

interview with an akron

vampire



the twilight saga
breaking dawn

part 2

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Photo: Andrew Cooper, SMPSP

Firestone graduate takes a bite out of Hollywood.

Lisa Howard may not be a household name yet, but in the West Akron area, she's the talk of the town.

>> The 1993 Firestone High School graduate has snagged a role in the upcoming film, "Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part 2" — the epic finale of the Twilight saga — which opens in theaters Nov. 16. Howard's character, Siobhan, is the leader of the Irish Coven of vampires, one of the groups called upon to help protect the half-human, half-vampire child of the saga's leads, Edward and Bella Cullen.

"My character Siobhan has a quiet but strong presence. She can will a situation to go the way she wants it to," she says. "She is beautiful yet fierce and is willing to fight if she has to."

This is Howard's first foray on the big screen, but she's no stranger to the spotlight. In high school, she performed in numerous choirs and on-stage in musical theater productions. After graduation, she studied music at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music.

Howard originated the role of Rona Lisa Peretti in the musical, "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" and remained a member of the cast on its climb from regional theater to Off-Broadway and finally to Broadway. She won a Drama Desk award for Best Ensemble for that show.

She performed on Broadway in "South Pacific," "9 to 5" and, most recently, "Priscilla Queen of the Desert." During her stint with "Priscilla," Howard and fellow cast members performed a song from the show during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. She also performed in a national touring company of "Les Misérables" and in regional performances of "Legally Blonde" and "The Sound of Music."

In 2009, Howard was a guest star on the ABC show, "Ugly Betty," and last year, she released her debut CD, "Songs of Innocence & Experience: The Music of William Finn." In her spare time, Howard teaches an audition technique class in New York City and private voice lessons.

>> For Howard, working on-set with *Twilight*'s male leads, Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner, was a memorable experience.

"I was never in a scene with (Lautner) where he had his shirt off. Sorry," she says, adding that "he is a cutie though. And very nice."

While reading the *Twilight* series, she says she became a fan of Edward, Pattinson's character.

"I wavered for a while but I'd ultimately have to go with Edward," she says. "There is just something very seductive about him."

To prepare for the shooting of "Breaking Dawn Part 2," Howard says it took 45 minutes to get into makeup.

"It wasn't complex or anything, but the makeup artists really took their time and tried to make us look really good. Then, it took at least another hour to get my wig on," she says. "I know, it seems crazy, right? But the wig is so perfectly fitted to my head that they had to get my hair really flat to get it on. It really looked like it was my own hair! It was a gorgeous wig."



Howard says one of the hardest parts about being transformed into a vampire was wearing colored contact lenses. She had never worn them before, and the lenses used in "Breaking Dawn Part 2" were larger than normal and very uncomfortable.

"Oh, and vampires also don't fidget, at least in these movies," she says. "It was challenging to stay so still. (Vampires) are very deliberate with their movements."

Speaking of movements, Howard said learning the choreography for the movie's fight scenes was similar to learning the choreography for all the musicals she's been in.

"I guess all my years of dancing in plays at Firestone really paid off," she says.

Although some *Twilight* bloggers wanted superstars like Julia Roberts or Uma Thurman to be cast in the role of Siobhan, the directors gave the part to Howard — a new face in Hollywood.

"To be honest, I was just as surprised that an unknown like me got the role. But, if you've read the books, I fit the description of the character to a T," she says. "She's supposed to be beautiful and physically imposing — tall, large, grand. I'm glad they stayed true to the character that Stephenie Meyer created."

Most recently, Howard and her fellow coven-mates, actors Marlane Barnes and Patrick Brennan, walked the red carpet at the mid-July Comic-Con convention in San Diego, Calif. There, she was interviewed by Fandango and participated in a photo shoot for *Entertainment Weekly* magazine.

"The *Twilight* mania has definitely kicked in. I've never been a part of something where I've had fans before they ever saw me perform," she says. "The fans love the characters in these books so much, and they're excited just to see them. I hope all the new vampires live up to their expectations!"

"Comic-Con was great. People came from all over the country and camped out for days just to get good seats at the *Twilight* panel. They're pretty amazing. We surprised them the night before and walked through the crowd. We signed autographs and took pictures; it was great meeting so many fans. A couple of them actually knew my Broadway work, which was cool."

>> Today, Howard lives in New Jersey with her husband, Matteo, and 2-year-old son, Leo. Her parents, Phil and Laura Howard, still live in Akron and think it's cool that their daughter had the opportunity to make this movie.

So what's next for this talented performer?

"I'm working on a new show called 'It Shoulda Been You,' directed by David Hyde Pierce and starring Tyne Daley, that will hopefully go to Broadway next year," she says. "I'll let you know if it does!"

Just make sure to mention your Akron roots in your Tony acceptance speech ... Ok, Lisa?

Comments?

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