

Film Close-Up: Jennifer Garner

by Joey_Berlin

With her spy series "Alias" now behind her after five successful seasons, Jennifer Garner no longer faces the grind of carrying an hour-long weekly television show. But the Texas-born, West Virginia-bred beauty still has her hands full. She and her husband, Ben Affleck, are the parents of a 1-year-old daughter, Violet.

JENNIFER GARNER - Jennifer Garner stars in the romantic comedy 'Catch and Release.' CNS Photo courtesy of Mark Fellman. Garner, who co-starred with Affleck in the films "Pearl Harbor" and "Daredevil" before any sparks flew between them, is now returning to the big screen in "Catch and Release." A romantic dramedy co-starring Affleck's pal Kevin Smith, "Catch and Release" casts Garner as a woman dealing with the aftermath of her fiancé's unexpected demise just days before their wedding. And it turns out, he may not have been the man she thought he was.

With the FBI thriller "The Kingdom" on the way in April, 34-year-old Garner is a certified superstar returning to the limelight.

Q: You have been away from these microphones for a little while.

A: Yeah, I've taken a little bit of a break. I haven't done a press junket in three years or something. It's been a long time.

Q: Are you OK with "Catch and Release" being seen as a chick flick?

A: I love chick flicks. I'm one of three sisters. I like chicks. I like chicks to go to the movies together. I think this is a movie where you should take your girlfriend, your sister, your mom, your daughter and go and watch it. You'll enjoy it. You'll laugh, you'll definitely have a tear and you just will feel good. You'll think a little bit and you'll say, "Oh my gosh, is my husband ... is there something I don't know?"

Q: How surprised was Ben when he heard Kevin Smith was your co-star?

A: Ben was surprised. He was like, "They cast who? That fool?" That's how they talk about each other. But Kevin was a blast. Kevin never said the words that were on the page. Here we had this beautiful screenplay and he never said the words.

Susannah (writer-director Susannah Grant) would say, "Please, will you do one take the way I wrote it? Just do one for me."

Kevin introduced me to McDonald's McGriddles, which I'd never had before in my whole life. Those are the things that are pancakes with syrup stuffed inside of them, and then sausage. They bowled me over.

He was incredibly professional and to me; he's my favorite thing in the movie, he and Juliette Lewis.

Q: What was it like having that time away from your career?

A: Well, you know, it's kind of been heaven. All of the above. After "Alias," of course, I was terrified and didn't know if I was going to hate having time on my own and fall apart, or if I was going to embrace it. And really I have to say, having a baby fills your life in such a way that no matter what you're doing, there's something bigger. Whether you're working or not, you care more about your own life. I've just been in heaven being with her the past year.

Q: Did having a baby make you think of your own mother?

A: Of course, yeah. Now I call her and say, "You know all the dinners you made that I said 'No' to and ate peanut butter instead?" Now I say, "I get it, Mom."

You know, I slaved over roasting this and making that, and she's "No, no, no."

Q: Does being a new mom also impact your acting?

A: I remember when she was 5 or 6 months old, I was rocking her and she was really fascinated by something. And it was the way the light was hitting the ceiling. I sat and looked at it with her for the longest time and I thought, "God. I mean, the past five years I haven't stopped to look at light on the ceiling or the shadows. Not even for a second."

To kind of stop, breathe, slow down and be at her pace has been such a gift to me. And of course, it's always a wonderful thing to sit down on the floor and play. So it does, it changes you as a person. And since I'm an

actor, that's all you have is yourself. So it changes what you do.

Q: How is Ben at doing the dirty work of fatherhood?

A: He does a good job. I mean, OK, maybe I wrote out what he was supposed to make for her today while I was gone, but that's my own thing. That's just me being paranoid. What a baby likes, as I'm sure you know, changes from day to day. So you're just trying to keep up, and make sure everybody's on the same page. Ben can do it. He's fine. He's great.

Q: Was making "Daredevil" when you had an inkling that this guy might be the one for you?

A: No. No. Absolutely not. We were kind of partners in crime in a really hard movie to shoot, and friends. And we both definitely went off on our own ways and did our own things.

Not for a second was there anything there that if you had told me then that I would be here now. Still talking about him in this way, and you know, with his baby? I would not have believed you for a second, actually.

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