



Season of the Witch Britt Robertson enters “the Secret circle”

BY JON STEELY, PHOTOGRAPHY FRANK OCKENFELS 3/ THE CW

September 2011

While other 21-year olds are celebrating their right to legally get into a nightclub, Britt Robertson has already lived many different lives in front of TV and film audiences. She’s been Alan Thicke’s granddaughter in the ABC Family TV movie “Growing Pains: Return of the Seavers” (2004), worked with Jeremy Piven, Cheryl Hines and Garry Marshall in Keeping Up With The Steins (2006), been Steve Carell’s lovestruck, drama queen daughter in Peter Hedges’ Dan in Real Life (2007), played the enigmatic Samantha Saxton on the CBS period drama “Swingtown” (2008), starred as a foster kid who reunites with her biological parents on The CW’s critically acclaimed series “Life Unexpected” (2010-2011) and was a victim of Ghostface in Wes Craven’s 2011 slasher hit Scream 4.

This fall, the home schooled South Carolina native is set to star as an orphaned California teen who moves to a small Pacific Northwestern town, discovers she hails from a family of witches and finds her new high school friends waiting to enlist her in their witch coven on “The Secret Circle,” The CW’s highly anticipated supernatural drama, executive produced by Kevin Williamson (Scream, I Know What You Did Last Summer, “Dawson’s Creek”, “The Vampire Diaries”).

Though young Hollywood is known for excessive behavior and fast lane decadence, Britt Robertson stands on stable ground. She is close with her family. She still hangs out with friends from middle school. She stays focused on her work, values the art of good storytelling, and is deeply appreciative of her position in the entertainment industry.

During a break from shooting scenes for “The Secret Circle,” the down-to-earth actor takes time with Venice to discuss getting called by Kevin Williamson, schooled by Steve Carell and what it takes to play a teenage witch.

Venice: What drew you to acting?

Britt Robertson:

I’ve always loved the idea of using my imagination and exploring that part of my mind. I love creating characters and being able to free myself via another person. I love storytelling and the whole creative side of the industry. I’ve always been fascinated by it.

Who are the actors that have influenced you?

My favorite show growing up was “The Golden Girls” (1985-1992). I used to watch the re-runs. I absolutely loved Bea Arthur. I loved every character on the show. As far as movies actors go, I love Jeff Bridges, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Natalie Portman and, of course, Meryl Streep. She is so phenomenal in everything she does. Such an inspiration. I can only imagine what it would be like to work with her!

When did you start acting?

I started out doing a lot of community theater in South Carolina when I was very young. My mom saw how much I was interested in acting and introduced me to an agent who got me into an acting convention. I went to meet with a few of the agents who flew in for the convention. One of them happened to be from L.A. and she advised me to come out for pilot season, so I did. And it all developed from there.

When you were twelve, your grandmother started shuttling you from South Carolina to Los Angeles for auditions and you started getting work in film and TV. At what point did you realize that acting was definitely going to be your profession and livelihood? When did you know there was no turning back?

When I booked Dan in Real Life with Steve Carell. That was the point where I felt like I was a professional actor and could take the work seriously in terms of making it my career. That was the defining moment.

Steve Carell is such an incredible talent. An amazing force in comedy and improv. What did you learn working with him?

I learned so much. I really grew up on the set of Dan in Real Life. Steve has such an amazing comedic background. He’s so well trained in the art of improv and comedy. I learned a lot from him about the basics of comedy. I’ve taken acting classes, but I had no formal training in comedy or anything specifically geared towards comedic timing. Working with Steve was a great lesson in that style of acting. He’s a phenomenal person to work with. He’s a phenomenal actor, even aside from the comedic aspect. He can do anything. And he’s a real gentleman. So friendly. A real nice guy.

You definitely created a buzz about the quality of your work by playing Lux Cassidy on “Life Unexpected” on The CW. How did that lead to your booking “The Secret Circle?”

I had a previous relationship with The CW from working on “Life Unexpected” for two years and they sent me the script for “The Secret Circle” and said that Kevin Williamson had called and asked about my availability. I read the script and immediately fell in love with it. I met with Kevin Williamson and the other producers the next morning and they asked me to come in and test for the role in front of the network that night, which I did. Right after the audition, the network and the studio told me that I had the gig!

Did you have any interest in the subject of witchcraft or the supernatural prior to getting cast in “The Secret Circle?” Were you a fan of the L.J. Smith novels the show is based on?

I was not familiar with the books prior to the audition. I was aware of Kevin Williamson and his career and I was definitely interested in the work that he had done in the supernatural genre. I was looking for a role that would be different from what I’d

done before. Genre television was something that was interesting to me because it's so well received. I'd never worked in the supernatural genre before and I thought it would be fun and another way to grow as an actress.

Your character, Cassie Blake, is a sixteen-year old girl who loses her mom, moves to a new town, learns that she is a witch and is peer pressured to join a coven. How did you prepare to play a teenage witch?

My character finds out she's a witch along with the audience, so I didn't do a lot of research on the subject matter because it really wouldn't have made sense for me. She's had no experience with witchcraft and has no knowledge of it, so, for the pilot, I wanted to experience all of that stubbornness and resistance to being a witch along with her. Of course, I read the books. And I watched a lot of the old television witchcraft shows so I could gauge what that world is like from a television audience standpoint. I wanted to see how an audience receives these characters.

What TV shows did you watch? "Bewitched" (1964-1972), "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch" (1996-2003), "Charmed" (1998-2006). I wanted to see and understand what other people have already done with that subject matter from watching all the television series that came before "The Secret Circle."

You have a very busy shooting schedule and very little free time. What do you enjoy doing when you finally get a break?

Simple things. Game nights with my friends. I love to go to the beach. I love the ocean. Surfing. I love the water in general. Just normal, chill things. Going to movies.

What are some of your favorite movies? The ones you watch over and over?

Pretty Woman (1990) is one of my favorite movies. All the Julia Roberts movies from the nineties. Love her! I thought Garden State (2004) was such a cool film and I loved Natalie Portman in it. Steel Magnolias (1989). As for dark and weird movies, I really like A Clockwork Orange (1971). I watched it for the first time when I was sixteen and I've been a huge Stanley Kubrick fan ever since. I thought it was so fascinating, so well done, though it's a strange movie for a sixteen year old to enjoy. [laughs]

Is the Hollywood club scene something that interests you?

Not really. I haven't had much experience with that. [laughs] I was working on a film when I turned twenty-one, so I didn't have a lot of time to go clubbing. I have friends who play music at certain clubs and bars around town, so I've been to a few places just to hear friends play, but I don't try to make it a regular habit. It's not something I love doing.

What do you think an audience is going to get from following Cassie Blake's journey on "The Secret Circle?"

Our show is a great vehicle for those who want to come home, escape from their world for a little while and jump into a show about real people experiencing extraordinary things. Real people doing fun and exciting things that you'd never be able to experience in real life. Fun and exciting stories. Magic. ☐

"The Secret Circle" premieres Thursday, September 15th at 9pm on The CW.