

'Claws' Star Jenn Lyon talks Season One's Deadly Dealings and Unbreakable Bonds

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McKenzie Morrell

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Badassery is at the forefront of TNT's new summer series *Claws*, and this show has come at the perfect time seeing as 2017 continues to demonstrate it's indeed the year of women, so why not have a surprise hit featuring five fierce ladies? The show, which stars Niecy Nash, Carrie Preston, Judy Reyes, Karrueche Tran, and Jenn Lyon, encompasses a "chosen family"

mentality, and centers around the complicated women who work in a nail salon down in Manatee County, Florida. The series has brains, brawn and dare I say balls? Throw in money laundering, a controlling yet powerful mob boss named Uncle Daddy ([Dean Norris](#)), and you've got the perfect prescription for murder, betrayal and indulgence.

But don't get it twisted, *Claws* is not only about sideways businesses and deception, it also has a crap ton of heart, too. Centering around a hardworking manicurist named Desna (Niecy Nash), and her dream of opening a more luxurious salon in order to give her crew, and mentally ill twin brother a better life. Unfortunately, not much goes right in Manatee County, and Desna's Diva's find themselves in dangerous diversions along the way.

Lyon, an award-winning stage actress who recently made the transition to television, plays Jennifer, who is one of those lovely ladies trying to rebuild her life after one of her baby daddy's landed themselves behind bars. Not to mention the current hubby is a recovering addict who has found himself in murky territory after taking over for his baby brother Roller ([Jack Kesy](#)), who might I add was presumed dead. These new relationships lead to a whole lot of awful dealings, and friendships will undoubtedly be bent to the brink.

Lyon was kind enough to chat with me while shooting the final episodes of *Claws* season 1, and dang did I have a blast. We spoke about her character's reservations diving head first into the Dixie Mafia, and what finding out about best friend Desna's dark past will do to their bond.

Transitioning effortlessly from drama to comedy, *Claws* is quirky, flawed, and distinct.

Forget about sinking your teeth into this series, whip out them claws because things in Palmetto are about to get savage.

MCKENZIE MORRELL: Can you tell our readers what *Claws* on TNT is all about. Give us all the dirt.



Photo Credit: Rachael Shane

JENN LYON: *Claws* first and foremost is about female badassery and your chosen family. On the surface, it's about these five diverse manicurists in Florida, but underneath it's about doing what you can to survive and how you're going to claw your way up in a world that has previously been dominated by men. They're trying to make better and do better for themselves but they're flawed and complicated and they're loyal to a fault which really keeps them together. Their loyalty is tested but they're overall ride or die.

MM: When I first watched this show, I loved that the cast was so diverse, especially when Polly entered, I was like "they're avoiding this girl at the salon" but it turns out she's a part of this group, and pretty badass to boot. I think that's what's great about the show is it's like these unlikely pairs that have come together.

JL: Totally. You think about Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul [in *Breaking Bad*]. Who would have put those two together? It's not even a buddy cop movie. It's polar opposites. But it works so well. That sort of dichotomy makes it so interesting.



Photo Credit: TNT

MM: It really does. You obviously play Jen, which ironically is your name [laughs] you probably get that all the time. But, when we found out Jen's husband was Roller's brother, that threw me for a loop. Things didn't go over too well with Roller, and now Bryce is being sucked into this world. Do you think things between Desna and Jen would be ruined if she knew what her and Virginia did to him?

JL: I think you're about to see that play out because if Jen finds out that Desna destroyed part of her family to save herself that's going to be a real chasm in their relationship. Will they be able to get over it? Will Desna be able to tell her or will Jen just find out? That's family. She doesn't like that side of her family. She thinks Uncle Daddy is nothing but trouble and doesn't want Bryce involved in any of that bullshit. She's definitely scared to get sucked in.

MM: Obviously your character does not want to see her husband take Roller's place in Uncle Daddy's shady shenanigans.

JL: Absolutely not. That road only leads to one place...

MM: Do you think that's her biggest hesitation that she doesn't want to see him go down that road and end up getting killed?

JL: That's a huge hesitation. She met him in AA. She knows what addiction has done to his life and for him to be around a surplus of pills is a real terrible idea. And if Jen loses him, she loses her family. Jen's got a different baby daddy in prison but she's trying to make good for herself and this man is so loving and kind and takes care of her and the kids but she knows if he starts doing drugs or getting involved in that world, it's a matter of time before her life explodes.

MM: Looking forward to seeing that unfold. I have a funny story for you. I stumbled on *Claws* several weeks ago flipping through the channels late one night. It was a sneak peak that showed the entire episode before it premiered. Within three minutes I was so down for this show. I instantly wanted more. What do you think gives *Claws* that it factor. It clearly worked on me, someone stumbling upon it. I think it's such a great show.

JL: Thanks for saying that. That makes me feel great.

MM: I was watching it and within two minutes I was like damn! This is an amazing show!

JL: That's great. A bunch of my friends husbands who they made them watch because I was in it and they're like "oh my god, this show is so dope! I thought it was just for girls!" I hope it catches on in that way.

MM: I've seen you describe the similarities between yourself and your character. But can you name any distinct differences between the two?

JL: Sure! Jen has like a real hot temper. The moment she sees something that she doesn't think is right, she'll pop off. I'm absolutely the opposite. I'm the slowest burn. It takes so much to get me upset and even if I do I'll just hold it in for years. I'm much sweeter. Jen is a

lot rougher around the edges for me.

MM: There's a lot of family and chosen family surrounding the show and doing nails in the salon is the glue that holds the group together. If Desna ever does succeed in getting a place in a different neighborhood do you think that'll change the dynamic of the group in the shop?

JL: Do I think that would change things? Well, I mean as a character I'm like "it can only change things for the better." There's a moment we'll get to go see the new salon and I think Jen feels uncomfortable because she grew up poor. She's not from that world. She wants to be a part of it but it makes her feel a bit shabby. I would hope that their ties are strong enough to check each other if they get too big for their britches. They're family. You can bust each other's balls and come back at the end of the day and get over it.



MM: Extravagant nail art is it's own character on this show. What is the craziest design you have ever gotten done on your nails?

JL: The most interesting nail art I ever had was I had a charm at the top of my nail that was connected to a chain that came down my hand and went into a bracelet. That was the craziest shit I ever saw. They were my nails but it was also jewelry. I've also had nails that had an encapsulated feather on them. It's amazing.

MM: With all these dynamic characters on the show, if you could swap bodies with one of the other characters, who would it be?

JL: Uncle Daddy. I would love to play a character that was bad and had that kind of power.

MM: Whose backstory are you most excited for the viewers to learn about as the season unfolds?

JL: Everybody. The audience will just be so surprised. Quiet Ann of course because you don't know shit about her. Also Polly, Virginia — everybody has this painful, beautiful life that brought them here, and I think it'll be a pleasure to watch.

MM: I'm excited to peel back those layers and see everyone's story unfold. You also have an extensive background in theater. Filming a TV show and doing Broadway must be vastly different. How does that experience translate? How do you deal with going back and forth?

JL: I think it's helpful. Your theater background helps you to know how to use your whole body and to tap into different circumstances over and over. If you see TV actors go to do a play, sometimes they only act from their waist up and the bottom half of them doesn't know what to do. When you grow up in the theater you learn how to stand still, use language, motivate your own business. It brings a sense of self governance so that when you walk onto a TV set and you know what the scene is going to be, you're not afraid to make bold choices. It engenders a sense that you can handle it. You get no extra takes in front of a big audience.

MM: How has it been seeing the fans react to the show on social media. That's a whole different component that we didn't always have in the past?

JL: It's so crazy and so immediate. We sit during the show and we're live tweeting and looking at stuff. Just the names people come up with and watching them find out information in real time. You see it unfold right before your eyes.

MM: You guys have some fun hashtags on Twitter too, with the little emoji next to the *Claws* TNT one.

JL: I know! I can't believe we got an emoji.

MM: If you had to concoct a donut based on your character's personality on *Claws*, what kind of donut would it be and what kind of toppings would be on it?

JL: A donut. Okay, it would certainly be jelly filled because I've got a whole lot of jelly jam happening. Then it would be fried up and crunchy on the outside. It wouldn't just pull apart. Then on the top it would have half vanilla, half chocolate because I've got that mixed baby and then it would have like gold leaves because that's who she wants to be. On the inside she's jelly but she aspires to be better.

MM: Finally, what can you tease about what's to come for your character and why should the audience be tuning in?

JL: What's coming up for my character is she's being tested. Shit's going to go down and it's going to be real surprising. Every episode, you'll get surprised in some way. You'll think things are finally going to be okay and the rug gets pulled out from under you. That doesn't just happen to the viewers, that happens to the characters as well.

CLAWS airs on TNT Sunday's at 9/8c

