

TV Close-Up: Christina Applegate

by Eirik_Knutzen

Christina Applegate - who received an incredible career boost at the age of 15 as the very slutty, really stupid and impossibly blond high school student Kelly Bundy on "Married...with Children" - has been an actress all her life.

CHRISTINA APPELEGATE - Christina Applegate plays Samantha Newly, a hard-boiled vice president of a killer law firm who snaps out of an eight-day coma in a local hospital only to find that she has no memories in the sitcom 'Samantha Who?' CNS Photo courtesy of Gary Null. And now, at 35, she seems destined to receive another career booster shot as the star of the comedy series "Samantha Who?" portraying a really slutty, very smart and naturally blond law school graduate with a heart of granite and no recall of her totally bitchy past due to retrograde amnesia following a serious car crash.

She plays Samantha Newly, a "pretty vile" partner and vice president of a killer law firm who snaps out of an eight-day coma in a local hospital only to find that she has no memories of her lunatic parents (Kevin Dunn and Jean Smart) or her ex-boyfriend (Barry Watson), whom she cheated on with a married man. True friends prove nonexistent as she attempts to reconstruct her life.

"Samantha Who?" is the result of a highly amusing pilot script that caught Applegate's eye and a solid job offer she couldn't refuse. She wasn't looking for another series, but the producers were anxious to use her TV comedy experience. Besides her 11 years on "Married...with Children," she starred in the sitcom "Jesse" and earned an Emmy Award for guest-starring as Amy Green (Jennifer Aniston's sister) on "Friends" during the 2003-03 season.

Born and raised in Hollywood, she is the daughter of former record promoter Robert Applegate and actress/singer Nancy Priddy. By the time she was 7 months old, her parents were divorced and there were some tough years ahead. Because it was easier and less expensive than hiring a baby-sitter for a day, Applegate went on lots of auditions with her mother.

Hence, Applegate made her "professional acting debut" in her mother's arms at the age of 3 months on an episode of the daytime soap opera "Days of Our Lives." Two months later, she was featured in her first TV

commercial for a Playtex baby product - the first of dozens of ads that would help provide a fine teenage lifestyle and plenty of room for her mom. When she was 4 years old, acting, voice and dance lessons became a way of life - and she loved them all. There were scores of guest-starring roles on sitcoms ranging from "Silver Spoons" to "Family Ties" before she became regulars on such short-lived (but profitable) political satire shows such as "Washington" and the cop drama "Heart of the City."

Her feature films include the upcoming comedy with Rainn Wilson "The Rocker," a nice addition to a library that holds "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy," "Surviving Christmas," "Employee of the Month," "Wonderland" and "The Sweetest Thing," among others.

Fearless, the totally unaffected actress made her Broadway debut a couple of years ago in the title role of the musical "Sweet Charity." She promptly earned a Tony Award nomination and a broken foot in the venture.

"It was an incredible dream come true - something I wanted to do since I was a little girl," she said, laughing. "I was really, really blown away by the experience."

Playing Charity - a complex, vulnerable, tragic, beautiful and funny character - and sharing her with a live audience for 2 1/2 hours every night was an amazing experience, according to Applegate.

"But in one of the early performances I twisted my ankle coming off a lamppost and broke a bone in my foot in half," she recalled.

"It took an hour before I could get myself offstage and find medical attention," she continued. "I spent the better part of a year with my foot in a brace and special shoes. I'll be able to tell my grandchildren that grandma was a real trouper."

But now she also faces the pain of the void left when her divorce from actor Johnathon Schaech was final in August.

The couple, introduced through friends, were married in Palm Springs in 2001 and separated in 2005. She got the cool house with the swimming pool in Hollywood Hills; he walked away with a reported \$1.5 million plus some odds and ends. Until her personal life is completely sorted out, Applegate plans to keep a very low profile with her pets and family.

"I'm really a homebody who doesn't like to go out anyway," she said, laughing. "It's nice to be at home with my animals, just laying around the pool. And I don't want anyone to come over either. I don't want to entertain, and cooking just doesn't intrigue me."

Applegate also wants to use her minimal spare time mapping out her future, such as it is.

"I'm 35 years old and divorced, so children are always on my mind," she readily admitted. "It will happen because I love children and want to have my own in my life every day. I want a part of me to grow up in the process, I want to teach them everything I've learned from all the mistakes I've made. ... That's really what it's all about, isn't it?"