



If you attended the 2023 Industry Fair this year, you may remember our Keynote Speaker, Laurel Harris. Laurel is the owner of Laurel Leaf Productions and a long time supporter of WIFMCO. We are thrilled to be able to spotlight Laurel and tell you all about her production, 47. Laurel Harris is an award-winning writer-producer and actress whose extensive acting credits include ABC, NBC, CW, Disney.

What is your field of focus?

Producing / Acting:

Laurel is an award-winning producer and actress best known as Willem Dafoe's wife in the screen adaptation of Dean Koontz's best selling novel, "Odd Thomas," and loved by young girls worldwide for the American Girl film, "Saige Paints the Sky," opposite Jane Seymour. Her extensive TV Credits include ABC, NBC, CW and Disney, and feature films with STARZ, Paramount and Fusion. As a producer, Laurel has garnered an EMMY from the Heartland Chapter as well as multiple NATOA and TELLY Awards.

Tell us about your journey thus far in your career.

The adventure begins when Laurel and a friend launched "Picture This Productions" in college. While they had little to no experience, they had a whole lot of enthusiasm and shopped their new idea across their small town of Colorado Springs. See more at link: <https://laurelleafproductions.com/our-story/>

What was your inspiration to get into this industry?

I'm often asked the question, "When did you start acting?" My mother would say from age two, and I wouldn't doubt it!

Early on, I can recall leaping from the pink loveseat in our living room with utter abandon, fake microphone in hand, and singing at the top of my lungs every Saturday morning when "American Bandstand" hit the airwaves. Oh, how I longed to be dancing and singing my heart out along with the other greats on that stage!

Until then, my poor younger brother and his friends had to serve as my dance partners while I choreographed elaborate performances, dressed them in homespun outfits, and charged a pittance at neighborhood 'theaters in the round.' (I.e., any friend's basement or living room that would have us.)

Do you have any mentors you want to mention??

In my hometown, that would be Peter D'Anello, my former agent. He was instrumental in helping me launch my acting career in Colorado and I've such fond memories of his immense help and guidance. In Los Angeles, I've been really inspired by Wendy Davis and Mary Lou Belli, for acting and filmmaking, respectively. They're power house women and I aspire to be more like them in my career.

Tell us about your favorite project you've worked on?

It's so hard to say I have a favorite, but one that always comes to mind is working with Willem Dafoe in a film called, "Odd Thomas." At the time I was so nervous and excited - and - concerned about all of the external parts of this business... like making sure that I showed up the way I thought I was "supposed to," that I lost sight of the bigger picture, so to speak. One day, Willem and I were taking a break in between set-ups. It was a pretty warm day, and we were outside in an open 'bull pen' area with security surrounding us. Between extras and cast and crew, there were literally hundreds of people around us to film a really large crowd scene. People weren't supposed to access us, but they would still line up to get Willem's autograph. (I always wondered if he created a sort of understanding with the security team that it was OK with him that people approach us? I don't know, but the fans kept lining up.) It was a fairly long day, and he could have had several excuses to take a break, or go hang out in his trailer, but instead, he remained outside, warmly receiving each person that approached him. One very disheveled person - who some might immediately dismiss - came up and insisted on telling Willem about how much his work meant to him - at great length. Well, I've never seen anyone so gracious! Willem not only offered this person his autograph, but he sat and talked with him for a long while; treating them as if they were all that mattered in that moment.

I was in awe. Here was this mega-star regarding each person that approached him with such kindness and genuine appreciation. When I asked him about it later, he said - and not verbatim - 'I will always treat them with respect. Those people are the reason I'm here today!' That rocked my world. In an instant, I realized that the facade I thought I needed to create for myself to work at a higher level, with so many 'heavy hitters,' came crashing down. I realized we actors and creatives need to operate on a different level to create and enjoy long-term successes. PERIOD. Then...I got more curious about who was approaching their career in a humble, authentic, and gracious way, and how I might be able to do it even better - for myself and others. This also led me to realize that more "conscious" living in our acting / creative world leads to much more peace and happiness all along our LIFE journey...which ultimately leads to a longer and more joyful career. In other words, it's all intertwined!

What are your hopes for the film, television, and media scene in Colorado?

This is such an exciting time in our industry and for Colorado. I look forward to more people realizing the power of the entertainment industry here to create more jobs and opportunities for all of us. This state has SO much to offer and if we want to compete, we need the support of local government. The people have spoken. The time is now!

Any advice/wisdom to fellow actors, filmmakers?

I've seen a lot of people come and go in this business and a lot of them get completely burned out, discouraged, and even drop out because it took so much from them - time, money, and more importantly, parts of their soul, in a way. A solid mindset, community, and belief system are KEY to enjoying this journey. Kindness and consideration also go a really long way. Find the people who inspire you - and then - inspire yourself.

Tell us something unique about you

Since life often gets super busy, I tend to eat the same foods over and over again out of convenience. (Aka, There's sadly little room for creativity and time in the kitchen these days.) My latest obsession? Almond butter smeared on tortillas with cacao nibs sprinkled in. Add a cup of creamy peppermint tea and I pretend I'm savoring something exotic! OK... can you tell I've been working too much lately?

Anything else you want to tell us?

I so appreciate this organization and am inspired that more women filmmakers are rising up to tell powerful stories. They need to be seen and heard, and I'm honored to follow in the footsteps of the greats that have gone before us. If people would like to learn more about my team and our projects, we'd be honored to have them join us on social. THANK YOU for the opportunity to share some of my story. It's been fun!

Laurel's Latest Project

"47" - a short film that's launching our production company, Laurel Leaf Productions. We're currently raising finishing funds for it, and so we can make an even bigger impact on the festival circuit next year. We'd love your support, and more can be found at:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/47themovie/47-a-short-film-about-infertility-and-stigma?ref=az3rnej&token=0991c2b2>

