



News for kids

EDUCATION



Brittany Snow, Meg, with Nick Carter who will be making a guest appearance on the Nov. 3 episode.

Recreating the '60's

By Brenda Rees, Special to Pencil News

HOLLYWOOD, Calif., Oct. 29 - Even though they weren't around during the early 1960s, the teen stars of the hit NBC show, "American Dreams" wish a little bit of that era could be found in today's society. Pencil News visited the set to talk with the teenage actors.

[COMPLETE STORY](#) ↘

“I LOVE THE DANCES,” admits 17-year-old Brittany Snow who plays Meg Pryor, the wide-eyed teenager from Philadelphia who loves to appear-what else?-dancing on the then new TV show “American Bandstand.”

“I went to a club the other night and I just started doing the dances, you know, the Potato, the Twist and the Jerk,” relates Snow recently in between filming on the set. “Those dances are more fun and free than dances today. You could be silly back then and it was OK. Nowadays, everyone would think you were such a dork dancing like that!”

Indeed, along with the powerful changes that took place in America during the 1960s, the crazy dances are just one aspect of the show that appeals to the young actors and actresses. After they were cast in the show, all performers dove headfirst into research about the 1960s; many used the Internet and the library; all viewed episodes of the old “American Bandstand” shows; and all got first-hand accounts from older family members and friends.

For 19-year-old Will Estes who plays Meg’s older brother JJ, the 1960s represented both a time of innocence and yet grown-up themes. “There were civil rights marches, women’s liberation and even the music went from being just bubblegum to something more serious and deep,” he says. “The stereotype of the early 1960s is that ‘Leave it to Beaver’ family, but that wasn’t the case.”

Roxanne and Meg in the Nov. 10 episode of American Dreams.



NBC

Boys,” he added.

Estes sought advice from his uncle who was the exact age that Will’s character JJ is supposed to be in 1963. “He told me that the “Duke of Earl” was one of his favorite songs,” says Estes who added that he tries to imagine what it would be like to hear those well-known songs for the first time. “There was amazing music going on, like Martha and the Vandals and the Beach

Classic movies, especially Paul Newman flicks-gave Estes a good understanding of '60s culture. "Man, those are good ones," he says rattling off examples like "Hud," "Sweet Bird of Youth" and "Cool Hand Luke."

"I love the fact that back then people were classy," says Estes. "I mean, all men wore suits to work not just the bigwigs. People got dressed up just to go to work. You don't see that these days."

Sixteen-year-old Vanessa Lengies plays Meg's best friend Roxanne Bojarski, a girl who's quite a bit more daring and wild than sweet and innocent Meg. Bojarski also got a lot of first-hand advice from relatives who couldn't wait to explain what life was really like in the 1960s.

"I didn't even have to ask them," jokes Bojarski. "They just called me up. My dad's friend, my grandmother, everyone. They talked to me for hours on the phone. They were so willing to offer information. It was great."

All performers say that the scripts and the writing on the show has been top-notch. All like their characters and have such high hopes for them.

"Meg is such a big dreamer and such an innocent in her world," says Snow. "She has such an open heart and she does what seems right, like walking home with a black kid at a time when you just didn't do that sort of thing. She's going to have to figure out who she is in the course of the series. How she transforms into a woman, someone more confident and sure of herself."

Before that happens, however Meg is tempted to be a little daring when she is around her best friend Roxanne. "I hope one day Roxanne can break away from her family," says Bojarski. "I would like to see her get an apartment, a job and go to school. I think her family just keeps her down and she's ready to move on."

The future is up for grabs for the young teenagers whose stories are told in "American Dreams." Tune in and find out how history reveals-and maybe repeats-itself!

"American Dreams" is broadcast Sunday nights at 8 p.m. on NBC. For more information on the show, visit http://www.nbc.com/nbc/American_Dreams.