

UZZURI

Bollywood star
Cleo Isaacs takes
India by Storm

Acting with
energy
MUSSETTA VANDER

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MARTIAL TAPOLO PRINCE OF COUTURE

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A Candid Interview with
Musetta Vander

UZURI ShowBiz

ACTING WITH ENERGY

By Suna Moya and Zeta Marie



Musetta Vander is a native of South Africa. As the daughter of a ballet teacher, Vander was no stranger to the entertainment world, and debuted on stage at the young age of 4. Her childhood was filled with numerous song and dance performances, and, shortly after school, she qualified as a ballet teacher herself.

After earning a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and Psychology, she landed the impressive role of anchor host for an MTV-like television show in South Africa. One day, a handsome visiting American spotted the sultry host on television, made her his bride, and whisked her off to the very place she had always dreamed of - Hollywood. There, she became part of the very world she used to host, appearing as the "dream girl" in more than 20 music videos for top recording artists such as Rod Stewart, Tina Turner, Elton John, and Chris Isaak.

Since then, Vander has performed in many feature films and worked alongside such screen veterans as Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, and Will Smith in *Wild Wild West*; George Clooney and John Turturro in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; Jennifer Lopez in *The Cell*; Sally Kirk-

land in *What's Up, Scarlet?*; and Robert Duvall and Will Ferrell in *Kicking & Screaming*.

She has also added a slew of television credits to her arsenal, including guest appearances on hit TV shows such as *Stargate SG-1*, *Star Trek*, *NCIS*, *Highlander*, and *Frasier*.

Vander's recent projects include *Breaking Point*, a crime drama in which she stars opposite Tom Berenger and Armand Assante, and the upcoming thriller *Spreading Darkness* with Eric Roberts.

Tell us about your childhood in South Africa. What is one of your fondest memories?

Growing up without television. It provided me with great respect for nature and the power of imagination. I would often entertain myself by exploring the dense plant and animal life that surrounded our property, or travel along on imaginary journeys while listening to the radio. Although I love technology, I think it's taken some of the simple things of life away and we get sucked into our digital reality.

How did you get into the business?

I was born into the entertainment business and groomed for the stage from a very early age. I was literally in the newspaper the day I was born. The entertainment business is in my blood and acting

was a very natural progression for me.

Your modeling portfolio is quite diverse and impressive. Could you give us some information as to this aspect of your career?

I was scouted as a young girl but only became interested after I finished school. Just as I became more involved with modeling, I booked the job as anchor host for a TV show, and was no longer allowed to endorse any products while on the air. Unfortunately, my modeling career has always taken a backseat to my dancing and acting career.

Who is your favorite designer?

I really don't have one favorite designer. There are many great ones out there. To me, the most important thing is that the clothing compliments my body and that

I feel comfortable wearing it. I like both classic and edgy designs.

Your filmography is very versatile. What was your first movie and what has been your favorite movie role?

The first movie I did when I arrived in Los Angeles was *Monolith* with Bill Paxton, John Hurt, and Lou Gossett, Jr. I played a Russian spy. I remember being extremely excited and don't think I slept the night before. There is nothing like that first movie experience when you're fresh off the boat.

I've enjoyed all the roles I've been fortunate enough to play. They're all different and each experience has been unique. I think *What's Up, Scarlet?* and *Under the Hula Moon* were the most fun roles to play, but I hope to still add my favorite movie. I've always wanted to act in a



Photography: TC Reiner
Hair & make-up: Melinda Miller Rider
Stylist: George Bloodwell
Dress by Nicole Miller
Flowing shirt: by Catherine Malandrino
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classic period piece and hopefully this will become a reality.

You are well known in the sci-fi genre and have appeared in many TV shows. Which one was your favorite?

I really enjoyed working on Secret Agent Man and always wanted to play a “Bond Girl” for kicks. I guess this role came closest. Prima was an edgy, tongue-in-cheek character, and we shot the series on location in beautiful Vancouver. It was great.

Who are your favorite actors to work with thus far and why?

I’ve been really fortunate to work with some amazing actors. They’ve been great teachers, inspiring to watch and humbling to share screen time with. One particular moment stands out for me in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* I’m a big fan of John Turturro and his chameleon-like ability to transform into roles. Needless to say, getting the opportunity to work with him, on a Coen Brothers movie, was incredible! I’m a huge fan of both!

We were shooting the river scene where the sirens appear and seduce the men. The minute they yelled action, he instantly transformed into this awestruck hillbilly that looked at me with such burning desire that I felt I was the only woman he had ever seen! I felt like I was being lured across the river by his mesmerizing stare. Every time they’d cut, he’d instantly revert back to his normal self, oblivious of my presence. Then we’d roll again and he would turn on that intoxicating stare. There were moments when it was hard to keep a straight face, as his intensity and expressions were so priceless and captivating. I thought to myself: “What the heck is happening here? I thought I was supposed to doing the seducing.”

Few people know that you are also a certified Medical Qigong Master with a successful private practice as a healer. Tell us about Qigong.

Qigong is a powerful and ancient system of natural energy medicine from China. It employs the skillful practice of gathering, circulating, and applying life-force energy, or qi, leading to better health, vitality, and a tranquil state of mind.

How did you transition from actress to Medical Qigong Master?

Fate. If you told me my life would one day include entering the world of healing, I probably would have laughed at you.

When I arrived in LA, I started developing an interest in alternative healing and explored and practiced different therapies. I loved learning about the human body and found it very empowering. However, nothing prepared me for what Medical Qigong would introduce me to, or that this would one day become an integral part of my life. It saved me from debilitating surgery and opened my eyes and mind to the incredible healing power of energy.

What is your motto in life and what is your greatest piece of advice for others?

Know yourself. “To conquer oneself is a greater victory than to conquer thousands in battle.” If you don’t like the way things are out there in the world, take a look at yourself - change begins from within.