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Waiting in the Wings

By [Pearl Washington](#) | Published 10/11/2007 | [Arts & Leisure](#) | Rating:

Waiting in the Wings



The ladies of Healing Touch Massage Parlor: (bottom left to right) Tammany Harrison, Deneka Lashea, DeAara Lewis; (top left to right) Tracee Lashae and April Hale)

'Tricks' filmmaker set for full-length feature's Indie festival debut.

Even as a young girl, Memphis filmmaker DeAara Lewis had a plan.

"I've always wanted to act, since I was five," said Lewis. "So the plan was to go to Hollywood straight out of high school and become an actress."

An article in People magazine ("Hollywood Blackout," March 1996) moved her to take an alternate route.

"That article was about the underemployment of people of color in the movie industry," she remembered during a recent interview. "I came to understand that to get the parts I wanted, I was going to have to learn how to write them first."

That understanding has brought – and keeps bringing – Lewis full circle in the film industry: From writer to filmmaker to actress and back again. At 28, she now comfortably wears the hats of all three crafts.



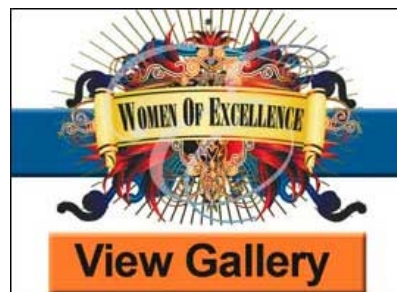
From writer to filmmaker to actress and back again. DeAara Lewis comfortably wears the hats of all three crafts.

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Lewis has written her first full-length feature, "Tricks," one of about 117 films (including music videos) scheduled to screen at the Indie Memphis Film Festival over seven days beginning Friday, October 19th at Malco Theatre's Studio on the Square. The film uses an all-Memphis cast and crew and even features DeAara's mom, her dad, sister and nephew, with her younger sister working behind the scenes as the script supervisor



Jean (Joanne Brown) and Natalie (Tracee Lashae) try to unsuccessfully hide their annoyance with one another.

Lewis is a University of Memphis graduate whose first screening was a 33-minute piece titled "The Forgotten Ones." That film debuted before a sold-out audience at First Congo, the theatre arm of First Congregational Church on Cooper. The film explored the ways in which "the parts of ourselves that are the most oppressed and the parts we think are the

most taboo come back to hurt us after we've pushed them away" in the form of various destructive behaviors," Lewis has said.

Lewis has a history, though, of productive behavior. She was cast as Beneatha in "A Raisin in the Sun" when she was fifteen. She won, for three years running, the state championship in dramatic interpretation (Tennessee High School Drama League).

Her writing and acting have garnered numerous awards and Lewis worked as production operator for CBS affiliate WREG TV in Memphis for several years. And that productivity appears to run in the family, since Lewis's grandmother is retired educator, administrator and politician Sara Lewis.

"Tricks" is premiering on Monday, Oct. 22 at 9:55 p.m., and Tuesday, Oct. 23 at 3:10 p.m. According to an online trailer, it is an urban tale about the struggles of five prostitutes and their madam, as they try to survive and thrive in a business that is deemed immoral and taboo.



Donna (Deneka Lashea) defends herself at all costs.

Lewis wrote and directed "Tricks," and Chicago

native, Rod Pitts, is cinematographer. Pitts said he and Lewis shot the film "in the summer of last year, all over Memphis. There were some hot days, but otherwise it was perfect." Pitts is an award-winning filmmaker who attributed the ease of location scouting to the city's friendly residents.

"I've been here in Memphis off and on about five years now," said Pitts. "And it's really easy to work here. People were very forthcoming about allowing us to use their locations. And we shot all over – from downtown to South Memphis to East Memphis."

Lewis, along with actress LaDonna Long and filmmaker and actor Keenon Nikita, is already working on her next project, a trilogy that she hopes will make Hollywood pay attention.

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Comments

- **Comment #1** (Posted by [Irene Porter](#))
Rating
Very proud of my niece, I didn'y know she was so involved and talented. Good luck to all of you. I also had the acting bug. I guess it's in the genes. Hold on to your dreams.
- **Comment #2** (Posted by [Elon](#))
Rating
It's a great movie and all involved are extremely talented. And this was a very good story by Pearl Washington.
- **Comment #3** (Posted by [Lynda Ingram](#))
Rating
Congrats on films. I too am a Memphis writer, filmmaker, actress. My first short film was "Broken Esteem". I am now working on other screenplays to shoot here in the near future, good to see us black women coming forth in filmmaking here in Memphis.
- **Comment #4** (Posted by [Deneka](#))
Rating
I loved the movie!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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