

# HEROES & INSPIRATIONS

# JODIE WHITTAKER

WHAT MAKES A TIME LORD TICK? THE NEW  
DOCTOR SHARES HER FAVES WITH  
NICK SETCHFIELD

Portraits by Andrew H Walker

**J**ODIE WHITTAKER HAS A COSPLAY confession. "I wanted to go to Comic-Con as Dustin from *Stranger Things*," she reveals, clearly unafraid to cross the streams of geek culture and potentially trigger the total collapse of reality. "I would have loved to have given myself a really tight curl and a baseball cap. But I couldn't, because I was Jodie! I was my own person! I went as the Thirteenth Doctor instead..."

As the latest incarnation of the Gallifreyan icon Whittaker is on the brink of becoming a hero and an inspiration herself. So what better moment to sit down with her in a London hotel suite and discover the stuff that rocks her universe. She gives vibrant, heartfelt conversation, her brain pinballing between passions at authentic Time Lord speed: everything from *Annihilation* to Al Pacino to Arcade Fire ("Wake Up" is the song I'd have played at my funeral!) earn honorary mentions.

She's one of us. Someone who relishes the opportunity to geek out. "I am in love with film and television," she tells *SFX*, "and even now I can be knocked sideways by something, and be so excited." Hello, *Stranger Things*. "That kind of adventure is absolutely what made me fall in love with cinema, and also why I wanted to be an actor

in the first place. I didn't study film. I wanted to slide down the waterfall. Essentially I wanted to be Indiana Jones. I didn't want to be tied up going, 'Indy!'"

## MARTHA PLIMPTON

My first female hero was probably Martha Plimpton in *The Goonies*, because in that crowd that's who I could see myself as. Really I wanted to be Mikey, or Chunk, because he gets to swing on a rope, but I looked at her and she had that awkward look and the short hair... I had short hair. And Jennifer Connelly in *Labyrinth*, because she had flaws and I loved seeing that as a young girl, seeing her trying to

right her mistakes, through this extraordinary and absolutely terrifying adventure. My role models were very often played by boys or men. In *ET* I wanted to be Elliott. Maybe it was just down to being brought up in a house where we didn't have this gender-specific upbringing but I never thought I wouldn't be able to do it because I was a girl. I was used to watching Atreyu in *NeverEnding Story* and wanting to be that part. I didn't want to be the princess while everything collapses around you! Now I'm about to be embraced as a female version of Doctor Who. I love the fact I can look up to anyone and they don't have to look like me, which is hopefully what will happen with this, like the young boys won't suddenly go, "I don't want to look up to a girl!"

## PETER O'TOOLE

All my scenes in *Venus* were with him. It wasn't about hitting marks, it wasn't about anything except exploring a scene and the characters and to do that with one of the greatest actors of our time... It came at a perfect time because I was so young and so naïve. If it was now I'd be not intimidated but much more nervous of the moment. I was just a bit of a stropky teenager. I was like, "Hiya, you alright?" I asked him loads of questions and he always gave me wonderful answers. I also had a hundred Peter O'Toole →





Whittaker acted alongside the legendary Peter O'Toole in *Venus*.

“I was a bit of a stropky teenager when I first met Peter O'Toole”

stories that people would tell me. I'd say, “Is this true, because my mum's friend said that you did this back in whenever...” And he'd be like, “Oh, I don't remember...” He was incredibly generous with me, because I was just this little kid who was nattering away. What impressed me about him was that he'd done loads of work. I thought oh, surely you get to that age and you don't need to do your homework, because you know what you're doing, but his script was covered in notes. I felt really inspired by the fact that no matter how long you do this job, you can always be learning, because then it's never boring. And you're not boring.

**ET: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL**

It's an exploration of adult themes through the eyes of a boy and a beautiful alien. That story covers so much. It's about divorce, it's about isolation, it's about fear, it's about love and it's about loving without understanding. It's about home. It's about hope. I play the soundtrack a lot, particularly the bike scene.

Drew Barrymore in that? Unbelievable. [Breaks into six-year-old Drew Barrymore voice] “We're going to the spaceship!” Gertie! That performance! Just the snot and the tears.

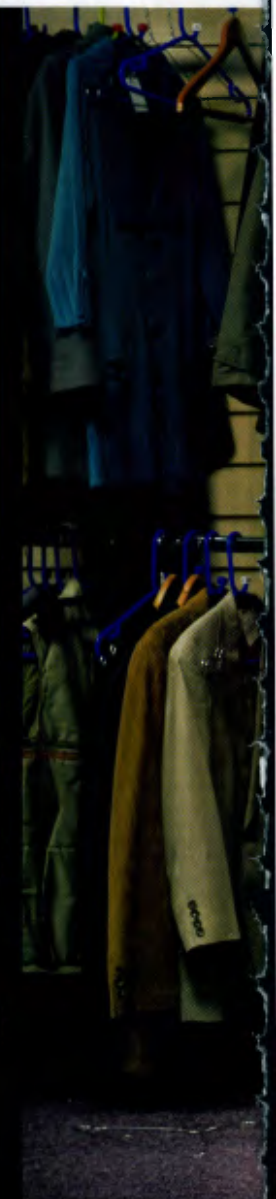
I absolutely adore that film. I just think it has everything. →



The Doctor and her new friends look to the stars.



We're digging that new coat.



# THE XX

“WOMEN ARE NOT A GENRE...”  
TALKING WHO AND EQUALITY  
WITH JODIE WHITTAKER

**BETWEEN AUDITIONS FOR THE ROLE YOU WERE SENDING SHOWRUNNER CHRIS CHIBNALL INSPIRING PHOTOS YOU'D FOUND. HOW DID THAT HELP SHAPE YOUR TAKE ON THE DOCTOR?**

At that point it was more trying to woo Chris into giving me the part, but what I was finding were images that I really responded to, and a lot of the time it was someone, not necessarily an alien, but a thing or a person or an object that was otherworldly to the environment of the picture. I really loved the contrast between, say, someone in a suit stood on Mars. There were a lot of pieces of art that I found – not art, more graphic design stuff. Often when you use the point of view of a child you get a



Whittaker says every element of the costume was chosen for a reason.

# FACTOR

kind of very raw and honest and hopeful view of something. If you saw it through the point of view of an adult... I suppose we get older and we get jaded and we get judgement and we get self-consciousness fed into our opinions. The point of view of youth was helpful to me to enter into the Doctor, because my very first episode is me regenerating and finding myself. I think that plays into the Doctor that I wanted to play. That kind of open-heartedness and chaos within an ability to find a stillness in the tiniest detail.

#### HOW MUCH INPUT DID YOU HAVE INTO THE DOCTOR'S LOOK?

I had loads. And that came from an image, from one of the very early pictures that I sent. I don't know where it came from, I don't know what I googled, and I don't know what decade the picture is from but it's a photograph, and it was timeless to me and couldn't be pinpointed to an era or necessarily a culture, either. It was a woman, walking with purpose, thinking, and she had boots, short trousers, braces and a t-shirt, and she had kind of unkempt hair. She was walking, not fearfully, not anything, but just with purpose. And I loved the image. It didn't lend

itself to a man's outfit or a woman's outfit. It was a feeling, and that's what I wanted to help create, more of a feeling than a costume. I'm not going to tell you, so there's no point asking, but there is a reason for every single little thing. The colour of every single part of the outfit, every stripe, every bit of lining. Everything is a choice. At some point you may know... it's not a lazy costume.

#### YOU'RE THE FIRST WOMAN TO PLAY THIS PART. WHAT DOES YOUR DOCTOR REPRESENT?

Obviously it can only be described from my personal experience of this moment. I appreciate it as a moment in television and in film and for British culture. To be in the moment of change for that is incredibly exciting. Women are not a genre. We are just the other half of the population, so to see us doing things shouldn't be such a surprise, but I know it is, because I watch TV and film, and we are often less active in things or we are the emotional point of view of a storyline rather than necessarily the active one. It is a moment and I'm part of it and I'm proud of it but I can't wait for it to not be a moment as well, so someone going to drama school at the age of 18 doesn't need to think, "There aren't any jobs for me." I were told, "Just so you know, it's going to be harder because there's less jobs." Right, okay, cool. Hopefully now that doesn't have to be the message.



Whittaker admires how *Interstellar* tackles topics of time and love.



*Let the Right One In* is one of Whittaker's favourite films.



### JOHN STEINBECK

Steinbeck is my favourite writer, and my favourite books are *East Of Eden* and *The Grapes Of Wrath*. Someone said to me, "I've seen the film of *East Of Eden*," and I was like, "Oh man, it's one section. The book is so much more." One of the reasons I love Steinbeck is that it's about the land. It's about the elements. Not just humanity. His prose is absolutely beautiful. I'm not a writer. I don't have that lyricism in my brain. I have a response, which is why I'm an actor. I have a very honest and unashamed response to something but I cannot generate that. I don't write.

### INTERSTELLAR

You might have got a completely different thing from this film than I did, which is why it's such a genius piece of cinema. For me it was about love, and just the fact that it doesn't matter what dimension you are in, love crosses all barriers of time and space and mass. I was inconsolable walking out of that film. Just the fact that they make that mistake and they don't get back and all those years have gone by. Hearing Michael Caine say that Dylan Thomas poem is just heartbreaking and amazing. And Hans Zimmer's music! Those organs! I love it when you walk out of a film and one person's got one thing and you've got something else. I love it when it's not handed to you on a plate. That's why this job is amazing for me, because



it's about time, and my favourite things are about time. The Doctor has this incredible brain and all this knowledge that's been collected over years and years, but the thing that moves the character forward and keeps the search going is hope. You don't have hope if you don't have a heart.

### LET THE RIGHT ONE IN

The original film is in my top five. I can remember telling my mum, "I really want you to watch *Let the Right One In*." She was like, "It's about vampires." I told her, "It isn't. Please watch it, mum." She watched it and she was like, "That were amazing..." There is such a thing as feeling like, "I'm not into sci-fi, I'm

GETTY (3), REX (1)



Whittaker loved Pulp growing up because they sounded like her.

not into this, I'm not into that..." I'm basically into anything. There'll be a horror film that I absolutely adore and then a comedy that I can't not hurt when I watch because I laugh so much. We sometimes decide, don't we, particularly with genre... We go, "Oh, I'm not going to watch that because it's not this", and you're like, "Oh, man, you're missing out on so much..."

#### '90S MUSIC

I love music from the '90s, me. You know you get like your '90s playlists on Spotify or whatever? I think I'm probably the only person listening – everyone's got a much cooler decade! I thought it were ace. There's just some absolutely classic tracks. "Dreams" by the Cranberries is just beautiful and timeless. I loved the Cranberries when I was growing up. Four Non-Blondes. Pulp. Oh my god. I loved Pulp because they sounded like me. I knew what they were talking about and I knew where they were from and it was music that I

“You don't need to know about Doctor Who. Just watch it!”

could relate to. I loved all sorts of angsty, Nirvana-y sorts of stuff but I also loved dance music. I can't dance but I have no self-conscious bone in my body – unfortunately for everyone around me because I will absolutely rave like the best of 'em.

#### FAHRENHEIT 451

I'd never read any Ray Bradbury until this book. Christian, my husband, was mortified. I was like, "Babe, I've got this really cool book that Obama has said is really important..." He was like, "Yeah, it's a really famous book, and that is embarrassing you don't know." I got to the end yesterday and I was like [pretends to sob eyes out]. I folded down about 70 pages and circled so many lines... the campfire bit, that conversation about what it meant to the grandfather. Just that moment around the campfire will stay with me forever. It's not that I hadn't heard of him, it's just that I didn't realise how much of an impact the book had had. I'm not a fan of snobbery. I'm not a fan of people saying, "Oh, you don't know about that?" Because that excludes everyone from everything. If someone was to say, "I don't know anything about the world of *Doctor Who*..." Well, I didn't! And actually you don't need to. Just come and watch it. It's for everyone. When things have got a cult following you do sometimes feel that you can't kind of enter into it. It's like you have to

become a member. It's not about that – it's about including rather than excluding. So if anyone gives me shit for not knowing who Ray Bradbury was... [laughs].

#### LONDON

I've lived here 15, 16 years and I love it. There's something about the energy of this city and the fact that people from all over the world live here. I love its energy and I love its pace. I love its space – it has masses of greenery. It has loud noise and then beautiful hills that you can sit on and look out over the whole place. And I ache for it when I'm away. It's home, which for someone with a broad Yorkshire accent is probably blasphemy! I really love being in town. When I went into town, when I were growing up, it were a bus that took about 50 minutes to go about two miles – and then you got to the town centre, you went to a coffee shop and then you came home. Coming into town here, one minute you're in Covent Garden, the next minute you're in Soho. My favourite part is the South Bank. Creatively the South Bank has played such a huge role in my life. My first job was at the Globe. *Antigone* at the National. That place is amazing. And I love water. It's a close call between that and being by the sea but if I had to be somewhere and only one place forever, it would be here. ●

*Doctor Who* airs on BBC One on Sundays.