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Felicity Jones: 50 Shades of Grey role depends on the film-maker and script

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Felicity Jones has been tipped to play Anastasia Steele in Fifty Shades Of Grey (Picture: Daniel Lynch)

Felicity Jones talks about her new film *Cheerful Weather For The Wedding* and being tipped to play Anastasia Steele in *50 Shades of Grey*.

Before meeting Felicity Jones, I stumble across a YouTube clip featuring images of her and Chris Hemsworth, of *Thor* fame. The three-minute montage, compiled by a young fan, is accompanied by text citing their 'phenomenal acting talents' and 'physical appropriateness' to Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey, the characters in the steamy novel *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, which is to be made into a movie. When I mention this to 29-year-old Jones, she looks bored. She has clearly buffered this speculation before.

'It all depends on the film-maker and script, just like any other job,' she says of the role, adding: 'Anyway, I've heard there's lots of campaigns by fans pushing other brunette actresses but I guess I should thank this person who went to all that trouble.'

She is, however, intrigued that sites such as YouTube can be used to help cast an actor in a role or propel an unknown film-maker into the public eye. 'There's always a place for immensely well-crafted cinema but, at the same time, it's important we have fresh, unusual ideas with no budgets coming through the digital medium,' she says.

So far, her career has spanned both these extremes – and lots in between: the improvised 2011 Sundance Film Festival favourite *Like Crazy* was shot on a tiny Canon EOS 7D camera with no budget (Jones did her own hair and make-up); romcom *Chalet Girl* showed off her comic timing; her credible portrayal of Luise Miller at the Donmar got the theatre world's attention; she held her own alongside Maggie Gyllenhaal in *Hysteria*, the story behind the creation of the vibrator; and she has just finished filming *The Invisible Woman* with Ralph Fiennes, about Charles Dickens's secret mistress, Nelly Ternan.

But today we're here to talk about her current release, *Cheerful Weather For The Wedding*. This glossy big-screen adaptation of Julia Strachey's 1932 novella sees Jones play Dolly Thatcham, the headstrong older daughter of Hatty Thatcham, played by *Downton Abbey* heavyweight Elizabeth McGovern.

Dolly is about to get married to handsome-yet-dim Owen but her former lover, Joseph, arrives on the morning of the wedding, threatening to derail the day. His presence causes all sorts of melodrama, especially for Dolly's acerbic mother, who is desperate for the day to go ahead.

In the hours before the ceremony, we watch Dolly swigging rum from the bottle, vomiting and reliving memories of her summer romance with Joseph, which are depicted through sun-drenched flashbacks. These golden scenes contrast starkly with the iciness of her winter wedding, mirroring Dolly's emotional state.

'Dolly is a very complex character and quite an alternative heroine,' says Jones. 'She's pitched as a rebellious young girl but she's actually quite scared of being with the man she loves, so she goes with the safe option – she's actually a coward.' The actress, who chose a degree in English literature from Oxford over drama school, adds: 'There is something very hard about all the characters – I love how unsentimental they are. I studied Virginia Woolf and this film reminded me of Woolf's wonderfully acidic diaries.'

If Jones were in Dolly's position, which man would she choose? 'Well, you've got to go with your heart, haven't you?' she grins.

And what of Jones's heart? She's happy to mention her boyfriend, artist Ed Fornieles. They've been together since university and live in Hackney, east London, although these days, Jones spends a lot of her time in LA. But that's all she's willing to reveal.

'I find that if you know a lot about an actor's personal life then, instinctively, it is harder to believe in the character they are playing,' she says. 'I like going to the cinema and being surprised and that's more difficult when you know every single detail about the actor on screen. Besides, I couldn't be that open, simply for my own sanity.'

She currently appears in a Burberry shoot alongside Cara Delevingne and is also the face of Dolce & Gabbana make-up. Doesn't her modelling contrast with her serious acting career?

'The campaigns are very high-fashion and I approach them as if I were playing a character,' she says. 'To be the Burberry girl, I got into a chic, 1960s and Jean Shrimpton-esque mood. So, in that sense, I feel it doesn't threaten what I do.'

This week, Jones will leave Hackney and LA behind for the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, where her latest film, *Breathe In*, is showing. She plays an exchange student whose arrival at an upstate New York home has devastating consequences for the family. It stars Guy Pearce and reunites her with *Like Crazy* director Drake Doremus, although Jones says it is a far more solemn picture.

Once, when asked why she went for a role in *Hysteria*, Jones simply replied that she wanted to play someone silly. What mood is she in for 2013? 'My last few roles have been quite heavy and serious,' she says. 'So I'm ready for something lighter. I'm feeling playful.'

Cheerful Weather For The Wedding is out now on DVD, Blu-ray and digital download



Like Crazy was a hit at Sundance Film Festival (Picture: File)

How Jones prepares for her roles

Felicity Jones has a strong method approach to her acting. 'The more preparation I've done, the more comfortable I feel,' she says. 'I guess it's because I take an academic approach: I prepare as much as I possibly can in order to be as spontaneous as possible on the day. I love the idea of doing something I've never done before.'

For *Chalet Girl*, where Jones starred alongside Tamsin Egerton (pictured right), she spent a month in the Alps learning to snowboard, followed by an undercover stint scrubbing toilets and partying in St Anton.

'I fell over about 50 times a day – it was an incredibly painful process but it felt extraordinary to even put on a snowboard and move down half a mountain.'

For *Breathe In*, Jones learned how to play the piano. Guy Pearce plays her piano teacher. You can work the rest out.

While treading the boards and playing Luise Miller, a deeply religious character, she immersed herself in Catholicism. 'I knew a very religious family and I'm not from a religious background, so I spent one month living with them and attending Mass. It was an intense but interesting experience.'

And for *Page Eight*, David Hare's TV thriller, Jones plays Julianne, a talented artist and daughter of Bill Nighy. So she immersed herself in the art world, which wasn't too difficult thanks to her boyfriend Ed Fornieles. He introduced her to his friends at the Royal College of Art, where she hung out and even attempted to take some 'terrible pictures' herself.

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