

Jeff Probst and 'Survivor' once again snubbed by the Primetime Emmy Awards

## Women in Makeup/FX series: Cristina Patterson breathes life into the lens



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One of the most magnetic and memorable attributes of any film or television character is his/her eyes. The eyes, after all, are said to be the window to the soul. As such, they are one of an actor's greatest dramatic tools. They reflect and express a myriad of emotions including joy and sorrow, fear and doubt, anger and frustration, and love and longing.

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While bringing any character to life is ultimately a huge collaborative process that includes hair technicians, costumers, makeup artists and more, eyes complete and enhance the overall look and also give clues to a character's age, heritage and state of



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physical and mental well-being. In horror and fantasy genres a character's eyes help define them. Consider Maleficent's (Angelina Jolie) penetrating multicolored glare, Edward's (Robert Pattinson) immortal amber-golden gaze in "Twilight" and Cordelia's (Sarah Paulson) horrifying milky blind stare in **"American Horror Story: Coven."**

Over the course of nearly two decades, Cristina Patterson has placed her artistic focus on this critical aspect of character and has earned the reputation of being one of the leading contact lens painter/designers in the world. She has worked with renowned makeup artists on more than 300 films and television shows and brilliantly breathes life into some of the most legendary characters ever seen on screen by employing her delicate and intricate skills to hand paint contact lenses that become a

transformational focal point for both the actor and the audience.

Some of the blockbuster films in her expansive list of credits include "King Kong," "Planet of the Apes," "A Beautiful Mind," the "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise, "The Twilight Saga" franchise, "The Hobbit" films, "The Amazing Spiderman 2" and "Maleficent."

Cristina also currently works on Emmy-winning TV series "The Walking Dead" (AMC) and "American Horror Story" (FX) and she recently worked on the highly-anticipated new vampire horror-drama "The Strain" (FX).

The Southern California resident was born in Spain and raised in California. She joins a long list of family artists including her mother Rafaella Butler, who worked as a makeup artist on

classic films like “To Kill a Mockingbird” and “Dr. Zhivago.” She credits her mother as her biggest influence and enjoyed accompanying her to set while growing up.

Struggling with an undiagnosed form of dyslexia while in school, she continued to nurture her love of drawing and painting from a very young age and enrolled in makeup school at 17. While things weren't always easy, Cristina was determined to never give up. She wouldn't let anything stop her from achieving her dreams and little did she know back then, just how far she would go or the magnitude of everything she would accomplish.

Cristina followed her mother's artistic lead and found her calling when joining Professional Visioncare Associates (PVA) in 1995. She functioned in a variety of roles over more than 15 years there, working in almost every aspect of the business as a department head, along with contact lens painting, which became her passion.

Cristina left PVA in 2011 and co-founded her own company (formerly Optical Illusions, now known as **Eye Ink FX**). She remains dedicated to finding a balance between working and raising her 16-year-old daughter, Mckenzie, with her ex-husband, Ted Haines, who is a fabricator at Legacy Effects.

Besides natural talent, Cristina possesses intense dedication and desire to exceed her clients' expectations and excel at everything she does. She is driven by her mother's admonition (and her own personal belief) that success comes with hard work. Cristina's unparalleled creative skills are highly sought-after in the magical world of film and she often works around the clock to hand paint lenses, one at a time, to meet the tight deadlines and high quality standards that her clients from production companies and special FX studios require.

The talented artist and savvy businesswoman celebrated her July 10 birthday with extra excitement this year by earning a Primetime Emmy **nomination** for Outstanding Prosthetic Makeup for a Series, Miniseries, Movie or Special for her work as a Makeup Effects Artist on “American Horror Story: Coven” along with the rest of the talented AHS team: Department Head Makeup Artist Eryn Krueger Mekash, Key Special Makeup Effects Artist Mike Mekash, Prosthetic Designers Christien Tinsley and Jason Hamer and Makeup Effects Artists Christopher Nelson, David L. Anderson and Rob Freitas.

I had the honor of connecting with Cristina recently via phone to discuss some of the incredible people and projects she's been involved with throughout her prolific career in the following in-depth Examiner Exclusive Q & A as part of my Women in Makeup/FX series.

**E:** Congratulations on your Emmy nomination! How did you find out you were nominated and how does it feel?

**CP:** Thank you. It was my birthday. I had decided to sleep in that day. I turned my phone on silent so I wouldn't be disturbed and woke up to my phone buzzing like crazy. My business partner kept calling me. He's on the East Coast and got the news before me. I was nearly awake when he yelled, "Happy Birthday nominee!" I was in shock. I had 13 texts from everyone. Most of the makeup department from AHS was texting me, asking if I saw or congratulations. I think I got up and started walking in circles. I was in total and utter shock. It really didn't hit me for a while. I had this gigantic smile on my face, but wasn't sure how to feel; very surreal. I think it was midday, I went to the shop to do some work and it hit me. I just started crying. I have worked so hard all my life and I love what I do and love working with the people I do, not just the AHS makeup team, but all makeup artists. And it's silly I know, but it's like now I have been recognized. They are saying "Cristina, we see you. We know how hard you work. We know you give it your all." How does it feel? Pretty darn nice.

**E:** Did you get involved with "American Horror Story" through Christien Tinsley?

**CP:** Christien and the head of the department, Eryn Krueger Mekash. I've worked with them both on different projects. So, they contacted me and at the time I think I was working for Professional Vision. But, when I branched off they continued to go to me for the contact lenses. I started off and have been doing every season since.

**E:** Did you work on Sarah Paulson's crazy-looking eyes in "Coven?"

**CP:** There were a few characters on that. Sarah's eyes, there were a few versions of her burned eyes. At first she was like, "I don't want to see anything, because I really want to feel being blind." Then she realized being blind [is tough] and said, "Can I have maybe one eye I can see a little bit out of?" So, we kind of did a progression. So when she's lying down and

it's really bad, she can't see anything. When she's sort of walking around it's very cloudy and fuzzy but she can see outlines of things so she doesn't run into the camera or walls.

Then we did the really crazy thing where they cut the eyes out of those two other witches and she had an eye transplant. So she had two different colored eyes. We did the Voodoo devil demon guy, Papa Legba and of course, all the zombies.

**E:** The transformation they brought to Naomi Grossman for Pepper was amazing in "Asylum." Did you do her eyes?

**CP:** Yes, her wandering eye. I painted that one too, in "Asylum." It's amazing when you see her before she has any makeup on and you see her whole transformation. It's bizarre. They make her hands bigger and the expression she can do on her face with just herself is pretty amazing.

**E:** Are you involved with "American Horror Story: Freak Show?"

**CP:** Yep. I'm working on it right now.

**E:** You're also involved in the upcoming new series on FX, "The Strain." Can you tell us anything about it?

**CP:** Nope. All I can say is that I worked on it and that's all I can say.

**E:** You came up watching your mom work and you assisted her on a commercial. What is some of your favorite work that your mom has done?

**CP:** "To Kill a Mockingbird." She worked on "Dr. Zhivago." I was either not born or too young back then. But, she worked on "Laugh In" when she was pregnant with my brother and me. She would do Goldie Hawn's body makeup. There was a story, with twins, she couldn't bend over anymore. So Goldie would sit down and put her legs on my mom's belly and she would do Goldie's legs.

**E:** Is your brother artistic too?

**CP:** No. Not really. He's a surfer. He got the brains and I got the talent. Growing up, we would draw together. But, he went with skateboards and surfing and I went the artistic route. And my mom would work on "Happy Days" and "Laverne and Shirley" and she would take me to set; a couple times to "Happy Days" and once to "Mork and Mindy." So I got to meet Robin Williams, who actually lived right up the street from us. Then when I worked on "Bicentennial Man" I did his lenses and said, "I grew up down the street from you and I used to come to your house and talk to your wife and my mom took me to set." Of course he didn't remember it was so long ago, but he was tickled pink.

**E:** What was your impression of him?

**CP:** He's a sweetheart of a man. I've worked on a few projects with him. "Night at the Museum," I did lenses for him. "One Hour Photo," I did lenses and "Bicentennial Man." He's always been super nice to me. Super, super nice – he's a sweetheart.

**E:** Do you remember how it felt when you saw the finished result of your very first makeup or FX job?

**CP:** I think the first real film I worked on was called "Transylvania Twist." There's a scene where Van Helsing or this Van Helsing-type character was stabbing the vampire in the coffin. It was a comedy type film and I was in the coffin holding an extinguisher filled with blood. It had a hose so when they turned this on a tremendous amount of blood would splatter up into this guy's face and the splatter came back down onto me. When the scene was over I sat up and I was swimming in blood. So, when that scene came out I laughed because I remembered being covered, head to toe. It was in my ears; it was everywhere.

**E:** You've done so many blockbuster films since then. I have to ask about "Twilight." Were you a "Twilight" fan? Had you read the books?

**CP:** I had read every single one that was released before we got the call to do that movie. It's funny; I remember I was in Barnes and Noble. I was working at PVA and I was in the

bookstore trying to find something to read and I get a call from the makeup artist, Jeanne Van Phue and she was talking about these golden-amber eyes for a vampire thing and it didn't hit me when she was trying to tell me this. Then she said "Twilight" and it still didn't register and I said, "We can do it."

I was walking back to the office and I was halfway down the block when it hit me like a ton of bricks: You're making it into a movie. I went running into the office and all the girls that run the general practice, we're all huge fans of the books, and I said, "Guess what our next project is?" When I told them, they started screaming. It was before anybody was cast or anything like that. It was the very beginning of it and we were really interested to find out who they were going to cast.

**E:** What did you think of the film adaptation and what Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart and Taylor Lautner brought to the roles of Edward, Bella and Jacob? How was it working with them and, Team Edward or Jacob?

**CP:** I really didn't spend much time with Taylor since he didn't wear lenses, so I guess you could say I was Team Edward. I think they all did a great job in their roles. You get this idea in your head when reading a book of how the characters look and act. You never know if it's going to be the same as in your head, you just have to wait till it's all said and done.

When I first heard that the actor to play Edward was some kid named Robert Pattinson, I was like, "Who?" I was told he was Cedric Diggory in "Harry Potter." I thought, "No way. Oh no, they're going to ruin it for me." I love "Harry Potter," and Rob was great as Cedric, but I just couldn't see it. But then I met Rob. He was soft spoken, charming, very polite, a handsome kid, and completely oblivious that his life was about to change forever. After that day I knew he was going to be the perfect Edward.

Kristen was nice too, maybe not as chatty as Rob at times, but we had some laughs. I had seen her in many things before and knew she was very versatile. She played the brooding, moody, going through that awkward stage teenager very well. Everyone played their roles so well. If I went back and read the books again, I would see their faces and not the ones I had seen before.

**E:** You're often credited as designer and painter. So, when you're coming up with a design, do you work from notes and present an idea back?

**CP:** Most of the time the designer of the makeup effects that go with the character will send me the lens design when the shop is hiring me. But, when they're not quite sure about the lenses and they're going to let me design everything, they kind of give me a direction of what they're looking for and I'll do Photoshop renderings, as any designer would. Which, I find is easier. I know what I can do to a lens. There are times when I get a design and I know it's not possible. When I have control over it, I know whatever I'm putting on Photoshop can be done.

**E:** You've worked on "Alice in Wonderland" and "Pirates of the Caribbean." Johnny Depp is one of my favorite actors. Have you interacted with Johnny and what is your impression of him?

**CP:** He's one of my favorite people to work with. He's an all-around great guy. He's generous and kind and everything you would want to an actor to be.

**E:** He seems a little bit larger than life.

**CP:** He does, but, sometimes he's quiet and sometimes he's chatty. He's very courteous and respectful. He's just a great guy to work with. He listens to the makeup artist talking to him or if I'm talking to him, he listens to people's suggestions, which is really nice. He's a great guy. I've been lucky to work on almost every project he's needed contact lenses on since "Blow."

**E:** After coming up in the business with your mom, are you kind of immune to being "star struck" by anyone? Or is there one actor or actress you feel kind of star struck by?

**CP:** There has been, but I keep it inside. There were a couple of times I had a little tummy turn when I saw the actor or got to talk to them. One was Michael Fassbender. I had a huge crush on him, so I did a little giggle. Another person I was a huge fan of and when I saw him I was kind of dumbfounded, was Clint Eastwood. I'm just in awe of him. So when I worked on "Letters from Iwo Jima," I went to the makeup test and he wanted to see what the lens looked like. The makeup artist had put the lens in the actor and he came in and as soon as he walked

into the room I was like, “Oh my God, that’s Dirty Harry! That’s “The Good, The Bad and The Ugly!” Clint Eastwood is an amazing man.”

**E:** Do you have a favorite project?

**CP:** That’s such a hard question. Sometimes there’s a design. It’s not necessarily the film, but the lens itself that was exciting to me because maybe I made some sort of a breakthrough. For “King Kong,” there was a lens I did that had a sort of webbing effect and it was something different and something nobody has done before and when I was able to create it, I was proud of myself, I guess I could say, and it was kind of neat coming up with something new and different looking.

“King Kong” was also fun because I went to New Zealand with Dr. Sumner, who I was working for. We got to spend a month working in New Zealand, working with the makeup artist, my friend Gino Acevedo, who now works in the digital department at WETA. That was really neat, so “King Kong” is one of my favorites because there are so many things that happened while I was on that show.

Another favorite is “American Horror Story”, because I’ve become so close with that group and they’re a great bunch of makeup artists, extremely talented and I love being part of that team.

Another one is “Walking Dead.” It’s such a good story. I’m like a fanatic watching that show. Before I watched “Walking Dead,” I’ve never liked anything with zombies. The thought of watching a human eat another human is just horrifying to me. So when I was working on the first webisode I met all the executives from AMC. They sent me a disc of the first season and I sat down to watch it with my daughter who had already been watching it and was a fan and I was hooked.

**E:** Is fantasy one of your favorite genres? What shows do you watch for enjoyment?

**CP:** I love fantasy. I love “Game of Thrones.” I love that type of stuff because I love to escape. I have since I was a kid. That’s why I would paint fantasy, to just get away from your own

hum-drum life for a couple hours and be taken somewhere else. Forget about your problems, your troubles and just escape. So, fantasy/science fiction is probably my first choice.

**E:** What is the most difficult or challenging part of your job?

**CP:** Time frame. Sometimes I just don't get enough time. Sometimes it has to do with casting the actor. They just don't find the actor and they're shooting in three days and so we have to scramble to get things fit and I have to order the lenses and paint them. There are times when I'm up all night long trying to get it done in time. That can be the hard part.

**E:** What is the most rewarding part of your job?

**CP:** Seeing it on film. Seeing it on screen or on television.

**E:** Besides your mom, is there a female makeup/FX artist whose work you admire?

**CP:** There's probably quite a few. Toni G., she stands out and Ve Neill. I know there's more. Ve is very well known. She's got like three Academy Awards already. Toni had learned a lot from Rick Baker and she doesn't get credit or get recognized enough. She was Angelina Jolie's makeup artist on "Maleficent." She's such a down to earth lady. I love working with her. She's very spiritual and just a neat person and incredibly talented. Also, something that doesn't get recognized enough with women and makeup/FX is the fabricators. One of the top female fabricators is Beth Hathaway and she works at KNB.

**E:** Do you have any advice for women who are aspiring to get into the field?

**CP:** I just go off of what my mom told me. My mom would always say to me, "Don't give up on your dream. If there's a will there's a way." If you want it enough, you just won't give up. You'll keep knocking on doors and keep trying and eventually something will happen and you'll get through. It is a tough industry and there's a lot of competition. Just don't give up.