Home Grown

Orange County serves as the setting for bestselling author Alyson Noël and her popular works of fiction. By Ashley Canas, Photography by Duncan Stewart

Chances are, we're going to start hearing a lot more about Alyson Noël. The Laguna Niguel resident is not only a successful author (she has several New York Times bestsellers), but she's also a bit of a Hollywood darling, penning deals for her young adult novels—the Immortals and Riley Bloom series—with Summit Entertainment (you know, the company behind the blockbuster Twilight films). Her chick-lit novel, Fly Me to the Moon, was optioned by Ridley Scott’s production company and now has famed director Sharon Maguire (Bridget Jones’s Diary) attached to the project. And that's not to mention her latest publishing deal: a multimillion-dollar contract for a new book series, Soul Seekers, debuting in 2013.

Although she spends a fair amount of time with her head in the clouds (dreaming up her next hit, no doubt), Noël and her stories remain firmly rooted in Orange County. Here the admitted vampireophile shares her favorite area haunts.

You write alot about teens and young adults. How are you still a kid at heart? Despite the number of birthdays piling up behind me, I never really feel like an adult. I always feel more like a kid who somehow ended up with a husband, a mortgage and credit cards.

You grew up in Yorba Linda. What’s your favorite childhood memory? Riding horses with my friends after school was the best. We would race home, dump our books, hop on our horses and meet at the lakedale where we'd have great adventures until the sun went down and it was time to head home. Those were truly good times!

Several of your books take place in Orange County. Why do you think it makes a great backdrop for your novels? Aside from being a great place to live, I love the duality of coastal Orange County. I love how, on the surface, it appears to be this perfect, pristine place of stunning beaches and upscale shopping—but inside all of those beautiful homes are real people, living real lives, facing real struggles. Those struggles are what interest me. That's where the story lives.

Who would you love to see play your lead character, Hailey Lane, in the movie version of TTY Me to the Moon? I hate to admit it, but I’m really not at this game. I see the characters so clearly in my head while I’m writing that it makes it impossible for me to replace them with real people. But, with Sharon Maguire directing, I've no doubt she'll surprise me in a good—way—I loved what she did with Bridget Jones's Diary.

Favorite O.C. restaurant? Vino in San Clemente; Stone Hill Tavern at the St. Regis Monarch Beach; Studio at the Montage Laguna Beach resort; Izakaya Wasa Sushi at the Irvine Spectrum; The Original Pancake House in Yorba Linda; and Marecote Moderna, AnQi and Charlie Palmer, which are all at South Coast Plaza.

Coffee, tea or cocktails—and where do you like to get it? A glass of Champagne at the Montage resort lobby bar at sunset is a favorite way to celebrate.

Favorite place to shop in Orange County? South Coast Plaza—it has everything!

Guilty pleasure? Watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer movies while eating Golden Spoon frozen yogurt.

Coolest thing that ever happened to you as a writer? Meeting Judy Blume in person and getting to tell her that her books inspired me to be a writer. She’s been an idol of mine since 1980, and I was just as kind, gracious and warm as I hoped she would be.