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INTRODUCING SUNDANCE SCENE STEALER GINA RODRIGUEZ

By Adriana Rivera | 01/16/2012 - 10:39 |



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Gina Rodriguez is soaring right now with buzz for her new film *Filly Brown*, which is due to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival this month. The 27-year-old Chicago native of Puerto Rican descent stars as the title character in the film opposite Jenni Rivera and Edward James Olmos. Rodriguez, a graduate from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, plays an aspiring hip-hop artist struggling to make the right decisions. She shared exclusively with *Latina.com* her love for hip-hop, what it was like working with Olmos, and where we can see her next.

11 Things to Look Forward to in 2012
(<http://www.latina.com/entertainment/buzz/11-things-look-forward-2012>)

Were you a fan of hip-hop before shooting the movie?

I grew up in the inner-city of Chicago where hip-hop thrives. I used to do a lot of spoken word. I loved poetry. I loved lyrical poems and mixing writing with my own personal desire to perform. When I went to NYU, I was in some hip-hop

theater courses and I helped co-write a theater mainstage performance. But I had never done rap. So I always kept to spoken word, but I always admired emcees. So when *Filly Brown* came to the table, they said *Filly Brown* was a spoken word artist. Then, there were rumors they were going to change her from a spoken word artist to a rapper so I threw down a little rap piece I had written and a week after booking it, I was in the studio recording my first song ever.

Would you want to be a hip-hop artist now?

I would love the opportunity to be that positive, motivating, inspirational voice for young girls who don't think their dreams will come true and grow up poor in the inner-city like I did. So hip-hop artist is definitely a goal of mine along with obviously being an actor, which I've been working on for so many years. Let's hope the hip-hop community accepts me. Hopefully they have some room for a Puerto Rican chick!

What was it like working with Edward James Olmos?

It was a dream come true. I mean, he's a godfather to the Latino community. I never stopped watching him from *Stand and Deliver* to his directorial debut in *Walk Out*. I would have to keep pinching myself because I would look over and he would wave and say 'There's my star.' I would just want to crumble and start crying. It was such a blessing.

Jenni Rivera's 'Filly Brown' to Debut at Sundance Film Festival
([entertainment/movies/jenni-riveras-filly-brown-debut-sundance-film-festival](http://www.latina.com/entertainment/movies/jenni-riveras-filly-brown-debut-sundance-film-festival))

What's next for you?

A really great thing is in the works with a wonderful network. I am also working with Michael Olmos, one of my directors from *Filly Brown*. Right after the film, he came to me with another project about a girl boxer, an autobiography about her and her single dad. It struck a chord with me instantly because my father is a referee for professional boxing and I boxed my whole life with my dad. It really brought us together with the sport. So