



Emmanuelle Vaugier: All-Canadian Girl?

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I have an admission to make...

I am hooked on teen melodramas starring actors who are in their mid to late twenties.

Wow. It felt good to admit that. I'm not sure how or why this obsession began, but I have given in to it. Sadly this is not my first battle with melodrama addiction. I once dropped a course in university because it interfered with me watching *Melrose Place*.

One such show that I now watch is the WB's *One Tree Hill*. I tell myself that it's cool to watch because it revolves around basketball. It's almost like watching sports, right? Right!?

Oh, stop judging me. Anyone who didn't at least shed a little tear when Nathan finally called Lucas "brother" is a heartless robot. They've both been through so much!

Anyway, during the latter part of the show's inaugural season, I noticed an actress that had just joined the cast as a recurring character. She looked very familiar to me, but I couldn't recall from where. I decided to log onto the handy dandy Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) to do a little research. And much to my surprise it said that this lovely young woman was a fellow Canuck. From Vancouver, no less!

I was shocked. If there are two things in this world that I know it is the accomplishments of Canadians and hot actresses. I also know an inordinate amount about cheesy 80s music, but I couldn't really find a way to tie that in.

I was a bit skeptical. How could she be an up and coming Canadian actress when no one had informed me? I decided that I would do a little investigating. I tracked down Emmanuelle's tireless publicist Lesley. Under the guise of writing an article for *Eh! Magazine* I arranged an interview. I was going to get to the bottom of this mystery of whether or not she's Canadian once and for all.

Upon first glance it is impossible to ascertain where Emmanuelle might hail from. And her varied movie roles will back that up. She's played a "white trash whore", an Arabian princess and a Latin popstar. Not bad for a girl whose genes are Franco-Italian. First glance also tells us that she is absolutely stunning. I don't want to speak out of turn, but the *Eh!* staff meeting to choose the pictures for the cover and this article lasted 96 hours, three people dehydrated, and at one point someone floated the idea of renaming the magazine "Eh!mmanuelle."

When I asked Emmanuelle why Canadian actresses were so much better looking than their American counterparts, she laughed, and politely refused to answer. She would only say that she wasn't "going to dig myself a grave answering that one." Hmm... That does seem like something a nice Canuck would say. I then tried to get her to admit that Canadian actresses are more charming than the Yanks. "We have a different type of humour. I'll call us different. Not better, but different. I'm remaining neutral on this one." Maybe she's from Switzerland...

And it's not only the *Eh!* staff of pasty shut-ins who have noticed the beauty of this talented actress. When she was 14, Emmanuelle took a modeling class, was discovered by a scout and asked about going overseas to model. It took a couple years to convince her parents, but at sixteen Ms. Vaugier hit Japan like *Godzilla* on uppers. (I... don't know what that means either.)

However, acting had always been her true passion. "When I was in the second grade I did my first school play. It was all over after that!" After modeling for a while she knew that she wanted to get into film work, so she signed with an agent and started going out for auditions. Starting with commercials and then moving on to speaking roles.

Emmanuelle's big break came when she landed a part in a Showtime movie of the week called *The Halfback of Notre Dame*. This was, ahem, for an American channel. However, it did also involve a number of other Canuck actors, including fellow Vancouverite Laura Harris (*The Faculty*.) The jury is still out...

Halfback "kind of helped me get into the doors in Vancouver. That helped me get into rooms I might not have been able to otherwise. I kind of jumped to the head of the line. I was really lucky." Previously she had done a pilot for *Fox Kids* that wasn't picked up and a bit part in an NBC TV movie starring Faye Dunaway.

I tried to steer our interview back to what was really important by asking her what we could do to bring Alan Thicke back to international prominence. She said "I really don't know how to answer that one!" Did she even know who Alan Thicke was? I then asked whether she preferred to watch *Danger Bay* or *The Beachcombers*. She answered, "I never watched those shows." Uh huh! Breakthrough! But before I could say, "Impostor!"



she continued, "I was too little..." The next few moments are a blur as I was suddenly feeling horribly self-conscious about my age. As I yanked out a grey hair she pulled me back with "I think my Dad preferred Danger Bay." Nice save. She truly is a worth adversary.

Emmanuelle has appeared on a metric butt load of television shows for Canadian TV (or that were filmed in Canada), including; Highlander, Madison, Breaker High, The Outer Limits, Dead Man's Gun, Viper, Seven Days, Level 9, Higher Ground, So Weird, Big Sound, MythQuest, and Just Cause. I suppose that does lend a little support to her claims of being Canadian. Although it COULD just be a freakish coincidence. We'll have to delve deeper.

Most recently she appeared on big US television shows including Charmed, as well as having recurring roles on Smallville and the aforementioned One Tree Hill. On Charmed and Smallville she played doctors. I suppose that to Americans, anyone who came through the Canadian school system would seem like a doctor. You know, if Emmanuelle really is Canadian.

To test this further I asked her what she missed most about Canada when she was in L.A. "Sushi" she replied. What? "Not getting sued" would have worked for me. "Moose meat." "Anne Murray's 'Snowbird.'" I know she's from Vancouver, but dude... Sushi?

"There's only a handful of places in L.A. where you can get really good sushi. Vancouver is just full of little whole in the wall, fun sushi restaurants that are amazing." That sounds reasonable enough. "In Vancouver you could walk down the block and find four sushi restaurants and odds are that at least three of them are good." I'm not sure if that is true or not, but am I the only one who is suddenly craving futomaki?

She's made perhaps her biggest television splash this past season on One Tree Hill. She embodied bad girl "Nikki" with gusto. She seduced a high school jock, hit the bottle like a sailor – or politician, tortured her ex, completely changed the way we look at carousels, briefly kidnapped her own child and partook in a knock-em-down drag-em-out catfight for the ages. Not bad for a recurring guest star, eh? When I asked her if "Nikki" would be returning next season, she answered, "I guess we'll have to wait and see." How cruel is that? I'm now even more determined to find out if she has anything to hide.

In researching this article I tried to contact Paul Johansson – "Dan" on One Tree Hill – who was raised in Canada and has dual citizenship. However, I was unable to track him down to ask him a few questions. Has Emmanuelle gotten to him? Perhaps. Maybe he knows too much. His character was having a heart attack in the season finale. Is that Emmanuelle's doing as well? Diabolical! "I think that he's actually out of the country right now. I believe that he is in Thailand." How convenient.

Just as Emmanuelle's roles and acclaim have grown in her television career, her film path has followed a similar arc. Like many other actors just starting out there are some films on her resume that one might not quite consider exactly award winning. Prior to 2000, she appeared in such films as; Hysteria, Shadow Warriors II, Shape Shifter, and The Fear: Resurrection. One wonders whether the thriller/horror genre is one that she is a fan of. "Not particularly. It's just worked out that way." One also wonders if you need to see the first Shadow Warriors in order to grasp the subtle nuances of the second one. "I never saw the original, I can't really say. I don't even think that I saw the one that I was in. My part wasn't terribly memorable in the second one. I think that I had one line."

In 2000, Emmanuelle won acclaim for her performance as Mike Love's wife in the mini-series The Beach Boys: An American Family. An "American" family, huh? Interesting... That same year she also appeared in MY FIVE WIVES with comedy legend Rodney Dangerfield. On working with the 80-something comic legend: "I had a blast." And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that it too was filmed in Vancouver.

I've always been curious if there was a certain special bond between Canadians working in the industry in LA. "Absolutely." So I asked if she and other Canuck actresses ever had sleepovers at Neve Campbell's house where they ate s'mores and froze each other's bras. "I think Neve might be a little freaked out if I show up at her house and put her bras in the freezer. We don't really know each other."

That didn't bring us any closer to finding out the answer to our mystery, but I did just plant that sleepover image in your heads, didn't I? You're welcome, fellas.

She continued to work in the thriller genre. Now I don't want to say that Emmanuelle has played a lot of characters who've died, but South Park's "Kenny" had a better chance of seeing the closing credits than she did for a while.

More recently, Emmanuelle has appeared in big studio films like Secondhand Lions (starring Michael Caine, Robert Duvall and the puberty-ravished Haley Joel Osment) and 40 Days & 40 Nights (with Josh Hartnett.) The former garnering her a large following amongst 10-13 year old girls for her portrayal of "Princess Jasmine." And her memorable turn in the latter is the funniest part of the film and features a scene that will stick in your memory. Pun completely intended. (If you've seen it, you'll know what I mean.)

Emmanuelle just starred as "Lauren" in Call Me: The Rise and Fall of Heidi Fleiss. The movie about the infamous Hollywood madam aired on the USA

Network south of the border, as well as Movie Central and The Movie Network in Canada. I actually caught a showing of it as research for this piece. Yeah, "research", that's the ticket. I asked Emmanuelle if she did any special research for the role (like studying up on Charlie Sheen's predilections.) "I went and read the book that Heidi Fleiss put together called 'Pandering.' I refused to buy it though... on principle." Canuck or not, you gotta like that attitude.

Part of this interview was done over the phone as Emmanuelle is – as this is being written – spending some time in Italy. It's her second trip to Europe in about three weeks. She just returned from an exciting visit to Cannes. "It was possibly one of the best trips of my life. It was my first time there and definitely won't be my last... We arrived in Cannes with no plans whatsoever, no reservations, nothing. We just sort of landed there and everything just fell into place... It was one of those unbelievable vacations."

After much investigation, I've grudgingly concluded that Emmanuelle is indeed a good Canadian lass. She's charming, talented and has star qualities coming out the wazoo. (They have a patch for that now.) And we had better enjoy her while we can, because if Hollywood decision makers have a clue she'll be one busy woman for the foreseeable future. And just what her immediate acting future holds is still up in the air, as she's "looking at a bunch of possibilities right now. No decisions have been made yet." No matter what she chooses, we're sure she'll do Canada proud and Eh! will be watching.

I still can't believe that she won't even give me a hint about next season on One Tree Hill...

