

This mouthy 'It girl' is shaking up Hollywood with her brutal honesty, but is Megan Fox hungry for publicity or just a free spirit who won't transform for anyone?

FOX'S RUN

STORY TIFFANY BAKKER

Megan Fox enjoyed killing her co-stars in her latest film, *Jennifer's Body* – perhaps a little too much. “I loved all the blood and guts,” she says with a sly smile. “I loved beating up all the boys and biting them.”

That's not to say she enjoyed every aspect of getting physical onscreen. “Despite what people seem to think of me, it's never fun kissing people you don't know,” she laughs. “But killing them? I loved it.”

In the film, penned by Academy Award-winning screenwriter Diablo Cody (*Juno*), Fox stars as Jennifer, a possessed teenager who feeds upon the bodies of the young men at her high school. It's a plot guaranteed to have half the global male population buying a copy of it on DVD when it hits stores early next year.

In person, 23-year-old Fox is incredibly petite, dressed in a bone skin-tight knitted mini-dress and towering grey heels, which look as if they could stake themselves right through the heart of any willing teenage boy. Add to that lashings of dark eye make-up and bright red lipstick, and she looks positively vampish – a perfect mask to talk about her devilish character.

Jennifer's Body isn't just a horror movie; it's a high-camp comedy that's irreverent, thanks to Cody's typically witty dialogue. At its heart is the dysfunctional relationship between Fox's popular Jennifer and her best friend, the nerdy 'Needy', played by *Mamma Mia!*'s Amanda Seyfried (with whom Fox shares an on-screen kiss – “We knew it was gratuitous”). The film's tagline, “Hell is a teenage girl,” is on the money according to Fox.

“They're nasty, horrible little things – teenage girls,” she says. “I hated high school. It's a negative experience for everybody, even the popular girls or the ones who seem as if they're part of the 'in' crowd. I think they're probably miserable and plagued with insecurities.”

Fox was educated at a strict Christian school in Florida (“Pentecostal. You know, talking in tongues and all that”), where she was an outcast. She says girls threw things at her in the cafeteria and called her names for reasons she couldn't understand.

“I was unhappy. I had one friend – who's still my only girlfriend to this day – and we were both treated like sh*t,” says the actor. “I felt like I would have been better off educating myself and experiencing life. I was miserable.”

Worried she may be unstable, Fox's mother, Darlene, grounded her often, but it didn't curb her propensity for trouble (she was arrested for shoplifting). Fox says her unhappiness stemmed from hating school and wanting out.

“In the end, my mom let me drop out, but she made me study by correspondence, in case I didn't make it as an actor. She wanted to make sure I could get a job doing something.”

So, with school books in her suitcase, 17-year-old Fox and her mother schlepped off to LA, hell-bent on pursuing a career in acting. But instead of finding the bright lights of Hollywood and manicured lawns of Beverly Hills, they landed in Burbank – a suburb as aesthetically pleasing as a car park.

“I lived in this enormous apartment complex where other actor kids and their stage mothers lived,” she says. “When we first came to LA, we were really poor and lived off instant noodles. I once had a date with this guy and I wanted to shave my legs, but we had no razor. I had a fight with my mom because she said we didn't have the money for it. That's pretty broke. I never take anything for granted.”

“How much more obvious can I be with my sarcasm before it ceases to be sarcastic? There's pressure to change and become a bit safe”

But they survived and Darlene returned to Florida after 12 months, leaving her daughter to make her way with her aspiring flatmates. “At one point, Frankie Muniz, Shia LaBeouf, Hilary Duff and I were all living there,” she says. “Somebody should have filmed it.”

While Fox could have done with some exposure back then, today she's one of the most famous faces in the world. It's been a meteoric rise for an actor who's only appeared in a handful of films. Still, there's no doubt the brunette beauty is a publicity magnet.

There have been the inevitable Angelina Jolie comparisons (“lazy journalism,” says Fox) and, wherever she goes, a trail of paparazzi follows (even as we speak, a gaggle of them are waiting outside). Whatever she says is regurgitated by tabloids and gossip sites as soon as the words have left her mouth. In a world where celebrities are media-managed within an inch of their lives, Fox is blunt, funny and often controversial because she's never been shy about speaking her mind.

That's not to say she hasn't been burnt. A notable low was when she weighed in on the legalisation of marijuana, saying she'd be first in line to buy a joint. Predictably, uproar ensued. Then she said – as a joke, she later protested –

she'd had a lesbian fling with a stripper during her early days in LA, giving the tabloids an easy headline.

“How much more obvious can I be with my sarcasm before it ceases to be sarcastic?” says Fox. “There's pressure to change and become a bit 'vanilla' and safe, because it's horrible receiving letters from people I've offended by saying something I thought was a joke.”

And it's not only her personal life that's been under the magnifying glass. In September, unnamed crew members involved in the *Transformers* films wrote an open letter berating her for her barbed comments about director Michael Bay, for being a prima donna and for putting on a show for the press. (Another crew member later penned a public rebuttal to the claims.)

“It's annoying ending up in battles,” she says. “The obvious way to avoid that is to be

completely safe in everything you say and do, but then you lose your personality and become robotic. I don't want that. But I do want to find a happy medium, because I'm always in trouble.”

Fox says there's a double standard for what male actors get away with as opposed to their female counterparts. She points to Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears as prime examples. “It's a lose-lose. People are waiting for you to do something they can get angry about,” she says. “But then they complain when you're boring or pious and a perfect humanitarian. They think you're full of sh*t.”

The actor says she's avoided getting into Lohan-like scraps because she and her longtime boyfriend, actor Brian Austin Green (best known as the geeky David Silver from *Beverly Hills, 90210*) are hermits. “We stay home and watch TV. We play pool and pinball, and that's it,” she says.

Acting may seem a strange career choice for a woman who's uncomfortable with attention, but Fox always knew what she wanted. “When I was a toddler, I told my mom I wanted to be an actor even though I didn't understand what that meant,” she says. “I knew Judy Garland was an actor, and that she was Dorothy [in *The Wizard of Oz*], and I wanted that – whatever that was. I never had aspirations to be anything else.” >

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And, really, if you looked in the mirror and Megan Fox's face stared back at you, why wouldn't you believe you could be on the big screen? From the time she first appeared hunched over LaBeouf's Camaro in the first *Transformers* flick, she's had men (and more than a few women) salivating like puppies.

In *Jennifer's Body*, her character jokes about her oft-discussed beauty, groaning, "My skin is breaking out, my hair is dull and lifeless. I feel like one of the normal girls." Ask Fox about her own looks, however, and she squirms in her seat, scrunching her knees to her chest.

"Hollywood is focused on image, particularly women's, so the attention on me is no different than it has been on anybody else," she says. "I don't take it personally or find any deep meaning in it."

In fact, the prospect of seeing herself onscreen makes her feel "nauseous - instant diarrhoea. And that's my everyday feeling."

So why do it?

"Actors are masochistic," she says. "It's a form of self-mutilation."

She confesses she only watched *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* "to understand what the movie was actually about, so I could promote it. Because making it... I had no idea."

It seems the success she so craved hasn't always been easy to adjust to. Fox felt her confidence erode as she became more successful. "[Fame] causes a lot of stress and constant worry, and your mind becomes consumed by it," she says. "For a while, I was an insomniac. I've just returned to the point where I can sleep without any sort of aid. You have to find ways to escape it, which is why entertainers are prone to drug or alcohol abuse, because you have to get away from it. Otherwise, you'll sit in your room and give yourself a hard time."

Still, she's recently made peace with her place in the spotlight. "I can't control what people think of me," she says. "People say I'm dumb and all sorts of nasty things. But you know what? F*ck them."

She's putting the blinkers on and living life, and if people can't take it, that's their issue, she says. She's come so far and worked too hard to walk away. Fox may joke she's "no Meryl Streep" but, right now, she's a bona fide moviestar. And she's fun. Hopefully, she won't lose that sarcastic sense of humour or her habit of taking the micky, because, frankly, it's refreshing.

"I always felt as if I was moving in the right direction, for whatever reason," she says. "Even when I was poor, I never second-guessed this dream. It was just the process to get through to where I'm going."

"And I feel like I'm still getting there." **SM**

FOXING CLEVER

While easily convincing as a sexy ingénue, Megan Fox prefers to be more than just a damsel in distress.

- In the *Transformers* films, Fox plays mechanic Mikaela Banes (top right), who really knows her motors and helps save the day with her skills.
- She recently took home the Best Sci-Fi Actress award at the Spike TV Scream Awards, for her sizzling turn in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*.
- In *Jennifer's Body* (right), the creative team wanted to maintain Fox's allure even when she was in demon form, so they kept her eyes real and only used special effects from the nose down.

