

‘Entourage’'s Autumn Reeser on Battling Ari Gold and What ‘The OC’ Should Not Have Been Canceled

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The producers of *Entourage* could have chosen any actor to go to head-to-head with Ari Gold this season. Given Jeremy Piven's tornado-like portrayal of the ruthless super agent, you'd think they would have chose someone with a some broad shoulders and bite. Instead, they went with the girl who played perky, peppy Taylor Townsend in the dying days of *The OC*. Not a bad move. Autumn Reeser's snappy, confident depiction of rival agent Lizzie Grant has all but revitalized the sagging show by finally giving Ari Gold someone to fear. Breathing life into creatively stunted shows seems to be Reeser's specialty. She was largely responsible for *The OC* regaining its voice after Mischa Barton's abrupt (but welcomed)

departure. Reeser just wrapped *Entourage*, and is currently shooting episodes for ABC's *No Ordinary Family*, a kind of *Lost*-meets-*Heroes*-meets-*The Incredibles* that premieres on September 28. We spoke to the rising star about *Entourage*, why *The OC* died before its time, and getting over canceled shows.

Was your role on *Entourage* this season a case of you coming on as a guest star, and the producers liking you so much in the part they extended your character's arc?

Yes, that's exactly what happened. I did five episodes last season and I definitely felt like there was more to it, and luckily the writers felt the same and asked me to return this year. I was so lucky with the character and what they trusted me with. I feel really grateful because that doesn't happen a lot.

Is that what happened on *The OC* as well?

Yeah. For *The OC* I was supposed to come on and be a four episode guest star, and then I ended up doing 16 episodes. I was certainly thrilled and just wanted to have a great time with that character. I loved Taylor, she was so much fun to play.

Is Taylor what people recognize you the most for?

I would say mostly Taylor, but I recently was recognized at Starbucks for this stage show I do. I do a 1940s-style radio hour with a lot of other comedians and voice-over artists. It's kind of like *Prairie Home Companion*, but edgier. There's like a space cowboy serial and an Amelia Earhart serial, and it's all very reminiscent of 40s radio programs.

What's it called?

The Thrilling Adventure and Supernatural Suspense Hour.

Are there any other television or film actors who are a part of it?

Yeah, Nathan Fillion was there last month and James Foley was there. Chris Hardwick comes on a lot, Samm Levine's a regular. We have a lot of people. If you're famous and want to do a stage show, come guest star with us!

Is it intimidating going head to head with Jeremy Piven?

It's so fun, I don't have time to be intimidated. I mean, as an actor, you just get a big goofy smile on your face when you get that opportunity. I've watched the show since the beginning and loved the character of Ari Gold the whole time, so to be able to be in one of my favorite shows is a trip.

You're on *Entourage*, and yet you've never had a scene with the actual entourage.

People ask me all the time, "How is it to work with the guys," and I'm like, "I don't know, I haven't met them!"

You haven't met any of them?

I mean at this point I've met most of them. I just met Adrien at the premier, but I never met him before that. It's also just the nature of an ensemble show.

Is this your last season on the show?

Yeah, we're finished shooting this season but I would love to go back if they would have me, of course I'd love that.

Is there anything you can tease in terms of where your Lizzie is headed?

Oh gosh, let me figure out what to say without spoiling. There are more fiery scenes to come between Lizzie and Ari.

Are you a regular on *No Ordinary Family*?

I'm in every episode. We're only on the second episode. We filmed the pilot which is episode one in March and we just finished episode two and we start episode three today!

Because I saw the trailer and I didn't see you in it.

I know! I'm a series regular, just not in the trailer.

Did you have any reservations about being on another ABC show about a supernatural plane crash?

Well, that, um, hmmm, what can I say here? Their powers may not have come from the plane crash. When I first read it, it seemed like a live action *The Incredibles*, which was a great reaction because *The Incredibles* was an amazing movie.

Will they move into crime-fighting territory?

I think for most people who have superhero powers, that might be a direction they would go.

So far all I've seen is clips of them coming to terms with their powers, but not really using them for good.

There will still be a lot of that because it's a lot of exploring family life and marriage, and the problems that go with that, how they can be exacerbated by extraordinary circumstances whether they're good or bad. Whether it's tragedy or great joy, it throws family life into turmoil so it's all about the family dealing with that. But I think it's all really relatable because it's a pretty genuine exploration of marriage and family.

Is it going to have more of comedic tone or dramatic tone?

It's both. That's the great and difficult thing about this, because the tone walks such a fine line between drama and comedy. That's a great challenge as an actor, to find the jokes but not overplay them and to still exist in reality. I love shows like that. That's what *The OC* was for me, and where admittedly so, a lot of her funny comes from her social awkwardness. I like that challenge, personally, I kind of look for that.

Who do you play?

Julie Benz's character Stephanie Powell is a world renowned scientist and I am her lab

assistant. One of her problems is that she's so busy and she never has enough time for her work or for her family, and she doesn't have a lot of friends because she doesn't have time for that, and so when she gets these magical powers, she confides in the person she sees most often, which is me.

You've done a ton of TV work, but not so much film work. Is that a career choice or as an actor is there a threshold that you need to cross?

For me, that's just been about the opportunities that came my way. There was the writer's strike right when I came out of *The OC* and then we had the recession so the industry's been very different for the majority of my career. *The OC* really enabled me to kind of launch my career. I had certainly worked a lot in television before that, but that opened a lot of doors for me, and then the industry went into a bit of a tailspin.

Was that disappointing?

I don't know that I thought about it like that, but I just had to take it from where I was at, and obviously there's nothing you can do in a situation like that but continue to look for roles that are interesting. I looked at it as a great opportunity to put more work into my craft, and I certainly worked through that period, but it's nice to be in the position I'm in right now with some really great projects.

Do you think that *The OC* should have been canceled?

I would have liked to see it continue, I think there were more stories to be told.

How do you go react when your show is canceled?

Moving from job to job is very much the nature of this business, and I grew up in theater so it's the same thing. You do a show for two months, and you move on. You get really close with these people and they become your little family and then sometimes you never see them again, so I was already used to that lifestyle. It can be hard to leave a show and have a show end, but all of that is so far outside of my realm of control that I don't give it too much thought.

Do you pay attention to ratings?

I'd like to say no but yeah, I will. I love working on the show, it's a great group of people and I'd like to see the show run a long time. I'm definitely invested in hoping we have a nice long run.

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