

#### **'DEBBIE MACOMBER'S MRS. MIRACLE'**

#### **CAST BIOS**

**DORIS ROBERTS (Emily Merkle)** – Doris Roberts knew she would become a professional actress when she made her debut at the age of six, portraying a potato in a school play. Now, nine years as Marie Barone on "Everybody Loves Raymond" have brought her international accolades as the most popular comedic actress in television. Roberts has starred in two comedies and a horror/adventure blockbuster for Twentieth Century Fox, another for Miramax and two heavy dramas for Hallmark Channel, as well as a special segment of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" written especially for her.

Roberts, who boasts four Emmy<sup>®</sup> Awards for "Raymond" alone and a fifth for a dramatic portrayal as a victim of homelessness on "St. Elsewhere," has continued her long career of diverse performances by co-starring as Ashley Tisdale's grandmother in "Aliens in the Attic." Earlier, she jumped into the title role of the Fox comedy "Grandma's Boy," and then starred opposite Garry Marshall in Miramax's "Keeping Up With the Steins." In between, Roberts won critical acclaim in the "Privilege" special of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" for NBC and the Hallmark Channel Original Movie "Our House."

Roberts, whose pre-"Raymond" series and specials on television, countless features, and 30 years on Broadway made her one of the most beloved performers in entertainment, is no awards newcomer. In addition to five Emmys, she has been recognized three times as Best Television Actress by the National Viewers for Quality Television. In 2001 alone, she was selected by the prestigious American Film Institute as one of five actresses of the year, won the 2001 TV Guide Award, the 2000 Beautiful People Award and was named Best Actress in a Comedy at the American Comedy and Los Angeles Weekly Awards for her stage performance in 24 Hours. In March 2003, Roberts was immortalized with her own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and in April of that year, St. Martin's Press published her memoirs, *Are You Hungry, Dear?*, which became an immediate best seller.

Roberts made her Broadway debut in 1955 in William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*. The following year, she was the understudy to one of the great ladies of the American stage, Shirley Booth, in *Desk Set*. She then joined the famed Actors Studio, where her peers were also to become stars, among them Marilyn Monroe, Kim Stanley and Maureen Stapleton.

New York theater continued to beckon Roberts, who appeared both on and off Broadway in numerous successful productions, including *It's Only a Play, Desk Set, The American Dream, The Death of Bessie Smith, The Office, Marathon 33, The Color of Darkness, The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild, The Natural Look, Last of the Red Hot Lovers, Cheaters and Bad Habits, for which she won the Outer Critics Circle Award.* 



Roberts moved away from Broadway to join "The Lily Tomlin Comedy Hour," initiating a new and thriving career in television. She became one of the medium's most successful stars as a series regular on "Angie," "The Boys," "Ladies on Sweet Street," "Remington Steele," "Maggie" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Comedy Hour." Roberts also managed to fit in guest starring roles on "Rhoda," "Amazing Grace," "Walker, Texas Ranger," "Step By Step," and "Full House," among many others. Producers of TV movies were quick to take advantage of the actress' popularity, and she was soon playing key roles in "A Thousand Men and a Baby," "A Time To Heal," "Blind Faith," "Sunset Gang," "A Mom For Christmas," "The Fig Tree," "The Diary of Anne Frank," "It Happened One Christmas" and "Ruby and Oswald," to name just a few.

Moving to the big screen, Roberts drew even more accolades for such films as "A Fish in the Bathtub," "My Giant," "Walking to Waldheim," "The Grass Harp," "Used People," "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," "The Night We Never Met," "Something Wild," "Barefoot In the Park," "No Way to Treat a Lady," "A Lovely Way to Die," "Honeymoon Killers," "A New Leaf," "Such Good Friends," "Little Murders," "Heartbreak Kid," "Hester Street," "The Taking of Pelham One-Two-Three," "The Rose," "Good Luck Miss Wyckoff," "Rabbit Test," "Simple Justice," "Number One With A Bullet" and "Mamma Mia," among others.

While most performers might begin to rest on their laurels, Roberts continued to shine. With a hefty weekly schedule on "Everybody Loves Raymond," she also managed to star in three TV movies, racking up rave reviews for a dramatic role in "A Time To Remember" and "Our House" for Hallmark Channel and "Raising Waylon" for CBS. In between, she appeared as a regular on "Hollywood Squares" and accepted a special role written for her on "Touched By An Angel."

Roberts devotes what free time she has to community service as a founder and active supporter of the charities Children Affected By AIDS and Puppies Behind Bars. For several years, she has produced "A Night of Comedy," gathering top comedy stars to raise millions for Children Affected By AIDS. With Puppies Behind Bars, she has helped to create a new sense of humanity for prison inmates by providing them with pets and a sense of normal responsibility.

Roberts is also a formidable fighter for the rights of fellow actors in the continuing battle against ageism. In mid-2002 she made international headlines when she testified before U.S. Senator John Breaux's Special Committee on Ageism in Washington, D.C. She then became a Cultural Ambassador for the U.S. Department of State, traveling to underdeveloped countries throughout the world to speak about hope.

Some may call this indefatigable worker an actress who has done it all, but Roberts insists, "There's always a new challenge around the corner and I'll be ready when it comes." Roberts currently lives in Los Angeles.

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**JAMES VAN DER BEEK (Seth Webster)** – James Van Der Beek, known to audiences for his breakout role as the title character in the popular dramatic series "Dawson's Creek," and who has starred in such features as "Varsity Blues" and "The Rules of Attraction," was most recently seen heading up an all-star cast in RHI Entertainment's sci-fi action thriller mini-series, "The Storm."

Born in Connecticut, Van Der Beek began pursuing his acting career in theater in New York City as a teenager. He landed roles in the features "I Love You, I Love You Not" and "Harvest," before being cast as the central character in "Dawson's Creek," which served as a breakout role. The series itself broke new ground in presenting teens and young adults on television as complex characters dealing with topical issues in a mature, articulate and forthright manner.

Among the other features Van Der Beek starred in while continuing to work on "Dawson's Creek" was the Western drama "Texas Rangers." After the series ended its successful run, he also starred in "Standing Still," "Plague" and "Final Draft."

For television, Van Der Beek has guest starred with a two-episode appearance on "Criminal Minds" and a three-episode story arc on "One Tree Hill," as well as single-episode guest star appearances on such series as "Medium," "Ugly Betty" and "How I Met Your Mother." His vocal talents can be heard in episodes of the cult favorite series "Robot Chicken." Further displaying his comedic talent, Van Der Beek was a guest host for an episode of "Saturday Night Live."

Van Der Beek's many TV movie credits include "Eye of the Beast," "Football Wives" and "Sex, Power, Love and Politics." He also recently starred in the crime-drama TV movie "Taken In Broad Daylight." On the feature film front, Van Der Beek has completed roles in the features "The Boy in the Box" and "Formosa Betrayed."

Van Der Beek has several awards to his name, including two MTV Movie Awards for his performances in "Scary Movie" and "Varsity Blues." He currently lives in Los Angeles.

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**ERIN KARPLUK (Reba Maxwell)** — Alberta-born Erin Karpluk has come a long way from the foothills of the Rockies. After graduating high school with honors in 1996, the diligent 17-year-old packed her bags and moved to the West Coast to enroll in the theater program at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Having no prior stage experience, she threw herself into the program, graduating with distinction in 2006.

With just four years of television experience, Karpluk landed the lead role on the critically acclaimed series "Godiva's," a witty drama-comedy created and written by Michael MacLellan of "Queer as Folk" fame. She starred as Kate, an East Coast transplant, managing Godiva's and the quirky employees who work there. She was nominated in 2006 for a Gemini for Best Actress in a Dramatic Series.



Karpluk barely had time for a break before she was in front of the cameras again. Some recent credits include the feature films "Almost Heaven" and "Love and Other Dilemmas," for which she was nominated for a Leo Award for Best Supporting Actress. Her television credits include "Luna: The Way Home" and "Flash Gordon," for which she received two 2008 Leo Award nominations. She also secured a guest-starring role on "Dark Angel," starring Jason Priestly and Adam Beach. Karpluk then shot "Judicial Indiscretion" at the end of 2006, opposite Anne Archer, followed by a guest-star role on "Men in Trees" with Anne Heche.

She spent a summer commuting to Calgary, where she was co-starring on two TV movies: "It Must Be Love," directed by Emmy winner Steven Schacter and starring Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen, and "Family Sins," directed by Graeme Clifford and starring Kristie Alley. Traveling again, this time to Victoria, B.C. she co-starred in a romantic comedy for ABC television, "I Want to Marry Ryan Banks," playing opposite Jason Priestley and Bradley Cooper.

In 2008, Karpluk had a recurring role on both "The Guard" and the SciFi pilot "Revolution," as well as the lead role in the cable feature "Wyveryn." Most recently, she completed shooting 13 episodes of the CBC series "Being Erica" in Toronto, in which she plays the lead role.

Karpluk continues to reside in Canada while she works on projects there as well as in the U.S.

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**MICHAEL STRUSIEVICI (Judd Webster)** — Young Michael Strusievici reigns from British Columbia, Canada, where he has appeared in numerous commercials. He has also starred in commercials nationwide for U.S. toy brands such as Fisher Price and Hasbro. Strusievici has also done voiceover work on both "Sesame Street Workshop" and "L: Change the World."

The budding actor's film and television credits include appearances in the TV movie "While She Was Out" and the series "The Assistants" and "Reaper." He also played a principal role in "Storm Seekers," starring Daryl Hannah.

When he's not on camera, Strusievici is quite the athlete, taking part in competitive karate, gymnastics and swimming.

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**VALIN SHINYEI (Jason Webster)** — Born in the comfort of his parents' home in May 2001, Valin Shinyei is a relative newcomer to acting. In 2008, he fell into the industry via his dance studio and its affiliated talent agency. His abilities come naturally, as his mother and pet dog, Cleveland, had careers as actors before him.



In addition to an educational video, Shinyei has several commercial, film and print credits, Shinyei takes his love of performance in stride and has not yet decided if he wants to be an actor, designer or a beekeeper. Ideally, he would like to do it all.

Shinyei's many interests include dancing, acting, singing, skiing, golfing and playing soccer. His busy life is compounded by a little sister, artist parents and two big dogs, and by attending an International Baccalaureate School in the suburbs of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

-- HALLMARK CHANNEL --

