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RACHEL WEISZ PHOTOGRAPHED FOR GQ
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THE SEX ISSUE!

RACHEL WEISZ: BRITAIN'S MOST PROVOCATIVE MOVIE STAR
BY JAMES MULLINGER

**PLUS > THIERRY HENRY > GIOVANNI RIBISI > LARRY FLYNT
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RACHEL WEISZ

RACHEL

A few years ago, Rachel Weisz was doing good work in Brit flicks. Then she was yummy in *The Mummy* and went A List. Here she reveals all to GQ, talking burgers, Bergman and baring all in blockbusters

Story by James Mullinger Photographs by David Ferrua Styling by Alexia Somerville



'I'VE BEEN APPROACHED TO DO PLAYBOY A COUPLE OF TIMES. I THOUGHT ABOUT DOING IT, I REALLY DID'



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'I NEVER WANT TO HAVE TO THINK ABOUT MY WORK IN TERMS OF WHAT PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET ARE GOING TO DO WITH IT'

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“Mmmm, delicious”

Rachel Weisz is fingering her way through a plateful of crab in a cosy corner of Milos, a rusticated little Greek restaurant on Avenue du Parc, in the centre of Montreal, Canada. “I love Greek food,” she coos. “I like peasant food when I go to a restaurant. I can’t stand nouvelle cuisine; I hate the whole performance when they bring you a sun-dried tomato seed and charge you £40 for it. It makes me angry. What you’re getting is the chef’s ego on a plate. Food like that reminds me of an over-stylised film.”

This is the fourth time Rachel Weisz has been interviewed by *GQ* – and the fourth time she has thoroughly disarmed her interlocutor. I feel obliged to ask why it is that seemingly every reporter sent to meet her comes back beaming like a goofy child. In an uncharacteristic display of insincerity, she claims to have no idea what I’m talking about.

“I don’t know what they’re normally like,” she says, “so I can’t compare.” I tell her that normally they’re miserable buggers who would barely crack a smile if they won the lottery. “I never know what journalists are thinking,” she says. “But I’ve always had a really nice time with those from *GQ*.”

Rachel is coy about her sex symbol status, but the facts speak for themselves. On the internet, she’s regarded as a goddess. She says she has never Googled herself. Happily, I have,

and I’ve brought some of the results along to show her. The first concerns a poll to determine the 100 Sexiest Movie Stars Ever. Rachel’s fans are – rightly – appalled that she doesn’t make an appearance until number 72. “Rachel should be higher,” rants one correspondent. “In my opinion, she is the most beautiful and natural-looking woman ever. She has beautiful eyes, a sensuous mouth, gorgeous hair and a terrific body.”

Is she happier with her positioning? “That depends,” she purrs. “Who is number 71?” It’s Kate Bosworth. And behind Rachel are James Dean, Cary Grant, Lauren Bacall and Ursula Andress. “Well, in that case, I think number 72 is a very dignified spot.”

Another online screed: “Why does Rachel Weisz appear nude in so many of her films?” (Note to obsessives: the films in question are *Stealing Beauty*, *Enemy At The Gates* and *I Want You*). One fan lists three possible reasons why she’s happy to strip off: she feels confident in herself; she feels it’s vital to the story; she likes the thrill of being nude. How accurate is this?

‘I NEVER KNOW WHAT JOURNALISTS ARE THINKING. BUT I’VE ALWAYS HAD A NICE TIME WITH THOSE FROM GQ’

“I don’t think I’ve done any nude scenes for a long time,” she says uncertainly. “When I started out I didn’t really think about it. I guess it’s only when people post it on the internet. It’s bonkers, it’s a proper geek culture.”

Would all this titillated geek-speak put her off going nude in the future? “No, I never want to have to think about my work in terms of what people on the internet are going to do with it.”

Away from cyberspace, she has been approached to do a nude shoot for *Playboy* “a couple of times”. “I thought about it for a good second. I really did; I imagined it. They do have quite serious pieces in their magazine. They have proper journalism. Their retouching is just not sexy is it? It’s not like *GQ*’s.” Quite right, too.

We are here in Montreal because Rachel is filming *The Fountain*, her first film with her boyfriend, the acclaimed American director Darren Aronofsky. While cagey on the subject of their relationship – understandable, perhaps, considering the media circus that surrounded her earlier relationship with the actor Neil Morrissey – she does admit that she has now bought a home in New York, where Aronofsky lives. She is, however, keen to talk about the film, despite being ordered not to. Rehearsals began two weeks ago and the rest of the cast, including Hugh Jackman and Ellen Burstyn, are arriving in a few days. ▶

RACHEL WEISZ

► "It's a love story that spans three ages," she says, licking her fingers. "It's set in a 16th-century Spanish court, the present day and the year 2050." Rachel and Hugh play lovers across the ages.

"The script," she says mysteriously, "is very architecturally designed."

The Fountain is one of three films that Rachel has been working on over the past year. They are set to secure her transition from acclaimed actress to household name and fully fledged movie star. She recently completed work on *The Constant Gardener*, based on the John le Carré novel, co-starring Ralph Fiennes and directed by *City Of God*'s brilliant Fernando Meirelles. "Fernando has a completely different style of movie-making," she says. "It was like making a documentary. We were shooting in the slums in Nairobi, Kenya and I was just walking around in character and they were filming whatever happened. It's very tense."

First up, however, is *Constantine*, one of early 2005's must-see movies, with Rachel, Keanu Reeves and Tilda Swinton leading the cast.

'RACHEL HAS BEAUTIFUL EYES,' SAYS ONE INTERNET FAN, 'A SENSUOUS MOUTH AND A REALLY TERRIFIC BODY'

A disturbing, violent affair, it's based on the DC/Vertigo comic *Hellblazer*, about a supernatural detective, John Constantine, who has the ability to co-habit between hell and earth. Despite his powers, he is dying of lung cancer. Fans of the comic were predictably sceptical until an extended trailer was released, suggesting that none of the original's intensity had been compromised.

Rachel says that it's precisely this darkness that attracted her to the project. "Keanu is not playing a nice, sweet hero," she says. "He's very nasty. It's essentially about people being possessed and the idea of free will. We all have demons whispering in our ears, tempting us to do bad. I play two characters – identical twins. One is an LAPD detective who teams up with Constantine to determine whether or not her twin killed herself."

Film industry buzz suggests that Rachel's earning power has increased considerably. Is it true that she was paid £2.6m for *Constantine*? "In my dreams," she says, "although I guess that's good press. I assure you it was nowhere near that amount."

Multimillion-pound earner or not, at 33 Rachel has finally secured her position on Hollywood's A list – but she's had to work hard to get there. A native of genteel Hampstead, north London, in her teens Rachel declined the offer of a part in Richard Gere's ill-fated *King David*, at the behest of her father who wanted her to concentrate on her studies.

She read English literature at Cambridge, where she founded the Talking Tongues theatre group and decided to pursue a career as an actress.

After graduating in 1993, she turned down a place at drama school only to be cast weeks later in a BBC adaptation of *Scarlet And Black*, alongside Ewan McGregor (and in which she also disrobed). Bit parts followed before she landed a role in Bernardo Bertolucci's 1996 art-house film *Stealing Beauty*, which opens with a scene in which Rachel sunbathes topless.

Rachel failed to ignite the box office later that year with *Chain Reaction* (her first collaboration with Keanu Reeves), or with *The Land Girls* and *I Want You* in 1998. The latter nevertheless remains Rachel's favourite film. Her star rose with 1999's blockbuster hit *The Mummy*. After that, *The Mummy Returns* and *About A Boy* assured her position: the combined box office takings of those three films is almost £300m.

Such success meant Rachel could afford to enjoy an artistic detox now and again with independent pictures like Neil LaBute's *The Shape Of Things* – which began life as

a play in London and New York, also starring Rachel. "Like any movie-going person," she says, "I do have a blockbuster side of me. Sometimes you just want to go and see the most incredible, powerful, moving Mike Leigh movie and sometimes you want to be entertained. A human being can have both desires in them and it's the same for an actress."

Despite her success in Hollywood, Rachel has resisted the LA-centric impulse to flatten out her curves. She works out but remains charmingly voluptuous. She acknowledges that she has to watch what she eats to stay movie-star slim, but she refuses to starve herself. When was the last time she ate a McDonald's? "I haven't had one for a while now. They are delicious, though. You can't beat a double cheeseburger. McDonald's gets it so right: the sweetness of the bun, the creaminess of the cheese, the onion." She lets out an orgasmic sigh. "Everything's spot-on."

Dustin Hoffman recently compared Rachel to the legendary Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman, star of *Casablanca*. "That's an amazingly lovely thing for him to say," she says, clearly flattered by the comparison. "I wish. I love Ingrid Bergman. So classy."

Hoffman knows of what he speaks: he and Rachel have been in two films together: *Runaway Jury* and *Confidence*. The latter was a noirish con flick in which Rachel oozed sex appeal as a blonde pickpocket. The former, based on a typically overwrought John Grisham

novel, was an entertaining courtroom drama with an anti-firearms message. Rachel feels strongly about this. "The gun problem in America is out of control. Americans just don't understand when you tell them that there's no gun crime in England. If the police have guns, then the criminals get guns. If it's there you're going to use it."

Rachel followed *Runaway Jury* and *Confidence* with *Envy*, another film which frustratingly squandered its cast's talents. Starring Rachel – sporting a very fetching skin-tight leopard-skin one-piece – Jack Black and Ben Stiller, *Envy* had everything going for it. The premise was ludicrous but appealing – man (Black) invents an aerosol spray that vaporises dog poo, makes a fortune, neighbour (Stiller) develops uncontrollable jealousy – but someone forgot to put any jokes in the script.

"I had great fun doing *Envy*," she says.

"I couldn't ask for a better masterclass in comedy than working with Ben Stiller and Jack Black, but unfortunately it didn't work out very well. The tone was a bit off. I thought it was going to be my calling card into comedy. In America they think I'm a very serious dramatic actress." After she completes work on *The Fountain*, she really, really wants to do a play in London.

Then she is due to start work on *Barry*, the true story of James Miranda Barry who, in the early part of the 19th century, became the first woman doctor but was forced to keep her gender a secret. Rachel is due to play the title role but the producers are still trying to get the money together. One suspects they shouldn't have too much trouble once Rachel has signed on the dotted line.

Rumours have abounded recently about Rachel and her predicted casting in Ron Howard's film adaptation of Dan Brown's bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code*. She is currently the hot favourite to play Sophie, the French-speaking female lead. "You're joking," she exclaims, clearly astounded that this information has escaped. "My agent asked me if I could speak French. I guess they've been asking that of all the actresses."

Well, can you? She grins. "The answer's yes, I do speak French." Her Hollywood power points may be at an all-time high, but this isn't going to stop her speaking her mind: "I haven't yet read the book but," she says, leaning in conspiratorially, "I understand the prose is mind-bogglingly bad."

On the way to the door, Rachel leans forward for a farewell kiss before darting skilfully for the door. Her coat awaits, proffered by the waiter who is presumably in possession of the longest straw.

Wrapped up and ready to brace the bitter Canadian winter, she turns for a final wave accompanied by a sultry smirk. She then skips down the stairs and out the door, apparently blithely unaware of the stupid grin spreading across my face. ☺

Constantine is out on 18 March.



Dress by Roberto Cavalli, £1,150. 020-7823 1879.
Bra by Agent Provocateur, £75. 020-7439 0229
Stylist's assistants: Alison Morse (US) and Nana (UK)

'IT'S GREAT TO BE COMPARED TO INGRID BERGMAN. I LOVE HER. SHE'S SO CLASSY'