

DANIEL CASTS A NEW SPELL

Tim Teeman CATCHES UP
WITH *Daniel Radcliffe*
AS HE RELEASES HIS
FIRST POST-HARRY
POTTER BLOCKBUSTER,
The Woman In Black



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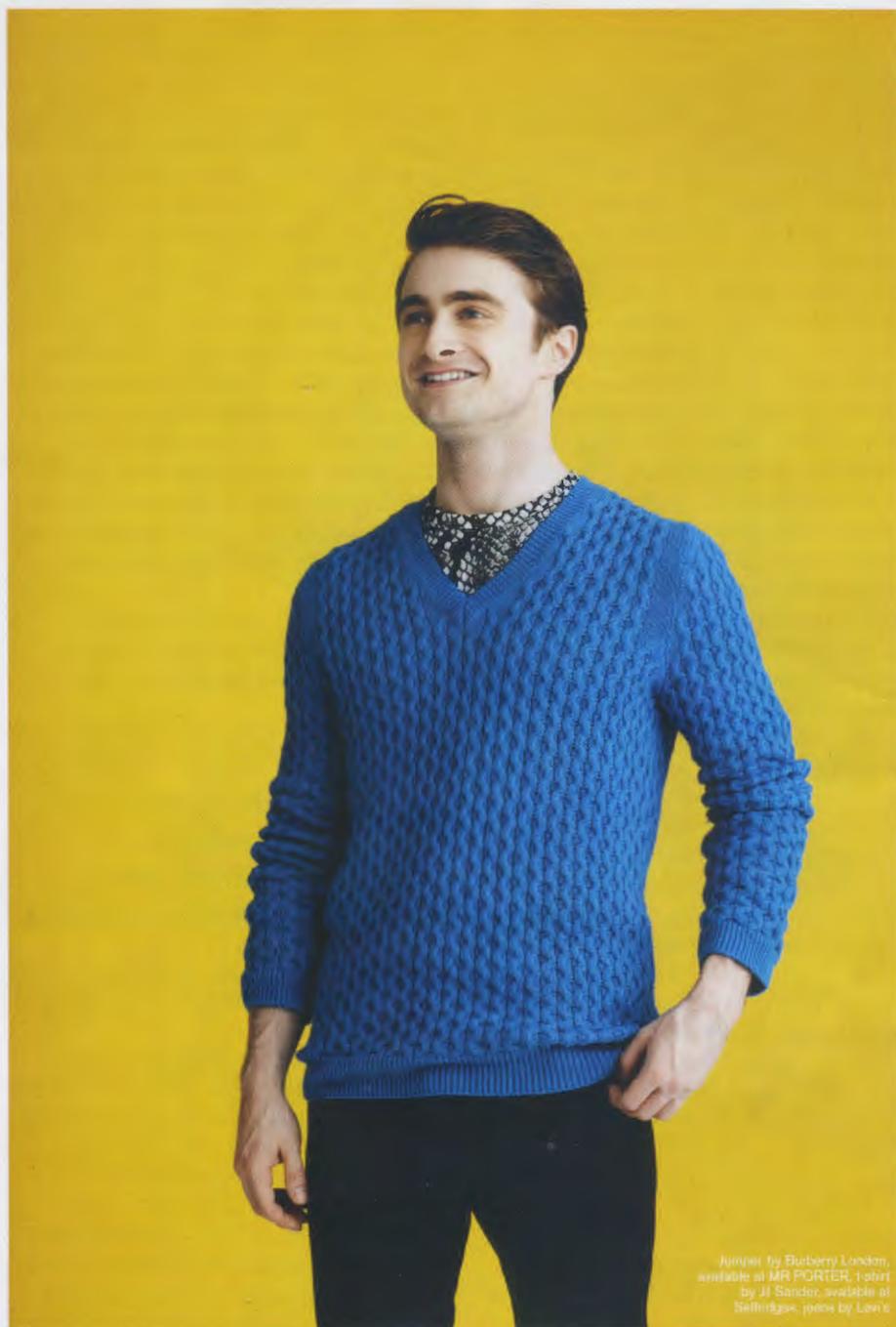
H

e is 22, and Harry Potter is done with, but when Daniel Radcliffe unself-consciously strips to his underwear (black, tight-fitting boxers) after the *Attitude* shoot in a New York photographer's studio, it's impossible – while obviously admiring his perfectly chiselled abs and furry

chest – not to think, 'Nooo, wrong, this is Harry owly-specs Potter: bad, stop looking.' Not that Radcliffe cares: he's done the nudity thing before, to much admiration, on stage in *Equus* when he was just 17.

Today he will talk candidly about being a gay lust object, the need for 'total' equality, anti-gay bullying at school, love, being circumcised, wanting children, giving up drinking, the 'darkest moment' when he thought about jacking Potter in, moving on from the boy-wizard to the lead role in *The Woman In Black* (his first film since the franchise ended), fighting obsessive-compulsive disorder, having therapy and why – after announcing in *Attitude* that he was voting Lib-Dem in the last election to many subsequent headlines – that party's leader, Nick Clegg, has become David Cameron and the Conservatives' 'whipping boy'. Now, Radcliffe reveals, he is switching his support to Ed Miliband's Labour. The actor is intelligent, charming, disarmingly revealing and sharply funny.

It is rare to find a straight star of Radcliffe's stature not just being vocally supportive of gay rights, but so active that last year he won the Trevor Project's Hero Award, for campaigning to prevent suicide among lesbian and gay teens. Radcliffe runs around the studio, asks if he can have a fag (a roll-up); he has already cased a window perch where he can light up, the wail of New York sirens punctuating our intense conversation. His openness, he says, is because 'it's good to have the smallest difference between how



Jumper by Burberry London, available at MR PORTER, t-shirt by JJ Sander, available at Selfridges, jeans by Levi's

Gay marriage is about transmitting a fundamental message about equality

people perceive you and how you really are'.

'I don't think there's been a time in my life when I haven't gone up the stairs two at a time,' Radcliffe says of his dashing about. 'I run everywhere. I didn't sleep a full night until I was about eight. If there was a sack race at school I'd practise with a pillowcase on the stairs. It's why my parents [Alan, a literary agent, and Marcia, a casting agent, who raised him in West London] didn't have any more kids. I was enough, a handful. I was very sweet, polite and loved the company of adults from a young age but all my school reports said the same thing:

"Dan's lovely, but he's crap at the work and he talks too much".'

Radcliffe says he's 'always been this hyper' and feels lucky to have found a profession 'where this level of industry has been productive'. Is it ever a burden? 'If you come into work and you're slightly below normal, people ask, "Are you OK?" My personality is... I wouldn't say extreme but, for example, I watched my first game of American football four months ago and now I can tell you the names of every quarterback, running back, wide receiver and tight end in the NFL because I am obsessive about anything I get excited about.' It's the same with punk music, the planets, space. 'I get obsessed, I read. It's never enough for me to have one fact, I need to know where that fact came from. Whatever I put my energy into gets all of it.'

Does that include the eight Potter films, the first released in 2001? 'Absolutely. The reason I can look back so fondly is that I know, without fear of contradiction, that everyone on that set would tell you I gave it my all every day. If you're the lead actor on a film, I think you should see yourself as a head of department for actors. If you walk on to that set where the main actor is an arsehole, the whole place feels dead, horrible. You have a responsibility for morale on set, and that will make for a better film.'

Did he ever want Potter to end sooner than it did? He pauses, takes a drag of his fag. 'Not really. Even at the darkest moments of my teenage years there was never a time when I thought, "I wish I'd never done this". OK, maybe once. Around the sixth film we found out my parents were being followed by a private investigator. That was a hard time and I thought, "This wouldn't be happening if I wasn't who I was". But other than that, no: it's given me everything, every opportunity I will ever get.'

But he'll always be known as Harry Potter. Does that frighten him? 'You can't really be frightened because that's the case and that's fine – as long as casting directors don't think that I don't mind. There is only a finite period of time to make really good choices with what you do next, to break away. For me there is no problem to which enthusiasm and hard work are not the solution. I just have to keep working with interesting people and things I'm passionate about.'

To that end, on stage Radcliffe starred in *Equus* in 2007 and in the 2011 Broadway revival of the musical *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, generally warmly received apart from the influential

New York Times, which gave him a 6/10 for his performance, scornfully noting his 'prevailing blankness'. Showbiz bible *Entertainment Weekly* couldn't have been more enthusiastic, however, ending Daniel's year on a high with a cover feature proclaiming him Entertainer Of The Year.

Does the odd negative review put him off the stage? 'God, no. I want to return in a new play or musical as soon as possible.' Liza Minnelli came on opening night. 'Which was one of the biggest thrills of my life, it's fucking Liza-with-a-zee,' beams Radcliffe. 'My dad's friends describe him as the gayest straight man around and I grew up on Liza, *Chicago*, *Sondheim*, *Company*... I could hear her laugh above everyone else's in the audience. At the party afterwards she said, "You just did it, you're doing it!" It made my night.'

Radcliffe is 'very nervous' about the reception to *The Woman In Black*, in which he plays a lawyer investigating the apparent

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haunting of a remote village by a female ghost. 'It feels like an old-style Hammer film. I've never had a film come out that *has* to do well. This isn't a make-or-break moment in my career but it's important because it will show whether I can or can't carry a movie. It's the first step to establishing that I can do other things.' Next he hopes to play Allen Ginsberg in a movie about the Beat generation.

Equus got him used to being sexually objectified. 'I know, I got told the other day by a mate that I had a really nice arse,' he says happily. 'I didn't know that. I don't mind it. It's fine if people want to make me the subject of their sexual fantasies – good luck to them, fantastic, I'm honoured to be in their dreams. Growing up, I never thought that would be the case, so it's very flattering and not something to object to at all. The other day my girlfriend Rosie [Coker] asked me, "Do you find it weird that some of your gay mates think about you sexually?" I've never really thought about it

Jumper by Jil Sander, available at Selfridges, t-shirt worn beneath by Burberry Brit, jeans by Costume National, sneakers by Pierre Hardy



but I don't care – if they want to it's fine. I don't care who fancies me, I care who I fancy.'

If you Google 'Daniel Radcliffe', 'Daniel Radcliffe Gay' is the second scroll-down option. The same thing happens with Florence Welch, he says, smiling. 'People are still asking me about it. I'm straight. I think that's why people still ask me, they're fascinated that I really don't give a shit what they think. Frankly, if you're a young, relatively successful actor and even slightly good-looking – if people are not saying you're gay, you're not doing your job properly.'

Has he ever had sex with, kissed or fancied another guy? 'No. I can quite happily say someone is handsome, good-looking and I can see why someone would want to fuck them, but I've never felt that way about a man myself. There is that moment in your late teens when you ask yourself the question, "Am I?" but I wasn't.' So not even a crush? 'Well, this year I have a talent crush on Ryan Gosling. I think he's fantastic and' – he smiles – 'you know he'd be nice afterwards. He seems smart. If I was gay I would go for a smart man.'

His ease comes down to a childhood where 'gay' wasn't a big deal. 'Our friend Mark was just Mark, never "Mark who likes guys"'. Radcliffe is involved with the Trevor Project – which aims to prevent suicides among LGBT youth – because childhood is also 'a time when homophobia is taught by parents to kids, and kids to other kids. It's horrendous, stupid, unnecessary and boring. I always feel like asking homophobes, "What is it about homosexuality that is new to you? People have been doing it that way since the other way was invented". Why is it shocking to anybody?'

The suicides of young people, either gay or accused of being gay, are 'not surprising when you consider how accessible a bullying victim is now. You used to be able to escape at the end of a day; now you can be hunted by mobile phone, Facebook, Twitter. It's terrifying.' Radcliffe wishes educational establishments, especially in the US, were not in thrall to religion. 'I'm not religious, I'm an atheist, and a militant atheist when religion starts impacting on legislation. We need sex education in schools. Schools have to talk to kids from a young age about relationships, gay and straight. In Britain it's better – more of a conversation is being had.'

Should straight kids show their support? 'Yes, absolutely,' Radcliffe says adamantly.

'Don't define yourself by your sexuality, don't define as straight or gay, define yourself as people and help another person if they're in trouble. The ultimate reason gay marriage should be legalised everywhere is because, as a kid, you look to your mum and dad and they're married; then you look at the gay couple who've been together for the same amount of time, but because they can't get married their relationship doesn't seem the same. Yes, gay marriage is about symbolically blessing a relationship, but the larger issue is about transmitting a fundamental message about equality. Gay people should have equality in law everywhere. If you grow up as a young gay man knowing you don't have the same opportunities as everyone else you're going to feel victimised and massive prejudice towards you.'

Radcliffe has been 'disgusted, amazed, stunned' by those candidates seeking the Republican presidential nomination, such as Rick Santorum or Michele Bachmann, who proudly advertised their homophobia to win votes. 'But they disgusted me less than candidates like Rick Perry, who made that ridiculous advert wearing 'the Brokeback jacket', and I think pretend to be homophobic just to win votes.' Does he wish Obama would publicly back gay marriage? Radcliffe pauses, winces. 'Yes, I do, but can he really? Of course he's in favour of it, but he has to be careful about saying so. I'd rather have someone like him in the White House than the alternative.'

As for Britain, when asked if he is happy with the Lib-Dems' place in the Coalition, Radcliffe looks down. 'No, of course not. Nick Clegg asked to meet me after that *Attitude* interview and we talked about issues such as gay rights and faith schools. He was great, a real human being. I was initially supportive: for me it was good that the Lib-Dems would be fighting our corner. But he has become a whipping boy and it seems to me that he has been totally used by the Tories - anything they don't want badly reflected on them they reflect on to him. It's very unfortunate when you think how impressive he was in those pre-election debates, but he has made so many concessions that supporting the Lib-Dems has, for me, become unviable.' What concessions? 'Over education and taxes. I think, if you make a lot more money than most people - like I do [Radcliffe has an estimated fortune of about £30 million] - you should pay more tax and subsidise people who work just as hard as you, but don't earn as much.'

So where will his vote go? Radcliffe smiles. 'I don't want to announce my voting intentions in *Attitude* every time, but no, not the Lib-Dems. I will probably be going to Labour. From what I've seen of Ed Miliband, I really like him and he speaks for what I believe in. I think he's genuine, genuinely Left-wing, and will act as such if he gets in.'

I ask if love is important to Radcliffe, a confessed 'serial monogamist'. He and Coker have been together for 18 months; they met on the set of *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows - Part 2*, on which she was a production assistant. 'It's great. Rosie is wonderful, tolerant and kind. She's hot as well, which doesn't hurt. Love is very important to me. It's healing. I don't like living in my head, it's busy, loud and I'm quite negative about myself. I'm self-critical, self-analytical. It's lovely to be in the arms of somebody who just loves you, and all the shit you hate about yourself.'

Does he want to marry? 'I think so, one day. I've always gone back and forth on marriage. On the one hand it's just always seemed like signing a bit of paper; on the other it's about standing up and declaring your love, and that's sweet.' Does he want children? 'Fuck yeah, can't wait, very excited. I love kids and always have. Kids are so much better than adults, they're funny and honest as hell.'

One wonders if Radcliffe has had therapy. 'I'd be lying if I said no. I'm not having it now, but just to have somebody completely objective who didn't know me, that I could just talk to about anything without worrying if I seemed arrogant or phoney, was great.' Why did he do it? 'I had lots of behavioural ticks and obsessive-compulsive things: tapping things, moving my hands in certain ways. When I was five I had to repeat every sentence I said under my breath. When it takes you five minutes to turn out the light you think, "I want this to be easier".' The therapist helped Radcliffe make the OCD manageable. 'I would encourage everybody to undergo therapy. It doesn't mean you're insane or weak. I haven't had it this year so far and I'm missing it. I hope to return to it.'

If that's surprising, equally so is the revelation that Radcliffe's super-buff body is not down to dieting or the gym. 'I haven't been for a year-and-a-half. This is from dancing eight shows a week.' He confesses to being 'terrified, very scared' of ageing. 'Youth has been part of my identity for a long time, I've always been the youngest person in the room, and that's just started not being the case. There are two or three

heavyweight champions of the world, professional footballers and cricket players younger than me. The next step will be working with actors younger than me, it's weird.' Does he feel like an old pro? 'A little bit. I have a lot to learn, but I know what happens on film sets because I've spent so many years on them.'

Plastic surgery is 'weird', he says. Would he have it? 'No, God no.' Botox? 'Injections? I'm not being judgemental on anybody, you do what you like with your body, but I'm terrified of unnecessary surgery. It doesn't sound like fun. Vanity is quite unattractive in a man: you've got to age as gracefully as you can. I'm not one of those guys with lots of skin creams, I can't be bothered.'

Does Radcliffe think about his own mortality? 'Yes, I'm very morbid,' he reveals, smiling. As a boy he would read a book of 'last words' said by people. 'I find death fascinating, I love graveyards - I think they're the most beautiful places.'

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His family is buried in Highgate's Jewish Cemetery. Does Radcliffe feel Jewish? 'Oh yes, absolutely. My dad's a Northern Irish Protestant, my mother's a Essex-Russian-South African Jew. I'm very proud to be Irish and Jewish - you're not going to find two harder working groups of people.'

But he's an atheist? 'Judaism isn't about God. Some of the best Jews have been atheists, Karl Marx was. Some things make me incredibly proud of being Jewish: vilified wherever they have been, they are a surviving people.'

He laughs when asked if he was brought up in the Jewish faith. 'No, we were Christmas tree Jews.' Was Radcliffe circumcised? 'Yes, as a baby, and it ended there - they said, "He's not going to be any more Jewish than that". I'm giving away too much, but my dad is also circumcised, and even if my kids aren't Jewish I think I would have them circumcised. I think it's important to look the same, father to son. I don't know why I think that - maybe I'm wrong.'

Radcliffe looks like his mother and he and his father are so close in personalities that they have 'clashed a few times'. The last year has been 'especially amazing' because for four years Radcliffe's relationship with them was tested by his extreme drinking. 'I've stopped now. It started when I was 17 when I moved out. It was like, "Wow, I can do whatever I like", and I did, and it became routine. It was three or four years of annihilation, and by the end my stomach was in bits. I was drinking daily, every night. It got me into many dangerous situations. I'm the type of person who has two drinks and is great fun, but have six more and I become a nuisance and have to be taken home, and friends have to look after me.

'After a while I got sick of being that person. Every day I would go into work and laugh about the behaviour I indulged in the night before, but after a while humour no longer works in terms of processing what is actually shame. You have a moment when you go, "I don't need this, I'm better than this". My parents could see what was happening to me, didn't know what to do and were terrified. Now I'm their son again, and I've found my parents again.'

Not drinking isn't easy, Radcliffe says. 'I just keep going from day to day. The only time when I get sad about not drinking is that point of the night when everyone is officially drunk and I realise that is no longer available to me. But the beginning of the night is great: I have conversations and am not focused on drinking as quickly as possible to get drunk, and I'm also not frightened of what could happen later in the evening.'

It's time for him to go home to Coker and the displacement activities of an Xbox and NFL. I've caught him on a 'good day', apparently. 'There is a side of me that is quieter and darker. I have to turn "this" [hyper-mode] off sometime. There is a depressive side of me. Rosie knows if she comes home and I'm in that mood just to leave me alone for 10 minutes and I'll be fine.'

What is his final message for the gay teen being bullied? 'You have to talk to somebody. It sounds like the hardest thing in the world, that parents and teachers can seem the worst option, but talk to them because they will let you know you are not alone.'

Then, darting this way and that, coat shucked on, scripts and books bundled into a bag, he's off, running to his next adventure. *The Woman In Black is out on February 10*

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