

STAR VIEW

By FRANK LOVECE

'Anything but Love' star

Jamie Lee Curtis puts on a rosy face

Does she or doesn't she? Only her producer knows for sure.

We're talking power on the set and whether or how much Jamie Lee Curtis has on "Anything but Love," her ABC-TV sitcom co-starring Richard Lewis.

In that wonderful Hollywood way, fact and fancy have again collided.

"I have no say about anything on the show," Curtis claims. "I bring no producorial weight."

Yet when its creator, Wendy Kout, was compelled to quit soon after the series began in 1989, Curtis told reporter Joanna Elm: "I'm not a saint here. When I didn't like something or the direction the show was going, I said so."

Curtis said she even "worked to get the rest of the cast in order, and to get the sets looking right, and to get the scripts funny and smart."

A TV Guide article in October 1989 described an impassioned debate between Curtis and a director over how a scene should be played.

Despite her own words, (Curtis continues to assert

today: "Not one cast addition has ever been run by me. I don't have any creative input on the show at all. My biggest input is staying with the show when I could have walked away from it."

That much, at any rate, is true.

"Anything but Love" is a romantic pas de deux between Curtis' Hannah Miller and Lewis' Marty Gold, fellow

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writers for the fictional Chicago Weekly magazine. The series stands or falls on the interplay between the two.

It's generally witty and insightful, which makes most episodes as delightful as anything on television.

Yet Curtis the 32-year-old daughter of film stars Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis, has come through the experience scarred. Kout and supervising producer Dennis Koenig left the show after the first six episodes, following protracted disagreements with not only Curtis and Lewis but also with ABC and Twentieth Century-Fox executives. And Curtis feared being tagged a Dragon Lady. It may have made her selectively forgetful of unpleasant facts.

But that's Hollywood, a world Curtis has known since

childhood: Her godfather is Lew Wasserman, the legendary czar of MCA and the industry's resident Yoda. Yet father Tony Curtis left the household after 10 years of marriage when Jamie Lee was still a toddler. Mother Janet Leigh, a screen legend for such films as "Psycho" and "The Manchurian Candidate," married stockbroker Bob Brandt when Jamie was 3-1/2 and her sister Kelly was 6.

Curtis grew up both in and out of the family business.

She broke in to TV with a line on "Quincy." An episode of "Columbo" ("The Bye-Bye Sky High I.Q. Murder Case," May 22, 1977) got her noticed when star Peter Falk brought a clip with her in it to screen on Johnny Carson.

"I was a waitress in a restaurant," Curtis happily recalls, "and Columbo was sitting at a table eating a donut he brought in. And I say, 'Sorry, sir, you can't eat that here, you have to order something.' So I take this donut, give him the menu, he has this scene, and I go back and say, 'Have you decided?' and he says, 'Ah, ah, ah ... I'll have a donut.'"

Curtis went on to do "Emergency," "Buck Rogers" and "The Nancy Drew Mysteries." She played Lt. Barbara Duncan on the first year of ABC's "Operation Petticoat" (1977-79), which was based on the 1959 movie co-starring her dad and Cary Grant. Then she starred in John Carpenter's low budget hit "Halloween" (1978), thus beginning her scream-queen period of horror films ("The Fog," "Prom Night," "Terror Train" and, of course, "Halloween II").

Next producers decided to capitalize on her figure, giving her highly visible sexpot roles



Jamie Lee Curtis

in the TV movie "Death of a Centerfold: The Dorothy Stratten Story" (1981) and the feature films "Trading Places" (1983) and "Perfect" (1985). Yet, despite her voluptuous charms shown off in a diaphanous slip for an Esquire magazine feature around that time the sexy image has, she insists, "very little to do with me."

"I was never particularly pretty," Curtis remembers. "All these early TV things when I was 19, 20 I looked like I was 35! I was always with a lot of hair, a lot of makeup I was generic woman! Ageless, styleless, kinda boring. You look at Wynona Rider she looks 17. I never looked 17," she says, with a sort of hard sadness.

Still any regrets are past tense. Though her series finishes its nine-episode order in mid-April, then awaits word of renewal, Curtis looks forward.

She's filming "My Girl" with Dan Aykroyd, and inspired by her and husband Chris Guest's adoptive 4-year-old, Annie she has written a children's book, "When I Was Little," to be published by Harper Collins.

"The angels have been blessing me, all through my career," Curtis reflects. And that's the truth.

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