



DREA DE MATTEO **Bad Girl**

Fans of *The Sopranos* know her as Adriana La Cerva, the big-haired, scantily clad FBI informant whose heart is bigger than her brain. Fashionistas know her as the co-owner of NYC's über-hip downtown boutique Filth Mart. She's Drea De Matteo, and she's out to prove that she's neither the Jersey girl she plays on the hit show nor the rock 'n' roll wild child she's often portrayed as. Who is she, then? A&F sent our own informant, Sean T. Collins, to find out.

You're on the best show in television history. Yes, I am.

How does that feel? Great! It's a weird feeling at this point. It doesn't feel real. It felt more real in the beginning, but now it's kinda like, "How did this happen?" I'm used to it, which is more shocking to me than the initial shock of it being so huge. The fact that I'm used to it, and that it's normal now, and this is what my life is and I get to have the privilege of being part of history—I mean, that freaks me out.

At first you weren't intended to be a regular character. Yeah. I was originally in the pilot, but I wasn't an Italian character; I wasn't "one of the girls." I was playing a hostess in this restaurant, some stupid thing. No one knew what the show was going to be. Then David Chase called me back for a one time part as Christopher's girlfriend—but they just kept writing me. If they had been casting for that role as a series regular, I would have never gotten that part. They would have gone to someone who was a little more established. I haven't been acting that long. I was in film school originally for six years. I really wanted to act, but I was way too petrified. So I took a lot of acting classes as a director, so no one could judge me as an actor. I must have started to really take acting seriously a year or two before *The Sopranos*. But it felt like forever. I felt like I had been grinding the pavement for years before I became an actor.

You took on a really central role this season. Does that change how you feel about the show or your character? It makes me a little more judgmental of the show, because I'm nervous that if something doesn't work it's my fault. But I love my character so much. I just can't believe that that's a part of me sometimes, and I can't believe that I love her, because I hate myself most of the time.

You've talked about how fans think that you are her. What's more shocking is people in the industry. These are people who are casting movies and producing films, and I don't understand how they can't figure out that I'm acting. In the beginning I played up the fact that I was born in Queens, because I didn't want anybody to say, "Her accent is not good"—I wanted everybody to think I was her out of respect for the character and the show, because the show is so great. I did myself a disservice, because now everyone thinks I'm either Adriana or some wild rock-and-rolling freak. That's definitely not who I am. I'm quiet, and I like dogs, and I like to smoke my cigarettes because I am shy.

Yet you and Michael Imperioli hosted VH1's Big in 2002 Awards. That would have been Adriana's *dream!* (laughs) I can't believe I said yes. What upsets me more than anything else is that I have to wear certain types of clothing. Someone has to dress me. Why? Why can't I just go out in baggy

sweatpants and sneakers? But they would hate me, they would fire me the day of. I'd say, "You know what? This is how it's going to work out: I'm going to come out in my fucking pajamas and you are all going to fucking just deal with it. How does that grab you? Michael is gonna come out in his robe, and I am going to smoke onstage. And if you don't fucking like it, get another host."

And now you're a sex symbol. Am I?

According to every guy I know, you are. God! I feel more like a guy most of the time. I mean, I know my character is sort of a sexy lady in those clothes, but I don't feel like that in my real life. I'm a mess with all my dogs, picking up shit left and right. It's not so sexy.

To my Italian friends in particular, it's like you're Sofia Loren. Wow! That's somebody I would be starstruck by. I love Sofia Loren. **But I'm not a kid anymore, so if I keep banking on my tits and ass I'm not going to get too far in my career, I guess.** I won't do *Maxim*. I think because I'm so naked so much on *The Sopranos* in those little outfits, I feel I don't need to do it when I'm done, you know? I think I got myself burnt out on stuffing my bra. Everyone thought I got implants this year on the show. Everyone is like, "Oh God! Drea got her tits done! Oh my God!" You know how I undressed before I shot up in that one scene? I should have taken the cutlets out of my bra before I shot up. That would have been a good look for the show.

What did you make of the Columbus Day parade controversy? That's ridiculous. I like being Italian, and I'm still very proud to be Italian, but who wants to watch *The Cosby Show Italian Style*? We have *Everybody Loves Raymond*, we have *King of Queens*. Leave us the fuck alone. Our show is more interesting, and it's deep. These Italians who don't like it don't realize how deep it is. They are just so narrow-minded and stupid, and they make us look stupid. It's ridiculous, because the show is just so above anything that's ever been even on movie screens. You should be proud that this came out of our heritage. It's so smart and it's so well done. So fuck 'em.

I've got to wonder: How far in advance do you guys learn about what's going to happen? About getting killed? (laughs) Let's see. Vinny Pastore knew he was going to get killed at midseason, or at the beginning of the season. Joey Pants knew for two years, but I think they kept him around longer than they were going to. They'll find out a month before or the year before. You never know....

Drea De Matteo photographed by John Scott.