

From the moment its flickering technicolor title appeared in the opening credits, it was obvious that **Stranger Things** was not your average sci-fi drama.

The show is an unapologetic homage to 80's horror and suspense, and from wardrobe to its synth-heavy score, it doesn't miss a beat. The series is the first from twin brothers Matt and Ross Duffer and has since been recognized with numerous award nominations, including a Golden Globe nomination for Best Television Series Drama and two Grammy nominations for its soundtrack. So far, the show's greatest departure from its inspired genre has been its emphasis on resilient female characters.

The most sterling example of such was Nancy Wheeler, played by Natalia Dyer, who began as your typical straight A student and by season's end was pointing a shaky pistol in her boyfriend's face. Along the way, Nancy was not immune to your typical teenage blunders: she ditched her friend for a guy, but not the quiet, brooding one who was shamelessly in love with her, she chose the popular asshole instead. Despite these shortcomings, Dyer admitted that she wasn't unlike Nancy as a teen.

"I was always kind of searching for the right social group in high school and never really felt like I belonged with any one specific clique," she told me. "It was frustrating how Nancy treated Barb, but I can relate to that too. When you're in high school and you're trying to get the attention of a guy you like, sometimes you don't always make the best decisions."

Thankfully those years are long behind her now, and in between auditions and filming Dyer studies at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, though she confessed she's had to take a couple leaves of absence following the success of the show.

"None of us really had any idea how popular the show would become, but I think we all knew from the beginning that we were a part of something special, but it's nice to have that validated," she admits.

Born more than a decade after *Stranger Things* takes place, Dyer was given homework by the show's creators to help her prepare for the role, but thanks to her mom, she already knew plenty. "The 80's were kind of like my mom's golden age, so I grew up learning about the fashion, hair, music, all of that. The Duffer Brothers also gave me a list of films to watch that had a similar aesthetic to the show like *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Aliens*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. I like that our show is more of a thriller or suspense, the 80's gore is hard for me to watch," she says.

One of the biggest criticisms towards the show was its handling of the character Barb Holland, Nancy's supposed best friend, who she ditched to hang out with her new boyfriend Steve Harrington, played by Joe Keery. Barb went missing that night, but by the time Nancy noticed it was too late. Barb's disappearance was a turning point for Nancy, who began spending more time with Jonathan Byers in an effort to understand what was happening to their small town. All things considered, I wondered if Dyer thought Nancy was a good friend to Barb.

"Yeah, people weren't happy with that," she conceded. "I get it, I do. I think if Nancy knew what was at stake she would have acted differently. Once she knew Barb was missing she did try to find her, she really just had no idea what they were up against."

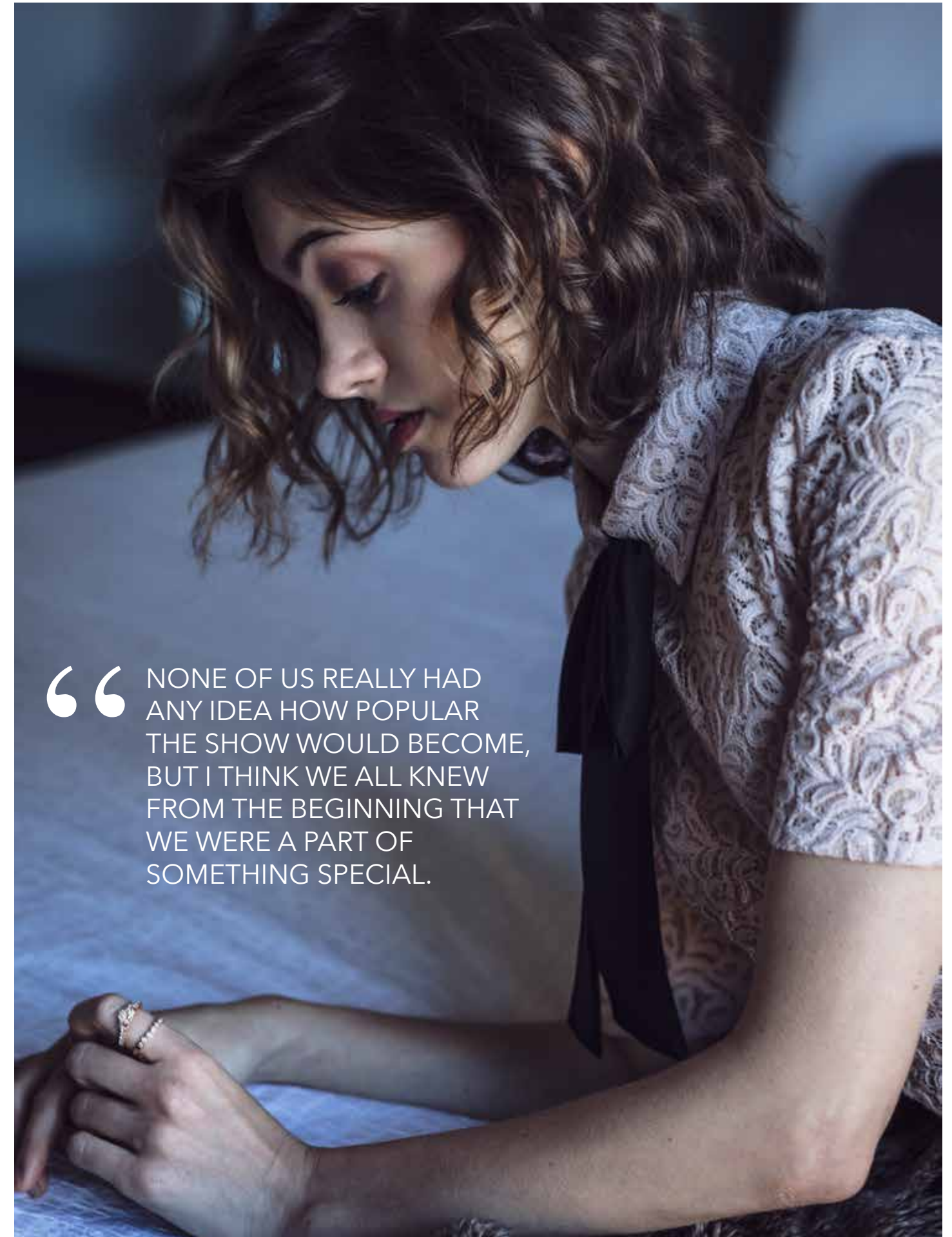
While we were on the topic of Nancy's poor decisions, I asked Dyer to weigh in on her character's choice to remain with Steve. "I think it made sense for Nancy to choose Steve in that moment," she defended. "He wasn't always the nicest guy, but they went through a lot together in a short amount of time. She definitely shares a bond with Jonathan, so perhaps there is hope for the future, but I understand why she chose Steve."

Dyer was back in Atlanta filming Season Two when we spoke and naturally I wondered what it was like now that the entire gang was back together. "It's been great. I hang out with Charlie and Joe a lot since we're all around the same age. The kids are really great and make being on set a lot of fun."

So far no release date has been announced for Season Two, though a Netflix teaser revealed episode titles that the Duffer Brothers warned afterwards would change, no doubt to throw off Reddit's most dedicated fan theorists.

As for Nancy's future on the show? Dyer was tight-lipped, but told me that, "Season Two picks up about a year from where it left off. Nancy definitely hasn't forgotten what happened and is determined to get justice for Barb."

So maybe she's not such a bad friend after all. You'll have to tune in and see for yourself when the new season of *Stranger Things* is released later this year.



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