

entertainment

Sheree avoids un-creativity

She likes room for fresh thinking

By STACY SMITH

HOLLYWOOD — "But I'm a Big Girl Now" actress Sheree North doesn't subscribe to the idea that her dry-humored, free-spirited think tank executive character is a byproduct of the age of Women's Liberation.

"There have always been strong women and free spirits," she says. For instance, her mother.

Sheree says, laughing, "When I knew I'd be doing the series I called her at her Lake Arrowhead (Calif.) home. We hadn't talked in a while and I thought she'd be dying to hear from me. But her response was, 'Sheree? Oh, yes — Sheree my daughter. Could you call back in a half hour? I'm watching a show.'"

So I called back. Now, most mothers would be thrilled to hear their daughters were on a series, right? She said, "You're not going to let them make a slave out of you, are you?"

"My mother... is really something."

Sheree herself "Wouldn't want to do anything TOO routine." The actress and dancer who started her career as a Broadway chorine at 17, went on to '50s fluff movie fare such as "How to be Very, Very Popular" and graduated to films including "Best Things in Life are Free" and "The Shootist" — and to TV including

ABC's "Marilyn" — says she avoids work, "where there's no room for fresh thinking and creativity."

As a matter of fact, she hasn't minded keeping busy with television pilots that never made it off the ground. "You know, a lot of people do pilots all the time, never really wanting them to sell," she informs. "It's really Russian roulette. I remember doing one in which everyone in the cast felt that if it did go to series, the thing to do would be to get notes from their doctors saying they were mentally incapable of going on with it."

Such was not at all the case with her latest video venture, Sheree insists. For one thing, she enjoys work.

Diana Canova and Danny Thomas. For another, she finds her independent, intellectual character Edie especially interesting.

"Characters like her aren't new," she says. "It's just that earlier we didn't have the 'liberated' label for them. Look at the movies from the '30s and '40s. Jean Arthur, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Kathryn Hepburn, Jane Russell — they all played those parts. And boy, didn't it stop! It's very interesting to look at the historical overview and ask why that happened. Maybe it was just that the '50s were such an unrealistic time."

"I think there've always been women who've had visions for their lives and who've gone ahead and pursued them," she adds. "But I'm talking about a very special breed, ones who didn't think about how hard something would be. They just went out and did it. We've needed to get rights for all the rest."

Divorced from husband Gerhart Sommer in the '60s, Sheree shares her Malibu home with her two daughters, Erica and Dawn. "Erica drops in and out of college," she says. "She got a job, saved a lot of money and went to Europe for a while. Now she's back and I expect an announcement any day that she's decided to return to school. Dawn is studying jewelry design. I think she's doing pretty well."

As for her own activities, "I don't know that I just want to go on performing all my life," says Sheree. "I'm writing a script, I may do some coaching, people have asked me to direct — which I know would be difficult. But I'm not looking into the future too much because of the series."

She's had an avid interest in vitamins and nutrition for years, but now says, "The more I learn, the more I see that nobody really knows about it. There are very few answers. You never find two nutritionists who agree."

'Public,' Stanley thriving

Pittsburghers continue to actively support the Pittsburgh Public Theater and the Stanley Theatre, according to recent reports.

The Stanley has been named the top-grossing concert facility in the United States for the third consecutive year by Billboard, a national magazine for the entertainment industry.

Pittsburgh Public's most recent production, despite a massive recession, played to 95.2 percent capacity. The rescheduling and extension of the run for "Death of a Salesman," which was due to the lead actor's laryngitis, affected about 4,000 subscribers.

The subscription rate for the theater has increased as the group continues to attract Pittsburghers to its quality productions. The current sixth season has been highly successful, with very positive comments from critics and audiences.

The Stanley's success was boosted by ten top shows in 1980, which included the recent touring company of "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." Others were Bob Dylan, Johnny Mathis, Sha Na Na, James Taylor, "Da," Peter Paul and Mary, Parliament Funkadelic, George Benson and Paul Simon.

The Stanley, a burlesque theater years ago, has been owned by promoters Pat DiCesare and Rich Engler since 1977. It's located at Seventh and Penn avenues, Downtown.



Sheree North enjoys being Edie

David Bowie reaches new heights after 'Elephant Man'

By MARILYN BECK

HOLLYWOOD — David Bowie reports he'll be moving from his stint as Broadway's "Elephant Man" to Hollywood next month, to take advantage of a multimillion-dollar development deal at either United Artists or Zoetrope Studios.

These are only two of a slew of offers from major film fac-

ories that have come his way since Bowie bowed in the legitimate drama this season — to prove anew that there's no showcase like a hit Broadway show. The singer-turned-actor has been desirous of concentrating on a movie career for quite a while. But with his 1976 "The Man Who Fell to Earth" hardly setting box office records, and his 1979 "Just a Gigolo" a

hasco, Hollywood hasn't been rushing to Bowie's door, until now.

Good news for Dustin Hoffman. Columbia Pictures has signed none less than Larry Gelbart ("M.A.S.H.," "Sly Fox," "Oh, God," "United States") to take on the task of rewriting "Tootsie" — Hoffman's big-screen comedic project which has been bogged down in pre-production

for some eight months as one script after another has been scrapped.

Carol Burnett, Joe Hamilton and their children are certainly going to be testing the strength of their familial ties in coming months — as the Hamiltons set down permanent roots on the Hawaiian island of Maui. Jody, who's 13, and 12-year-old Erin have been enrolled in a school on the

islands. However, 17-year-old Carrie, who recently underwent her second stay at Houston's Palmer Drug Abuse Program facility, will remain in Los Angeles, where she's found employment in a department store. And Joe will be spending much of his time (until February at least) winging to Hollywood for taping of the "Tim Conway Show" which he produces. Meanwhile, Carol expects to do a special here in March or April, and in May starts work on the "Annie" production which will involve months of location shooting in Hollywood, New York and New Jersey. The Hamiltons are convinced it should be no strain commuting from the islands to work assignments, and while they live in a condominium they own in Maui, are making plans to build a home on that island where their friend Jim Nabors also lives in splendor.

Keller believes in independence

By MARILYN BECK

HOLLYWOOD — Swiss actress Martine Keller describes herself as "so independent I am almost a prisoner of independence."

She also prides herself on speaking. "Not, how you say, for publicity? But from the heart, out of honesty."

Independence has led her to retain her status as a single woman. "Not because I don't believe in marriage, but because I don't believe in divorce."

And candor leads her to volunteer that when she gave birth to her son, Alexander nearly nine years ago, "His records stated 'Mother Unknown' because there was then a law in France that said if the child of an unmarried couple assumed the name of one parent, then the other was 'unknown.' And Alexander was given the name of his father, French director Philippe De Broca, whom she now regards as "A friend and no more."

She headquarters with her son in Paris in a 17th century townhouse, which Orson Welles wanted to buy but was turned down because the owner didn't want to sell to an actor. "I reminded the owner, I, too, was an actor, but was told: 'You're different, you're Swiss.' It really had to do with the fact that the French have this cliché image of Orson Welles as a big drunk. And I at that time had just starred in a French television series, 'La Demoiselle d'Avignon,' about a

princess who passes as a school girl, and my image was one of purity."

"Anyway, I got the apartment and my friends thought I was crazy. How will you pay? they asked. I was in bad shape and it was like I was trying to self-destruct. But two days later I landed my first American movie role so things worked out."

That movie was "Marathon Man," which led to "Black Sunday." And then to "Bobby Deerfield," which led to a marathon romance with Al Pacino, which early this year ran its course. And now she's back again, gracing the screens in MGM's "The Formula."

She takes great pleasure in the fact that "Formula" producer Steve Shagan, on whose novel the film is based, allowed her to expand her key scene in the film. With her input, that scene, in which she talks of having learned that her father had been a

Nazi officer responsible for the death of hundreds, not only provides motivation for the actions of her terrorist character, it adds a haunting sense of history to the picture.

Political causes and care and companionship of her son take up most of Marthe's non-acting life. She beams with pride that "Alexander has now reached the age where he begins to do everything better than I: piano playing, skiing, everything."

She will be heading from Hollywood and "Formula" promotional activities to Toronto and co-starring stunts with John Savage in "Amateur Hour." And after that will commence work on yet another major film. But she will not remain away from Alexander for any extended period of time.

"I have it written into all my contracts that my weekends must be free

so that I can fly home. And I do. I am never away from Alexander for more than a week at a time. Not that he minds — but I do."

She laughs as she reports that when she is away her son is scared for by her parents. "And they spoil him so — as grandparents do."

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Kathy Cronkite writes stories about stars

By MARILYN BECK

HOLLYWOOD — Morrow and Co. is trying to keep the wraps on Kathy Cronkite's "On the Edge of the Spotlight" text which undergoes publication in March, but those who've read the galleys report it is highly candid and strong, and is bound to generate reaction — particularly among some of the celebrity subjects whose family relationships it dissects.

The 29-year-old daughter of Walter and Betsy Cronkite does note in the chronicle that her parents have "done everything right." And her famous father adds a very touching note in his introduction which tells of his regret "that I didn't make more of the times we were together — and that there weren't more times together."

Included in "On the Edge" — and reportedly the most highly controversial of all — is the story of Scott Newman, son of Paul Newman, who died of a mixture of drugs and liquor. Also included are the observations of former first son Jack Ford, John Ritter, Irving and Sylvia Wallace's daughter Amy, and the offspring of Ed McMahon, est founder Werner Erhard and William Buckley. There are 25 case studies, plus several where the subjects remain anonymous, in all. And of them all, Buckley reportedly comes off looking most like a saint — or at least like a parent without faults.

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