

TV's Young Veteran

Melissa Sue Anderson, 18, Grows Up on Show

By TARIS SAVELL

Television viewers have watched Melissa Sue Anderson grow from a child to a young woman.

When she was 11, she was cast as Mary Ingalls, the older sister in NBC-TV's Little House on the Prairie. Now Missy, as her friends call her, is 18 and she's concerned about her career.

"I don't want to be typecast as Mary Ingalls all my life," she said. "That's always a serious problem when you appear on a western or period show, and this one is both. I just don't want to be playing a little blind girl in the sticks for years and years. That's why I've branched out and done a couple of other shows, including a Love Boat and a Movie of the Week for CBS."

When Missy originally started in the successful series, her character was not blind. She was a bit leery of the proposed change.

Recognized More

"I figured once Mary went blind, I'd be shipped off to a blind school and I'd really be out of the show," she said. "But Mike Landon kept telling me it would be good and to trust him. And he's right. I'm getting more attention now than ever. All of a sudden people recognize me on the street. Maybe people naturally pay more attention to you when you have a handicap."

Strangely enough, many viewers actually think that Missy herself is blind and that the character was written so she could stay in the show.

Melissa, however, is an active, normal 18-year-old. She lives with her mother in San Fernando Val-



Melissa Sue Anderson

ley, Calif., rides horses, and studies disco dancing and singing.

"I'm treated just like all other kids are," Missy said, "except that I have a lot more problems, like income tax. I even get a monthly allowance. I nickel-and-dime my money away—nothing big."

The petite five-foot, four-inch actress seems older than her years, a fact she attributes to always being around adults and rarely around people her own age. She also feels that the handicapped Mary character has matured her thinking.

"I've become more understanding about people with physical problems," she said. "I used to be intrigued by people who were blind; now I don't pay attention to them, and that's the way it should be. They want to be treated just as other people."

And, just like a lot of other people, Melissa is also a fan.

"At the NBC affiliates' dinner," she said, "all the network stars were standing in a long line waiting to be introduced individually. And I turned around, and James Garner was standing two feet from me. I love him. He's so good-looking. I finally went up to him after staring and told him how much I admired him. And, let me tell you, he looks even better in person."

Shyness Shows

"It was exciting for me—it really was—but I didn't ask for his autograph. I'm a bit shy, and it was hard for me to get up the nerve to go up to him. I figured nobody else was going to introduce me, so I found the courage real quickly."

Her present acting chores are taken care of as long as Little House continues the way it is. But what does Missy see in her long-range plans?

"I'd like to work with Jane Fonda one day. I'd like to do feature pictures. I also wouldn't mind directing when I'm good enough. I don't want to be just mediocre with it—I want to be great at it. And I won't do it until I know I'm better than average. I'm always watching Mike direct and trying to learn. I'd also like to be considered a great actress someday."

Melissa's newfound recognition is a learning experience for her.

"Being recognized now doesn't really bother me, but I can't honestly say I thrive on it either," she said. "But if you don't get it, you have to worry. I'm outgoing when I know people, but it's hard for me to meet strangers. But I'm teaching myself to get over that. That's the business I'm in, so I have to learn."



Are They Doing It the Wrong Way?

Lyricist Tim Rice (left), shown with composer Andrew Lloyd Webber during a visit to New York City, concedes that their way of doing musicals is different. The song team produces a record album first. If that's a hit then they go ahead and do the play. The team was successful with "Jesus Christ Superstar" and now they hope the same backward technique will work for "Evita," their next Broadway effort.

Godzilla: Famed Creature Back in Business

Japanese Movie Monster Hero of Nuclear Power Plant Accident

Godzilla, the Japanese movie monster that first stomped across the screen 25 years ago as a film argument against the A-bomb, will make a comeback next year as the hero of a nuclear power plant accident.

Born in the South Seas as a result of U.S. atomic bomb testing, and a veteran in the fight against the powers of evil, the prehistoric monster will reappear after a six-year absence, apparently a confirmed good guy.

"It will be a serious film, just like the first movie, which was a reaction to uncontrolled atomic bomb testing in the atmosphere," said Tomoyuki Tanaka, president of the Toho Motion Picture Company in Tokyo.

"We are in the middle of script-writing. The Japanese are now fearful of the future much as at the time of the 1954 film," said Tanaka, creator of the series of 15 movies starring a giant flying prehistoric monster that tore up com-

muter trains and kicked its way through oil refineries.

The monster's 25th birthday was celebrated in July in New York City and in August in Tokyo with a screening of all 15 films. Tanaka said the new film is a response to renewed popular interest in Godzilla.

Godzilla toys brought in \$4,500,000 for makers in the last four years, and books and other memorabilia are also said to be selling well after a lapse.

Ishiro Honda, director of 10 of the 15 movies, said, "We went downhill in the last five or six pictures. The first film was pacifistic in intent."

Tanaka said European critics saw Godzilla as a Japanese reaction to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States during the Second World War.

"I think that appraisal is correct," Tanaka said. "Godzilla shows the Japanese attitude toward the atom."

"The monster turned friendly in later films and, in one epic, warded off monsters from outer space."

Monster Emerges

In the first film, a monster emerges from the depths of the South Pacific after U.S. atom bomb testing in the Bikini atoll.

In the American version, Raymond Burr, later to be known as Perry Mason and Ironside, played the part of an American reporter investigating the appearance of a monster in Japan. Burr's investigating activities were shot in Hollywood and spliced into the

Japanese motion picture. The first film featured major Japanese actors, but the later, cheaper films used mostly lesser-known younger talent.

"Godzilla is a hard act to follow," said director Honda.

There was even a Godzilla film that dealt with the dangers of industrial pollution, which are very serious in Japan. Another monster called Hedora, from the Japanese word "hedoro" meaning industrial sludge, rose from polluted Japanese seas and engulfed everything in its path.

Godzilla in Japan is known as "Gojira," apparently a combination of gorilla ("gorira" in Japanese) and "kujira," the Japanese word for whale.

"The oil shortage, the prospects of a third world war, food shortage, and the possibility of another giant earthquake are now beginning to preoccupy the Japanese much like the atom bomb did 25 years ago," Tanaka said.

Asked if the next monster epic will deal with these fears, he said, "I don't think we'll be all that logical."



Godzilla Returns: Godzilla, the Japanese movie monster, born 25 years ago in the South Seas as a result of U.S. A-bomb testing and seen here in

battle against King Kong in a 1974 film, is slated to return to the screen. Godzilla will be depicted as the hero of an accident at a nuclear power plant.

Little Rascals in Christmas Special

"The Little Rascals Christmas Special," the first television production based on the classic film comedies, will be presented Dec. 3 on the NBC Television Network.

The five young characters, whose antics sparked the action in film comedies between 1922 and 1938, will be spotlighted in this new animated production.

The Little Rascals include: Spanky, eight, who is chubby, a born leader.

Alfalfa, 10, skinny, freckle-faced, and the eternal romantic with an incredible cowlick sticking up from his slicked-down hair.

Darla, nine, the cute heartthrob of the fourth grade, for whom Alfalfa pines.

Stymie, about nine, bright and frisky. He is Spanky's closest friend and usually works out details of his pal's wild schemes.

Porky, four, is Spanky's kid brother. He can just about toddle around but can't speak too well.