

Throwback: Pam Grier

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Pam Grier's film career started in 1970 when she appeared as a partygoer in the movie *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls*. She became a supporting actress after working on Jack Hill's women in prison flicks *The Big Doll House* and *Women in Cages*. *Cool Breeze* would be her first official blaxploitation film, but it was the vigilante action movie *Coffy* that became her breakout hit. Grier was a new type of cinematic heroine because she was African-American, passionate and exuded a sexuality that was confident but not cheap. The role was written for a white actress but none were able to handle a gun or the required physicality. Grier attributes her preparedness to her feminist grandfather who encouraged the girls in her family to be independent. *Foxy Brown*, *Sheba Baby* and *Friday Foster* cemented her place as the first woman to be an action star in the movies. Each role showcased Grier as a sexy but tough character who typically sought justice for the people in her life who were wronged by criminal and corrupt organizations. At the end of the '70's she had a role in *Greased Lightning* where she met Richard Pryor and embarked on a highly publicized personal relationship with him. In the '80's Grier had memorable roles in *Fort Apache*, *The Bronx* and *Something Wicked This Way It Comes*. Television work on the hit show *Miami Vice* also kept her relevant. Grier returned to the spotlight in 1997 with the Quentin Tarantino-directed *Jackie Brown*. Tarantino adapted Elmore Leonard's *Rum Punch* for the story and he created the film with Grier in mind and used it to pay tribute to her earlier work in *Foxy Brown* and *Coffy*. The film was critically acclaimed and Grier received Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, Saturn and Chicago Film Critics Awards nominations. Her next big sighting came on *The L Word* where she played Kate "Kit" Porter, the R&B singing sister of

Jennifer Beal's character for six seasons. In 2010 she published her memoir, *Foxy: My Life In Three Acts*. When Grier isn't doing television and film work she cares for the horses, turkeys, chickens and dogs at her home in Colorado.