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Mackenzie Davis Likens Her Hair in *Halt and Catch Fire* “to Donald Trump’s”

The actress talks about her transformation for the 1980s period drama.

BY **PRIYA RAO**
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TINA ROWDEN/AMC

AMC has been trying its hand at a *Mad Men* replacement for some time, and its new 1980s period series, *Halt and Catch Fire*, premiering this Sunday, is its latest gamble. Set in Texas in the early days of personal computers, the drama follows three proto-geeks as they try to turn corporate computing on its head. Given the sheer nerdiness of the milieu, it's no surprise that two of the characters are guys: former IBM executive Joe MacMillan (**Lee Pace**) and down-on-his-luck engineer Gordon Clark (**Scot McNairy**). But the female among them, college prodigy Cameron Howe (**Mackenzie Davis**), outsmarts both of them in her first few scenes.

This is Davis's biggest role to date, but audiences who remember the Canadian actress from her work in such indie films as *That Awkward Moment* and *Breathe In* might not recognize her. In the show, Davis favors thrift-store wares (think military jumpsuits) and sports a chunky, peroxide-blond bowl cut worthy of Watts from *Some Kind of Wonderful*. "Cameron's obviously, on an immediate level, quite the aggressive anarchist," says Davis. "She doesn't fit into this male-dominated computer world, nor does she fit into the idea of feminine beauty of Texas and the South."

Still, Cameron is no stereotypical 1980s punk. "She didn't have a mohawk on purpose," Davis says. "My hair kind of started like a chin-length bob when we first took a stab at it, and we just sort of kept cutting into it, very D.I.Y., like Donald Trump. "It's supposed to look like she cut it in the bathroom sink and dyed it that dirty color herself." Thanks to the role, Davis has warmed to the pleasures of self-styling. "I love cutting chunks of it; it's like a new level of discovery every day," she says. "It looks like a mullet now."

As for the fashion, "All of Cameron's clothes are supposed to look like they fit into one small army duffle bag," says Davis. "It's all pretty utility, no embellishment or accessorizing or embroidering, so it's not like she is even part of the punk community." Davis has costume designer **Kimberly**

Adams-Galligan to thank for her anti-establishment look. “She’s somewhat androgynous with her hair and clothes, but there is also a very real sex appeal to her,” says Adams-Galligan. Sure, Cameron has a pretty spicy sex scene in the first episode, but Adams-Galligan attributes the character’s T-shirt-and-no-bra look to her childlike quality, not a desire to be provocative. “There’s a scene at the end of the first episode, where Cameron feels like she looks O.K. and is faced with what real Texas beauty and sexuality look like, and she’s like in elementary school again,” says Davis.

Off duty, the starlet, who is a high-fashion junkie—think Prada, Céline, Miu Miu, and Louis Vuitton—is much more comfortable in her skin. “I like Cameron’s idea of vintage and not wanting anything too done, but I’m also a little more spontaneous,” she says. “I wear a lot of boyish stuff, but I prefer to throw a fur coat on top just for the hell of it.”

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