

## RISING STAR

### Toledo native's credits include acclaimed TV series, new films 'Legion' and 'Red Dawn'

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The upcoming apocalyptic thriller *Legion* is full of scary stuff: Killer angels, a wrathful God, diner food. For actress and Toledo native Adrienne Palicki, though, one thing stands out.

"I had to give birth."

Not just that, but the 26-year-old Whitmer High School graduate, who plays a waitress pregnant with humanity's only hope, decided to watch a birth video for inspiration.

"I'm in my trailer watching this birth ... I was crying. It was really emotional," she said. "All of a sudden, she's holding the baby and it's beautiful. [Then] her placenta just comes out and I'm like, 'That's the most disturbing thing I've seen in my life.'"



Adrienne Palicki will be in the apocalyptic thriller 'Legion,' which opens Friday. (LEWIS JACOBS/ STILL PHOTOGRAPHER)

In the end, Palicki decided to forget the video and portray the scene by going with her instincts, a quality that has served her well in an emerging career that already has seen her bewitch television viewers for three seasons on the critically acclaimed drama *Friday Night Lights*. Next up is *Legion*, which opens Friday, and an upcoming remake of the Cold War cult classic, *Red Dawn*.

None of this might have happened if she hadn't followed her intuition and told her parents, Jeff and Nancy Palicki, that she'd rather go to New York and pursue theater than attend college.

"It didn't go over very well. It was really hard for them to hear, but I did it," she said.

#### Perseverance

Palicki said she'd always known she wanted to be an actress, whether it was goofing around and dressing up with a friend or taking part in *The Wiz* and other productions in high school. It wasn't too long before Palicki had an L.A.-based agent.

#### PHOTO GALLERY

[See more photos of Adrienne Palicki](#)

She returned to Toledo and worked a bit before heading to the West Coast. She took acting classes and suffered through rejection after rejection while working a variety of jobs, from waitress to manager of a sunglasses store.

After about two years, things clicked. She landed a role on a television remake of *Lost in Space* directed by John Woo, and even though it was never picked up, she went on to appearances on *North Shore*, *South Beach*, *CSI*, *Smallville*, and *Supernatural* (created by Sylvania Township native Eric Kripke).

Palicki's cocktail for Hollywood success is simple in nature but tough to execute.

"It's a little bit of everything," she explained, speaking by phone from Los Angeles, where she lives. "It's perseverance, obviously, and a lot of luck, a lot of being in the right place at the right time. ... I just worked really hard. Once you start working, you just keep going. You don't give up."

**'This is ours'**

In 2006, Palicki broke out with the role of Tyra Collette on NBC's *Friday Night Lights*. The series depicting life in a small town where high school football rules was hailed by critics.

"It was literally the most amazing pilot that any of us had ever seen," she said. "There was no doubt that it was going to be a real hit."

Except, it wasn't. Low ratings threatened it with cancellation.

"It was really disheartening. All of us were just in shock. It was really sad," she said.

Rabid fans helped save the show, and, in time, the cast found almost a sense of liberation in no longer being so beholden to ratings.

"It just kind of became: You know what? Just fine. This is ours. We get to do really good work and we get to stay out of the spotlight, but every single person in Hollywood watches the show and was really, really impressed with our work. That had to be enough."

Palicki may not be on the show anymore — her character went on to college and the 5-foot, 11-inch-tall actress moved on to *Red Dawn* — but the way it was filmed proved helpful to her development in lasting ways.

"It was literally like acting class. You'd go into a room and they're like, 'OK, do the scene,' and we would keep going until they ran out of film," she said. "It made it really easy to get to those really emotional points because it wouldn't just stop and have to start over."

### **Comic book fan**

There have been other projects too, like the indie comedy *Women in Trouble* where she plays a porn star/stripper/ idiot and *Legion*, which tells the story of angels sent to bring on the Apocalypse while humanity's last hope is trapped in a desert diner with the Archangel Michael, played by Paul Bettany.

The latter's cast includes Dennis Quaid and immediately appealed to Palicki's love of action and supernatural movies.

"I love science fiction. It's very *Constantine* meets *Terminator*," she said. "I love those kinds of movies."

A longtime fan of comic books — a love she picked up from her brother Eric, who creates his own — she fell in love with her character in the movie. But there's another character she'll always want to do: Supergirl.

"I would love, love, love to play Supergirl. ... I grew up on that movie," Palicki said, referring to the 1984 movie starring Helen Slater.

"I really hope they remake this," she said. "That is my dream."

Until then, the woman who used to dress up as Supergirl will satisfy herself with whatever roles seem particularly interesting.

"It's so hard to find good female characters, especially in my age group in this town right now, and so when I find one I kind of just jump on it," she said.

### **'A homecoming'**

Palicki's natural beauty (she was runner-up for homecoming queen in high school) hasn't escaped viewers' notice. In 2007, Maxim magazine ranked her No. 79 on its Hot 100 list. She hopes people notice a lot more, though.

"I think it's flattering, but I also think it's about bringing something else to the table," she said. "Anybody can be a pretty girl. Anybody can wear a short skirt, show some leg. It's about making that character interesting and likeable."

As the female lead in the action flick *Red Dawn*, she's sure to stay in the public eye. The original version, about Russian and Cuban soldiers who invade America and a squad of teenagers who battle back, featured Charlie Sheen and Patrick Swayze. She'll reprise the role of Jennifer Grey, and while her friends are excited for her, she said they have one piece of advice: "It's so awesome you're doing it, but please don't mess it up."

Making the film was a homecoming of sorts, since it was filmed in the Detroit area and allowed her to visit with family. She said fans won't be disappointed with the results.

And Palicki hopes to be saying that for many years to come.

"Honestly, I hope to be doing this when I'm 80," she said. "I want to constantly be working and constantly be honing my craft and getting better as an actor."

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