

Grace Gealey
star of *Empire*
opens up about
her career,
and her
personal
life.



WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS GOING ON RIGHT NOW WITH THE POPULARITY OF *EMPIRE*?

(Laughs) This has been one of the most popular questions but I'm in a state of fullness. This is a huge deal for me and my career. All of us have worked really hard on this project and we're just ready to share it with everyone because we put in a lot of blood, sweat and tears. I'm definitely in a state of gratitude and as of right now I'm just pacing it day by day.

ARE THERE ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN REAL LIFE AND YOUR ON-SCREEN CHARACTER?

We're definitely different personality wise but in terms of attributes we're both independent black women in today's world. My character is also elegant, classy and refined which I like to consider myself to be as well. In terms of differences, my character is wealthy, me on the other hand I'm an island girl. I grew up climbing trees, picking fruit and running around barefoot. She's a silent storm and chooses her words very wisely. You know growing up in the Caribbean culture it's extremely different because if you have something to say you just say it like there is no holding back.

OVERALL HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THIS ROLE?

I play both the girlfriend as well as the head of A&R for the record label. Playing the girlfriend I would say comes from life experiences. To be a black woman in the role as the head of A&R which is usually dominated by men I had to do specific research. So my publicist and I got together and worked with another female executive who is actually the head of A&R at a label. We spent a lot of time together and that in itself was very helpful because I was able to reap the benefits of learning on a personal level from a first hand account. I also did extensive online research and studied a lot.

SWITCHING GEARS, IF YOU WEREN'T AN ACTRESS WHAT OTHER CAREER PATH WOULD YOU HAVE CHOSEN?

Oooh, that's a very good question.

My parents are both deaf so I'm considered what you would call CODA, Child of Deaf Adults;

because of this I'm very passionate about the deaf community. If I weren't pursuing acting I would want to be a professional interpreter.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM YOU IN THE FUTURE? DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL PROJECTS IN THE WORKS THAT YOU CAN SPEAK ON?

Well, of course *Empire* is my primary focus for sure but I plan on moving out to L.A. and with the exposure gained from the upcoming season of *Empire* I'm hoping to use that as I audition for films but you'll just have to wait and see.

BY DONTAIRA TERRELL

