



Salli Richardson

Not Just Another Sci-Fi Queen

Salli Richardson is thrilled with the success of her Sci-Fi Channel TV series *Eureka*, but is also proud to be co-starring with Will Smith in the sci-fi feature film, *I Am Legend*, slated for release in December. Richardson says she is prepared to be scared.

She tells *TBW*, "I play Will's wife, and his daughter

actually plays our daughter in the film. I think we, basically, set the tone for the whole film because what would happen if you see this virus that's really killing the whole world and your husband is the only hope. You have your child there and what happens is if she dies, we're going to be sent away. Will we see each other again? Will he be alive? Will he be safe? I think it just sets up the whole film for devastation that's going to happen."

Richardson, who is thrilled to be playing Will Smith's significant other, worked with Smith's real-life significant other Jada Pinkett-Smith in *Low Down Dirty Shame*. She says, "Well, that (*Low Down Dirty Shame*) was a long time ago and there was another film that Will had talked to me about doing and I think it's more of a testament to Will. I think he decided it was time for him to, maybe, give me a chance and I'm sure Jada was like, 'Yeah, Salli's

BY ANNE M. RASO

cool. But I definitely had to audition and do a screen test for it, but I did feel like it was my part to lose. As long as I went there and did what I was supposed to do, which was audition, it was definitely my job."

On the personal side of things, Richardson has been happily married to actor Dondre Whitfield for five years and they have a daughter, Parker, who attends private school near their "beachy neighborhood" home in Van Nuys, California. What she doesn't like so much is doing red carpets—but she keeps in mind that it's for her daughter that she needs to get out there and "press the flesh." Says Richardson, "The red carpet—I have never loved it but I guess it is fun once you get out there for a little bit. I don't do a lot of celeb parties/events—that has never been my thing. But, with my daughter here, I have to get out more because the whole press thing gets you work."

According to Richardson, being a real-life mother has helped her career in surprising ways. "Well, honestly, at first I didn't know how much it was going to help my work. It just gives me a different depth, especially playing mothers now. You don't really understand what that means until you are a mom. In real life, it just makes my life much more hectic. The hours on the show are long, and, sometimes, some of the cast members work longer than me, but, like I tell them, 'I'm never off.' When I get off of work, I just don't get home to relax and unwind and sit down and memorize my lines. I have to come home and be a mom full time and after my daughter goes to sleep then I try to find some time to memorize the lines. Then I have to get up and be mom before I have to leave. It's been much harder than I ever expected."

The 39-year-old Chicago native (who got her start at age 14 in live theater via Chi-Town's Kuumba Workshop) has future goals which are high yet attainable by an actress of her caliber. "I hope my series goes another five years—we only do 13 episodes a year, which gives me a large window to do films in my off time. This year, I am 'saddling' (following) a few directors because I want to start directing my show and some other shows."

Richardson also wants her new makeup and skincare line, Savi Beauty, to take off when it gets launched this fall. She also hopes to do more work with the sickle cell charities since her goddaughter is a victim of the disease.

A lot of fans of both she and hubby Dondre's work often ask if she will work onscreen with him. "We've done about three or four episodes as guest spots on shows that he's had," says Richardson. "I've come in as his love interest, but, unfortunately, we have no control over that stuff. We always love working together and it's hot."

According to Richardson, she's found that being in a marriage of two actors is generally not difficult—that the only hard part is being apart when they are filming at different locations.

Richardson's positive attitude permeates both her personal life and career outlook. She says, "If I don't get a part, I just say it was not the job I was supposed to have and another great one is coming. The things that are most important to me are my close friends, my family, and being good to them. The people I've met in L.A. have been wonderful. It's great to be living here. ■"

