

Newcomer Sea joins 'L Word'

The globe-trotting adventurer says Showtime's lesbian-themed drama is a different sort of challenge.

By GAIL SHISTER
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

The *L Word* will shine from Sea to shining Sea this season.

Newcomer Daniela Sea — punk musician, performance artist and former juggler with a Polish traveling circus — will add TV star to her list when Showtime's lesbian-themed drama launches its third season Sunday.

"I've done a lot of crazy things in my life," says Sea, who grew up with hippie artist parents on the beach in Malibu, Calif. "This one ranks pretty high."

On *The L Word*, Sea plays Moira, a mucho-macho computer techie from the Midwest and new girlfriend to Jenny (Mia Kirshner). During the season's 12 episodes, Moira gradually morphs into Max.

Androgyny isn't new to Sea. As a punk rocker, she and her band cross-dressed. And at one point, she lived in India for eight months . . . as a man.

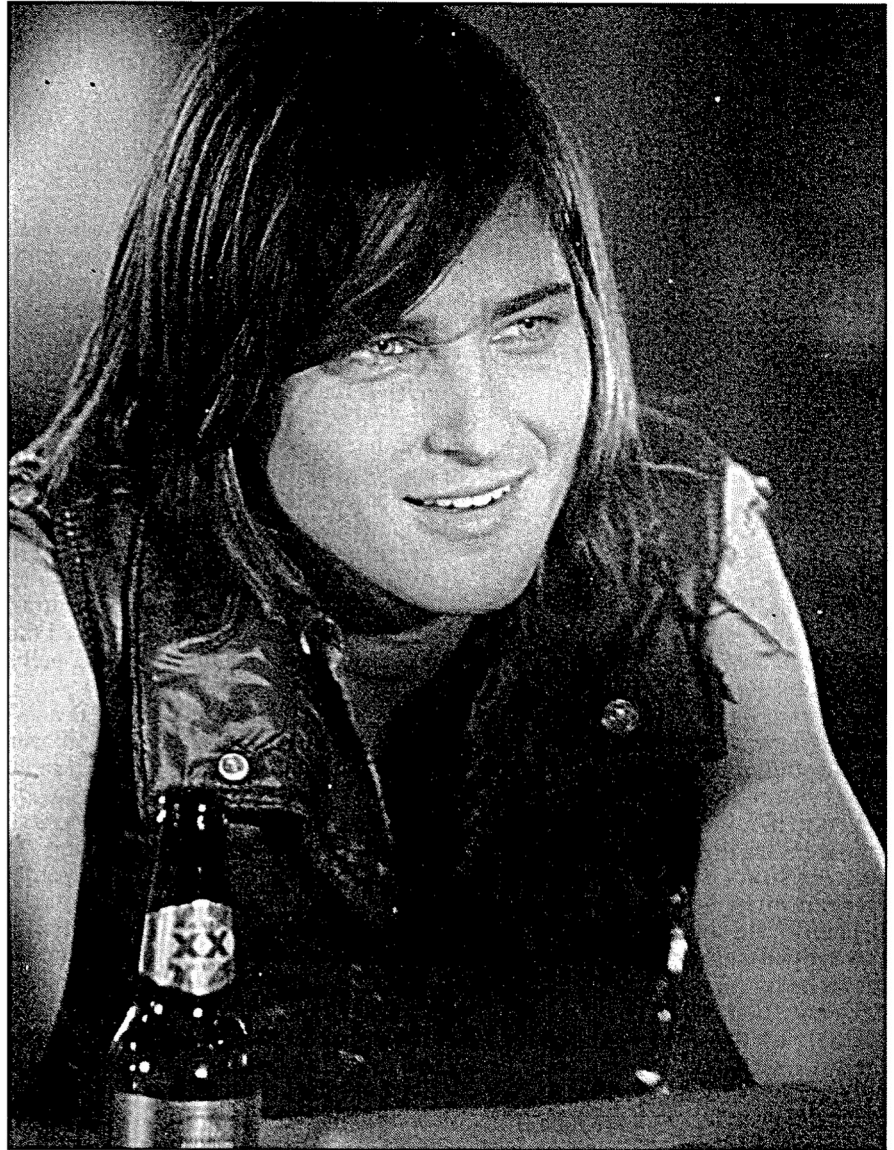
"It wasn't something I planned," Sea says. "It evolved quickly when I realized what freedom I'd have. As a man, I could ask questions and walk around at night. I felt it would give me better access to the culture."

She bound her breasts, oiled her cropped hair and wore men's traditional clothing.

"I don't feel anyone suspected anything. . . . If I want to, people think I'm a boy. I'm a tomboy. I always wear boys' clothes. I don't have to try very hard one way or the other."

When she decided to give acting a shot 18 months ago, Sea changed her surname to reflect her love of the ocean. She won't reveal her birth name.

The L Word came together quickly for Sea. In April, her homemade audition tape was given to a producer by a friend of Sea on the writing staff. She was asked to fly to Los Angeles the next morning. She nailed the audition, and production began in June.



PAUL MICHAUD/SHOWTIME

Daniela Sea plays Moira, a computer techie from the Midwest and new girlfriend to another character. During the season's 12 episodes, Moira gradually morphs into Max.

"This whole thing is unbelievable," Sea says. "Eighteen months ago, I wasn't even sure I wanted to pursue acting. I love it, creatively. All the other things I've done have led to this."

"I feel comfortable and confident. I've observed all kinds of people for years. I have this 'travel thing' in my gut. Now I'm using that toward acting."

Her "travel thing" has led Sea

around the globe. Before India, she lived in Poland, where she hooked up with a traveling circus as a fire juggler. *The L Word* feels pretty tame by comparison, Sea says, but it has its own kind of challenges.

"I may be sleeping in the same place every night, but I'm learning a craft," she says. "It's a different kind of adventure."