



AWARDS

Jamie Lee Curtis finds the truth, even in that thing called the multiverse



"My contribution is that I am good at being truthful," actor Jamie Lee Curtis says of her roles in multiple genre films. (Jay L. Clendenin / Los Angeles Times)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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Jamie Lee Curtis does not like being scared. She does not have much interest in whatever the multiverse is. But that hasn't stopped her from becoming a horror icon

(her [“Halloween” character Laurie Strode](#) debuted in 1978 and became a powerful symbol for female survival and empowerment), comedy (“A Fish Called Wanda,” [“Knives Out”](#)) and action-packed sci-fi (“Everything Everywhere All at Once”). For the 63-year-old actor, it’s all about a story she can connect with.

Joyful and enthusiastic, she joined The Envelope at a post-“Everything” screening and panel in New York City in October to talk about truth, (not) being a nerd and selling cars with O.J. Simpson.

“Everything Everywhere” is a real stealth hit. But you’re unrecognizable in it as an IRS worker who takes her job a little too seriously. What did you like about playing Deirdre?

I totally know people like Deirdre Beaubeirdre. They wield power to hide their loneliness. Their lives are chaos, because they’re alone, and they use their jobs as a way to have omnipotence in the world. I didn’t have to know the script. I didn’t have to understand it. It was, for me, [co-star] Michelle Yeoh, [filming in] Los Angeles — and I knew Deirdre.

So you’re not all that caught up on multiverses and things like that?

I know what a fantasy life is like. I know what love feels like. I know what breaking up with love feels like. I’m an emotional actor, not a trained actor. I don’t dance in an intellectual petri dish of ideas and concepts. If I feel something, then I know I can perform it.



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Maybe that helps you transition between genres so easily. What's your secret?

My contribution is that I am good at being truthful. I think people believe me when I do things, which is why I sell things. Not many actors talking to you, on SAG panels or Oscar lists, are doing commercials for yogurt [Activia] that makes you poop. Or who sold L'eggs pantyhose or [Hertz Rent-a-Car commercials with O.J. Simpson](#). Because I'm a truth-teller.

Why, for you, is truth is so important?

We live in a world of lies. Everywhere we look seems somewhat fraudulent. Did I wear makeup today? Yes. Did I do fancy pictures on a fancy panel? Yes. Do I look like this in my regular life? No. I wear fuzzy Birkenstocks and black yoga pants and a very specific black button-down shirt. All day, every day. I don't wear makeup, I keep my hair short so I don't have to do anything — because I'm obsessed with truth. I'm obsessed with the demystification of it.

And then you translate that into whatever characters you'll create onscreen?

I'll do anything. I have this weird little girl inside me who comes out. My husband [Christopher Guest] wants to send her to an asylum. But I have all these people inside me, to this day.





A nearly unrecognizable Jamie Lee Curtis as Deirdre Beaubeirdre the IRS agent in a scene from “Everything Everywhere All at Once” with Michelle Yeoh (Allyson Riggs / Associated Press)

The characters you’ve played are parts of you?

Well, I looked at [the original] Laurie Strode like a character part. Laurie wasn’t Jamie at all. But by the 2018 movie — this woman they created 40 years earlier, who never got any mental health help, she and Jamie the Vulgarian started meshing with Laurie Strode, and by the 2022 movie we are almost indistinguishable. It’s less fun, because it’s just me tapping into my own feelings of vulnerability. A character like Deirdre? I don’t get to do that very much. I was with Maggie —

Maggie Gyllenhaal — you’re godmother to her and her brother Jake, right?

A fairy godmother; there’s no official godmother, because they’re Jews. They call me their fairy godmother. Maggie said that Deirdre reminds her of “Mrs. Silverstein,” See, I used to call Maggie — I’ve known her since she was 8 — I’d call and Maggie would pick up the phone and I’d say, “Hello, this is Mrs. Silverstein from the Silverstein Stewart School, is this Margalit Ruth Gyllenhaal?” So when she said, “I heard Mrs. Silverstein coming out in Deirdre,” I was like, “It is a little Mrs. Silverstein, a little bit Anthony Fauci and a lot of Bernie Sanders.”

You just wrapped up the sci-fi series “Borderlands, and your resume is

full of genre projects. Are you a nerd?

I have raised a nerd — and a proud trans nerd. My younger daughter is a complete nerd; [we had a cosplay wedding](#). Random cosplay. Annie went as Jesse from “Toy Story,” and Ruby was ... well, I don’t know what Ruby was. I swim in the horror sea beautifully, but I hate it. I hate being scared.

And yet you and Laurie Strode have merged, as you say.

The gift of Laurie Strode is that I now have a company [Comet Pictures]. We’ve bought all the Patricia Cornwell [Kay] Scarpetta books for a TV series; I bought a book called “Paradise” by Lizzie Johnson. I wrote a screenplay. I will direct it. I’m now a maker. That’s what I get to do now. I’m wide open, I’m so loose. I’m loose as a goose, so I’m saying yes to all of this: Bring it on.

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