

Jewel Shepard - Biography

Jewel Shepard has made that difficult, odd segue from working in front of the camera to in front of the word processor. Since her days in the cradle, her dream was to be a grade "A" movie star. She got about as far as a few dozen grade "B" (or lower) movies viewed on late night TV by either die-hard fans or insomniacs.

Finally, after fifteen years of being thrown into pig excrement — no kidding; she really did a movie where she was thrown in genuine pig excrement — *Party Camp* — she decided it was time for a change. It was time to get away from working conditions such as the time she was shipped off to the Philippines for what the casting director assured her would be "a vacation in paradise." (It was a Roger Corman epic, *Caged Heat 2*, and she was thrown in prison, flogged, beaten up by a band of orange-clad warrior women and practically devoured by bugs the size of Buicks) It was time to get away from films where they'd tell her, "There will be brief nudity." (In *Christina*, "brief" turned out to mean about 88 out of 90 minutes, including one nude scene shot on location in front of the Eiffel Tower in near zero-degree weather.) It was time to get away from doing your own stunts, eating Spam on a meal break, producers who insist that a separate hotel room is not in the budget and you must share theirs, ice-cold sets, colder dialogue and film companies that are so underfunded, they can't afford a Casting Couch and expect you to put out on a folding chair.

Of course, there were *some* good movies. Like the time where she got chased around a graveyard by a bunch of Zombies screaming, "More Brains" (the highlight being; she got to keep her clothes on during the entire episode) in the Horror/Comedy *The Return of the Living Dead* written and directed by the king of monster gore — and creator of *Alien* — Dan O'Bannon.

Of course, her happiness was short-lived — twenty-minutes later she was nuked. Never to survive the endless sequels that followed.

Such is life.

Occasionally, she had a dramatic moment on film. *Scenes from the Goldmine* offered her that rare moment where she wasn't getting whipped, or thrown in pig-dung, or tossed in a hot tub... she got pregnant instead.

But hey, it was a chance for her to work with a former *Sopranos* star, Joey Pantiliano — Rock Star and member of the Mega-group The Eagles — Timothy B. Schmidt, and the actor best known for his eerie depiction of Charles Manson, in *Helter-Skelter* — Steve Railsback.

While all of these people are great — it was her friendship with fellow co-star, Catherine Mary Stewart (*Night of the Comet*) that made her pregnancy truly special. It was after-all her on screen dad, Alex Rocco, who got her pregnant which somehow lead to the part of a *blind* hooker in *Roots of Evil*.

I want to know who came up with that one! Ahh... it was back to popping-off her top — Again.

This time it was in the absolutely forgettable *The Underachievers*, where for a brief moment she had an encounter with an Alien that somehow inspired her to rip her top off with desire — at least when she ripped her top off in *Zapped!* It was for Scott Baio. Or in *My Tutor*, it was for Matt Latanzi. At least, ripping off my top for any of the above mentioned was better than ripping of my top in an elevator in *Raw Force* — just for the heck of it.

I am not even going to bother to mention all the made for the Z channel "pop-the-topper's" I've been in...

Time to start on a second-choice career goal...

So, Jewel decided to become a writer, knowing full well that she was fighting an uphill battle to get folks to take the star of *Hollywood Hot Tubs* (and its even-better sequel, *Hollywood Hot Tubs II*) seriously. She started by polling her fellow B-Movie Queens, interviewing stars of the past and present to create the definitive book on the

subject, *Invasion of the B-Girls*. This is the book that answers the musical question, why would anyone appear in a film called *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-a-Rama*? Why anyone would watch such a film remains unanswered.

Her first book was a smash.

It sold like crazy, still sells (do a search on eBay) and even got purchased by Dick Clark as the basis for a not-yet-filmed-but-she's-still-hoping "A" movie. Better still, it prompted a demand for her second book — an autobiography entitled, *If I'm So Famous, How Come Nobody's Ever Heard of Me?* — and brought her offers to write for magazines, including *Premiere*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Details* and many others. (It also yielded this surreal scene: Jewel autographing copies at the American Booksellers Association, seated between Ross Perot and Senator Paul Simon, both of whom wanted their picture with her.) She also received a fan letter — which she opened very carefully — from Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber.

It was *Premiere* that especially grabbed up her writing, saving her from getting whipped in any more bad movies. She was tapped for a feature article in their "Women in Film" issue, in which she profiled the 6'1" goddess and reigning "Queen of B-Movies," Julie Strain and her hubby, who became filthy rich by creating the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Five pages later, *Premiere* appointed her a Contributing Writer and began lobbying assignments her way, covering the Hollywood scene from her unique perspective.

Today, she divides her time between more articles for magazines, special features for the *Associated Press* and a couple of secret projects. Asked about her work, she replies, "So this is what I do now. I sit in front of my computer and write. I write about people I've met, places I've seen. Did I mention the experience with African Wild Dogs? Or the last Botswana Bushman? Or the deer people of Mongolia?"

"It's sometimes exhausting, sometimes difficult, sometimes dangerous, traveling to the World's hotspots..."

Recently, she was back in front of the camera — not in some crummy movie with over-heated producers, and lots of bad acting — no bad acting here — she got a chance to act opposite William Macy in *The Cooler* starring Alec Baldwin and better yet! She got to keep her top on!

Jewel is also a regular on *The Garfield Show* performing various voice roles as the occasional tourist, cat, or covered dish as opposed to the regular moments of her life playing an uncovered dish. She can also be seen in the wildly popular flick *The Artist* where she played a flapper babe to Jean Dujardin's Academy Award winning performance as George Valentin. When asked about her part in the Academy Award winning flick Jewel just smiles and says, "I had as many lines as anyone did in the movie". True. And, how many folks can say that about any part?

Buy a video. A photo. A book. And get to know me better.

That is not such a bad thing, is it?

Jewel Shepard

