

Alison Arngrim will forever be known as mean-spirited Nellie Oleson on ``Little House on the Prairie."

Now 46, the one-time child star figures that if you can't beat the rap, make the most of it. Instead of moaning about how tough it is to transition to adult stardom unless you're Jodie Foster, Arngrim has put together an act and taken it on the road.

``I do my stand-up comedy; I do my one-woman show called `Confessions of a Prairie Bitch,' which has become quite successful," she said last week. ``The title says it all. I have a facsimile of the wig, and we make fun of that and ask, `How do I look now? Do I look the same?'

``I tell people I had myself laminated in the early '80s."

Even without the wig of ringlets, Arngrim hasn't really changed much since her days as the spoiled Nellie, whose parents owned the mercantile in fictional Walnut Grove.

``Unlike a lot of Hollywood, I never had any work done or got a nose job, so I just kind of look exactly the same, which is a little spooky," she said. ``Some days I go out and no one says anything, and other days, it's like they put out an APB -- I can't go 10 feet without: `You're Nellie Oleson! what are you doing here?' It's pretty cool."

She has kept busy with her stage act, which is popular in France and other unlikely places.

``I'm going to be up with the Vancouver Gay Men's Chorus in February, and then I'm doing a prison guard's convention in Las Vegas," she said. ``I'm sort of all over the map."

She's also kept busy with various television guest appearances and a decades-long dedication to AIDS/HIV activism spurred on by the AIDS-related death of actor Steve Tracy, who played her husband on ``Little House."

``I lost a lot of friends," she said. ``A lot of people were afraid to talk about AIDS in 1986, but for some bizarre reason were willing to talk about it with someone from `Little House on the Prairie.' With Nellie Oleson it was OK. So I was able to reach people that other people had trouble reaching."

Arngrim, who appeared in more than 100 episodes of ``Little House" between 1974 and 1982, was in the headlines just last month when she made Mr. Blackwell's infamous worst dressed list.

``He said I looked like a fashion correspondent for the 1940's Farmers Almanac," she said, laughing. ``I kind of had it coming.

``There was this fabulous event in Tombstone, a `Little House on the Prairie' cast reunion, and it was a hootenanny, which encouraged really bad Western wear. I did have on a particularly heinous outfit involving an orange skirt and a purple top and a cowboy hat. So, yes, I got to be No. 10.

I was getting calls from every newspaper, every magazine and from friends who were driving down the street and heard it on the radio and nearly totaled the car."

greg.hernandez@dailynews.com

818-713-3758