
Changing Her Colors

Forget the schmaltzy, feel-good fare: Amber Tamblyn's tackling some tough stuff in her latest series. By Sona Charaipotra

AMBER TAMBLYN is shedding her PG past. Until now, she's been busy talking to God (on CBS's *Joan of Arcadia*) and sticking by her BFFs (in the *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* movies). But the 25-year-old is finally ready to tackle some adult material. We're not talking about anything *too* crazy, mind you. For instance, you won't be seeing Tamblyn, who is a bit of a brainiac and reads *The Economist* on a regular basis, in any glossy men's magazines anytime soon. "Not until *Maxim* puts out the 100 Hottest Brains issue," Tamblyn retorts.

But in her latest role, on ABC's *The Unusuals*, Tamblyn is a bit gruffer than in her previous outings. The dramedy, which premieres this month, stars Tamblyn as a young homicide detective named Casey Shraeger, who's estranged from her wealthy family. "[Casey is] a little cynical, a bit of a smart aleck," Tamblyn says. "But she's actually much more similar to me than any other character I've played before."

Just how similar? Tamblyn claims her own cocktail preferences helped convince producer Noah Hawley that she was right for the role of the hard-drinking detective. "Somehow, my love of Maker's Mark whiskey came up during our conversation," she says with a laugh, "and he was like, 'Oh my God, she's perfect for this part.'" (What audiences see her



Costars Amber Tamblyn and Jeremy Renner in *The Unusuals*

drinking on-screen, however, is nothing more than apple juice. "I'm drunk on sugar," she jokes.)

But it took more than just a common taste in libations for Tamblyn to slip into Shraeger's shoes. To prepare for the role, she spent time with police officers at Midtown Manhattan's 18th Precinct. Now, when she's not filming the show — or working on other projects, such as her upcoming film noir with Michael Douglas, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* — Tamblyn's often at her new apartment in Manhattan's Lower East Side, where the show is filmed, throwing organic dinner parties or writing poetry. In fact, the actress is at work on her second book of poems, titled *Bang Ditto*, out this fall from Manic D. Press, and has even cofounded a nonprofit called Write Now Poetry Society, which raises funds for quality poetry programming.

"People always think [writing poetry is] some kind of weird actor thing, but I've been writing longer than I've been acting," she says. And the Venice Beach, California, native has been acting for quite a while: Her first big role was on *General Hospital*, which she began when she was just 11 years old. (She remained on the show for six years.) By age 21, she'd picked up an Emmy nomination for her saintly turn on *Joan of Arcadia*. And just as her acting has begun to take a more grown-up turn, so, too, has her poetry. "[Right now,] I'm working on this poem about Nancy Spungen, the Nancy part of Sid and Nancy," she says. "It's about obsession and lonely women."

Iambic pentameter about one of music's most controversial couples? Adult content like that earns her at least a PG-13.