

MOVIES

WITH FILM EDITOR TARA BRADY



DERRDE EITZPATRICK

“PEOPLE THINK THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU WHEN YOU BECOME AN ACTOR BUT IT’S NOT TRUE FOR ME. I WAS NEVER BULLIED AND I WAS NEVER A BULLY AT SCHOOL. THERE WAS NEVER ANY LACK THAN I NEEDED TO COMPENSATE FOR. I’M JUST A LITTLE ATTENTION SEEKER REALLY.”

successes to date, she has nice things to say about such former co-stars as Judi Dench (“She’s so cool; no wonder they named a street after her”) and Martin Mc Cann (“He’s the most hilarious person... ever!”).

She protests that she is, in fact, “slightly arrogant” but frankly we’re not buying. Utterly unaffected by the blandishments of stardom, she still hangs out with the same girls she played with in the schoolyard and has already enjoyed years of

marital bliss with the actor, Christian Contreras.

“I’m not lacking in anything,” she says. “People think there has to be something wrong with you when you become an actor but it’s not true for me. I was never bullied and I was never a bully at school. There was never any lack than I needed to compensate for. I’m just a little attention seeker really.”

How then, can she possibly account for her chosen profession?

“I was rubbish at school,” she says. “I was shit at everything except P.E. until I took drama. I just took to it like a duck to water. I hate being bad at things. I’m learning Spanish at the minute and I spend most of my time shouting at the computer and telling it it’s wrong. When drama came along here was the one thing I was best at. So I went for it. We were never pushed academically at home. But we were sports mad so I do have that competitive, ambitious side.”

She remains true to her roots by regularly commuting from her London home to see her mates. She retains, also, a fanatical devotion to sports. In between shoots *One Day*, a new rom-dram also starring Anne Hathaway and the latest Jimmy McGovern project, she still treks across London to watch Fulham.

“I’m just a tomboy,” she says. “We live in north London but we’ve ended up going to the Cottage because we love it there. I go by the Emirates everyday and it’s architecturally very impressive and everything but it’s not a real stadium like Fulham have. And I’ll always love cricket. If you’re not into cricket I’ll bet your Saturdays and Sundays are far more exciting than mine.”

Swansong: *The Occi Byrne Story* opens September 10

GREEN DAY



How did a young girl from the Yorkshire depths end up starring in two back-to-back Irish movies? **JODIE WHITTAKER** talks about channelling her inner Celt for *Swansong: The Occi Byrne Story* **WORDS Tara Brady**

“I’ve no idea how I managed it,” says Jodie Whittaker. “I ended up doing two films back-to-back in Ireland but there was no connection between them. I’m just a lucky girl, I suppose.”

Born in Yorkshire and raised on a steady diet of cricket and soccer, the award-winning 27-year-old actress isn’t sure how she ended up with so many Irish people in her life. First, there was Peter O’Toole, her co-star in the Oscar nominated *Venus*, the 2006 film that catapulted Ms. Whittaker into the limelight.

“He’s amazing,” she says. “Such a proud Irishman

and such great fun. I learned so much watching him work. But energy is important too. Had Peter been great in *Venus* but horrible to me on set I wouldn’t have been able to take much from the experience.”

This year, we’ve already watched the young star doing her thing alongside Cillian Murphy in the Dublin-set caper, *Perrier’s Bounty*. But *Swansong: The Occi Byrne Story*, her second Irish movie, was, she admits, a much steeper learning curve.

“In *Perrier’s Bounty*, I wasn’t required to do an accent,” she says. “So learning how to speak like a Connacht woman was enjoyable but completely terrifying. Before I started I didn’t even realize there

were different Dublin accents so I had a lot of work to do. I’m from Yorkshire so I know that a couple of miles down the road, you can find completely different sounds and I also know how annoying it is when you hear some actor getting it all wrong. You don’t want to let down an entire dialect.”

Set in the grim ‘70s, newcomer Conor McDermott Roe’s misery memoir charts the misfortunes visited upon its title character (Martin McCann, excellent) as he grows up without a father in a petty, insular town. Ms. Whittaker, who plays Occi’s much put-upon mother, was thrilled to be involved with such a weighty project.

“Conor is a fantastic person,” she says. “He and the producers fought so hard to get this made. It’s been so much graft. He wrote a one-man show, toured the world with it and then made it into this incredible movie. If I didn’t like him I’d be sickened.”

Is playing an alcoholic mother in the west of Ireland more work or just different to shooting movies like *St. Trinian’s*?

“It’s just different,” she says. “I loved making both for different reasons. With *St. Trinian’s* it’s always a girlie party with people like Gemma Arterton around. You can’t stop mucking about.”

If Jodie Whittaker has a bad word for anyone she certainly does a great job of hiding it. Bubbling with enthusiasm and no little gratitude for her