

# Savvy.com

## September 2007

### Star of the Week - Salli Richardson

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Classy, beautiful, graceful, and intelligent are perfect words to describe actress Salli Richardson, who stars on the Sci-Fi Network show "Eureka" and co-stars with Will Smith in this fall's *I Am Legend*.

The veteran talent has appeared in films such as *Antwone Fisher*, *Biker Boyz*, *The Great White Hype*, *A Low Down Dirty Shame*, *Posse*, and *Mo' Money*, as well as TV shows like "Family Law," "House M.D.," "NYPD Blue," "CSI: Miami," "Bones," and "The War at Home."

She talked to Savvy about having a hit TV show and a likely blockbuster at the movies...

**Savvy:** Your character on "Eureka," Allison Blake, has been put in charge of the secretive research facility. What's ahead for Allison?

**Richardson:** At the end of last season, we were in this altered state of reality where we were all very happy and had to go back. Last year, my character was in a love triangle between Nathan Stark (Ed Quinn), my husband on the show, and Sheriff Jack Carter (Colin Ferguson). In the altered future, she was married to

Carter. This year, Allison is drawn more to Nathan. This season, I'm not really sure whether Nathan loves me or if it is about him feeling my autistic son Kevin (Meshach Peters) has a connection to the mysterious artifact. That's what's cool about the show - you're never quite sure where someone is coming from, if his or her intentions are always honest.

**Savvy:** It's a terrific show, smart and funny. Is it inevitable that Allison and Carter will end up together? Or is it like Niles and Daphne hooking up on "Frasier"?

**Richardson:** I think we're destined to be, but if you put us together too soon in the show, it's over. We can't all of the sudden be together. Hopefully that will be season seven. (Laughs)

**Savvy:** That's a lot of sexual tension. Do you have a favorite episode so far?

**Richardson:** The season finale from last year, "Once in a Lifetime," because we finally figured out the tone of the show and what it should look like. It was a lot of dramatic stuff to deal with. And I loved the episode from last year where Allison and Carter got stuck together, literally magnetized. I don't get to do a lot of comedy, and that was a funny episode, a lot of fun to do.

**Savvy:** Our favorite episode was called "Purple Haze." In it, your character and others lose all of their inhibitions and you try to seduce Carter by greeting him at the door in a sexy outfit. Did you live at the gym for a month before shooting that scene?

**Richardson:** When I was 20, that stuff didn't bug me so much. I have a 3-year-old kid now, so I did have to work out a lot more for scenes like that. It's never comfortable, and it gets even more uncomfortable as you get older. I hope I've done my duty for the show. (Laughs) This season, there's been some sexy stuff but not quite so revealing. (Laughs)

**Savvy:** Did that establish you as a sex symbol?

**Richardson:** Of course, you're flattered and appreciate the attention. I do my best to stay in shape so people don't come up to me on the street and say, "Oh, you look so much better on TV." People are respectful. I'm happy that I've grown up beyond just the pretty girl to being considered an attractive woman who is also a great actress. I think people see the whole package now.

**Savvy:** Indeed. You are a great actress. What can you tell us about *I Am Legend*? We know you play the wife of Smith's character, who copes with an apocalypse that leaves New York City full of mutants.

**Richardson:** It's about this virus that takes over the world and is slowly changing and killing people. My character is Will's wife. You see through my eyes what it would be like if your death was imminent and your child could die at any moment, being separated from your husband who you may never see again. Or if he's trying to save the world, is he going to die? You see that kind of tragedy through our eyes.

**Savvy:** The previews look awesome. Can't wait to see the movie. There is a horror/science fiction element to this story. Besides this and "Eureka," you've been on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," "Gargoyles" and "Stargate SG-1." Are you a fan of the genre or just get cast that way?

**Richardson:** I've always been a big horror fan kind of girl. My favorite movies are *Alien* and *Aliens*. Any scary movie that is out, I look for. Now it doesn't seem like anything scares you anymore. I guess we've seen it all. But I'm always looking for that scary movie that might still scare us all.

**Savvy:** You've worked with Jamie Foxx, Denzel Washington, Laurence Fishburne, Djimon Hounsou, Samuel L. Jackson, Charles S. Dutton, Keenen Ivory Wayans, and other top African-American talents in Hollywood. Is it becoming easier as a minority in Hollywood?

**Richardson:** As a black actress, it is always harder in Hollywood. It is what it is. Things are getting better, but there aren't as many roles. There's not as much opportunity, so you just try to find your niche. Fortunately for me, I don't just work on minority films. I do projects like "Eureka" where there's no mention



that my character happens to be a black woman in relationships with two Caucasian men. But it doesn't mean anything. I appreciate that and appreciate Sci-Fi for not making that an issue, and no one seems to care.

**Savvy:** That is encouraging. What has it been like to work with megastars like Will Smith or Denzel?

**Richardson:** I've been lucky so far that these people have been great leaders. When you learn you're going to be working with these people, you hope that they are going to be kind and generous people, not having huge egos and walking around the set ranting. I'm happy that these people act the way they should. You could tell everyone was happy, and Will doesn't allow bad behavior from himself or anyone else toward other people. Just a really nice guy who demands respect from everyone and expects respect in return. I felt like Denzel was the same way directing his first film. You could tell he had the trust and respect of the crew. I think that is important when you hear stories about other actors.

**Savvy:** Speaking of actors, it has been reported that you once dated Matthew McCoughney. True or not?

**Richardson:** Matthew and I are good friends because we had mutual friends who hung out a lot, but no.

**Savvy:** I guess it is an occupational hazard to be in the tabloids.

**Richardson:** You always think that you'd love to be that famous that people care that much to follow you around, but I hope that my life isn't inundated that much. It's nice to be in the magazines and at events, but I'd hate to have someone out there trying to take pictures of me every time I stepped out because I'd probably look as crazy as some celebrities do with that much constant attention on them. There are some very famous actresses out here who are not being hounded by the press and the ones who are, they're out doing silly stuff. I'm kind of past that stage.

**Savvy:** No trips to jail planned so you can compete with the pop stars for attention?

**Richardson:** I love being an actress and working, but now it is a different focus. I want my daughter to go to the best schools and be secure. For that to happen, I have to work. I'm not a big press person, but if that will get me more notoriety because people are out taking my picture, I am willing to do that for her.

**Savvy:** What would you like to do next?

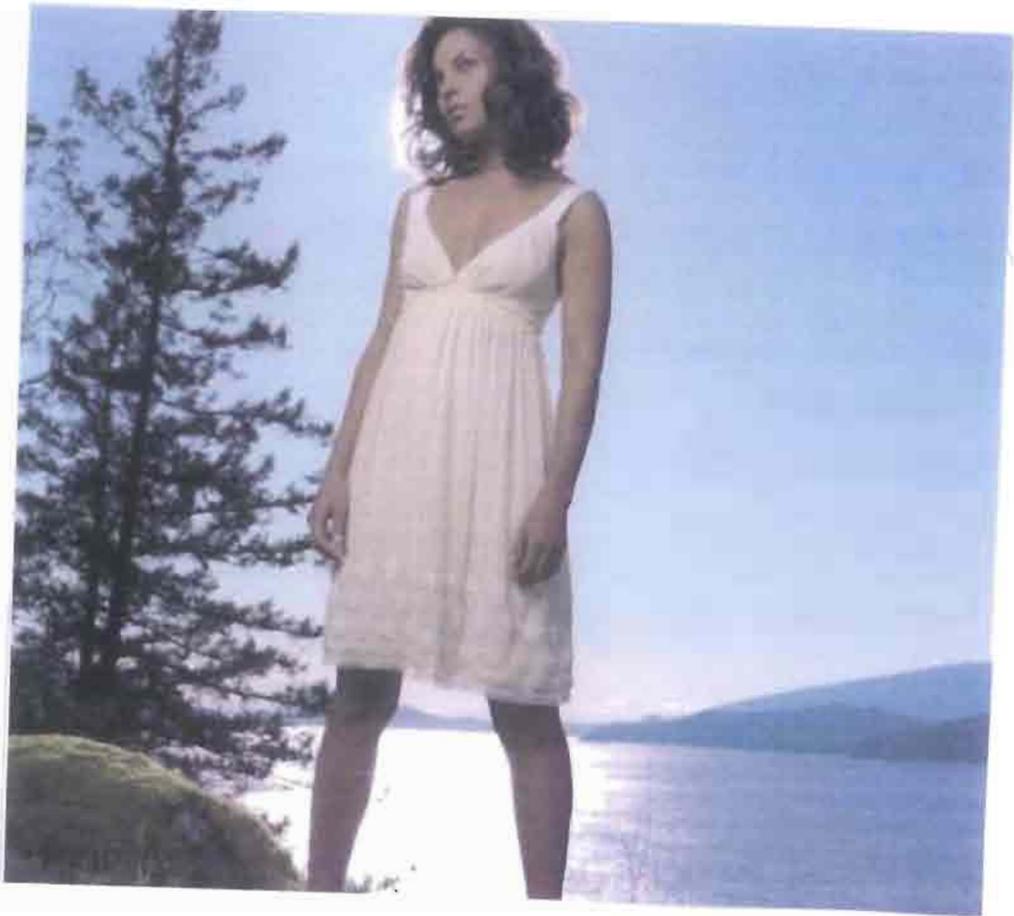
**Richardson:** Hopefully I will get to do another film with Will Smith that is more of a romantic type of comedy because I Am Legend is an action film. It was such a great experience working with him.

**Savvy:** Comedy, eh?

**Richardson:** Definitely. I love it. Most of my friends think I'm really funny. I think when people perceive you as an attractive woman, you don't get the opportunity to do the wacky roles. One reason I love "Eureka" is that occasionally I do get to do that. Comedy is harder, so it's a challenge. My hope is that "Eureka" stays around for a few years and I get to make two films during the summer break. I'm also shadowing different directors this year because I would like to start directing TV. When you're on a series like this, this is when you get that kind of opportunity. We all have to think about our longevity, and I'd like to be able to express myself by directing.

**Savvy:** Very cool. Do you have any advice for anyone thinking of trying the Hollywood thing?

**Richardson:** Before you come, be prepared, especially if you're coming from a place like Chicago like I did. Take classes, because some people think they can just act and take no time to learn the craft. Whatever city you're in, there are usually opportunities to act, and you need to get into the union before you get to L.A. Always stay in class, especially if you're not working. If you're in class, you always have that opportunity to practice and get better. This should be the only thing in the world you want to do, and there shouldn't be a time limit.



**Savvy:** Talent helps, we're sure.

**Richardson:** You should also be able to look at yourself and know what talents you have and don't have. You should be able to look at yourself and go "ooohh, that wasn't very good. What was I doing?" You have to be able to step outside yourself and adjust your own work and stay dedicated.

**Savvy:** Is there any work you wish would vanish?

**Richardson:** I think I've been pretty lucky. There's no job that I've look back and felt ashamed of or thought I was horrible. There have been a couple of jobs that I look back now and realize I was young and made some choices that I wouldn't re-do as an actress.

**Savvy:** So you didn't get discouraged when you did shows like "Silk Stalkings"?

**Richardson:** Never discouraged. That might have been my second job in Los Angeles, literally. I'd been here a few months. I was pretty lucky and organized coming to Los Angeles. I bought a car for \$700 and drove to L.A. I'd flown here a few months earlier and got an agent and an apartment. I had enough money to live on that I didn't have to go wait tables. Within a year, I was working and able to support myself.

**Savvy:** That's great.

**Richardson:** It's always up and down. There are times when I'm working and times when I'm not. I've always been able to not have another job, which is hard to say in this business. I think they say 2 percent of our union can afford to live only as an actor.

**Savvy:** Well, you are a tremendous talent, and we hope to enjoy new work from you for decades to come. Thanks, Salli.