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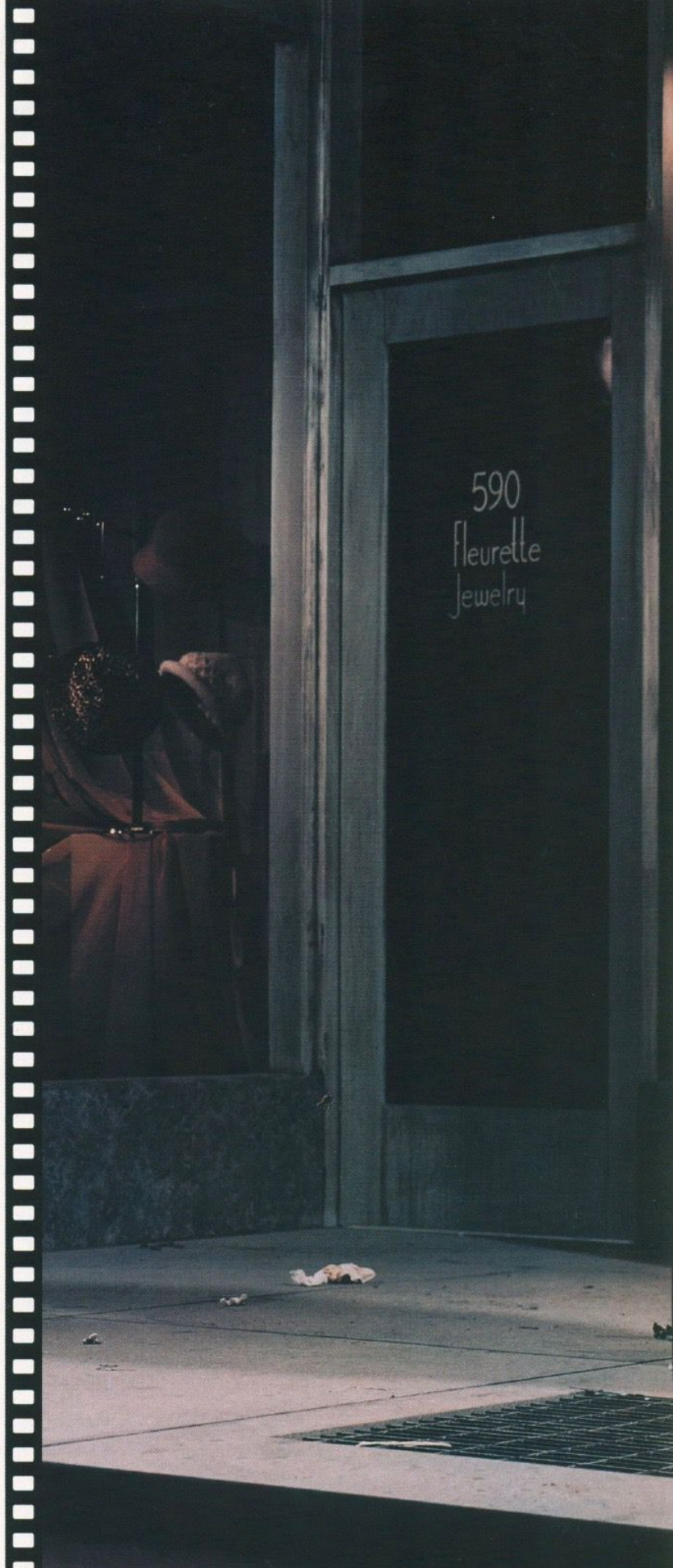


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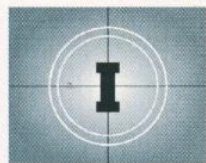
FROM ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES TO THE OPPOSITE OF SEX, CHRISTINA RICCI HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN SOME OF OUR FAVORITE MOVIE MOMENTS. NOW, THE GIRL WITH THE SAD EYES AND DEADPAN DELIVERY IS ALL GROWN-UP AND—DARE WE SAY IT?—HAPPY. **BY JAY A. FERNANDEZ**





Ricci as Marilyn Monroe
in *The Seven Year
Itch*. (Movie Moment #31)

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY
NORMAN JEAN ROY**



I have a problem with sincerity," Christina Ricci says with dry self-deprecation, as she leans forward in her chair and releases a trace of her delightfully crooked smile. Whether it's her once playfully snarky public comments, her forced good humor (famously captured to hilarious effect in 1993's *Addams Family Values*), or the aggressively unconcerned sensibility she has brought to her performances, Ricci has warily kept earnestness at a healthy distance. Straight-forward emotion would seem to be the last resort

for a young actress more apt to ridicule a tearful heroine than to play one.

But Ricci—no longer quite the cracked cherub of *Mermaids* and *Casper* or the fuck-you iconoclast of *The Opposite of Sex*—is changing, despite herself. In next month's *Prozac Nation*, an adaptation of batty bad-girl Elizabeth Wurtzel's best-selling memoir, Ricci sheds the detached self-consciousness to play Lizzie, a terminally depressed and narcissistic Harvard student wreaking havoc on her beleaguered mother and trying to connect with her long-absent father. It's a truly grown-up performance in which the 22-year-old actress-producer plumbs the pains

of her own family dynamic (her parents divorced when she was 13) in order to hit furious pitches of emotional honesty that many of her past characters wouldn't recognize. "She's almost reckless the way she projects her own emotions within scenes," *Prozac* director Erik Skjoldbjærg (who directed the original 1997 *Insomnia*) says. "I think most actors sort of guard themselves a bit. Christina seemed prepared to go into these emotional states and be there for the amount of time it required. You have to be very brave to do that."

Striding into the Chateau Marmont's funeral restaurant on a rare downcast L.A. morning a few days before Christmas (which she will be

STYLING: JENNIFER HITCHES/RED ROSE; HAIR: THOMAS MCKAY/REAR TISSUE; MAKEUP: TONYA WATSON/REAR TISSUE; DRESS: CALVIN KLEIN; SHOES: PRADA; JEWELRY: BVLGARI; PRODUCTION: RITZ PRODUCTIONS; PRODUCTION DESIGNER: JAMIE GIBSON; DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: TONY DUNN; EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: JEFFREY L. BRADSHAW; PRODUCED BY: STEPHEN MORTON; WRITTEN BY: CHARLIE

"I DON'T SEE MYSELF AS REPRESENTING ANYBODY ELSE BUT ME. OR PROMOTING ANYTHING BUT MY WORK, AND WHAT I DO, AND LIVING MY LIFE."

spending in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, with her older sister, Pia), Ricci looks like an Ivy League college senior about to leave for winter break after handing in her Anne Sexton paper. Since playing out a gloomy adolescence onscreen in *The Ice Storm*, *The Opposite of Sex*, and *Buffalo '66*, she's established a trademark of being the best thing in films unworthy of her bent talent (*Pecker*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *The Man Who Cried*). Now, bundled in a black long-sleeve shirt, jeans, and a black knit scarf, her hair pulled back and her watery eyes engaged, Ricci is eager to expand her artistic contributions.

As part of this new commitment, Ricci has

coproduced both *Prozac* and last year's awkward comedy *Pumpkin*. In addition, her production company, Blaspheme Films, is currently developing several projects, including an adaptation of Stewart O'Nan's novel *The Speed Queen*, a comic noir about a sex-and-murder-filled road trip, which Ricci hopes to direct. As an actor, she continues to take on an eclectic mix of festival and studio films, including the thriller *The Gathering*, Woody Allen's *Anything Else*, and a biopic called *Monster*, about female serial killer Aileen Wuornos, that she just began filming with Charlize Theron. "I think that she wants to make sure that she doesn't let Hollywood tell her who she's supposed to be onscreen," says *Sex* director Don Roos. "She's got a lot more self-possession than I do. She's very business-savvy, and she knows that she has to do a blend of movies."

But it may be hard for some to accept that Ricci's move toward accessibility may force her to leave the gleefully esoteric, edgy persona behind. "Christina was better off under the radar because she was not subsidized in her own delusions," *Buffalo '66* writer-director Vincent Gallo says. "She is one of a kind—she brought to my film the authentic soul that Reese, Gwyneth, and Winona will never have. But she's been through a very complex life, and her way of surviving it is certainly not to have become more radical or more soulful, it's to become more 'adult.'"

As you read on and find yourself picturing spooky little Christina with a frown punctuating her wonderfully full-moon face, reimagine her sipping from a string of skim lattes, making fun of herself, and often unleashing a childish giggle. What is most striking about Ricci, who is unfailingly polite, articulate, and sharp, is that she is no different from any other 22-year-old who is struggling with self-image, tangling with boyfriends, and trying to define herself anew in the working world. She doesn't drink, goes disco-bowling, attends spinning classes, and finds comfort in falling asleep watching *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Oh, and she has a serious crush on Aragorn.

PREMIERE: You're not alone in worshipping the Viggo. The biggest lesson I learned coming out of *The Lord of the Rings* was there's really no reason for me to go out with someone I'm not attracted to ever again. That's what it taught me: Do not go out with ugly men.

Have you ever met Viggo?

I had a screen test with him. He nibbled on my ear, and I was like, "Ah! I love you!" My cat is named Viggo.

You just made a lot of women very jealous. Moving on to *Prozac Nation*, do you think people are going to find Lizzie too unsympathetic?

What I'm finding is that people who have gone

through this, or know somebody who was like this, or have been like this themselves, then they have sympathy. But I'm also finding that a lot of people are like, "No, you don't live your life that way." It's like, the people who are responsible have put aside these feelings and have gone on with their life and not taken it out on others. And that's really what makes you a good person, is that you have controlled everything. The whole point of the movie is she *can't* control herself. And that's what makes her brilliant, but it's also what makes her not a lot of fun to be around sometimes. But I can't possibly have any judgments. I understand both sides of it.

Did you feel any special connection to the character because of your family life or your relationship with your father?

I think ultimately, unfortunately, unhappiness is what makes us all come from the same place. It's the great equalizer. So I can understand these emotions. I don't think I personally have the same problems she does. . . . I definitely have a father problem. When I was doing *Ally McBeal*, [costar] Greg Germann used to make fun of me because I love ties and I love men in business suits. It makes me all giddy, and I start acting like a little girl. Yeah, it's amazing what Daddy does to his daughter.

You clearly had to go through some tumultuous emotional terrain with this character.

I think there were four days total—when I didn't have to cry or have a nervous breakdown.

Is it true that the crew was going to stage a walkout because they were worried about your emotional well-being?

Well, I don't know about the walkout thing. There was one day when everyone kind of met in the back of the camera truck, and they were like, "This is really too much for her." They all had daughters, and they just felt like I was being too hard on myself and that I was taking it too far. So they wanted the producer to come talk to me.

Did they feel like no one was looking out for you?

Yeah. I completely understand it, because it was a little bit worrisome at times. My friends who came and visited me were just like, "Oh my God, we have to get out of there." I felt like I was a college art-boy student who said, "I'm going to be like Johnny Depp and Dennis Hopper. [laughs] I'm going to go crazy! I'm going to be just like Jack in *The Shining* and carry my ax all over the set. . . ." I think that was my moment when I was like an angst-ridden young man.

Did you feel like you were out of control at all?

No, but I could understand why they would think that. It was because people don't act like that outside of their bedrooms normally, you know? Johnny [Depp] said to me once, "All that matters is the results of your performance—do what you

have to do." You have to show things that you can't in real life. Like, I can't express my emotions! I'm unable to confront people! I freeze up, and I can't fight with boyfriends. But I am really emotionally expressive and eloquent when I work. . . . Tom Petty got me through *Prozac Nation*. All I listened to was *Wildflowers*.

What was it about that record that helped you?

He's like, "You belong among the wildflowers, you belong on a boat out at sea," and it's all these nice things that you would imagine someone saying to their little girl, who's precious and they love so much. And it was like, 'Tom loves me. Maybe Tom wants me to be okay.' [laughs]

It must have been helpful to have your friend Michelle Williams in the film with you.

Because I was so emotionally crazy, I ended up forcing myself to have a good time. Me and Michelle had so much fun. We went out all the time, all over Vancouver. We lived together, and we actually stayed in the same apartment and slept in the same bed, because the thing that the two of us always hated about being on location was being alone. And neither of us had been to college, so we decided to make our place like a dorm room.

The scene early on when we see the character naked, why was it important to you to do that?

It was important to the director. He had always seen the scene opening that way, and I think it made sense for me to be naked in the very beginning. And the nudity should be a little bit unnerving, because that's exactly what we're going to do emotionally later.

Did you feel any reluctance about doing it?

Not really. I was okay with it. I don't have any strong moral issues. At that point I had done so many embarrassing things in that movie, things you don't do in public, that me being naked was *sooo* not a big deal.

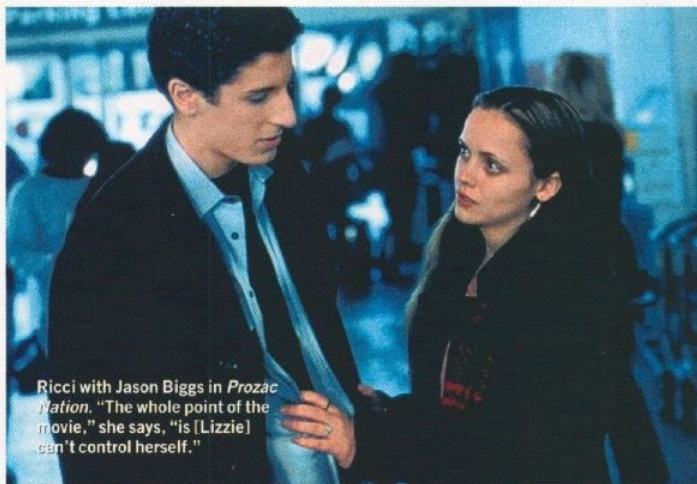
Did it make you get obsessed about your body? Did you

start working out all the time?

At that point I was on the crazy person diet of just, like, you know, mental anguish.

What's the "crazy person diet"?

[laughs] I wasn't eating much, and I was going out all the time, and I drank a lot of Red Bull. I had just broken up with my boyfriend. You always lose weight when you go through a major breakup. And he was my first big . . . I lived with him for three years. So yeah, I wasn't eating. I knew I was skinny. But I did have Michelle stand behind the monitor, and I would position



Ricci with Jason Biggs in *Prozac Nation*. "The whole point of the movie," she says, "is [Lizzie] can't control herself."

myself, and she would look at me and make sure everything was all right.

Is there some evolution to your recent attitudes about weight and body image? You were held up as the poster girl for actresses who looked "normal." Then you went on *Ally McBeal* and looked really skinny, and everyone was upset because you dropped the banner. It seems like you must have been getting tired of being . . .

Asked about it? [laughs]

Okay, next question.

No, I'm just kidding. Last year everyone hated me because I was too little. . . . I don't see myself as representing anybody else but me. Or promoting anything else but my work, and what I do, and living my life. So it's hard for me to take a stand on

that either way. I'm sorry, I decided I liked to jog and run! I started working 18 hours [a day] and drinking coffee and Red Bull, and I'm not 17 anymore. And in case people forgot, there is usually a huge mental, or sometimes physical, growth between 17 and 20, when I lost all the weight. [sighs] I guess I was expected to stay exactly the same, but you can't ask someone to do that when they're 17. Who would want to?

What's your view of antidepressant medication?

Well, I know it's helped a lot of people. A lot of people were just, like, dealt a bad hand. We always say in my family that we're really healthy, we've got good hair and good teeth, we're strong. But we're like weird death traps. We suck you in with our good physical genes, and then the mental health gets you.

Do you ever feel like you're the crazy girlfriend?

I have been the crazy girlfriend before, but I'm more of a secret crazy girlfriend, because I don't speak up, I don't tell you what's wrong. Then one day it's just, like, I've already fought with you so much in my head that I am now finished with this relationship. And we've actually never had an argument.

How do your men respond to this?

They don't like that so much. When I pull the Pearl Harbor. I'm so nonconfrontational. I just disappear. People want to know why. Isn't it better left unsaid? Then you can imagine the best possible answer.

You can also imagine the worst possible answer.

But I like to think that people will take care of themselves in that way.

What's the story behind the long-delayed release of *Prozac*?

Miramax does what it thinks is best once it owns your film. They're really smart, and I trust them. They made some changes, and we reshot some stuff. I thought the cuts they decided to make were good, and I think what they've done with the

Ricci on Ricci

Mermaids (1990)

"I felt pressure at the audition, but then when I got it, I was like, 'Fantastic.' I think when you're a kid you don't have as much self-doubt as you do when you get older."

The Addams Family (1991)

"They basically just told me not to have any emotions. I was always told when I was auditioning for commercials that I was never enthusi-

astic enough. So when I got that part, it was like, 'Oh, great! I can just be flat, and no one will care.'"

Buffalo '66 (1998)

"I had never really seen Method before. [Vincent] would start screaming at me. And I'd say, 'Why are you saying these things to me?'"

The Opposite of Sex (1998)

"My mother read that script and went, 'My God, Christina, it's just—

she's just like you.'"

Pecker (1998)

"I was too young to appreciate [the strippers]. Now I would be all about it. Actually, one of the girls who dressed up as a man, she and I had a really good talk about sex. And I was like, 'That is too much for me right now.'"

Sleepy Hollow (1999)

"Tim [Burton] was really fun,

because I'd suggest things and he would let me do them. I said, 'I could do a really good horror scream.' And he's like, 'Okay, do it.' After that he let me scream all the time, even though we didn't use them for the movie."



Mermaids, 1990

"I love ties and I love men in business suits," says Ricci. "It makes me all giddy, and I start acting like a little girl. Yeah, it's amazing what Daddy does to his daughter."



"YOU'RE GETTING MAD BECAUSE I'M MORE WELL-ADJUSTED THAN I USED TO BE? I'M A HAPPIER PERSON, SO YOU'RE MAD AT ME."

remember the awkwardness of that. I'm one of those people that if something is going to be uncomfortable I say, fuck it, just do it without thinking about it. I couldn't stand to be vulnerable, and I didn't want anyone *ever* to think that they had anything to use over me. If I was nervous, then that's something someone could exploit, so I was never, ever going to be uncomfortable or nervous.

Are you still like that?

Not as much, because when you're a kid you're terrified of getting hurt, but once you've been hurt, you realize that you're going to get over it, and you become less protective. That was the biggest problem the casting directors always had with me: I wasn't vulnerable enough. I always felt that people should get it. Like, there's no way that at 17 I could be that tough. Don't you people see it? That sounds an awful lot like DeDee in *The Opposite of Sex*.

That's why I was so perfect for that part. That's how I was, in a lot of ways. And when I would do press, they would be like, "How do you feel playing such a bitch?" And I was just like, "How can you possibly be an adult calling a 17-year-old girl a bitch? Guys, don't just take exactly what people are giving you on the surface."

Now do journalists egg you on to say the provocative things that you used to say?

They do! They get mad at me! I've been yelled at in interviews for not giving them something interesting. And they write that

I've conformed, I've become one of those actresses who just says pleasant things and has learned to hide her emotions. No, I'm just not feeling particularly obnoxious today. You're getting mad at me because I'm more well-adjusted than I used to be? I'm a happier person, so you're mad at me?

Vincent Gallo seems to think you haven't lived up to the potential of your "esoteric, aloof, unusual cinema persona. . ."

He doesn't feel that I've taken the right roles. Listen, I have to support myself. It's like, I don't know where you get your money from, but I'm not some mad genius. (Continued on page 102)

movie is better than it originally was.

Do you think viewers are going to have trouble sympathizing with the character because of Elizabeth Wurtzel's perceived insensitive comments after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center?

I don't. I don't even know exactly what she said. She said that she was misquoted. And how many times have people said something and they don't mean it or they're being sarcastic?

Was there ever a fear that the film wasn't going to be released?

Yeah. I was so worried.

Did you prep yourself in any way after putting so much of yourself into it?

That's one thing that this business teaches you. You learn to let go really well. What's that going to teach you, to put less work into something? You have to be willing to put as much energy and as much passion in as possible, but understand that it's most likely not going to work out. So then when it falls apart, you are like, "Well, what did that teach me?"

When was the first time that you felt like you got a role that you really wanted to do?

The Ice Storm.

Was it hard to do the overtly sexual scenes in that movie?

Not really, because I was young enough to

Malkovich

(Continued from page 83)

think for other people it's a little scary."

Malkovich first read Patricia Highsmith's Ripley series 14 years ago, while he was living in Rome. "I find Ripley a very disturbing modern character because he doesn't have any sort of conventional notion of morality," Malkovich tells me when I visit him in his trailer during the shoot, where he is popping cold medicine and sniffing from the rainy winter weather in the Veneto.

"He just likes to get his income in his various nefarious ways and if something threatens not his life but his *quality* of life, then he can respond quite brutally. In, say, *Ripley Under Ground*, rather than have this guy mess up his

\$12,000 bucks a year, he just kills him," he says. "He's a problem solver in a kind of great American sense. And I do find that funny."

After all, one of the qualities that has made Ripley a cult hero is his ability to make us root for him—crimes and misdemeanors aside. Which, of course, is exactly what Malkovich has done with even the most morally reprehensible of his characters. "People always ask me, 'Why do you play people who are bad?'" Malkovich says. "I don't really know what the question means. America's much more moralistic. I think they go, 'Well, if a character kills someone, then they're bad.' There are nuances that just aren't really thought about. In Europe, I think it's not at all the same morality. It's not a

Puritan society; it never was."

In her book *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*, Highsmith, herself an American who lived for many years in Europe and died in Switzerland, wrote about how to make murderers likable, by giving them pleasant qualities such as musical ability or cooking talent. "See, that's already kind of quite insane," Malkovich says, a lively glint beginning to shine in his penetrating eyes. "I don't know that it is a great sort of balance that because you can make a nice soufflé, you can kill a few people. I mean, I guess you could make an argument for that."

Kristin Hohenadel is a freelance writer based in Paris.

Ricci

(Continued from page 52)

This is the only way I make money. I don't have the luxury of not taking jobs, which is what he'd have me do. I'm pretty young to make sure every single thing I do is so powerful. I like working, and it seems to me you should be able to make mistakes while you're this age.

How do you deal with criticism, especially now that you're producing?

You should be able to accept criticism, but it shouldn't make you abandon your feelings about something. Sometimes when people start to say something is bad, I'll go, "Okay, so it's bad." Then they can't really criticize me because I've already agreed. But now I'm trying to be like, "Uh-huh, that's great. I appreciate your opinion..." Did you like *Pumpkin*?

I thought that if the tone had been more consistent, I would have liked it more.

But see, that was the whole point of the movie—to have the tone be inconsistent. I really liked that idea, because I don't like being so straightforward and sincere and emotional. I believed in [the material].

Why is it important for you to get into producing?

I'm an actor. You come in, you do your dialogue, and you leave. You get to express a little bit of what you want to artistically, but you're sort of a tool for what this director wants to say or this writer wants to say. It doesn't come as purely as I would like it to. So I want to make my own movies. Producing was a great way to start. And then I decided that I wanted to direct.

How did you end up in the director's chair on *The Speed Queen*?

We were talking about different directors, and we sent it to Stephen Frears, and I met with

him, and he had all these problems with the script. I could answer every single one and tell him how we were going to fix it, and he was like, "Well, if you know all the answers, maybe you should direct it." And I thought, Hmm. Then I decided that I should. [laughs] It really had not occurred to me.

What made you think you could do it?

It just seemed like the kind of material that could go really badly. *The Speed Queen* could be like *To Die For* or it could be like *Natural Born Killers*. It is delicate material, and I really feel like I understand that stuff. I always thought that that was something I was good at, making unlikable people likable. But now I'm not so sure.

Why?

Because I feel like I should have made the main character in *Prozac Nation* more sympathetic. But I feel like if I did that, I wouldn't have been being honest.

Did you like working with Woody Allen?

He's one of those guys I ended up liking in spite of myself—when he turns on the charm. He laughed at a story I told once, but then he turned around and was like, "If you do this right, I will let you tell another story." So he knows the effect he has on you.

How did you get along with him?

They told me, "He doesn't speak to actors." So I was expecting him never to talk to me. And then I was like, he is talking to me an awful lot. So I was happy, and I felt really flattered. But he got mad at me once. He blamed me for lightning one day or something. I was like, "All of a sudden I control the weather?"

Are you the kind of person who tries to get through things herself?

Yes. I don't wanna bother anybody. Like, my therapist. I don't want to bother her. [laughs] I

said that to her recently. She's like, "But I'm paid to listen to you." I won't take her emergency contact number because I don't ever want to bother her on her weekends.

Do you think the therapy's helpful?

I find it very helpful. As one person you have a very limited perspective on your own life. So I bounce everything off of her. I even had someone I was dating go see her so she could sign off on him.

That's funny. How did you explain it to him?

Well, he needed therapy. [laughs]

What's the best thing about being a movie star at this stage?

Sometimes it makes life more fun, I think. It's nice to be able to get into restaurants and all that stuff. . . . I used to be upset that I wasn't someone like Jennifer Love Hewitt, who was on some Hundred Most Beautiful list or on the cover of *Maxim*, and everyone knows she is beautiful and everyone loves her. Even the most punk-rock art student in high school had days when they wanted to be on the cheerleading squad. The other day I was in the mall and this guy at GNC said, "You are really talented. It's an honor to meet you." I was like, that's so nice. What I realized is that I like that people actually respect me. . . . I have a hard time saying stuff like that.

Are you afraid to invest too much in acting?

Yeah, exactly. As I get older, I am actually able to admit that I really love what I do. Now I take it more seriously. I don't know, people tend to be pretentious and talk about acting as an art form.

You don't think it's an art form?

I do secretly, but I can't say it out loud.

Jay A. Fernandez profiled Miranda Richardson in the December 2002 issue.