

BLONDE AMBITION

From Guess model to burgeoning actress in a couple of years, Florida-born Charlotte McKinney is a go-getting grafter who is engineering her own rise to stardom thanks to being a prolific Instagrammer and making the most of her breaks.

Words by Robert Piper. Images by Corbis

Charlotte McKinney has somehow weaved herself into the fabric of pop culture thanks to her photogenic looks, crafty use of social media, and witty personality. In 2014, she joined the ranks of several past supermodels by becoming a Guess girl. Then, in 2015, she appeared in a Carl's Jr Super Bowl commercial that was seen by millions of people around the world. Later that year, she danced in front of millions for season 20 of *Dancing with the Stars*. Her Instagram account boasts over 800,000 followers, and its growing day-by-day. McKinney's career is exploding.

But that hasn't always been the case. When she first started modelling she was rejected by several major agencies before getting her big break. "I got started in modelling at a young age," McKinney explains. "I was living in

Orlando, Florida. It was something I always wanted to do. So, I just left school, and I moved to Miami to start modelling. For over a year, it was really tough. A lot of people didn't want to sign me because of my height, and chest size. For a while, it was hard to get signed."

She's got thick skin and persevered, choosing to take control of her own destiny by doing independent photo shoots and putting the results on Instagram as a modelling portfolio for the world to see. It worked; she got her big break when she was discovered by one of the biggest names in the fashion business.

"I got it through Paul Marciano discovering me on Instagram, actually. I put a lot of my work on Instagram and online, strictly just of my modelling





stuff. He came across it and the rest was kind of history," McKinney says.

Paul Marciano is one of the founders of Guess and has played an instrumental role in scouting some of the top supermodels from all corners of the world for his multimillion-dollar fashion brand. Guess has been a part of the fashion scene for many years, showcasing some of America's biggest models, like Claudia Schiffer, Anna Nicole Smith, and Valeria Mazza.

It's very much a sign of the times that she was discovered on Instagram. The internet is rapidly becoming the go-to choice for agents in modelling, film, and music to pick aspiring young talent. Several big-name musicians like Justin Bieber, Carly Rae Jepsen, and even Adele were discovered on the internet. McKinney's social-media stardom led her to a role in the Carl's Jr hamburger commercial. To date, the now famous Super Bowl commercial has racked up over 12 million views.

She's parlayed her modelling career into an acting career. Recently McKinney appeared in *Joe Dirt 2* with comedian David Spade. "I had a meeting with David Spade for a show that he was going to do," McKinney explains. "The show kind of fell through, and then we never really did anything with that. One day, he called me, and was like, 'Hey, I have this really silly role. I don't know if you're interested. I ran it by my agent.' I did that because it was a really cool, funny, small role. Yeah, those are kind of the roles that I've been doing lately and are a bit smaller."

This year she has a minor part in the comedy *Late Bloomer* alongside Oscar winner JK Simmons. She was also invited to participate in the 20th season of *Dancing with the Stars* where she was matched up with professional dancer Keoikantse Motsepe. We grabbed her for a quick chat to find out what the girl's all about.





Who is the perfect man for you?

The perfect man for me is a guy with a bit of edge but still a nice guy at the end of the day. Kind to everyone with a big heart. He's nice to everyone.

What do you consider was your first big break?

I think when I booked Guess.

How did you get an agent?

I didn't [have one] for a while. I was kind of my own agent for a long time. I got an agent in New York and was working there, and then kind of realised California was more my spot. It was more commercial for me. I moved here and got an agent, too. The agent thing took a while.

How did you get the Carl's Jr Super Bowl commercial?

I got that because of them kind of coming across me online, too. I did an interview, they saw how I presented myself in interviews and the way I spoke. They kind of saw that, and I got a direct booking. My life has always been castings and castings. I just kind of direct booked it and they wanted me. That kind of just started everything for me.

What type of actress do you see yourself as?

I don't know. I don't really label myself as anyone else, really. For me, with acting I'm really into improv and a lot more comedies and funnier things. Stuff on the lighter side right now has really been fun for me. I've just been doing a lot of small roles. I'm definitely working on it. I have an acting coach. Yeah, I'm really enjoying it.

At what age did you discover your comedy edge?

[When I was a] baby... I've always been a little jokester. I've always loved to laugh. It gets me through a lot of my stuff. I think that's why I've stayed so focused on work. If someone doesn't like me or doesn't want to book me, I just kind of laugh it up and keep doing my own thing.

What kind of rejection did you have to go through in the modelling industry?

Every single kind of rejection. I've heard it all [from] my hair is too brassy to my boobs are too big, from I'm too short to everything else.

Are you doing any more print campaigns coming up?

Yeah, I am. I'm still modelling with the acting now. I have a cover coming out tomorrow with GQ. Mexican GQ, so I'm really excited about that. Just kind of finding the right campaigns and brands that work with me. I'm doing all that.

What's your role in *Late Bloomer* about?

I can't really talk about it yet. But it is another funny role again. I'm excited for people to see that one. It's silly.

How was it working with David Spade?

It was really fun. I consider him a good friend now because we always keep in touch. I always help him when he needs. He helps me with anything. I've built a nice relationship with him. He's a great friend.

What new projects do you have coming up?

A lot of cool new projects. Of course, again, I can't really share with you exact things. A lot more stuff with film for 2016. I'm signed with Wilhelmina [modelling agency] now in New York and LA. They got me working on some cool stuff. Also, pretty much just stay involved with my Instagram and follow that.

What advice do you have for young actors and models looking to break into the industry?

Pretty much just to have tough skin. I think that's been the biggest thing that's helped me get through everything, is letting everything kind of roll off my sleeve. So that's kind of my biggest thing, you know, not letting anyone get to your head. 🍷