

THE 4400

Star Richard Kahan reveals the joys of playing a geek



EUREKA

Salli Richardson deals with a whole new set of disasters!



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Allison Blake finds herself front and centre dealing with Eureka's disasters this season, explains alter ego Salli Richardson



Top At last! If you draw a line between them, you'll form a love triangle. Excellent!

Opposite Will Allison and Carter stay close in the second season?

HEY, LOVE IS in the air today, and that's a good thing, right? Well, no, not always. If, for example, you happen to reside in a certain little Pacific Northwest town, love can also be a rather complicated and, in fact, dangerous thing, especially when scientists start experimenting with it. Actress Salli Richardson, who plays Dr Allison Blake on the Sci-Fi Channel series **Eureka**, explains.

"In the episode we're shooting at the moment [*Maneater*], Sheriff Carter [Colin Ferguson] somehow gets this pheromone on him and becomes irresistible to every woman in town. He actually has to be kept separate from them. In order for us to even speak with Carter, we have to do it on a monitor from a different room because the sexual attraction is so intense that we would be clawing at him and he'd end up dead.

"So Carter has to be ushered through the town with Fargo [Neil Grayston] holding the women at bay. It's really

quite hilarious. Of course, he doesn't realize what's happening until all of a sudden these women are kissing him. Everyone is asking, 'What's up with that?' and Carter is like, 'I don't know. I thought maybe I just looked cute today.' Even Allison is fighting over him, and it's not until the two are separated that she's able to ask herself, 'Oh my God, what did I just do?' Again, it's a very amusing episode, and our characters have to figure out how to fix this before the entire town is affected by these pheromones and people start tearing each other apart.

"It's always interesting to see what they [the show's writers] are going to come up with next," says the actress, "and their ideas are always, I think, somewhat based in reality. It's something that either could be or could happen or maybe somewhere is being discovered and worked on, only we don't know about it. So it's always great fun. It's a terrific group of people here and nothing they've come up with so far has left us thinking, 'This is completely ridiculous.'"

ALLISON WONDER

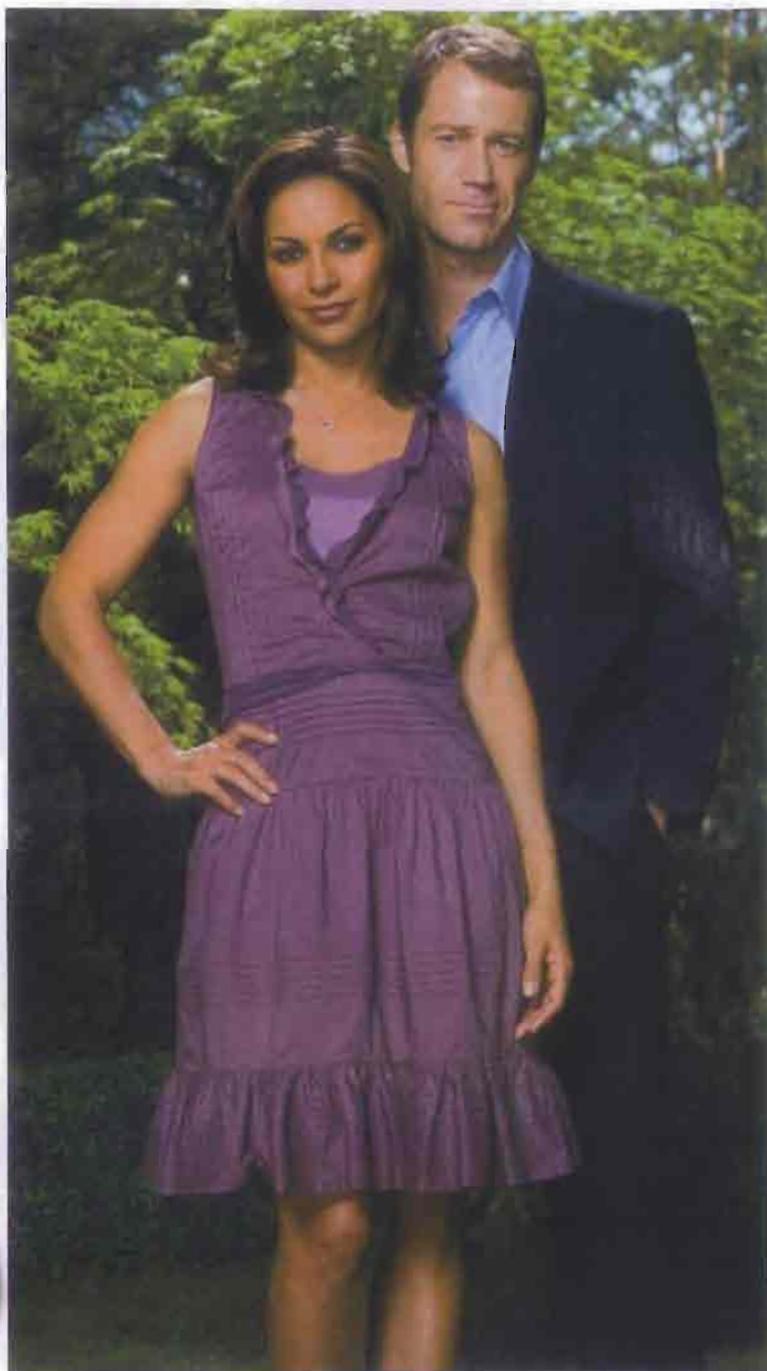


WHEN ALLISON BLAKE was first introduced to viewers last year on *Eureka* she was a US Department of Defence agent working as a liaison between the town – including its local think-tank Global Dynamics – and the government. In the first season finale, *Once in a Lifetime*, the head of Global (and Allison's estranged husband), Dr Nathan Stark (Ed Quinn), conducts an experiment with the top-secret Artifact which almost ends up destroying the town. As a result, at the start of Season Two, Stark is fired from Global and replaced by Allison. That has opened up a brand new door of acting opportunities on the show for Richardson.

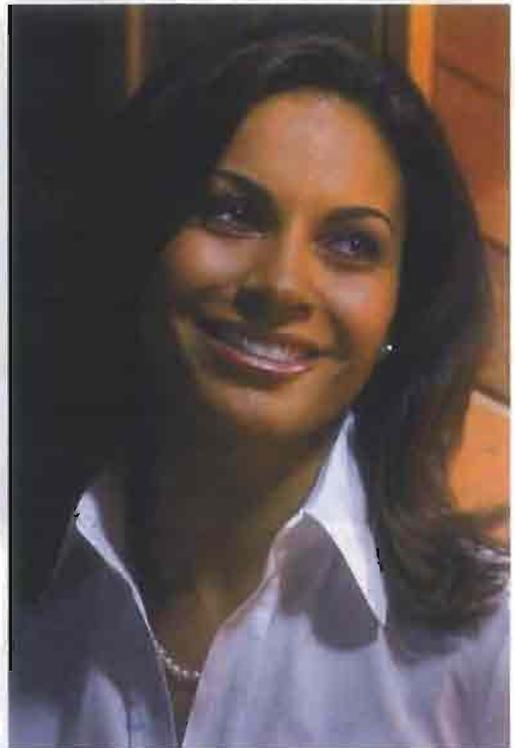
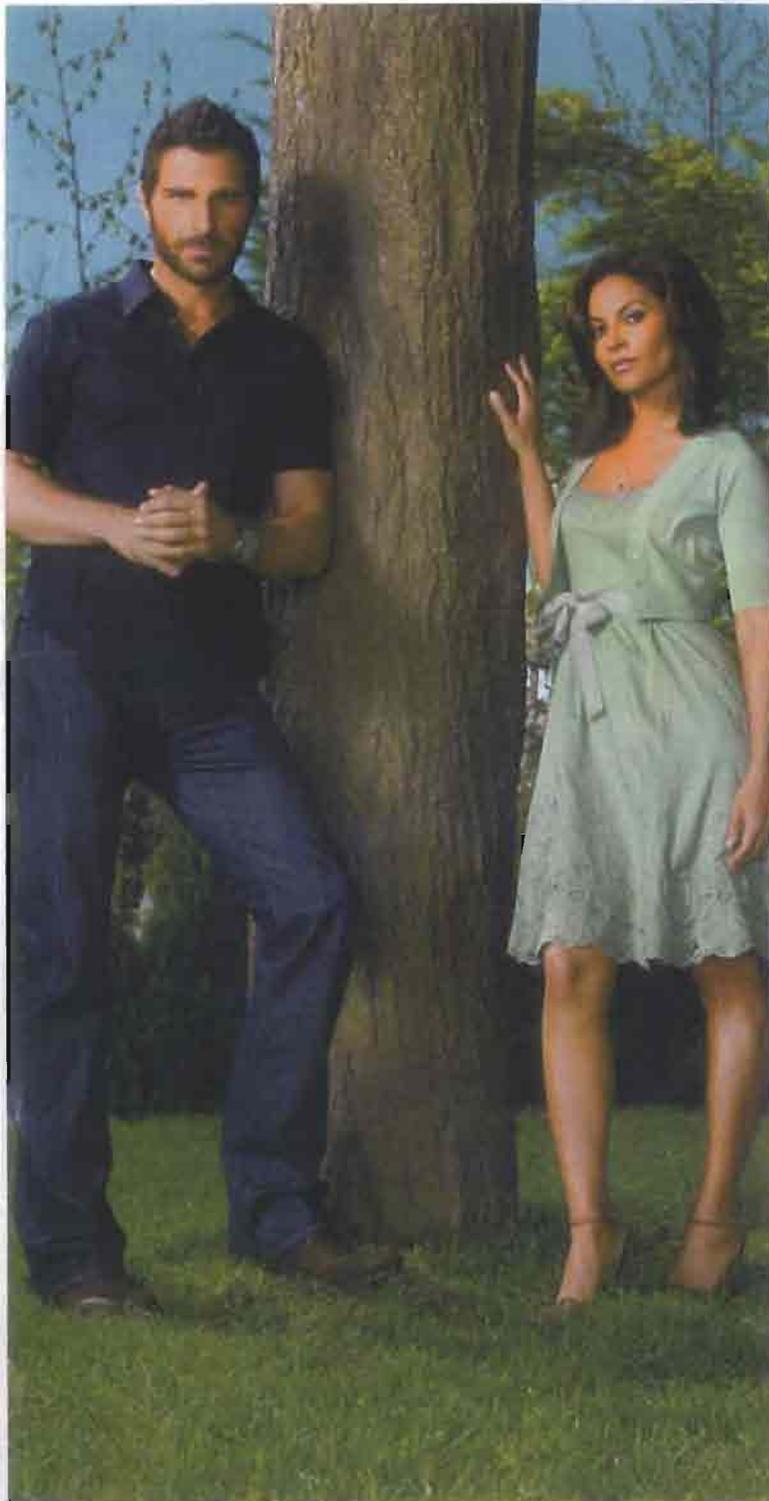
"I think this year my character has much more of a story arc than the first season," she notes. "We were still getting to know all these characters last year, so I don't feel I saw as much growth in Allison back then as I do this time around. Some of her arc actually happened during Season One, but she's not even aware of it because it took place in an alternate reality [the aforementioned *Once in a Lifetime*]. That would have been a big deal for her, but by the end of the episode she has no idea of this major turnaround she made in her love for Carter and her family, so that was kind of lost on Allison.

"This year, however, there's a real arc for my character. She takes on a new job and is the head of a company now. How does that change you? Allison isn't really reporting to people any longer, but instead is making the same tough choices that Nathan had to make. What type of person is she when she has that type of power? Those are all issues for her to deal with, and Allison gets her hands a little dirty, which I find more interesting to play than just being one-sided where you know she's good all the time. Now suddenly you're kind of looking at Allison a little bit strange too and wondering what she might be up to. There are a lot of different ups and downs for her this season, and I like that."

BESIDES BEING THE head of Global, Allison is also a single parent to her young son Kevin (Meshach Peters). Like in the real world, she has a lot of irons in the fire as a working mum, and balancing her personal and professional sides



N'S IRLAND



is sometimes tricky to deal with for both Allison and the actress playing her. "Maybe it's just me as a person, but I have a sort of edge to me," says Richardson, "and the note I always get [from the directors and/or producers] is, 'Can you be a little softer?' So I'm thinking, 'Oh my God, you've made my character the head of one of the most powerful companies in the world. How do I find a way to be obviously a very strong woman who's in charge over all these men, but also find a softness?'"

"That's been my challenge, and the thing is you don't always have to be hard to run a company and get what you need from others. Women, especially, have different ways of dealing with people to get the job done. So I've had to really think about that and find those different ways, you know? When they [the writers] told me that they were making this change with Allison I was so excited. Besides being an actress and knowing it would be a joy to play just as a woman, I love that they're taking a chance and allowing my character to run things. I think it works and, again, gives me so much more to do instead of always saying, 'I'm going to call the Department of Defence'. Now Allison is the one making the decisions and they have to listen to her."

"It's funny, poor Ed Quinn said to me [jokingly], 'Yeah, my character gets fired and yours gets a new set,' because Allison has this fabulous office now. It's all so much cooler. When I came back to work for the first time this year and saw the new [Global Dynamics] set I was like, 'Ooh, we might just be here for a while,' because it's truly amazing."

“NOW ALLISON IS THE ONE MAKING THE DECISIONS AND THEY HAVE TO LISTEN”



Legendary

During the hiatus between Seasons One and Two of **Eureka**, Richardson had the chance to work on the feature film **I Am Legend**, starring Will Smith as Robert Neville, the last man alive on Earth who fights a nightly battle with the rest of Humanity, all of whom have been transformed into vampires.

"I've done movies before, but it's a very different experience when you're in a multi-million dollar film and shooting scenes with 1,500 extras, a helicopter flying over your head and, of course, Will Smith," recalls Richardson. "He's what every big movie star should be, which is a true gentleman. This is a man who doesn't tolerate or allow bad behaviour from himself or anyone else he's working with, and that translated to a very happy atmosphere on set.

"As for the film itself, I think it's going to be really cool. Audiences are going to get that whole Sci-Fi vibe they're looking for, and wonderful drama and great acting as well. I play Will's wife (Ginny), who's a stay-at-home mom and a softer character, which meant I had the opportunity to do a lot more emotional work, so that was a great deal of fun."

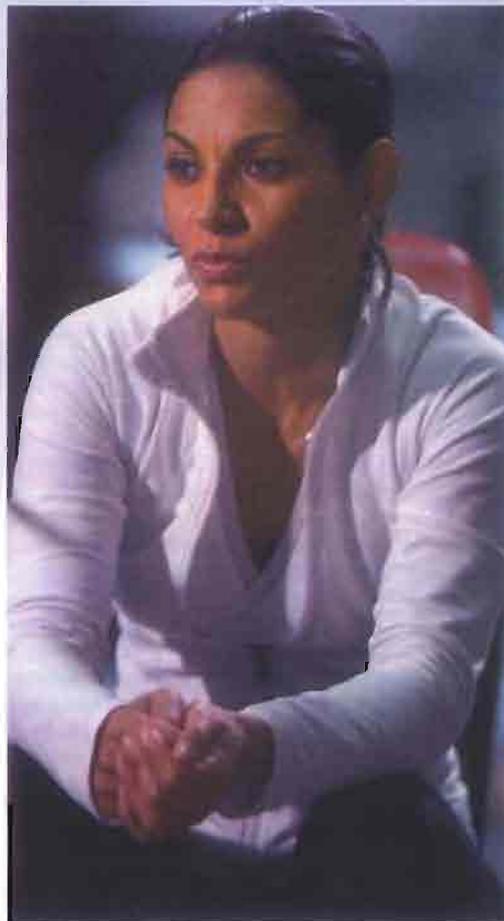
The set is big, but then when they shoot it on camera it looks enormous. It really gives you the feeling that Global is an important company."

NOT SURPRISINGLY, ALLISON'S new job assignment has an effect on her relationship with Nathan Stark, not to mention Carter. "You definitely see Allison gravitate towards Nathan because now he's not just this cold guy who's head of a company," says Richardson. "He's back to being a scientist, and the man who she originally met and fell in love with. Allison still has an attraction to Carter and is dealing with that, but she can't deny her past with Nathan and the feelings she still has for him.

"She and Nathan are also dealing more with Allison's son Kevin and what's going on with him, which is bringing them closer together as a family. I don't want to say too much about Kevin, but he's definitely brought further into the show's mythology, and Meshach is doing a great job in the role. I have to say, too, that I enjoy the relationship between Allison and her son, especially as it helps me show that softer side I was talking about earlier. So you not only see her at work, but as a mother as well and having to care for this very special son that she has. It just makes her more of a whole character, a whole person, and I really appreciate that."

To the delight of The Sci-Fi Channel, **Eureka** turned out to be a hit with audiences last year, and so far this season it's proving to be just as successful. Richardson's previous comment about the series being around for a while may just come to pass. "The pressure is on. We have our fingers crossed for this season and hope we do right by our audience," enthuses the actress. "The work is hard, but the hard work is showing, and you can't ask for more than that."

Steven Eramo



Opposite top left The Stark/Blake relationship continues to be complex

Opposite top right A loved-up Allison in *Noche de Suenos*

Bottom Allison waits for her toast

Eureka
Fridays, 21:00;
repeated Sundays
at 15.00.