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## Pam Grier COLORADO COOL

The iconic actress has come a long way from her Denver upbringing, but still calls Colorado home.



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# Woman of interest

## Legendary actress Grier a mile-high success

Pam Grier has come a long way from her Denver upbringing, but she hasn't left her home state behind. Today, she is much more than an actress maintaining an iconic status worldwide – she is a proud Colorado resident actively involved in her community.



The tireless Grier is driven in her work ethic, as a glance at her incredible filmography will prove. In addition to film, she is currently starring in a major role on the Showtime Network's popular series "The L Word." Further, she is almost selfless in her devotion to helping others through various charities.

Most of all Pam Grier is a charming, well-informed, down-to-earth woman clearly loving life.

It's a good bet that many fans still associate Pam Grier with her lead characters that populate her action-packed cult films from the early '70s. These are smart, strong, sexy women with names like Coffy, Friday Foster and Foxy Brown. She's also known for her role as Jackie

Brown, from director Quentin Tarantino's film of the same name, which served as his loving tribute to Grier herself.

In reality, Pam Grier is a smart, strong and sexy woman. However, she's more comfortable at home in the natural beauty of Colorado than in the glitz world exemplified by her many film roles.

"A lot of people assume I live in L.A. or New York," she says. "I may film on location, but I always come home to Colorado after each project."

"Denver is a major part of my character. It's great to see all of the growth that's occurring here, but I love the open space and the mountains. It's what empowers you and teaches you to respect the elements and your environment. There's also really no point for me to leave. My family is here and I still have a lot of friends in town – many of whom helped raise me."

Today, Grier lives south of Denver on what she describes as a "ranchette," complete with animals and a barn.

"I'm very outdoorsy," she says. "I love sleeping on the patio with the fresh air and scent of pine. I really do love the land and love to go skiing – Breckenridge is my favorite – or fishing on the Platte or Roaring Fork for trout."

What's the real secret though, for an international celebrity living in Colorado? "Moisturizer!" she laughs.

### Talent evident early

She originally moved to Denver with her family while still in her infancy. She was raised in and around the city, attending Mitchell Elementary, Smiley Junior High and East High School during her formative years. Not the typical Hollywood ingenue, despite her striking beauty, she was wise beyond her years and studied dance, martial arts and piano to hone her talents. However, this was still in the era of segregation, and it was tough, especially when she left the military base (her father was in the

Air Force) or tried to get into certain schools to nurture her creativity.

"I was lucky enough, though, to have not only the generous support and teachings of my family and friends, but a number of excellent teachers, deacons and pastors of all colors and races that helped me out early on," she says. "I'm still very grateful to all of them."

She relates a heartbreak but touching story of her piano teacher, "a wonderful lady who was brave enough to come to our house to teach me when I wasn't admitted to the school because of the color of my skin."

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It's the idea of taking chances to help others, like her piano teacher did, that still clearly resonates with Grier.  
"We can always do better in everything we do," she says.

### Committed to charities

One need only look at her dedication to charities nationally like the Hip Hop For Humanity Concert or locally such as the Urban Farm. This is a 23-acre site near Stapleton that offers a program designed to help inner-city kids learn agriculture and environmentalism as a means to attain a full scholarship. Another Colorado organization, People and Animals Living Synergistically (PAALS) has Grier's strong support. This farm located on a beautiful Castle Rock ranch setting provides shelter and medical support for both animals and seniors in need – whether abused, disabled or unwanted.

Grier was also able to lend her support to the first-ever Martin Luther King Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the civil rights movement, at the recent National Western Stock Show. The event saw a capacity crowd enjoying the skills of top-notch athletes from around the country.

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"I do this, not to feel better about myself, but to see how we can fix where we're failing," says Grier. "I'm still teaching and trying to help. Even if we continue to do small things with a lot of love, we're helping. I hope volunteerism continues to grow everywhere."

"You need a balance in life," she adds. "On a personal level, I try to eat natural, healthy foods. Respect my surroundings. Enjoy my friends and family. And I think you should always have something fresh to bring to your relationships."

"Always be curious. We can all do better, right? It's important to keep learning about other cultures and people, and to keep teaching."

### "L Word" fame

Part of Grier's continued thirst for knowledge has come through in her recent role on "The L Word" – the popular Showtime series, now seen in 12 countries. The program follows the lives and relationships of a wide cast of characters – primarily a microcosm of the lesbian community – acting out stories often inspired by real lives and situations.

Grier's character, Kit Porter, is a recovering alcoholic who has faced her demons and come back on top in reviving a singing career. She becomes involved in what Grier describes as a "neo relationship."

"Kit is a straight woman who becomes involved with a person born a woman, but who later changed gender. Shocked by the revelation, Kit must decide whether to accept her lover for who they are, not what they are, because they want them in their life. Or does she cave in to what society deems is proper? It's really about the relationships, not the sex or the gender."

"I'm very pleased with the show," she states. "Like all of my work, it's good to be rewarded if you do well, but in the end you do it for the art. Not only is 'The L Word' teaching open mindedness involving elements of love, concern, community and compassion; it's presenting a voice that had not really been heard from before. Through the show, I'm learning about a world I'd never known before. I think a lot of viewers are as well, and this enlightenment and tolerance may reach a group of people that it may not have before. Through fan letters and public appearances I've really gained a better understanding too of just how broad the scope is, which is something all of us who work on the show are very proud."

### Staying busy

Up next in Pam Grier's busy schedule: she has been personally invited by Gloria Steinem to present an award at the Free To Be Me convention, May 25 in New York.

"This is a real honor that I was just so pleased to receive," she says. "In 1974, Gloria took a chance and had me as the first black woman on the cover of Ms. magazine, despite the hits she stood to take. I am continually in awe of this woman and all she has done for us."

Pam Grier helped unveil the new Hattie McDaniels stamp at the Martin Luther King Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo of Champions at the National Western Stock Show.

## PAM GRIER SELECT FILMOGRAPHY:

- "Beyond the Valley of the Dolls" (1970)
- "The Big Doll House" (1971)
- "Twilight People" (1972)
- "Hit Man" (1972)
- "Cool Breeze" (1972)
- "Black Mama, White Mama" (1972)
- "The Big Bird Cage" (1972)
- "Scream, Blacula, Scream!" (1973)
- "Coffy" (1973)
- "The Arena" (1973)
- "Foxy Brown" (1974)
- "Sheba Baby" (1975)
- "Friday Foster" (1975)
- "Bucktown" (1975)
- "Drum" (1976)
- "Greased Lightning" (1977)
- "Fort Apache, The Bronx" (1981)
- "Tough Enough" (1983)
- "Something Wicked This Way Comes" (1983)
- "Stand Alone" (1985)
- "Badge of the Assassin" (1985)
- "The Vindicator" (1986)
- "On the Edge" (1986)
- "The Allnighter" (1987)
- "Above the Law" (1988)
- "The Package" (1989)
- "Class of 1999" (1990)
- "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (1991)
- "A Mother's Right: The Elizabeth Morgan Story" (1992)
- "Posse" (1993)
- "Original Gangstas" (1996)
- "Escape from L.A." (1996)
- "Mars Attacks!" (1996)
- "Jackie Brown" (1997)
- "Woo" (1998)
- "Jawbreaker" (1999)
- "In Too Deep" (1999)
- "Holy Smoke" (1999)
- "Fortress 2" (1999)
- "Hayley Wagner, Star" (1999)
- "Snow Day" (2000)
- "Wilder" (2000)
- "3 A.M." (2001)
- "Love the Hard Way" (2001)
- "Ghosts of Mars" (2001)
- "Bones" (2001)
- "The Adventures of Pluto Nash" (2002)
- "Baby of the Family" (2002)
- "Back in the Day" (2005)

### LOCAL CHARITY WEBSITES:

- [www.paals1.org](http://www.paals1.org)
- [www.theurbanfarm.org](http://www.theurbanfarm.org)

In June, it's back to Vancouver, where "The L Word" begins shooting its fourth season.

"Canada's nice," says Grier. "But we work long, 19-hour days, so until then I'm going to take advantage of my time here in Colorado."

~ by Michael Behrenhausen