



AWARDS

'It wasn't great for a very long time': Sydney Sweeney on the perils of Hollywood



Sydney Sweeney earned two Emmy nominations — one for her work as an entitled millennial in “White Lotus” and one for the drama “Euphoria.” (Celeste Sloman / For The Times)

BY RANDEE DAWN

AUG. 2, 2022 6:15 AM PT



Sydney Sweeney is riding high these days. The up-and-coming actor from



[in the gritty teen drama 'Euphoria' and the first season of anthology series 'The White Lotus.'](#) Then on July 12, good things got better — she was nominated for Emmy Awards for both roles.

Certainly, none of this happened overnight. Sweeney's been pursuing her acting dream for 10 years already, proving that talent, plus persistence really can lead to the red carpet. She spoke with The Envelope via Zoom from her hotel in Boston, where she's shooting Sony's Spider-Man universe action film, "Madame Web."

How do you keep your characters separate in your head?

I truly look at them as living, breathing human beings. I start building my characters as real people. I gave them memories. I give them an entire world, and I create these books with an entire timeline and diary and interactive journal of this person's life. So when I become this person, it's not me thinking, "How is she going to react?" It's "Sydney's gone, and now I am Cassie [in 'Euphoria']. Now I am Olivia [in 'White Lotus']." I know how they're going to react because I have "lived" through all these memories and moments. So all these characters have their own heartbeat, in a way.

It sounds like there's a writer lurking inside you. Is that a goal?

Totally. I want to do everything that I possibly can. My parents always told me to fall in love with as many things as possible — and I've always followed that.

"Madame Web" is your first superhero film. Does this mean you'll get to use all of your mixed martial arts expertise?

Maybe!

You really are trained in mixed martial arts. Why that particular area of



I loved all the competitive sports — I wake-boarded, I skied, I played soccer — but when I came to L.A. [to pursue acting] I didn't have time for team sports. My parents wanted me to have that interaction in that group setting. I'm very athletic and I had a friend who started training. I was fascinated by it and I started going to his workouts and just watching him and tagged along.

I imagine being so athletic, you've also hurt yourself here and there?

Oh, yeah. I have a scar right here [gestures at her cheek]. I was 12 and got in a wakeboarding accident. My whole body folded and my face was sliced by the board. I had to get 19 stitches. Then at 16, I was riding a dirt bike and tore my ACL. And then while fighting, I fractured my nose.

Does that teach you how to deal with pain?

Sports didn't teach me how to deal with pain. That was my mom. I was terrified of getting back up on the wakeboard, but the day my stitches came out and I could get back in the water, she drove me out to the lake, put my screaming and crying ass in the water and said I wasn't allowed to get out until I got back up on that board.

And today, you are —

So grateful. I'm not scared. And I know my limits. I know my body. I was training [for MMA] with my leg in a whole entire cast bar. My parents instilled in me never to stop.

There's a viral Instagram video of you in a car, on the phone, cry-talking with her about your nominations. Was your mom in particular always in your corner?



I was 12, 13 years old and my mom and dad gave up everything that they knew for me to be able to pursue my dreams. We lost friends, we lost our house, we lost everything in pursuit of it.

Did it get easier once everyone committed to your career choice?

It wasn't great for a very long time, because it was just fighting, fighting, fighting [for jobs]. I had no connections. I did not come from money. And when you're 16 and you don't really like yourself, and you're trying to figure out what the hell is going on in your body and your makeup and your hormones, and people are telling you that you're not good enough — that weight is so heavy. But I had parents who, no matter what, believed in me.



Sydney Sweeney (Celeste Sloman / For The Times)



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