



Shirly Brener ('Stitch')

'Hit List: The Shirly Brener Story'

Shirly Brener is one of the most prolific actresses and producers working today in Hollywood. She has over a dozen projects currently attached to her name as either an actress or a producer.

She just wrapped up the lead in the indie drama "TOUCHED" playing Monique, a Bi-Polar schizophrenic abusive mother. Shirly also finished shooting the romantic lead in the dark Comedy "HIT LIST", opposite Joey Lawrence and John Savage. Shirly also stars in Jake Torem's latest indie film project, "LETTING GO", in which she plays the manic depressive lead character, 'April' alongside Bokeem Woodbine and Christopher Knight.

Next she will be found in 'Stitch,' is a supernatural thriller in which she stars alongside Edward Furlong. With a lead role in the upcoming National Lampoon film "CHEERLEADERS MUST DIE!" (as the role of 'Ms. Hammer') thereafter.

On stage, Brener was seen in the play "Eccentric", which was performed in the NOHO district of Los Angeles. It was written up as a critic's pick in LA WEEKLY and nominated for an LA Weekly Award.

Besides her job at Radar, she recently completed producing 3 films. The latest is entitled "SESSION", a psychological suspense thriller starring Steven Bauer. Next up is the film "BLOOD HOSTAGE", featuring the mixed martial art form Krav Maga and starring Scott Adkins.

Shirly is a celebrity in her homeland of Israel. Born in Haifa and raised between London and Los Angeles, she is well on her way to being a rising film star. Following in her mother's footsteps of theatre and film, Shirly landed commercials for Merci Chocolate in Germany and France at the age of two.

She attended Beverly Hills High School, where she performed in theatrical productions. Juggling a career in 2 continents, she became a series regular on the popular "RAMAT AVIV", the host of the popular MTV "Singled Out" and a supporting-lead in the Israeli Academy Award winning film "Mr. Baum".

Exclusive Magazine recently sat down with **Shirly Brener** and we chatted about all her upcoming movies, her producing talents, special effects make-up, and, of course, ... penguins!

Taking it from the top and you were named (back in 2009) as one of the 5 up and coming Israeli actresses in Hollywood. Is that a big list these days, and do you still feel the pressure to be successful (as an Israeli actress in the US)?

"Being picked by Esquire was a great achievement. The publication has such a high visibility, so it definitely added to my 'cache' and I was certainly in a talented and creative company. These days there are many talented Israeli actors and actresses making a splash. Honestly because of my Eastern European roots (Russian, Czech), I don't really go for the Middle Eastern type roles."



"The pressure to be successful is not induced by the film industry. I personally grew up in an over achiever family where you were encouraged to excel in all you do. I've carried that with me in life, whether in college, grad school, acting academies, as a mom, wife, actress, and producer. I always strive high and when I reach a goal I set a new one of a more challenging nature."

"With that said, its always nice when I book new jobs, get a movie produced and reach cool achievements like winning film festivals or acting alongside De Niro and Pacino. These are the stepping stones in my life and career, which get acknowledged in the press and are respected by family, friends and peers in my homeland. It feels good being one of the ambassadors for my country in the Hollywood film industry."

Whether back home in Israel or over here in Hollywood, you have kept yourself busy in front of the camera. Was acting always in your family growing up? *"My mother was a pretty well known actress both in Film and theater. I definitely was influenced by her career. I used to tag along with her to shoots and rehearsals, so I always knew that that's where I wanted to be. My father was a record-breaking swimmer and later became an international businessman."*

"I started my career acting in nighttime dramas and hosting shows on MTV. Later I went on to act in over 30 features films. Since 2007 I've been a full time producer as well. The entrepreneurial side in me was evoked, probably by my father as well as my pursuing of a Masters degree in Business Administrations."

"Since then, I've produced award winning films like 'The Chicago 8' (starring Danny Masterson and Gary Cole), and the psychological thriller 'Session' (starring Bar Refaeli and Steven Bauer). In 2009 I formed Brener Films. Under my company we have 3 features in pre production as well as pitching TV shows."

"In 2010 I accepted a top executive job at Radar Pictures (The Last Samurai, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The Chronicles of Riddick) as their Vice President of Business Development. I get to work with A-list writers, producers, directors, and talent, developing projects in at the studio level. These days, I'm acting and expressing my artistic side by creativity acting in movies and I'm also taking an active business and executive role behind the camera as a producer."

Indeed, you have worked with a slew of A list actors - Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Sharon Stone, Val Kilmer, Dane Cook, John Cusack, etc. - but so far which acting job/movie has been your go-to favorite memory to work on - and why? *"I've been quite lucky to act alongside such great legends and talents. I studied these guys in film school while attending USC. I can't say one movie or one role has been my favorite or most memorable, as they each had a different affect on me. In 'Righteous Kill,' it was working with De Niro and Pacino, spending time with 2 of the greatest cinematic legends. While in 'Streets of Blood' it was the challenge of doing a Creole Louisiana accent mixed with playing a crack addicted white girl living in the ghettos. It was meticulous research work."*

"In 'Touched,' I had to play a bi-polar schizophrenic mom! It was extremely tough for me to connect to abusing my own child. That character stayed in me for weeks during the shoot and I had extreme mood swings and difficult behavioral patterns that I was wrapped in. It was a difficult role to say the least. The experience of shooting it was physically and mentally tough."

"In 'Stitch' it was the 5-7 hours a day, sitting in special effects makeup. That experience was fascinating because of the meticulous job of the special makeup department and playing a sci-fi affected character. I had to find new layers from which to draw from. I had to exercise plenty of zen and patience. By the end of the shoot, my skin was peeling off and I had rashes all over but had a whole new respect for the artists that worked on me."

"The traveling in various projects were it memorable as well. 'War Inc' with John Cusack and Ben Kingsley was shot in Bulgaria, and was a completely exotic experience, while 'Employee of the Month' with Jessica Simpson, Dane Cook and Andy Dick was all done in New Mexico being all out laughs and fun and a way to explore other regions in the states."

"I enjoy roles that are emotionally and physically challenging. I relish in playing women on the edge - drug addicts, alcoholics, streetwalkers, emotionally unstable, bi-polar. The depths it takes as an actor are challenging and stimulating as an artist. But most of all, I adore doing comedy - life's greatest remedy is laughter. I'm a Second City- improv/sketch girl, so I love exploring that in roles such as the soon to be released 'Hit List' opposite Joey Lawrence."



Your latest movie, 'Stitch,' is a supernatural thriller in which you star alongside Edward Furlong. Have you started filming yet, and being that the movie involves realities being shattered, subconscious states being entered into, and supernatural elements that change perceptions, how does one prepare for a role quite like that?! *"We've been filming 'Stitch' for the past month. As with any script I get, I sit with my acting coach and we break it apart piece by piece and work on it for days prior to filming. We look at every scene, every line, find the subtext, find the inner thoughts of the character, find the role this particular event takes as part of the larger story."*

"I make copious notes all over my script and carry a little notebook around and write background and ideas and references for the whole piece and for my character in particular. I also do lots of research online and watch movies for inspiration. Some of the ones I watched for this role were Bladerunner, American Werewolf in London, The Shining, Psycho, The Birds, and Alien."

"There are lots of Kubrick-esque moments and influences in Stitch as well as Hitchcock-ian motifs. Both of those directors have made a huge impact on me as an actress and it's cool to have a film where I can explore those moments of tensions, surrealism and suspense. Sometimes a piece of art can inspire you, sometimes it's an animal."

"For 'Stitch' I kept on looking at Salvador Dali's melted eggs and listening to old monk chants. An Artist can get inspired by sound, smell, history, culture and definitely other art. My character, Colline, starts out as a sweet expectant mom and slowly emerges to be something quite different. I had to ask myself several times "What would Jack Nicholson do?" It's not revealed until the end if Colline is good, evil, a psycho or was it all just a bad dream or a parallel reality."

"It was fun to play around with all the special effects makeup, blood and tears and take the character to new levels of otherworldly exploration. I cant say much more, you'll just have to check it out when it comes out. By the way, Furlong was a pleasure to work with and he has some really interesting moments in the film."

You will simultaneously be filming a supporting role in the comedy, 'Pendejo' opposite Danny Trejo - please tell us more about your character in this too *"I play Danny Trejo's Wife, Paula. I play a very uptight, republican, suit wearing, super dapper woman who is actually one of the heads of a big Drug Cartel. It was hilarious! We had lots of laughs and improvised a lot of silly things."*

It seems that your roles have involved most all genres, but is there a favorite go-to of yours that you seem to enjoy filming more than others? *"As I answered before, anything that is emotionally or physically challenging is always exciting to me. I love being fearless and trying out new things. It's definitely clear that the Suspense/Horror/Thrillers has a huge following. I actually get bored easily, so I feel pretty lucky that I get to jump from drama to comedy to suspense to horror to sketch to family stuff."*

"I think by far, making a comedy is beyond fun. It's always full of comedic minds trying to get the best joke and the funniest button out there in each scene. During that process, you end up amusing your co-stars, your director and the crew. Who doesn't want to work and laugh with their peers all day long? It doesn't even feel like work if you're peeing in your pants laughing half the day. Laughter is the best remedy to life, even to sorrows and disappointments. If you can't look at it with a wink and some humor or sarcasm then life really does become tedious and burdensome."

Following in your footsteps, your 6 year-old daughter, Mila Brener has also secured herself a movie role in 'Tool Box Murders 2' - was allowing her to debut in such a genre of movie an easy choice for you? *"Sure, Mila has been with me on sets for the past 6 years. When she was born, I took her with me to Eastern Europe where I shot The Weinstein Company's 'The Killing Ground,' a lead opposite Armand Assante. That movie was based on Fritz Lang's M for Murder. She was exposed to body parts and prosthetics at 3 months old. She also has done campaigns for major fashion labels like Esprit, Joe's Jeans, Walmart, JC Penny and many others."*



"She is a seasoned veteran. She knows it's all 'fake.' Actually if all kids could actually see a set in person in life, they would be a lot less scared by movies. On the set, you can tell that all the props are made from foam and that the blood is corn syrup. You can tell a stitch, a cut, blood is made by the makeup department. That's the beauty and magic of movie making."

"On screen it all has a different 'feel.' Therefore I felt very comfortable with her there. Plus me or my hubby, Bruce (he used to run Mickey Rourke's production company for years so he is seasoned on sets too), either one of us always accompanies her to make sure she is comfortable and not taken advantage of."

"In 'Tool Box Murders 2,' director Dean Jones was super professional and very gentle with Mila. Bruce Dern treated Mila quite amazing and actually told us stories about Laura Dern and how she started out around Mila's age. I knew she was in good hands and indeed she is terrific in the picture."

Is there a role that you wouldn't let her undertake at this time, perhaps? *"I wouldn't let her take any role that was exploitative in nature. Definitely nothing that involves nudity or underage relations. Other than that I'm pretty game for anything."*

You are also a prolific producer in your own right, having recently completed production on three films: 'Session,' 'Blood Hostage' and 'Everybody Wants the Kush.' Are these your movies - ones you also star in - or are you simply the paid producer on the project? *"As I mentioned in earlier, some of the movies I produce independent, some with Radar, some under Brener Films. It's a case by case thing. I always get paid both as actress AND as producer. I get hired of course as either or as both. Usually if I'm already producing a film and that sometimes takes 2-3 years to get one off the ground, its a lot of work, and frustration and requires tenacity and patience and ambition, I might as well put my efforts into something that I will also act in since I'm first and foremost an actress."*

"But there are certain projects like the new animated feature that I'm producing "The Embryo who Came in from the Cold" about 5 IVF embryos escaping from a lab and looking for their biological mother that I'm only a producer on."

Do you have any tattoos and, if so, and as we're not called Exclusive Magazine for nothing, what are they of and where are they located?! *"I have 2 tattoos. One of my right side of my stomach. It's a big Churob angel. I've always liked angels, its a sweet and spiritual symbol. It used to be all colorful with pinks and greens and yellows and now its kinda like an old sailor's tattoo. When I was pregnant with Mila it became so chubby and it actually shrunk back to its regular size. I really should do some color punch in on it."*

"The second one is on my right side shoulder. It's a little tribal sun. I did it for the memory of my grandmother. She used to call me her 'sun' because she said I'm optimistic and have an "up and sunny disposition"."

Lastly, and throwing you a journalistic curve ball, Exclusive Magazine love penguins ... do you, perhaps? *"I'm OBSESSED with penguins. We must have watched Happy Feet in this house a bagillion times I think it's terrible what has been done to them by oil spills and human cruelty combined. They are precious species that we should preserve. Hey maybe I should get a penguin tattoo?"*

Interviewed by: Russell A. Trunk

So, if you would like to win a **SIGNED 'STICH'** movie poster from Shirly, just answer this easy question: Shirly recently guest starred on CRIMINAL MINDS on CBS. But what was the name of the episode, and what was her character name?!

Send us your answers and if you're correct you'll be in the running to win one of these wonderful signed items! Just send us an e-mail here before August 1st with your answer and the subject title **CONTEST: STICH SIGNED POSTERS** to: exclusivemagazine@flash.net

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