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Loni Anderson Stars in New LGBT-Themed Sitcom on Tello

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
Saturday Jan 28, 2017

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Blonde bombshell Loni Anderson will always be remembered as Jennifer Marlowe from the hit sitcom "WKRP in Cincinnati," a role which garnered her three Golden Globe and two Prime Time Emmy Award nominations. Anderson was a regular in five more series and has guest starred in numerous other shows and TV movies like the title role in "The Jayne Mansfield Story." Her films include "A Night at the Roxbury" and "Stroker Ace" with Burt Reynolds. Her high-profile marriage to Reynolds made them the Brad & Angelina of the 1980s. She is now happily married to Bob Flick, from the folk group The Brothers

Four.

Anderson is set to premiere in the new Tello sitcom, "My Sister Is So Gay." She took time out from her schedule to chat with EDGE about her acting career, her tumultuous relationships, and her return to the small screen.

EDGE: Your LGBT fans are thrilled to see that you'll be returning to the small screen in Tello's "My Sister Is So Gay." Tell folks a little about the premise of the show.

Anderson: I'm very happy to be here, by the way! The show will be on Tello in five-minute webisodes, and it's really such a funny show. It's about a family where both children are gay -- one has always known, and one is just finding out. And their mother, which is a part I'm adoring playing, carries her own ice bucket and martini kit in her purse. She is promiscuous, wears miniskirts, plunging necklines, lots of animal prints. Even with all their flaws, she adores and accepts her children and loves them -- but not so much what they wear.



(Source:www.tellofilms.com)

EDGE: The tagline refers to you as "Frances, the boozy and inappropriately sexy mother of two middle-age children." Give an example of your characters' 'inappropriately sexy' behavior.

Anderson: There's one scene where I just come out with a bathrobe on, but it opens up and I'm totally naked. My kids are grossed out, but I just I call them fruits and ask for a drink. I also show up to my son's apartment at all times. I have a key, which he takes every time, but I always have another one, which I pass out to everybody.

EDGE: You're returning to the small screen after quite a while away. This pattern is typical for your career, which has been marked by periods of high activity, then retreats from the limelight. Are you ready to step back into the industry?

Anderson: I'm so ready to step back into it. It's funny, but when you get older you are pickier. I'm spoiled because I had fantastic producers, and I don't need to prove anything, so I don't come out for a role unless it's really good. I have a big family, I work with lot of organizations and charities; I can keep myself busy. I love being an actress, would love to go on stage too, but when something like this well-written comedy comes up, even if you are putting it on in your garage, I'd want to do it. I get offered so much stuff, but most moms and grandmas are kind of dull. That's not who I want to be.

EDGE: You'll always be remembered as Jennifer Marlowe from "WKRP in Cincinnati." You garnered three Golden Globe and two Prime Time Emmy nominations for that. Right now, there's a big movement of late to do reboots of these old shows. Is there anything like that in the works for 'WKRP'?

Anderson: There are whispers of 'WKRP' returning, and if they rebooted it, I would be right there. The only



(Source:HollywoodChicago.com)

person who's gone from show is the "Big Guy" Gordon Jump; everybody else is healthy and available. Likely, Jennifer would be in charge. I made history there when I stepped out and said, "I can be attractive and still be the smartest person in the room." Not having started life as a blonde, I was feistier about it, because I was taken seriously as a brunette actress earlier in my career. Got angry, this can't happen, actresses today change hair color back and forth. When we started, your image was set in stone. Young actresses don't have that; they're chameleons.

EDGE: While we're on it, your fans want to know -- how do you manage to look so amazing, in your 70s?

Anderson: There are lots of things that go into making a grandma that can still get into her same clothes from the '80s! I've worked very hard at it, and it does not make for a good time. You have to exercise, eat right, not drink or smoke, keep up with your skin, no sodas -- all that boring stuff you don't want to do. I wish I could eat a thousand donuts and malted milk balls, but can't. I remember talking to Barbara Eden about whether we were going to be cute forever, or let it go and become character actors. We decided: Let's be cute! It's a much bigger commitment. I'm a slave to making sure my skin is hydrated, and I am lucky to have good genes: my mom was a fashion model. Staying fit gets harder, but you just have to keep moving.



(Source:Pinterest)

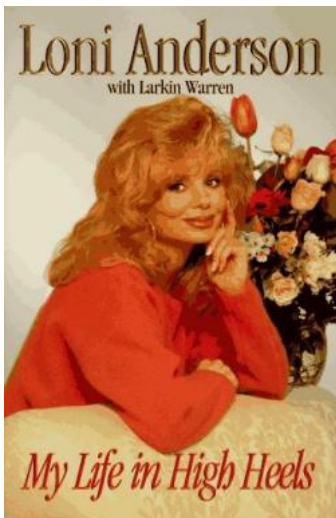
EDGE: With subscription-based channels looking like the future of TV, do you feel good about distributing the sitcom via Tello?

Anderson: I really do. I have two granddaughters, 21 and 24 in March, and one is a graduate of UCLA who's studying for the LSATs, the other is a junior at UCLA. So I have young women to relate to, and my son is 28. I ask them "What are you guys watching, and how do you watch?" A lot of them watch things on their gadgets. No one does destination TV, like, "We'll get together at 9 on Saturday and watch our show." I love this young family, they teach me how to use every app so I stay current. There are 450-odd scripted shows on TV, and we can't possibly sample all, so kids say "While I'm standing in line, I'll watch for five minutes," and that's what these webisodes do. It's different from someone from my generation, but we change

and adapt.

EDGE: Gays are huge fans of "The Jayne Mansfield Story," and it's widely considered one of the 100 Most Enjoyably Bad Movies Ever Made. Do you get a kick out of watching it?

Anderson: I do! What I love most is that Arnold [Schwarzenegger] hadn't acted much, and when I got the chance to do it, I felt there was no one else to play the part than Arnold. He was such a good sport! Sometimes he'd get through his dialogue and we'd all say "What?" So he'd do it again, he was so agreeable and charming, and I respected him because he had a sense of humor in two languages, and he tried hard to do well. Even then he was a business entrepreneur. I had a wonderful time doing that movie. I loved playing somebody that people still knew, and they loved my portrayal.



(Source:amazon.com)

EDGE: In 2014, you auctioned off all of the things Reynolds gave you. Did it feel good to purge?

Anderson: It did! He's not in my life anymore but he is the father of my child. It felt good to move on. But I thought, I have a housekeeper who's moving on from very disturbing marriage, and what kind of role model am I to her if I don't move on. So now, I feel very good. I have a fabulous husband! And I don't need any of those things.

EDGE: And in 2015, after 22 years, Reynolds finally paid off the \$154,520 he owed you from your divorce settlement. Is that a case of better late than never?

Anderson: It was the principle of the thing. It was not an earth-shattering amount, but again in whole thing I thought people need to be held accountable. As a parent and as a woman, you need to get out there and say you owed us this, and not let it go.

EDGE: You two adopted your son Quentin together in the '80s. Many LGBTs also go the route of adoption. Why is fostering and adopting needy kids so important?



(Source:www.tellofilms.com)

Anderson: Absolutely! When I look at him now, he's such a worthwhile human being. I'm so glad that even when things went awry, like my marriage, if hadn't married Burt wouldn't have Quentin, who is one of the best things that happened in my life. Having a son was something I never anticipated but wouldn't change for the world. I hope the fact that I had something to do with his life afforded him the opportunity to be a great guy. You can make a difference in someone's life.

EDGE: In 2008, you married to Bob Flick of the folk group The Brothers Four. Did you really first meet him when you were only 17 years old? What prompted you to reconnect all those

years later?

Anderson: When I was in high school, he was in The Brothers Four, and had done a theme song for an Ava Gardner movie. went to the premiere to get my album cover signed. He was just so cute and funny -- he was 24 in a band with his frat brothers. He asked about me so I said I was a senior in college, and made up a whole story about it, because I thought I never would meet him again. But he asked me to lunch, then would come back through town and see me, until my dad finally ratted me out. He was my crush for my whole life. In 2003 I was watching PBS, saw The Brothers Four on their pledge break, and wondered what happened to him. So I was doing a speaking tour in Seattle, and I called him. We went to dinner, and halfway through I thought, "He's still the one." We didn't have contact for a while, but eventually we got together, and have been married for nine years! It's kind of romantic.



(Source:www.tellofilms.com)

EDGE: You were a vocal supporter against COPD, and later, after your daughter Deidre was diagnosed, for multiple sclerosis. Why is it important to you to donate your time to these worthwhile causes?

Anderson: As a celebrity, what you have to give is your celebrity. If that can help raise funds for something close to your heart, that's what it should be used for, otherwise celebrity is worthless. I also did a big campaign for caregivers, because I was a caregiver, and Baby Boomers are getting to the age to take care of their parents. You can't care for others unless you care for yourself, so I'm out there raising awareness.

EDGE: Finally, for those aspiring actors out there, please share some advice about holding fast to your dreams.

Anderson: You can't do if just to be a celebrity, because that comes and goes. I think you have to love it, just no matter how many times you are rejected -- and you will be rejected over and over and over again -- if you want it that badly, you just have to stick with it. I speak at UCLA, and say "Look at rejection and get really comfy with it, because it's your best friend and it will happen." Some people can't take it, and they move on. As a young girl, my daughter wanted to do some commercials, but she didn't get picked, and she didn't like it. I told her, "It's just not what you're meant to do." If you really want it, you have to start from the bottom up. And you have to laugh out loud; you just need to in these times.

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MySisterIsSoGay/>

To watch the show, visit <https://www.tellofilms.com>



Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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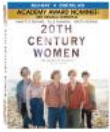
On Sunday, December 13, Tello Films will debut "Maybelle," a romantic six-part web series starring Bridget McManus and New Orleans actress/comedian Frances Nichols.

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