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PAQUIN
ON HBO'S *TRUE BLOOD*

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ANNA PAQUIN,
STAR OF
TRUE BLOOD, SINKS
HER TEETH INTO
THE ROLE OF A
LIFETIME

BITES

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Anna Paquin is about to catapult into a rare form of superstardom, the kind in which a television actress becomes an A-list fixture (à la Sarah Jessica Parker). Not that we didn't see this coming: At only 11 years old Paquin won an Oscar opposite Holly Hunter in *The Piano*. Since then she's taken on fantastical high-concept adventure (the *X-Men* franchise), drama (*The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*) and even a little history (*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Joan of Arc*). But today, as the bright-eyed Southerner Sookie Stackhouse on HBO's *True Blood*, she has fully arrived. And her recent Golden Globe win proves it.

"The Golden Globe feels pretty damn good because I'm an adult, and it's the first major recognition I've had for my work as a non-child," she says. "Even though I'm only 26, I've been working since I was nine, so it feels like I worked for it."

Entering its second season in June, *True Blood*—as Paquin describes it, "dangerous, sexy, otherworldly; a grown-up version of a fairy tale"—is the creation of Alan Ball of *Six Feet Under* fame. Paquin was on board the moment she heard he was behind the project. "He's

OPPOSITE PAGE: Dress by
Hervé Léger





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extraordinary, smart, funny and unpredictable in his humor, kind and approachable," she says. "The best boss you could possibly have."

Similarly, *True Blood* could be one of the best things that has happened to her. Paquin fell in love with her costar, Stephen Moyer (who plays the vampire Bill) during filming, and the couple now live together. Night after night of filming ("The sleep deprivation can be rough—our crew right now is starting to look like vampires," she says) enabled the relationship to blossom quickly. "Steve and I had a certain instant connection," she says. "It doesn't hurt when the relationship on screen that you're trying to create is one of attraction and fascination."

That chemistry is evident on the show, and the role of Sookie—an innocent, romance-novel kind of girl who reads minds and falls for the good-guy vampire—is Paquin's favorite role to date. "Sookie's had a really rough time in her own personal life," she explains. "Everyone thinks she's a big freak. Then this dark and mysterious creature shows up, and he's not judging her and she's in no position to judge him. It's the first time that she gets to be herself, and he's fascinated by all the things that make her different. And vice versa."

To get into shape for the role while living in New York City, Paquin trained regularly. "I do everything you can do in a gym. Boxing, Pilates, yoga—you name it, I've done it," she says. And it certainly paid off. "Sookie's her own little action star," she says. "I get blooded and vomited on and beat up—everything that the girl doesn't usually get to do in a show or a film because they're usually the girlfriend. Sookie's the center of all the action or trauma."

Though aware of her effect on *True Blood*'s rabid fans, Paquin keeps it real. She subscribes to the famous maxim "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," and she attributes her grounded nature to the realistic views that her family—who live in New Zealand, where she grew up—subscribes to. (She maintains a production company with her brother, with whom she made *Blue State* in 2007.)

"If you're respectful and professional and good

to people, what you put out there comes back to you," she explains. "I came up through the ranks before the tabloid media became what it is currently. It wasn't as much of a feeding frenzy. I guess that's more good luck than good management. There was very little time to be affected, and my family didn't value that. I was usually at work or at school or at home doing my homework."

Paquin has had stellar professional role models as well, including her favorite, Holly Hunter. "I'm still in awe of her," Paquin says. "*The Piano* was my apprenticeship. I had no idea what I was doing and I absolutely adored her. So I was like, I'll just follow her lead! She can just walk on water talent-wise."

Paquin may have sidestepped the celebrity craze, but one thing she has fallen into is fashion. She loves Narciso Rodriguez, Dolce & Gabbana



and L'Wren Scott, and she wore Hervé Leroux to the Golden Globes. "I absolutely love beautiful clothes and dressing up for red-carpet stuff," she says. "The whole Cinderella thing: the dress, the shoes, the hair, the makeup and the jewelry."

As for her true passions, she'd like to direct a film someday, start a family and travel. "India, Thailand, Africa, Borneo," she says. "Places like Brazil to support the Great Ape Project [an advocacy group for great apes]; I'm a little bit obsessed with that. And I'm finally going to the Hamptons! But finding the time.... that's top of my list." H

RIGHT: As Sookie in *True Blood*
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