the first one, more like a continuation of what follows.

I also shot a fun pilot with my Business Partner and fellow Scream Queen, Kimberly Amato called the Mis-Adventures of McT & A. It's a very tongue in cheek silly Web Series where we take suggestions from our fans on facebook and shoot them. It can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XclmoZVeS6U>

On the horizon for next April is an Event we're putting together to benefit a Battered Women's Organization. We're in the embryonic stages of planning, but it's something very near and dear to us and several people we know.

Zombies, vampires, werewolves, psychos, aliens, creatures, witches, telemarketers what does it for you horrorwise Michelle and why?

I love it all! The purpose of films or other mediums of entertainment is to escape for a couple hours. I love wondering what's going to happen next or which character\quote s going to "get it" next, etc. Creature features are fascinating because of the fantastical and mythical lore behind them.

Telemarketers... On the other hand... Not so much.

Do you have a horror movie dream role?

I think it would be really interesting to play a female Hannibal Lector type character. And somehow mix that with some action, blood - yet have a tiny redemptive side to her as well. Cunning and devious but bloodthirsty without

being vampiric.

Okay, we're pulling into the Michelle Tomlinson __ Drive In. What three horror movies are on the triple bill this evening and what goodies are they going to be serving up at the concession stand?

George Romero's 'Night of the Living Dead', 'The Ring' and 'Hostel'. In that order. The concession stand would have popcorn, but instead of regular butter, it'd be red colored butter so it would look like blood splatter. Confectionary candy in the shapes and colors of zombie fingers and arms. Black stringy licorice to mimic the hair that comes out of her mouth in The Ring. Gummy candy that looks like a freshly cut off finger from Hostel that would be filled with red goey syrup so when you bit into it, it would ooze out. The cups would be fashioned into the shape of the well from 'The Ring'.

What was the first horror movie to scare the crap out of you?

'Nightmare on Elm Street'. It was the first horror Film I saw- I was really young and I freaked out when I went to bed, thinking I'd dream of Freddy and meet my demise.

What scares you in real life?

The dumbing down of America.