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ENTERTAINMENT

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Traci Lords gives her take on Novel Romance

BY RAHNE PISTOR

Novel Romance, writer/director Emily Skopov's new film that puts a Faustian twist on a woman's desire to become pregnant and raise a child without the involvement of a father figure, will make its U.S. premiere at the Other Venice Film Festival at 3 p.m. Saturday, March 17th, at the Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice.

The film stars sex symbol Traci Lords, who made a rare transition from the adult film industry to Hollywood in the 1980s.

In Novel Romance, top-shelf literary editor "Max Normane" (played by Lords) agrees to publish the works of a struggling writer in exchange for one coveted substance — his sperm.

The character Lords plays in Novel Romance shows a woman who has been hurt by past romances too many times and is afraid to love. She shuns men, and at first, views her male counterpart, "Jake Buckley" (played by Paul Johansson), as a mere sperm donor for her lovechild.

But when "Jake" maneuvers his way into her life and the child's, she has a change of heart.

No stranger to complex sexual situations, Lords was a popular porn actress in the 1980s who became the center of a scandal when it was discovered that she started her porn career when she was 15, and that all but one of the sex films she starred in were made while she was under the age of 18.

She was one of only a handful of blue screen actresses to find success crossing over into more mainstream film and television acting, first starring in the Roger Corman B-movie Not of This Earth and later alongside Johnny Depp and Ricki Lake in John Waters' Crybaby, which she describes as one of her proudest on-screen experiences. She made appearances in Blade and Extramarital and in a number of television shows, including Roseanne, Melrose Place and Married With Children.

"I can't answer why I succeeded in crossing into mainstream film acting while other girls [who were involved in porn] haven't," says Lords. "I can say it has to do with hard work, talent, being diligent about studying acting, and also that I've been blessed to be surrounded by excellent representation."

Her experience as a teen porn star is a part of her history, something she says she has moved past and rarely thinks about, but that has proven to be a stigma nearly impossible to shake, she says.

"It's just not part of my life anymore," she says. "Think back to when you were a teenager and how completely irrelevant what you were doing then is to what you're doing now. But obviously it made a huge impression because people are still talking about it 21 years later."

One tends to wonder just how closely Lords herself — someone who has experienced firsthand intense love, abuse and confusion — relates to the lovelorn woes of Max Normane in Novel Romance.

But Lords says that her on-screen character in the film is in no way a reflection of her feelings in real life.

"I am so completely the opposite of 'Max' in my personal life. I totally believe in love," says Lords, who adds that she recently celebrated her fifth wedding anniversary.

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