



in the spotlight ●

Not Acting Her Age

Clockstoppers' Paula Garces finds her moment right on time



In the film, Garces and Jesse Bradford get into trouble with a watch that seems to stop time.

Paula Garces knows all about challenges. Raised in Manhattan by a single mom from Medellín, Colombia, she dropped out of school when she became pregnant at 18, then worked 16-hour days waitressing to support her daughter Skye. And after winning a lead role in the teen sci-fi adventure flick *Clockstoppers*, she still couldn't buy herself a drink to celebrate. Though the 28-year-old can make moviegoers believe that she's 16, she often can't convince bartenders that she's not. Says Garces: "I'm carded *all* the time."

Not that she's complaining: Looking young has long paid her rent. In 14 years of acting, from TV ads for Burger King to a two-year gig on CBS's *Guiding Light*, Garces has never played anyone over 18. "I'm happy I can live out my young years onscreen," she says. "I missed out on a lot." Being a single parent (she split from Skye's dad in '98) was "extremely difficult," Garces adds, even with the help of her mom, Victoria, and half sister Vanessa, 24. As a result, "she seems like she doesn't belong in show business," says costar French Stewart. "I mean that in the nicest way." One place she does belong: with her husband of four months, deli owner Antonio Hernandez, 36. When not playing with Skye, now 9, and the family Yorkie, Luca, at home in Queens, N.Y., Garces works at his restaurant. "She likes to make juices," says Hernandez. Says his wife: "I just love hanging with Tony." ●



Though acting and "finishing my education" are goals, says Garces (in L.A.), "my husband and my daughter are my life."

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOROTHY LOW