

# Bourne

## THIS WAY

*She's the English rose turned A-list glamour puss, yet actor Rachel Weisz refuses to play the fame game. By Tiffany Bakker*

**Y**ou know, it's really hard," says Rachel Weisz, "to talk about acting without sounding like a complete wanker." If there's one thing you discover quickly about the 42-year-old British actor, it's that she's not one for niceties, particularly when it comes to her choice of occupation. "I find it curious when actors go on and on about 'the craft' as if they're curing cancer," she says. "We get to play dress-ups, we're overpaid and we have a nice life."

You certainly can't argue with that. She's an Academy Award winner (she won Best Supporting Actress in 2005 for *The Constant Gardener*), she's had a sustained yet roller-coaster career (as well as critically acclaimed films, there's *The Mummy II*), she has no interest in celebrity ("even the word is ridiculous"), she embraces her age ("I thought turning 40 was wonderful, so 50 will be amazing") and she has no desire to let slip any tidbits, inane or otherwise, about her husband, Daniel 'James Bond' Craig.

"We don't invite attention because we never talk about each other," she smiles. "But what I will say is, he's a brilliant actor."

When we meet, it's a hot and sticky New York day and Weisz, in a very un-Hollywood-like manner, has driven herself from the East Village apartment she shares with Craig and

her son, Henry, 6, to our hotel meeting point on Central Park West.

Weisz is beautiful, although not in any cookie-cutter Hollywood way. Her skin is luminous, her eyebrows so arched she once joked they were akin to "*The Planet of the Apes*". She has laugh-lines, too, insisting she has no Botox, but rather a great facialist.

It's also clear why she's become such a favourite of the fashion set – her style is classic. Today she's sporting a Chanel blazer, dark blue jeans and knee-high leather boots.

She's more relaxed than at our last meeting a few years ago, when she came across as defensive. In retrospect, she was in the midst of her break-up with director Darren Aronofsky (the father of her son) and, frankly, she's not good with bull.

Today, it's a different story. She's more than happy to talk up *The Bourne Legacy*, the latest instalment in the action franchise that's grossed almost \$1 billion. This one introduces CIA spy/assassin Aaron Cross (Jeremy Renner) and Weisz plays Marta, a scientist who, after surviving an assassination attempt by the CIA that wipes out her entire team, finds herself stuck with Cross as the two depend on each other for survival.

"I liked the fact Marta has a real moral dilemma," says Weisz. "She's doing important, cutting-edge science for her country, but she

also knows there are dodgy implications she's cut off from, yet she's ignoring them. It's like a person making bomb fuses in a factory every day, but not really thinking about where they're going. That was interesting."

*The Bourne Legacy* delivers on the franchise's strengths; it's the thinking person's blockbuster, with well developed storylines, intrigue, espionage and edge-of-your-seat action. In particular, there's one nail-biting sequence where Renner and Weisz race a motorcycle through the manic streets of Bangkok, a scene in which she did her own stunt work.

"It was terrifying," says Weisz. "Luckily, Jeremy's a good rider, but still, you have to surrender to it. And there's all the other traffic. You've never met those people – what if they have a hangover? I didn't have to act, I was f\*\*king scared."

It's good then, that Weisz likes chaos. Lots of it, in fact. For someone who comes across as so measured, she insists the opposite is true: "I like things to be chaotic; when things are calm, that's when I panic." This, perhaps, explains why she made acting a career and also why she ended up marrying an actor.

She met fellow Londoner Craig years ago, when they both had up-and-coming careers, but the two didn't have any romantic connection until late 2010, when they filmed *The Dream House* together. They married six months later.

Before that, Weisz had been in a relationship with Aronofsky (*Black Swan*) for close to a decade and, given that, her wedding seemed to happen quickly. But she was ready for it.

"It's not lightweight," she says. "There's something permanent about saying those vows. The ritual and ceremony has the weight of hundreds of years of tradition. It's incredibly profound. It's fun as well, but there's a certain weight to it."

Of the day, she says a "lovely dress" was designed for her, but she won't say by whom, and there were only four guests – including Henry, and Craig's 20-year-old daughter, Ella. Being married to another actor is "helpful," she says. "There's an understanding of the life you lead."

The pair live relatively unbothered in New York. "It's not hard to have a normal life," she says. "You do a red carpet and there are people there to talk about you, but if you just lead your life, you can lead your life, which we're able to do."

Growing up in London as the child of a psychotherapist and an inventor, Weisz >



(clockwise from left) Weisz and Jeremy Renner in *The Bourne Legacy*; out and about in New York with husband Daniel Craig; with her son, Henry.



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liked to lose herself in books, films and plays. "I'd watch Elizabeth Taylor in *National Velvet* – I loved old black-and-white movies, getting lost in the story and being transported into a different world."

While studying English at Cambridge, she started performing in university productions. "I used to be very shy and that was what was so great about acting," she says. "I could hide behind a character."

When she left college, she worked as a hat-check girl in a London club: "It wasn't

a bad job; it could be fun, watching people coming in and out. And I got chatted up, which was nice." At the same time, she did some "really crappy TV roles. But, looking back, I was excited doing them."

Weisz came to international fame when she starred in *The Mummy* in 1999, but stardom was confirmed after her "pain-in-the-butt, do-gooder" role opposite Ralph Fiennes in *The Constant Gardener*.

Since then, she's followed an eclectic path. Just when her film career hit a peak, she ditched it to go back to theatre. (She won a coveted Olivier Award in 2010 for her critically acclaimed portrayal of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.) "I don't like things to be too comfortable, and I didn't want to be caught up in that

'you're so great' thing that permeates Hollywood," she explains.

Unlike many actors, directing doesn't appeal to her. Too much control, not enough chaos: "I did direct a short film starring Joel Edgerton, whom I love, but I think 10 people saw it." She is a fan, however, of Antipodean directors: "I love Gillian Armstrong, Jocelyn Moorhouse and Jane Campion. It's interesting that so many wonderful female directors come out of Australia. I think it's because you have a female prime minister and women are in positions of power there."

Weisz is a fan of Australian women in general. "They're raunchier," she says. "The culture dictates they don't have to be girly girls, and I love that. People seem to talk about sex more; they're not puritan. Americans are very puritan and the English are just repressed. I love that Australian openness."

In fact, if she could choose her dream dinner party guests, she'd invite Armstrong and Moorhouse, as well as writers Jeanette Winterson, Gertrude Stein, Anaïs Nin and Simone De Beauvoir. "Just women. Actually, just lesbians. They're more interesting, don't you think?" ■

***The Bourne Legacy* is in cinemas now.**

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