

LONDON FILM



IMOGEN POOTS

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Neoclassic beauty with a quick brain. She is one of the most in demand actresses of the moment. Terence Malick included. But, kisses on set, are banned.



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IMOGEN POOTS

Act the way you'd like to be and soon you'll be the way you act. (Leonard Cohen)

IMOGEN POOTS LOVES TO QUOTE LEONARD COHEN, HER LIFETIME ICON.

“ONE OF MY HIDDEN PLEASURES IS MUSIC AT NIGHT, WAKING UP AT 3AM AND LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF MR. COHEN. I adore him: if I ever had to meet him, I'd faint from the excitement”. Often the abilities of up and coming actors are judged by the cast they are working with, and, if this was a rule to determine her talent, Imogen Poots would have no problem and would be at the top of the most in demand actresses in Hollywood, as she has worked alongside Michael Douglas, Christopher Walken, Colin Farrell, Anton Yelchin, Christian Bale, Michael Fassbender and Natalie Portman, her favourite actress. Raised in Chiswick, on the outskirts of London, in a house full of books, Imogen – Immie, as her friends call her – begins acting as a child in as part of a theatre collective. “I used to go to the theatre with my mother Fiona and my brother Alex. My father Trevor is a TV producer, works with Sir David Frost, therefore I can easily talk about work at home as I know not only I will be understood, but I'm also supported in what I do”. Her first important role was obtained at 14, for the TV series Casualty. “The director had to explain to me what an toxic shock syndrome is, a very rare syndrome that affects menstruating women. It was not easy!”. In the following role, she plays a lesbian, in V for Vendetta, by the brothers Larry & Andy Wachowski (it is not relevant that Larry became Lana shortly after). “No kisses! For the sexier scenes, I was replaced by a stand-in. I was lucky to have a family that advises me and ensures I'm not exploited. In this field, it's easy to find someone that tries to take advantage of you and fucks you up”. With 28 Weeks Later, Centurion and Jane Eyre she was finally exposed to a larger audience.

One thing is clear: despite the angelic looks and the penetrating look of a neo classic beauty, her language and her quick thinking are definitely refreshing. We caught up for a quick chat at Comic-Con in San Diego before she disappears off to deal with ten projects that will keep her occupied for the next 16 months, featuring in films that go from the porn world (Paul Raymond Story by Michael Winterbottom), the one of music (classical music in A Late Quartet by Daniel Algrant and rock&roll with All Is By My Side before Jimi Hendrix and Keith Richards became famous), love, philosophy and truth (in Knight Of Cups by Terrence Malick, out next year).

IMOGEN, LIKE THE PROTAGONIST OF CYMBELINE, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S WORK?

Yes. But as it is such a weird name, it's often mispronounced but I'm not bothered, I take on all the responsibility for it, it's only my fault if I have a fundamentally ridiculous name.



WHY ACTING?

I've always thought that it was a good way to meet cool, creative people. I like the precarious nature of this job. It is not a normal, steady, secure job, it is a world full of accidents, of extremely negative aspects, yet when it works, it's very rewarding. It's not very healthy, it recalls the effects of an addiction and some illicit substances.

YOU ARE ENROLLED AT THE COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART IN LONDON, BUT YOU HAVEN'T GRADUATED YET.

I've missed the last two years because I found myself acting full time. I would like to carry on studying, even though I have to admit I have learnt a lot more on set than I have in the classroom. Either way, I want to graduate, even just to do it for my mom.

DO YOU STILL PAINT?

I paint, draw; I bought a small flat in Fulham, where I have space for a studio. I love art, not in the conventional sense of the term, but in a much more affected way, even though I have to admit a weakness for the struggling suffering that all great artists experience, the torture of the creative aspect.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE ROLES?

Those where women are not considered as objects. If a part is too mono dimensional, I can't accept it. I always try and be a bit feminist. I am inspired by the courageous choices made by Judi Dench and Maggie Smith, who've always tried to change, challenge, evolve. Life's too short to put effort into roles I don't believe in.

PASSIONS?

I couldn't live without music. I am a great fan and friend of Mumford & Sons, I adore above all Johnny Cash, I like Laura Marling, Joanna Newsom and the new folk renaissance. I also listen to The Smiths and the vocalisms of Fifties Doo-Wop, because they unite rhythm & blues with rock 'n' roll. My iTunes also features Charles Bukowski and Allen Ginsberg, that end up played randomly in some playlist; every now and again they pop up when you least expect it. It's great to hear the beginning of Howl- "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked..." - followed by a Depeche Mode song. Recently, I've also had to learn to play the violin. Initially, I found the phallic movement of the bow amusing! Then I became passionate (she laughs with irony), I'd like to become good enough to record an album.



YOU HAVE RECENTLY FILMED A BIOPIC ON TIM BUCKLEY.

The film is called Greetings from Tim Buckley. I play the part of a girl who meets Jeff Buckley, Tim's son, while he prepares a tribute concert for the father. Thanks to my brother I have listened to Jeff Buckley when I was a child, so being part of this project has taken me back in time. I have always loved his fantastic voice and the lyrics of his songs. Pure poetry, he was an extraordinary man.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME OF TERRENCE MALICK?

I couldn't wait to work with Terrence. I found him incredibly prepared, studious, a philosopher, a custodian of his own ideas. He has a unique directing style from anyone I've ever worked with before, often in contrast with the prepping criteria us actors have: when you are on set with Terrence, where there usually are tens of people involved in the film, you can sometimes find yourself alone with him and the cameraman, you walk, talk, search for a real, true moment, as opposed to a narrative moment. There's a lot of filming, more than with other directors. He wants us to act spontaneously, without a screenplay, without thinking about the scene and especially where it takes place. Often, when you are doing a film with him, you never know whether you will stay within the film or whether you'll be edited out. In my film, so far, there's Christian Bale, Natalie Portman and Cate Blanchett. Who knows, I might get cut, too. ●

