

Spacek, Sissy (1949-) Encyclopedia Article

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Spacek, Sissy (1949—)

Sissy Spacek is a fine actress who has made an indelible impression, both through her unique quality as an eternal waif, and because of four particular films whose overall quality was matched by her performances. Texas-born Elizabeth Mary Spacek won a singer-songwriter contest, went to New York to pursue a music career, but studied with Lee Strasberg instead. A little modeling and TV, and an extra's job in Warhol's *Trash* (1970) preceded her debut in *Prime Cut* (1972). Then, at twenty-four, she played the first of her dangerously disturbed yet sympathetic teenagers, on a killing spree in *Badlands* (1973); at twenty-seven she was *Carrie* (1976), the tormented teenager with telekinetic powers, which brought her first Oscar nomination; at thirty she essayed thirteen-year-old country singer Loretta Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1979) and won the best actress Oscar and, in 1982, playing grown-up but barely looking it, she was Oscar-nominated for Costa-Gavras' *Missing* (also for *The River*, 1985, and *Crimes of the Heart*, 1990). She took a four-year break between 1986 and 1990, and by the late 1990s, although working consistently, was no longer a major box-office draw.

Further Reading:

Emerson, Mark, and Eugene E. Pfaff. *Country Girl: The Life of Sissy Spacek*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Willsmer, Trevor. *Who's Who in Hollywood*. Edited by Robyn Karney. New York, Continuum, 1994.