

LIZA TRAINER

By Rachel Galvin

BRINGING WEIRD THINGS TO LIFE

Brassy and brilliant, Liza Trainer has found a niche in the film industry, making weird things come to life, one robot or rigged gadget at a time. By day, she works for her own company as a compositor and refinisher for jet planes. At night, she is working with upstarts in the film industry, making their dreams come true.

Before Hurricane Wilma, Liza had the entire top floor of a building in the "ghetto" of the Ft. Lauderdale area transformed into a working studio. But as the wind blew, her digs were torn to pieces along with most of her equipment and work.

Many months later, the unsinkable Liza Trainer has found a way to pull herself up by her boot straps once again. Her new studio is bigger (1700 sq. ft.) and more beautiful than ever. The large warehouse is decked out with props from the old studios and various miniatures she has created from old and new projects. She had to custom design the studio herself, adding a loft and installing a 23 foot high green screen by herself, with help from a few indie filmmaker hopefuls. She hopes to install a flying harness soon.

In the past, Liza has worked on everything from surreal and serene music videos to the devilishly demented *Ted-E Adventures*, where she demonstrated her ability to make explosives, squibs, realistic looking guns and other

devices. She also worked on her own feature called "Stick To What You Know," which put out a call to indie cast and crew around the world to pitch in and help out. For that production, she built a lifelike zombie, a life size leopard and a new form of furniture—a three tiered couch-- that turned into the perfect way to view a movie in her in-home studio.

The wonderful world of the Web allowed her to reach filmmakers like Michael S. Copeland, who flew to Florida from Chicago to use local



talent in a short film "Casting Call," which he entered into an on-line contest. She often uses local college students to help her with everything from camera work to editing.

It all comes down to experimentation. She has duct tape and knows how to use it. But often she uses bungee cords. She has gained a lot of attention from her ability to build robots.

Her latest and greatest development is named 'Gadget' - a remote control tank, topped with a DVX 100 AP camera. This baby will be used to tackle her most difficult challenge yet - filming a play. From

March 3rd through 12th, Liza helped to film the local performance of "Beware the Eyes of Mars," at the Broward Library Main Theater. During the play itself, they used two cameras, one far away and one at closer range.

The tank was on stage. It was used during rehearsal periods. Liza's goal was to catch shots that "no one has ever seen before," according to Trainer.

"Beware the Eyes of Mars" also featured two of her robots - one was a 200-pound (with person inside a la Flintstone style) green robot that played waiter to the passengers aboard the flight deck. The other was Brunhilda, the first robot ever made, according to the play script. This robot was modified to the specifications of three students (Renate Balsamo, Ashley Idell, Stephen Davis) who won a contest conducted by play director, David Mann.

Liza also helped to design the entire set itself—com-

plete with Star Wars-esque knobs and switches and lots of lights on the futuristic flight deck. Liza became involved in the project once she knew that the proceeds would benefit "Kids in Distress."

Filming is never easy. Luckily, her creations like Gadget help to do much of the work for her. "This tank is able to do a 360-degree pivot in a 2-inch radius. The tilt and gimbal are fully adjustable and it has bungee cord suspension for stabilization. The camera is mounted on the tank's turret so the angle can be swung on the fly," she explained.

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"A play is traditionally just filmed with a camera on a tripod. I am notorious for coming up with creative ways to shoot. Some of the shots I can get with this thing would normally only be done with a camera swung from a wire. The beauty of using a tank chase is that it lays its own track as it goes. Even the spins are stable if it is riding on a smooth surface," she added. Liza also was able to stand up high and get some original shots back stage with the regular camera.

On opening night, the fog machine set off the fire alarm. When the fire marshall momentarily stopped the show, Liza sprung into action chasing him down the hall and catching all the excitement for what she hopes will make some great additional footage or even a documentary.

Director David Mann is looking for additional people to help with editing this play turned film. Check out www.marshmusical.com for more information on the play and also to contact the director.

Meanwhile, Liza is back in her studio continuing to bring weird things to life for new audiences to enjoy. You never know what will be created next. [SoFLim](#)

**RINGING THE REGSITER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)**

This will then allow you to control your destiny and not rely on repeat business and referral customers only. Imagine being able to determine your financial needs and then knowing how to develop enough business to get there. I know, in my business, exactly how to create \$10,000 of new business. This lets me control my personal life better and gives me much greater business confidence as well. Effective and simple selling systems are not rocket science, but they involve discipline and follow-up. They will become second nature over time and give you control over your business and financial life. Try creating your own system and practicing it for a few months. You will fine tune it many times, but in the end, it will deliver many new jobs and clients. Drop me an e-mail and let me know how it works for you..Dave@barneswest.com

There you have it... One secret to success in the production business... well a start anyway... in the next months we will explore many areas of business and learn how to better control your destiny. [SoFLim](#)

Barnes/west Productions handles all aspects of a project from writing and research, to filming, editing, narration, and final dubs and distribution. The company offers over 30 years of production experience in projects of all types.

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DALLAS DREAMS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18)

He found the reason for his visit. A full shelf of screenwriting books. 'Write The Hot Script,' 'Make Your Words Live,' 'Screenwriting Tips,' the titles made him smile. Were these to be his magic wand? Could they put coherency and structure into his chaos?

An attractive girl walked past. She looked in every direction except his. He had never understood the ignorance. He knew he was no toad in the looks department. His scruffy blond hair, blue eyes and amiable face should be enough to attract at least one good looking girl. He believed, if anything was to blame, it was his glasses.

He only needed them to read, but had gotten so used to wearing them that he now felt naked without them.

He flicked through some of the books. The advice strolled into his mind. Confused him further. Then left as if it was a girl.

Jake stepped outside. He squinted at the bright Florida sunshine. It had broken through the clouds with gusto. He sat down on the lawn and watched the world go by. Knowing what you want and achieving it are two very separate things. At least he had a head start. He now knew his only path to self respect. Jake Dallas had decided to be a screenwriter. The journey would be arduous and many other footprints were ahead of him. But a dream is a dream, and only those that yearn for it can switch it off. Despite all of this, a thought arrived like a freight train. Jake's smile faded. If he was going to be a Screenwriter, he needed help.

To Be Continued... [SoFLim](#)

SoFlim: *How did you get into acting? Was it a lifelong dream?*

Rachel: My love of performing started at an early age. I started performing at the American Legion at the age of six. I would stand atop a Naugahyde red chair in front of the jukebox and sing "Feelings" to my captive audience at the bar. I knew then that I wanted to be in the spotlight. I had already started modeling by the age of four after winning a local contest. Soon after, I was Miss Poppy in the American Legion parade.

I didn't get into acting until much later. I started in theater and studied with a great acting teacher, learning as much as possible. I also did many plays.

Then, almost on a whim, I moved to Los Angeles. My family did not want me to go so I said I was going with my friend for only a week. Then, she returned home and I stayed. I lived in a hostel for the first three weeks, in unsanitary and unsafe conditions, in a co-ed room with no air conditioning in the middle of July. (That is a whole other story) But eventually I found my own place and began networking.

After three years, for a change of pace, I moved to Florida (long story) and started a writing career, freelancing for local newspapers. But in the last few months I have taken on acting again, full-steam ahead.

SoFlim: *What are your short term goals?*

Rachel: I want to do as much as possible, especially in film. I hope to put together a nice demo reel very soon.

SoFlim: *What are your long term goals?*

Rachel: I want to eventually be a SAG actress making a living at what I love to do. I am also interested in hosting my own show, like something for MTV or even a travel show. In addition, I want to continue my writing career.

SoFlim: *Talk to us about some specific moments/highlights from projects that you worked on here in South Florida.*

Rachel: It's tough being an actor sometimes. It's not glamorous. I know - I was an extra for years in Los Angeles on everything from "Power Rangers" to "Halloween H20." Ten hours on the set is not unusual and sometimes they don't use you at all. I don't do extra work anymore.

But even when you have lines, it's not easy. I have had some uncomfortable moments in some of my recent projects. I had to kneel on a countertop for a long time for one scene, waiting for the lighting to be right. In another film, I wore stiletto heels on top of a sand bag to attain the right height for a certain shot. Yet another film needed me to scream almost the entire time and duck at a certain moment to get just the right pan. Where's my stand in? (laughter) It's all part of showbiz, especially for non-union. But, in my book, a hard day on the film set is better than any day in the office.

SoFlim: *Who was your greatest influence / mentor when you first started to act?*

Rachel: I had a wonderful teacher in Colorado, Bill Smith, who to this day is the best teacher I have ever had. He allowed us to practice scenes, do them on camera and then see the results. I think that was very effective. Although we learned theory as well, seeing ourselves proved the most helpful. The actors there formed a coalition. We would go out and watch each other's performances. It was very supportive. He also

talked about frame, knowing what frame you are in and about listening to the other actor—which I think is essential.

SoFlim: *Why come to South Florida rather than go to New York or LA?*

Rachel: I was in Los Angeles but, if you are non-union, it is almost impossible to get any high quality work. Plus the competition is brutal. Everyone is an actor; everyone is serious; everyone is in tip top shape physically and professionally. It's tough to get your feet wet and to get a break. Here, once you build a network, it is easier to find projects. People are a bit more lax, allowing for a nice learning atmosphere.

ACTOR PROFILE

WITH: **RACHEL GALVIN**



Many times, though, I find it too lax. I am very much "Okay, let's get the job done." When I am working, I am working. I am always willing to pitch in and help, always looking to get the job done right, and done as soon as possible.

SoFlim: *Has this town changed you? How?*

Rachel: It is hard to be a type "A" personality here, but I seem to do quite fine. I think I stand out more here because of that fact. In LA, everyone is. It is all about precision and professionalism. I don't find that here. In some ways it is nice because I have the opportunity to rise to the top and help others on their way up. I enjoy inspiring and helping others with their projects and goals in any way I can. However, it is not as challenging as Los Angeles. Sometimes I miss the camaraderie of everyone being in a rush to get somewhere.

SoFlim: *Any thoughts on acting? Advice to those trying to break in? What do you think it takes to become an extremely successful actor?*

Rachel: I treat this passion like a beautiful game. I try to make it as much fun as possible, but play to win and in the end make it not mean anything. I don't hear "no," I hear "next." I am always open for opportunities. I try to be as professional as possible and to be open to learning new things and stepping into all roles on the set. "Need someone to hold the light? Okay. Need to run lines? Okay," etc.

I find that the most important thing is showing up because so many do not. Next is professionalism and respect for those around you and the project. After that, it's focus. If I'm not focused, the scene is blown. Then, of course, there is listening. But behind the scenes, getting work as an actor is all about who you know... network, network, network!

SoFlim: *Was being "Miss Poppy" the ultimate highlight of your career?*

Rachel: No. (smiling) I wasn't that excited about it at the time. I was more into modeling. They did a shoot of me in my Miss Poppy outfit and the pictures are hilarious. I go from all smiles to an obvious growl. I guess I got tired. I was only six. I don't ever get tired of modeling now.

I was also in a T.E.E.N. pageant when I was 17, which was much more of a big deal. I became a finalist.

SoFlim: *What are some current projects that you are working on or have recently worked on?*

Rachel: In October, the film I wrote and directed a few years ago, "To Mine Own Self Be True" (produced by Al Reyes), was shown twice at Screampfest. I was interviewed by a television show from Medford, Massachusetts and was chosen to be a part of an impromptu film the weekend of the convention as well.

In the last several months, I have been lucky enough to receive an abundance of projects. I was a fiancé in Jacmel Urena's "Wrong Turn;" a serial killer in "Lockbox," directed by Marina Pronostii; Java Shop Jane in "Faded (X)," directed by Ariel Ramos; an airline attendant in Christian Hall's "Final Job;" and an angry dead ex-wife in Liza Trainer's "Casting Call."

I got a call from Director Frank Amendola to do a short film at the last minute. His actor dropped out so I stepped in. Talk about a cold reading! I am in rehearsals for a sci-fi feature with him right now.

I also just finished a play that ran in early March called "Beware the Eyes of Mars." It was one of the most intense projects I have ever worked on. In addition to playing three parts: an old Jewish woman, a Brooklyn toned Galaxy Operator and a free-loving hippie, I also had to sing and dance with a huge ensemble cast in a Broadway-style show. Yikes! It was definitely a learning experience and one of the most unique theater scripts I have ever worked with.

I am going to be doing voice-over and additional outdoor scenes that will be added to the filming that was already done of the play to make a film that will probably be released in the Fall.

SoFlim: *Anything else you'd like to add?*

Rachel: Last tip: Actors—never take rejection personally. Keep smiling and take one day at a time. If you make it about fun, it will all work out. And be grateful for everything!

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