

Hollywood, Etc.: Radcliffe sheds 'Harry' persona to embark on a journey to adulthood

by Roger Showley

BEVERLY HILLS - The tagline for "December Boys" - "After that summer, nothing would ever be the same" - has special meaning to its star, Daniel Radcliffe.

BEYOND POTTER - In 'December Boys,' Daniel Radcliff sheds his Harry Potter persona. CNS Photo by Lisa Tomassetti. Radcliffe, 18, The lead in the "Harry Potter" series, says he now knows he can play something besides a wizard, even if the role of Maps represents the third time he's played an orphan.

This year he also debuted in a London West End production of "Equus," for which he had to drop trousers and blind horses. He hopes to reprise the role on Broadway late next year.

A made-for-TV, BBC movie, "My Son Jack," in which he plays Rudyard Kipling's son killed in World War I, is debuting this fall.

And he has left school with no intention of going on to college - spiking rumors last spring that he was headed for Princeton.

"I'm not bright enough," he said, adding that he also had been linked to Yale, Melbourne University and several campuses in England. "But for me, I'm not going to uni, much to the relief of the Princeton alumni."

In an interview in his hotel at the end of a whirlwind of appearances promoting "December Boys," his new movie, Radcliffe proved bright enough to succeed at any college. For example, he said he intends to continue his education several hours a week with his English teacher, Tony O'Sullivan.

"What will be great is it's without the pressure of exams and deadlines," he said. "He's going to take me through the books you need someone's help with, like 'Paradise Lost' and 'Ulysses,' stuff I would never be able to read without help to illuminate it for me."

And he let slip a couple of insights and ambitions not previously reported.

Example: He's not very good at video games unless they involve managing a sports team.

"I think I'm better behind the scenes," he said.

He likes fantasy football-type pursuits but doesn't have time to follow made-up teams closely; he's particularly keen on cricket.

"I might sign up next year for a laugh, but if you think about it, it's a pretty full-time thing. You have to pay a lot of attention. I think I'll make a list of players I like and follow them."

BECOMING HARRY

Radcliffe has been acting since he was 10 years old - his first role was in the BBC production of "David Copperfield" in 1999 - and won the coveted title role of Harry Potter in 2000.

Recently, he started filming the sixth film, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," and he is committed to the seventh and final segment, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," expected to be released in 2010.

"Potter's a marathon, not a sprint, as the saying goes," he said, and he expects to spend 9 1/2 hours a day on it for the next eight to 10 months. "We'll get a break at Christmas, and other than that, you're there. It's fun for me because I'm there every day, so you get in a rhythm, a very regular rhythm with it, so it's very easy to relax."

For the record, Radcliffe said he read the final book shortly after it was released in July, but had not a chance to chat with other cast members about who lives or dies until they reconvened on the set this month.

"December Boys" was shot in November and December 2005 - as an independent film, it's taken this long to get it released - so Radcliffe's sex scene with Teresa Palmer prepared him for his kissing scene shot in this year's "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix."

Filming on a tight schedule with a new crew and a mature theme represented a life-changing experience for Radcliffe on several levels.

"It gave me confidence to think I can do other things, go off and do other movies. That's really nice," he said.

In his role as Maps, he experienced the same sort of joy and letdown any 16-year-old feels with his first girlfriend.

"It resonated with me when I read the script, and that's why I wanted to be involved with the movie," he said.

Radcliffe also smokes (herbal cigarettes, actually) and guzzles a bottle of beer (probably just water) and serves as the role model for three other orphans in the story about a summer holiday and the meaning of family.

"I think everybody has had a summer where it's been influential on the rest of their life," he said.

But when he came of age July 23, he said, he didn't feel any older, wiser or more mature. When he looked in the mirror that morning, he said, "I saw somebody who didn't know how to be 18. That's why I really like the Maps character. We are in a similar place and have been for a while, and just trying to figure out how to be a man and wondering even what that means."

HOME LIFE

Reportedly the richest teen in Britain, Radcliffe said he and his parents still live in a semi-detached house in the west London suburb of Fulham and have not had to take any special precautions against stalkers or paparazzi.

"If it does happen, we are prepared," he said.

He dotes on his two border terriers, Binka and Nugget, the latter coincidentally the same name of the lead horse in "Equus."

"They're just great, and I love them and miss them very much when I'm not with them," he said.

He's also attached to his iPod and cell phone. "I find it sort of pathetic, the sense of total panic that sweeps over me if I lose my phone. It's terrible how dependent I am, as I think everybody has become. It's awful and depressing, but they have become very important now."

Unlike other young movie stars, Radcliffe has so far stayed out of trouble, thanks in part to close supervision and support from his parents.

"Also, I have some fantastic friends who keep you grounded," he said. "They keep you levelheaded, just because they're honest and they would never pander to me if I was being demanding or difficult or anything like that. I'm not naturally like that as a person at all. Even if I was, they would slap me down again."

But now, as Radcliffe takes charge of his career, he faces a choice among many personal goals.

One route is mapped out in the final Potter book's epilogue, set 19 years into the future. Harry at 37 is married to Ginny Weasley, working at the Ministry of Magic and sending off their two children to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He's happy, domestic and no longer bothered by his scar.

Where will Radcliffe himself be at that same age, 19 years from now?

"I don't know; it's impossible to say," he said.

He'd like to do a purely comedic role - he had a taste of that in a Potter parody performed on the British program "Extras" last year - but said every good drama, even "Equus," has its humorous moments.

He sings a bit in "December Boys" and would jump at the chance to appear in a musical.

"There's one musical which I have my heart set on, but I'm not going to say what it is just in case it never happens," he said.

But he scoffs at the idea of a musical adaptation of "Harry Potter," reportedly in development in London.

"I don't want to sound too horrible," he said. "I would just say I could see no way in which that could work." He hasn't seen the musical adaptation of that other big fantasy, "Lord of the Rings."

Meanwhile, Radcliffe hopes to bounce between stage and screen, learning from veteran actors and directors along the way.

"Hopefully, I'll still be acting" in 2026, he said. "I'll be writing and maybe along the way or further than that, I'd like to direct something. But this is all very hypothetical, so I don't know; I couldn't possibly say."

Would he be married with two kids?

"Maybe. I don't know. It depends on who I meet."

OTHER YOUNG STARS

Daniel Radcliffe has plenty of company when it comes to child stars who transitioned into contemporary adult actors. Among them:

- Christian Bale, 33

Beginnings: British ads and theater from age 9, "Empire of the Sun" (1987).

Adult highlights: "American Psycho," "Batman Begins," "3:10 to Yuma."

- Drew Barrymore, 32

Beginnings: "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial" (1982).

Adult highlights: Voice of Jillian in "Family Guy"; actor/producer "Fever Pitch," "Donnie Darko," and the "Charlie's Angels" movies.

- Leonardo DiCaprio, 32

Beginnings: "Critters 3" (1991), "Growing Pains" (1991). Oscar nom: "What's Eating Gilbert Grape" (1993).

Adult highlights: "Titanic," "The Departed"; narrator/producer "The 11th Hour"; Oscar noms: "Blood Diamond," "The Aviator."

- Matt Dillon, 43

Beginnings: "Over the Edge" (1979), "Little Darlings" (1980), "My Bodyguard" (1980).

Adult highlights: "You, Me and Dupree," "Something About Mary"; Oscar nom: "Crash."

- Patty Duke, 60

Beginnings: Kraft Television Theatre (1957), Oscar win for "Miracle Worker" (1961), Emmy win for "The Patty Duke Show" (1963).

Adult highlights: Emmy noms: "Touched by an Angel," "George Washington."

- Jodie Foster, 44

Beginnings: Ads from age 2, "Mayberry R.F.D."; Oscar nom: "Taxi Driver" (1976).

Adult highlights: Director of "Home for the Holidays," "Little Man Tate"; actor/producer "The Brave One"; Oscar wins: "The Accused," "The Silence of the Lambs"; Oscar nom: "Nell."

- Ryan Gosling, 26

Beginnings: "The Mickey Mouse Club" (1993).

Adult highlights: "The Notebook," "Fracture"; Oscar nom: "Half Nelson."

- Jackie Earle Haley, 46

Beginnings: Ads from age 6, "The Bad News Bears" (1976), "Breaking Away" (1979).

Adult highlights: "All the King's Men"; Oscar nom: "Little Children."

- Katherine Heigl, 28

Beginnings: Ads from age 9, "That Night" (1992), "King of the Hill" (1993), "Under Siege 2: Dark Territory" (1995).

Adult highlights: "Knocked Up"; Emmy win: "Grey's Anatomy."

- Ron Howard, 53

Beginnings: "Frontier Woman" (1956), "The Andy Griffith Show" (1960), "Happy Days" (1974).

Adult highlights: Narrator of TV's "Arrested Development"; director/producer "The Da Vinci Code," "The Cinderella Man"; Oscar wins (director/producer): "A Beautiful Mind."

- Shia LaBeouf, 21

Beginnings: "Monkey Business" (1998), "Holes" (2003); Emmy win: "Even Stevens" (2000-2003).

Adult highlights: "Transformers," "Disturbia," Steven Spielberg's upcoming "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull."

- Sarah Jessica Parker, 42

Beginnings: TV and theater from age 8, "Square Pegs" (1982).

Adult highlights: "Failure to Launch," "The Family Stone"; Emmy wins (actor/producer): "Sex and the City."

- Joaquin Phoenix, 32

Beginnings: TV roles from age 8, "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" (1982), "SpaceCamp" (1986), "Parenthood" (1989) (as Leaf until 1991).

Adult highlights: "To Die For," "The Village"; Oscar noms: "Walk the Line," "Gladiator."

- Natalie Portman, 26

Beginnings: Modeling and ads from age 4, "Developing" (1994), "The Professional" (1994), "Beautiful Girls" (1996).

Adult highlights: "V for Vendetta," "Star Wars" series; Oscar nom: "Closer."

- Brooke Shields, 42

Beginnings: TV movie "After the Fall" (1974), "Pretty Baby" (1978), "The Blue Lagoon" (1980).

Adult highlights: actor/producer TV's "Suddenly Susan"; guest star "Nip/Tuck," "Two and a Half Men," "Hannah Montana."

- Kurt Russell, 56

Beginnings: TV roles and Disney TV movies from age 12.

Adult highlights: "Grindhouse," "Poseidon," "Silkwood"; Emmy nom: "Elvis."

(Beth Wood and Jo Anne Glover contributed to this story.)

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