

Exclusive Interview: Natalie Zea on Sweet Talk, 'Justified' & 'The Following'

Natalie Zea really can't talk about "Justified" or "The Following," but her new movie Sweet Talk is on VOD which you can also watch on a television.

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We've seen Natalie Zea on shows since "The Shield" and "Dirty Sexy Money," all the way to "Justified" and "The Following."

Zea has a movie coming out this month so it seemed like a good time to catch up on both of her current shows, though that didn't go entirely according to plan. In *Sweet Talk*, Zea plays Delilah, a phone sex operator, who entertains a customer named Samson's (Jeffrey Vincent Parise) desire to tell each other longform stories. *Sweet Talk* opens in theaters December 13, but starting Dec. 15 you can watch it on television via VOD services including iTunes, Amazon, Playstation, Comcast and Time Warner.

CraveOnline: You're such a staple of episodic television. Do you go out for as many movies?

Natalie Zea: No, no, not at all. It's like pulling teeth. In terms of what's out there, it's becoming more and more difficult to even get movies made, so I feel like the pool of movies to choose from is shrinking, yet the pool of actors to choose from is as big as ever. It's a real fight so I'm fighting the good fight. There's a couple here and there that'll take me and that's good.

It's shrinking even though there are more avenues for distribution like VOD and digital downloads?

I think and I hope we're at a crossroads where because of innovations in equipment and because of the fact that distribution is becoming so huge and casting such a wider net, I think that now people are beginning to realize that they can make movies for a lot less and that there's access. There's so much more access than there used to be and that's exciting, but it's still going to take some time to get that ball rolling. We're still pulling from the same large pool of actors. Huge actors, like really, really well known established actors are willing to do movies if the script is good for very little money, so that's also making it difficult for people like us, TV actors, to get a chance. But slowly it's happening. Slowly everything's starting to even out I think.

Doesn't your recognizability from television mean something to movies, especially after "The Following" became such a hit?

It's starting to. It is starting to and that's great because it felt like it was a really big hump to get over. There's been absolutely nothing overnight about my career. Everything has happened very, very evenly and slowly and

methodically so I'm starting to see it a little bit now.

In *Sweet Talk*, with a phone sex operator it's only her voice, but since you're on camera we're seeing your expressions too. Did that make it very different?

God, I didn't even think about that when I was doing it. No, I wanted to be really deliberate about her level of talent if you will. This was not a girl who's a frustrated actress or a failed artists or an extrovert. She's just a girl who needed a job and this is the job she went with because she's got the ability somehow. So I didn't want to make her really magnetic. I didn't want her phone sex character to be anything that was really magnetic or too intriguing because it doesn't work for the reality of the situation, but I think she needed to be magnetic enough to get this guy's attention. I guess I did want her physical manifestation to be slightly different from what was coming out of her voice.

That's why Terri and I worked a lot with, and I don't remember how much you see it, but she's playing chess in one of the scenes with herself and she's doing sudoku I think. We just really wanted to occupy her with other activities to just show the disconnect.

Did you have Jeffrey on the line with you?

Oh yes. Both of us were on the line with both of each other for the coverage.

How much dialogue would you get through in a day?

There was one take that was 15 minutes long. In my life I've never done a 15 minute long take. That's just 15 straight minutes, never cutting. So that's 10 pages, 10 pages of just talking on the phone and I commend the crew for being able to navigate that because I'm walking around, I'm doing all kinds of stuff. Whether it was steadicam or whether it was on tracks, they had to stick with it. It was a very careful dance between the camera and myself. We would do really long takes.

Were any of those long takes ruined at 13 or 14 minutes in by something technical?

If it happened, it was fine because luckily we could intercut so there was never that stress. By the way, I have actually worked on a film where there was that stress. I just did a film where there's five acts and every act is one take, and it's a 20 minute take. At minute 17 if something goes wrong, that take is ruined and you can't use it. That is a very special kind of stress but not with this movie because there was so much intercutting that could be done that it never felt like, "Oh God, we were so close." The only reason we went 15 minutes during that take was because nothing f***ed up. We were like, "Let's just keep going until we're done." I think I even stopped. I was like, "I think we can stop now. I think we might want to cut here."

Is it weird if I think the overalls and sweats are still hot?

No, thank you, I'm going to go ahead and take credit for that because the way it was scripted, and it worked for the play I think, was that she was wearing a dress, like a frumpy dress with combat boots which I get, but I just couldn't wrap my brain around it. So the costume designer, Terri and I all got together and we talked about some alternatives and I just kept seeing overalls, and they're mine. I own them. I brought them in and I was like, "This won't get out of my head so let's at least try it." And it ended up working I think.

Yeah, overalls are cute.

They're cute, right?

Did you actually learn how to play cello?

No. I think Terri knew enough to show me hand positions and she was really great at editing that scene.

Which was your favorite story in *Sweet Talk*?

I like them both. I guess to be fair, it's kind of a his and hers. Budapest is his in a way and it's a little more elaborate, and hers was Sienna which was towards the end and it was not as elaborate, but I really, really enjoyed the dance sequence which I didn't think I would because there was a possibility of that going into the cheese factor. I think it turned out really great. It was really sweet and kind of touching without getting too precious.

Are you back on "Justified" this upcoming season?

You will see me this season, yes.

When we spoke last year, you said they could use you three times while you're a regular on another show, so did they use all three?

I don't know, we'll see.

Can you tell us which episodes you might appear on?

It's pretty early on.

"The Following" will be tough to ask anything spoiler-free about, but are you back in season two?

I actually can't say one single word about that. Not a word.

I thought of all sorts of clever ways to ask about flashbacks or things we already no, but I guess I won't even go there.

Sorry.

If we can talk about last season, what was it like for you being a part of "The Following" and seeing it become a hit?

Well, it wasn't surprising. Every time people would ask before we aired, "How are you feeling? What do you think?" My answer would always be, "Something would have to really extraordinarily go wrong for this not to take off. In all my years doing this, I feel like I have enough knowledge to know that this is about as close to a sure thing as you can get."

Is it ever a heavy show to work on?

Yeah, it is, it is. Not necessarily because of the content. I'm sure some of that seeps into it but because of the environment, the elements. The nature of shooting at night during the winter in a cold environment, a lot of night shoots, after a while your psyche just says, "No thanks. I don't want to do this anymore."

What was the other movie you shot?

It's called *Too Late*. It's with John Hawkes and it's this really cool noir story told out of sequence, and there are five acts. Each act is 20 minutes long and done in one take. And it's shot on film so it's breathtaking, it's beautiful but a really, really difficult task to undertake. Every act is kind of its own little story. John is in all of the acts but everyone else is mostly sequestered to their own act. My act is with John, Joanna Cassidy and myself.

They have film mags that go for 20 minutes?