

wheelspin



NEED FOR SPEED

Stuntwoman Olivia Summers on driving off cliffs, into walls—and getting manicures **BY CHRIS POWELL**

Olivia Summers has executed a reverse 180-degree skid on the set of *Bridesmaids*, been accidentally hit by a car on the set of *Transformers* and been “killed” 15 different ways on the set of *The Young and the Restless*.

But it was while shooting a commercial for Bing.com, of all things, that the Toronto native had the most harrowing experience of her career as a professional stunt driver/stuntwoman. Summers was a passenger in a 1966 Ford Thunderbird when the accelerator stuck, sending more than two tons of Detroit steel rocketing toward the edge of a cliff at Utah’s Dead Horse Point. Disaster was averted when the quick-thinking driver pulled the keys out of the ignition.

“That was one of the scariest moments I’ve had,” says Summers. “I honestly thought we were going off the cliff.”

When she left Toronto for New York’s Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, there were few indications Summers would one day spend her workday being repeatedly rear-ended or driving into a wall for the Fox Television drama *24*.

It was her dance training that ultimately landed her roles in music videos, but a childhood spent testing the capabilities of snowmobiles, boats and jet skis at her parents’ Muskoka cottage had instilled in her a love of speed that she simply couldn’t shake.

“I’ve always had that sort of speed freak in me,” she says. “It’s confusing to some people because I’m very girly; I like to go shopping, I love manicures and getting my hair done. But I also like getting dirty. I love the smell of fuel more than I love perfume.”

While Summers has earned a reputation as a go-to driver for commercials, television shows and movies, she is increasingly looking to incorporate speaking parts into her repertoire. She had a role alongside Michelle Pfeiffer in 1999’s *The Deep End of the Ocean* and last year landed a small recurring part in the hit Showcase series *Weeds*.

“I just love the word ‘action!’ so I’m happy no matter what,” says Summers.