

Kay Lenz Says She's a 'Working Actress'

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Kay Lenz, who calls herself a "working actress," draws inspiration from someone else in that category: Sally Field.

"When she won the Academy Award, Sally was asked why she would appear in 'Smoky and the Bandit' as well as 'Norma Rae,'" Miss Lenz said. "She didn't reply directly to the question, but she said, 'When you're an actress, you take the best of what comes your way.'"

The same with Kay Lenz. She made an impressive film debut as William Holden's young love in "Breezy," directed by Clint Eastwood. Three years elapsed before she appeared in another feature.

In the 10 years since "Breezy," Miss Lenz has made such films as "White Line Fever," with Jan-Michael Vincent; "The Great Scout and Cat House Thursday," with Lee Marvin;

and "The Passage," with Anthony Quinn.

She's also done a heavy load of television series, including "Ironsides," "Streets of San Francisco" and "Owen Marshall," and two specials that won her Emmys: Hallmark's "Lisa, Bright and Dark" and "Heart in Hiding."

She has worked, but . . .

"I like acting," she says. "It's the only thing I know how to do."

"The problem is that there is not a lot of 'Norma Raes,' 'Julias' and 'Breaking Points,'" she said. "There are many more roles for men, but on the other hand, there is also much more competition."

"Some people have what I call 'the two-hour face.' By that I mean they have the charisma and the appearance to sustain the audience's attention for the two-hour span of a feature movie. I'm hoping that I have a two-hour face."

Moviegoers can decide for themselves this spring with the release of Lorimar's "Fast-Walking," a crime drama produced and directed by James B. Harris. Miss Lenz plays an underworld figure who becomes involved in a plot to assassinate a militant (Robert Hooks) in a state prison. The plot leader, Tim McIntyre, enlists a hustling prison guard, Fast-Walking Miniver, played by James Woods — the psychopath of "The Onion Field."

"When I read for the part, I admitted, 'I'm surprised I'm here,'" Miss Lenz said. "I usually play victims — the receiver of someone else's aggression. At some point in the films I've done, I'm usually grabbed and shaken."

"'Fast-Walking' was entirely different," she said. "The woman is sexual. She smuggles cocaine. She rides motorcycles at 150 mph. Yet she is afraid to hold hands with a man."

The actress wasn't sure she could handle such a different role. She expressed her doubts to her husband, David Cassidy, who was once the heartthrob of "The Partridge Family."

She said that Cassidy told her: "I don't know if you can do it, either."

Said Miss Lenz: "He knew I was stubborn, and that would make me fight for the part. I fell for it hook, line and sinker."

"Fast-Walking" was filmed on location in July, 1980 at the now closed Montana State Prison. Production was completed in and around Los Angeles. The film got lost during a reshuffling of Lorimar Productions, and is now being released by the Pickman Film Corporation.