

WONDER WOMAN

From her muses over “wonderland,” to her prolific repertoire, Jennifer Love Hewitt is the quintessence of beauty and strength

Words by Vanessa Pascale • Photo Credit: Gomillion & Leupold

It's a world constructed of make-believe, dress-up, glitz and glamour, where thespians breathe life into fictional and real-life characters and tempting tales unfurl for our amusement. But the dais of the silver and small screen can skew perceptions. Are those onstage truly as engaging and attractive as the characters they depict? Is it simply an act by an adept entertainer? Is she or he worthy of being called a star? When it comes to Jennifer Love Hewitt, the label “star” transcends the physicality of playing the lead, and rests in her radiating warmth and veracity.

Jennifer, who is styled in a diaphanous cornflower blue dress, light make-up and lush curls that softly tumble down around her shoulders, is waiting for me in her cushy trailer on the set of

The Client List. We take a seat on the built-in chaise, where she pulls her legs up to her side, poising herself comfortably for our conversation. We dive into the subject of her current undertaking – Lifetime's sexy new series that she is the star of, *The Client List*. The new series derives from the 2010 Lifetime movie of the same appellation that garnered Jennifer a Golden Globe nomination. Centered around single mother of two, Riley Parks, *The Client List* brings to light the difficult choices that must be made to survive. For Riley, this means taking a job as a masseuse who doesn't mind going the extra, uninhibited mile for her clients. Due to the movie's high acclaim and relatable premise (financial adversity), Jennifer thought it only seemed natural to develop it into a television series. “Women are in a really empowered place right



now in 2012, which is really good. More than ever, in the United States, they find themselves in sex worker positions, so we thought that that was really interesting to sort of explore,” Jennifer says as she rests her bottled water down beside her.

Jennifer and her manager propelled the original film into production after stumbling on articles of the subject matter nearly five years ago. Intrigued, they felt that there was a story that needed to be told here. Pulling from her own life, the show is set in the state she grew up in, Texas —allowing Jennifer to return to her “real accent”— and features a myriad of characters loosely based on people she knows. “My character Riley is what I pictured. My mom was a single mom with two kids, so much of who Riley is emotionally really feels like my mom to me, so that’s really fun for me to do everyday. I feel like I get to go back and get to know maybe a piece of my mom that I wasn’t alive for yet, which is really nice —other than the massage parlor aspect of it, obviously,” Jennifer laughs. “That’s *not* like my mom, at all. My mom would kill me right now. She’d be like, ‘Um, please don’t say that.’ I mean emotionally, not professionally,” she corrects playfully.

Jennifer also has her hand in the show’s overall creation: executive producing, casting, and intends to direct an episode. “It creates a lot to do during the day. This is the most I’ve been able to just sort of sit down with one person in months,” she tells me. Really? I ask. “Oh yeah, this is the first time I’ve been one-on-one in months. Usually this trailer is filled with people and it’s a line! Somebody’s like, ‘We need to ask you this question.’ And I give an

answer. And they’re like, ‘Great. Have a good day. We’ll be back in an hour.’ And I sit and I’m like, ‘Ok.’” Her words spill out hurriedly, indicative of the pace she’s encumbered by. “And another person comes in and they’re like, ‘Can we...? We need to talk about a meeting.’ I’m like, ‘Ok. Ok.’ And before I know it, 14 or 15 hours have gone by. My day is over. I acted in between. It’s been crazy, but good,” she assures me, smiling. Being wholly involved in the process of developing a television series has been “eye-opening” for Jennifer, giving her a deeper appreciation for her craft, the material she works with, and the show’s evolution.

Los Angeles’ skyline is punctuated with *The Client List* billboards featuring Jennifer’s come-hither visage, prodding people to tune in on Sundays at 10/9c. Enticing audiences is nothing new for Jennifer, whose allure tastefully teeters between girl-next-door innocence and salacious seductress and has been highlighted in films like *Heartbreakers*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, and *The Tuxedo*. Her curvaceous figure inspired the famous lyrics, “Your Body is a Wonderland” penned by past love interest, singer-songwriter John Mayer (I ask if she has the song on her iPod. “I do. He’s so talented. His music is crazy talented. It’s amazing,” she remarks.), has landed her on *Maxim*’s Hot 100 list a number of times and made her a *Maxim* cover girl. *Maxim*’s April 2012 issue was her fourth cover.

When you’re lauded as one of the sexiest women in Hollywood, unfortunately, the spotlight exposes you to unabashed scrutiny. One second the media is raving about you and the next they’re

brandishing badly angled paparazzi snapped photographs of you. Jennifer recently commented to the media that she feels that she is in the best shape when she is asked back by *Maxim*. I inquire whether the gossip magazines have put pressure on her to be in tip top shape. “To say I didn’t feel pressure would be a lie. Most of my pressure is self-inflicted pressure. The body changes and your metabolism changes, and carbs lay differently than they use to... It’s more like a challenge I hand myself every year, to sort of be in better condition and take better care of myself, so that I can have kids one day and live a long healthy, happy life. You add on top of it Hollywood and pictures that they take, and things that they want to say —it gets to me sometimes,” she expresses candidly. “I try to keep a healthy mind about it.”

To prepare for the *Maxim* photo shoot, Jennifer confesses that she ate a lot more salads, drank lots of water, worked out hard, and cut out everything else for at least two weeks prior. She tells me that she lined up all four *Maxim* covers the other day and was fascinated to see how her body and face has changed over time. “I kind of want to frame them all, so that one day when I’m 80, I can be like, ‘Alright, we had it once, that’s good!’” she laughs.

She certainly has it —the “it” that has bewitched the likes of Carson Daly, John Mayer, and Jamie Kennedy in the past. These days the 33-year-old starlet is happily single. “It’s been good to be single,” she reflects thoughtfully. “I think I’m at an interesting age to do that, ’cause I’m sort of at an age where most women are settling down and getting married and having kids... And you definitely feel the pressure, sort of, from the universe to start thinking about those things. It’s really interesting to find yourself *not* doing that.” A part of a “great little *Sex in the City* kind of group of girls,” Jennifer is relishing the joys of single life rather than harping on where Mr. Right is. What must the next guy have to elicit her attention? I ask. “A miracle,” she emphatically answers. We burst into a fit of unbridled laughter. Right!? I exclaim. “A *mir-a-cle*,” she sounds out exaggeratingly. “He has got to be named Miracle.” Her mouth turns up into a huge smile. I warn her that once the male population reads this tidbit that many will be changing their name, and we laugh about the possible scenarios that might arise.

Playfulness aside, she replies, “Ya know what? I really don’t know. At this point,” she pauses contemplatively, “—giving up or surrendering is a bad thing to say because that sounds so hopeless —but I don’t really know.” Jennifer explains that her hectic schedule ties up most of her time but besides that, she’s presently dating herself —figuring out who she is, what she wants, doesn’t want, what she’s willing to put up with and not willing to put up with. “When I finished the book [*The Day I Shot Cupid* (2010)] and it came out and I was talking to people about it... I realized that maybe I didn’t spend enough time in the book on how *in yourself* you have to be before you can find that person. I think that’s where I am now.” Her focus has been redirected away from who that next guy will be and what he’ll bring to what she will be able to offer when he comes along. “I feel that’s a better place, a healthier place to sort of be in,” she muses.

From my candid encounter with Jennifer, she doesn’t seem to be lacking in any area. I find her to be as engaging and sweet as she

is beautiful. The Internet went wild when she mentioned that her breasts are her favorite assets, which prompted me to find out what she considered her best quality. “I think I’m kind of funny,” she says with a laugh, “just because I’m brutally honest most of the time, which sometimes is a good thing and sometimes is not. But I tend to make my friends laugh a lot and that I really like.”

To illustrate her noteworthy wit, when I ask what fans might be surprised to find out about her, Jennifer proudly replies with a big smile, “I know a lot of rap songs. I’m obsessed with hip-hop music.” I listen, wide-eyed, as she explains that she and co-star Rebecca Field rap “like nobody’s business” while having their hair and makeup done on set. Their range includes songs by Lil Wayne, 50 Cent, Salt-N-Pepa... “Rebecca is teaching me Biggie Smalls and Nicki Minaj. Right now, I have the lyrics printed out to “Super Bass” and when I’m at home, I sit in my Brookstone foot massager and study the Nicki Minaj lyrics so that I can hopefully know all of the words.” A vision of Jennifer, after a long day at work, relaxing in a cozy chair intently reading hip-hop lyrics over and over while singing them aloud (she didn’t say she raps while she’s memorizing the lines, but this is what I envision) comes to mind. Not what you’d expect from her at all. It throws you off a bit, but makes you adore her a little more.

The surprising idiosyncratic anecdotes roll off her tongue fluidly. “I have an uncontrollable thing,” she confesses in a way that tells me that what she’s about to disclose next is going to be pretty good. “If any kind of music is on, at any given time, this (she waves an opened palm in the space just above her butt) has to move. The badonkadonk is constantly moving,” she says emphatically. I am awed by her word selection. I can’t remember the last time, if ever, I heard someone refer to their butt as a badonkadonk —aside from in rap lyrics. Coming from Jennifer, it’s quite endearing. She passionately expresses her affinity for salsa dancing, and how being in a public place does not hinder her need to shake it, even if she is, say — grocery shopping. If the

right song is playing in the background, fellow shoppers are likely to find Jennifer employing her shopping cart as a salsa partner. “People are like, ‘What is going on over there?!’” she says animatedly. “I’m like, ‘I am sorry. This is just— it’s always been this way. It’s a situation. I don’t know how to help it. Just move along. Look away!’” Her comedic deliverance is on point and the vision has me in hysterics. “Could be why I’m single. I’m just sayin’,” she good-naturedly jokes. “Could be why the relationship did not work so well, ’cause I’m weird and I don’t really need anybody to entertain me. I kind of do it myself.” It flows from her so naturally —to amuse and enthrall. You never know what tale or tidbit she’ll toss out next, which makes you hang on her every word.

Obviously, Jennifer fulfilled her calling in life, but what path would she have taken had she not found a home in the entertainment industry? Jennifer supposes that her theatrical pursuits might have been sated by practicing law. “Being a lawyer, if you think about it, I think it sort of goes back to acting a little bit, getting up in front of the jury, pleading your case. I think that would be really, really cool. Or a chef!” she adds. She entertains the dream and wistfully replies, “Yeah, I would be a chef or lawyer. Maybe I can be a cooking lawyer. I can sauté and plead my case.” Her eyes light up and she lets out a laugh.

CHEF JENNIFER

“I make really good spaghetti, my mom’s recipe, and I make really good Dover sole and risotto.”



SPRING & SUMMER STYLE STAPLES

"Long skirts and sun dresses. Love 'em! Can't wait --super excited about it! I just feel like they're so comfortable and girly and beautiful."

Jennifer's career has been perpetuated by a number of memorable roles over the years that include a successful stint on *Party of Five* as Sarah Reeves Merrin, starring as Melinda Gordon in *The Ghost Whisperer* and playing Audrey Hepburn in *The Audrey Hepburn Story*. "That was pretty amazing," Jennifer says of the latter. "It was a dream of mine I never thought would actually come true. I got to play it at such a young age; I was only 22 or 23 when I did that movie. I always thought that'd be something I'd do later in life, if it happened. So that was really cool and extraordinary." How did landing this iconic role come about? "ABC was interested in making it. I got together with this company and we wanted to produce it. And it just worked out that we were able to do sections of her life where I was able to play her [Audrey] and look right for the part... It was a dream." In the future, Jennifer hopes to act in a "Jane Austen period piece," as this sort of role is one she has not employed yet. And at the opposing end of the spectrum lays her desire to unleash her inner badass. "I'd love to play Tomb Raider. I think that'd be really cool, and I hear they're going to do it again. I would really loooove to do a big sexy action movie like that," she says fervently. She allows her mind to wonder. "I really wanted to play Wonder Woman too for awhile... I think that would be really fun."

Gas up the invisible airplane! I'm confident we've found the next Wonder Woman. **ML**

MIAMI LOVE

"I like the people in Miami. I like the feeling in Miami, it's so, there's something saucy and hot about it all that I think is really cool. I feel like that's why people go to Miami. Vegas has a very specific reason [people go] and I feel like Miami does too. Miami is just so, I dunno, so steamy and awesome, and the guys there are so cute," she breathes girlishly.