

# NEWS

Having turned 27 on September 30, LACEY CHABERT knows all about the perils of peaking too early. A working actress since the tender age of eight who went through puberty in front of the entire nation as one of the regulars on the hit series "Party of Five," Chabert understood all too well that she was expected to become just another casualty of Hollywood's child stardom machine. But that isn't how things have turned out. She has instead transitioned to adulthood with a rare consistency and diversity, with roles in everything from the 2004 feature "Mean Girls" to voicing the cartoon series "The Wild Thornberrys." And she continues along that same versatile path in playing the unlikely love interest of a workaholic lawyer in the Hallmark Channel Original Movie "Elevator Girl," which premieres Saturday, February 13 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C). The following profile is available for all press uses, with photos, from Crown Features Syndicate™.

## **LACEY CHABERT: THE 'MEAN GIRL' MORPHS INTO AN 'ELEVATOR GIRL'**

**Crown Features Syndicate™**

It would be really easy for Lacey Chabert to walk around with the kind of arrogant attitude that too often comes with having the kind of great early success she's enjoyed in Hollywood. Before she'd even entered middle school, Chabert was co-starring as young Claudia Salinger in the hit series "Party of Five," after having landed a regular role on the soap opera "All My Children" the year before – when she was all of 10.

The consensus was that the Purvis, Mississippi-born onetime beauty contest winner was one of the finest young actresses of her generation. She had the world by the tail. But Chabert knew that her breakout success came with a seeming expiration date.

"I knew it could all change after I grew up, which was something I really couldn't avoid," Chabert, who turned 27 on September 30, recalls. "When you transition from being a child actor to an adult actor, it's rife with a lot of challenges. Most of it stems from trying to convince people you can still act. It's like reintroducing yourself."

That Chabert has made the leap to more adult roles with a rare smoothness is underscored by the fact she's no longer typecast as either the "Party of Five" kid or the catty teen from the seminal 2004 flick, "Mean Girls."

Case in point: The new Hallmark Channel Original Movie "Elevator Girl," which premieres Saturday, February 13 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C). It finds Chabert playing the free-spirited, artsy spark plug to Ryan Merriman's driven workaholic lawyer. In the romantic comedy, she's one of the servers at a party honoring Merriman's character, and unlikely sparks fly when they get trapped together in an elevator during the event.

"Oh my God, I had so much fun making this movie!" Chabert gushes. "First off, Ryan is just a

(more)



# NEWS

## HALLMARK CHANNEL/ 'ELEVATOR GIRL' – Lacey Chabert: The 'Mean Girl' Morphs Into An 'Elevator Girl' – Page 2

total sweetheart. He's so sweet and funny and humble and good at what he does. He's just a breath of fresh air in a business where sometimes I find that the guy takes longer in hair and makeup than I do."

It turns out that when Chabert hung out in a trailer during the "Elevator Girl" shoot, it was to babysit her three Chihuahuas named Teacup, Teaspoon and, uh, Kitty ("Because when she was a puppy, everyone thought she was a kitten," she adds). It turns out her dog walker took ill during the shoot.

"They're my kids," Chabert offers. "I swear I'm not one of these actresses who takes their dogs everywhere!"

The only anxious moment that Chabert says she had while making "Elevator Girl" came, bizarrely, during the first day of shooting. As she describes it, she was walking by a pool during what was "a sweet scene," and all she would think was "Don't trip, don't trip."

"So of course, during the last take, I'm walking along and the next thing I know my face is planted on the ground," she remembers. "Not only did I slip, but I flew through the air and then slid like 20 feet. Everyone was just like deadly silent. I stayed down for a full minute because I was so mortified. I bruised my knee up pretty bad. But I have to say, it really broke the ice on the set in a cool way."

Fortunately, Chabert's career took no similar dives following her early splash. She notes, "I had to go through everything on that show – my first kiss, my first bra, everything." But she was able to land plum voice roles on "Family Guy" (she played Meg Griffin in the show's first incarnation) and on the toon series "The Wild Thornberrys" in the late '90s.

Then the exposure in "Mean Girls" helped to serve as a bridge between juvenile and grown-up for Chabert, as did a much-acclaimed star turn in the 2004 made-for-TV movie "The Brooke Ellison Story."

It had all started for her back in the early 1990s when Chabert was a finalist on "Star Search," followed by a two-year run on Broadway as the young Cossette in a production of "Les Miserables."

"The bar was set for me pretty high from the beginning," she believes. "I mean, I'm in this amazing Broadway show, then a Golden Globe-winning drama. I was very blessed. I'm so thankful for all of those different experiences.

"But it was also really weird, so backward compared to most of my peers in the industry who were coming out of college trying to get their first job. Instead, I was encountering typecasting issues and trying to convince people I could be whatever character they wanted me to be. For a while, all I was offered were 'Mean Girls'-type parts."

(more)



## HALLMARK CHANNEL/ 'ELEVATOR GIRL' – Lacey Chabert: The 'Mean Girl' Morphs Into An 'Elevator Girl' – Page 3

Now that she's continuing to move past the career hurdle that was growing up, the gracious and polite Chabert is able to keep more of an eye on the future. She's taking to optioning books and other properties to star in and produce herself.

"I'm not sure of the path I'll be going on from here," Chabert admits, "but my goal is to take more control of what's ahead for me now that I'm an adult. I really want to be more collaborative and creative in making my own opportunities."

She's also devoting more time than ever to her lifelong hobby of photography. "But I like to use real film, not digital," Chabert notes.

And what of her personal life? Chabert respectfully offers that she's dedicated to keeping her private life private, which is why you don't see much written about her in the tabloids.

"They still manage to make stuff up about me," she quickly adds. "One time, they had me dating Jared Leto, and I've never even met him to this day. I find that whole world very unpleasant. I'm not a party girl. I love life and I love to have fun, but not on the club circuit. That just isn't me."

When pressed, Chabert will acknowledge there is a special man in her life. But that's as much as she will divulge. However, when she's talking about the "Elevator Girl" storyline, the romantic inside her pops through.

"The script was really cute and fresh," she says, "and its whole idea of finding a magical connection with someone and having to pursue it really resonated with me. These people live in different worlds and have different lives, but they can't ignore what they're feeling."

"I think the lesson is never to judge a book by its cover. And I'm a big believer."

"Elevator Girl" premieres Saturday, February 13 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C).

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