

NORTH YORK: Olivia Summers has drive

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Olivia Summers has appeared in a multitude of commercials, television shows and big budget movies, but you likely don't know it.

For the past four years, the North York native has earned her spot as one of Hollywood's top female stunt actors and precision drivers, having shot commercials for car companies Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, Jeep Liberty, Chrysler and Saturn.

Although stunt driving is her "thing", Summers also performs utility stunts, which don't involve cars, for television shows and movies.

"I used to want to be a dancer," Summers said in a phone interview from Los Angeles, where she has permanently lived for three years. "All my guy friends were stunt drivers and they told me I should try stunt driving because I would be good at it. My family has a cottage in Muskoka and my brothers and I would snowmobile race all the time."

Prior to deciding on her current career, the Northview Heights Secondary School graduate studied dance in Toronto and at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York City.

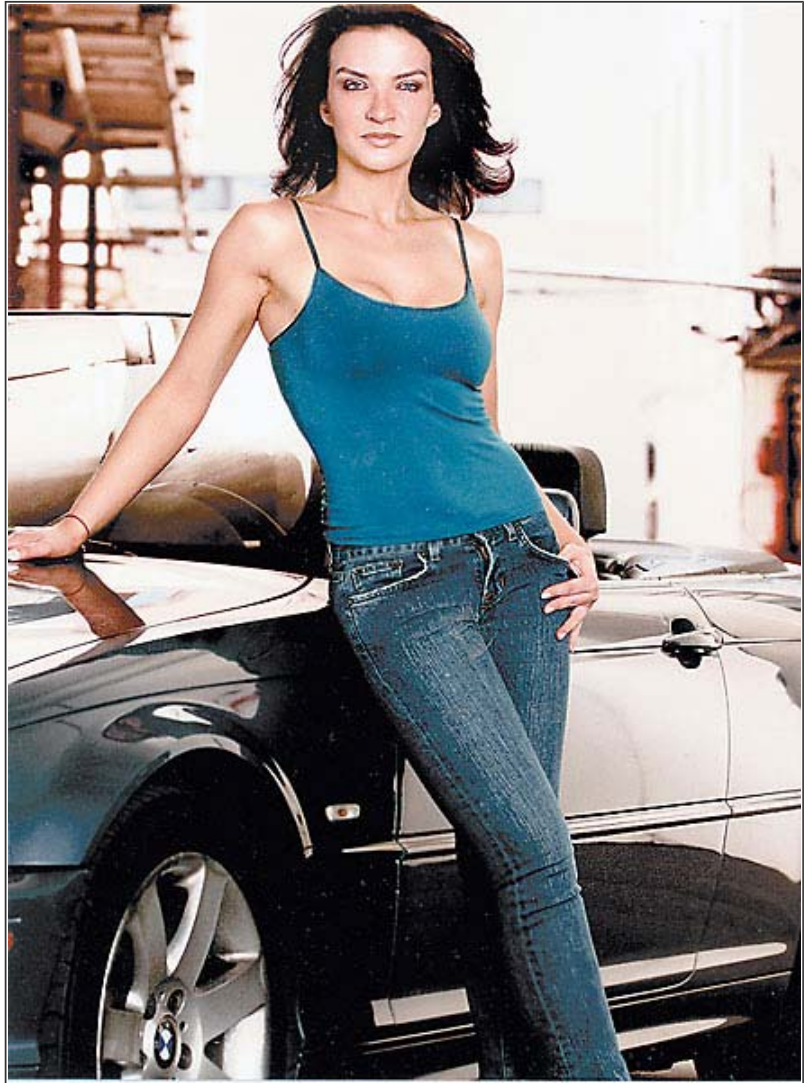
Summers then turned her focus to acting and relocated to Los Angeles to hone her skills. Her hard work paid off when she landed roles in *The Deep End of the Ocean*, *Stripping for Jesus* and *Back by Midnight*, Rodney Dangerfield's last film.

But her competitive drive was yearning for more so that's when Summers enrolled in stunt driving school.

"I do a lot of car commercials," said Summers, who doubles women in their early to mid-thirties. "I dub girls as the driver or passenger, it's a lot of hitting marks and sliding cars. It's very precise. There aren't a lot of women doing this."

A typical car commercial takes one to two days to film and can involve 15 sliding takes, Summers said, adding she's received some bumps and bruises, but no major injuries.

"The scariest time was on the set of *Transformers*," she said. "I was hit by a car by accident. I was supposed to run between two cars at an intersection and when I ran across the street I knew the timing was off. I saw the



NORTH YORK: Olivia Summers has drive. North York native Olivia Summers is considered one of Hollywood's top female stunt actors and precision drivers.

car coming toward me and I knew I was going to get hit. I jumped onto the hood to avoid the impact and I rolled off the car. I was fine. I'll do utility stunts but I mainly do cars. It's my thing."

Summers acknowledges that stunt driving is a male-dominated career but rarely feels like an outcast.

"For the most part everyone welcomes me on set," she said. "Occasionally I felt the whole 'Why is this chick on set driving?' thing. I just want to be a great driver, not a great female driver."

And not everyone has the same reaction when Summers divulges her line of work.

"Girls think it's really cool," she said. "Guys think it's cool until we go on a date. They either want me to drive - and I go the speed limit - or they want to drive really fast to show off but that scares me because they have no car control."

Car control was something Summers learned at the four racing schools she attended, including Bobby Ore Motorsports in Florida, where she assists in the beginner class.

"You go through cones, do 180s, 90 in a box, reverse 180s," Summers said. "You sit in a car for eight hours doing it over and over again. I crammed in all the schools I went to in a year."

The stunt industry involves a lot of trust and Summers refuses to work with people she doesn't know well, especially if they are behind the wheel.

"I do get nervous before a big hit," she admits. "One time I was the passenger in a convertible and we had to crash through a sign and into a vineyard. I started to get panicky beforehand, thinking what if we miss, what if we get decapitated. My heart was racing but after the crash I wish I could have done it again."

Summers has a lengthy resume, including stunt work for 24, The O.C., CSI Miami and Ocean's 13.

So is there a specific gig she's hoping to land?

"Iron Man 2," she said. "I'm going to try to get into that. But I don't think there are many girls in that movie."

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