

'She's so magnetic and real joy to work with'

Breakthrough entertainer Anya Taylor-Joy living in Narnia

By Amanda Lee Myers

In a span of seven months this year alone, Anya Taylor-Joy played a meddling British brat in "Emma," a Russian mutant with teleportation powers in the latest "X-Men" film, and an American orphan who turns out to be a chess phenom who can checkmate grown men by the time she's 8 in "The Queen's Gambit."

She's just getting started. The 24-year-old just wrapped shooting "The Northman" alongside Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgard, Willem Dafoe and Ethan Hawke. In October, Warner Bros. announced that Taylor-Joy will play Furiosa in the highly anticipated prequel to "Mad Max: Fury Road." Oh, and she'll have another movie coming out in April: Edgar Wright's psychological thriller, "Last Night in Soho."

"When I was a kid, all I wanted to do was go to Narnia and, you know, fly to Neverland and go to all of these incredible places," Taylor-Joy recently told The Associated Press, which named her one of its Breakthrough Entertainers of 2020. "And now as an adult, I'm like, 'I live in Narnia. Like, this is amazing.'"

Taylor-Joy is "the busiest person I've ever met," said Marielle Heller, who plays Taylor-Joy's foster mother in "The Queen's Gambit" and directed "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" and "Can You Ever Forgive Me?"

"I don't know how she's doing so many projects at the same time. It's really kind of mind-blowing," Heller said.

Netflix says "The Queen's Gambit" was its biggest scripted limited series ever and "Emma" received critical and box office acclaim, as did her big screen debut as a lead in Robert Eggers' 2015 horror hit "The Witch," which won Taylor-Joy a Gotham Independent Film Award for breakthrough actor. She's also drawn praise for her performances in M. Night Shyamalan's "Split," the dark comedy/thriller "Thoroughbreds" and BBC One's "Peaky Blinders."

All that success could easily have gone to Taylor-Joy's head, but Heller said she has managed to stay humble.

"The danger of young people having a career take off when they're really young — you can turn into a jerk. But she hasn't," Heller said. "She's a real joy to work with. You don't get that many roles back-to-back if you aren't somebody who's good to work with."

Adoration

Taylor-Joy is so well-liked among those who've directed her, they've formed what's almost a club of adoration, calling each other and talking about how she's doing, said Autumn de Wilde, who directed Taylor-Joy in "Emma."

"We share a common bond in that we just 100% believe in her and we're so excited to see how our ideas will flower with her," de Wilde said. "She's not an empty vessel. She's a never-ending box of drawers and secret passageways."

Part of what makes Taylor-Joy so magnetic is her complete lack of narcissism, she said.

"A great photograph makes you wish you were there. I think she makes you wish you were there watching her work. That's because she's not looking at herself in the mirror, she's looking at the person she's acting with, she's feeling me through the lens as a director," de Wilde said.

Taylor-Joy was born in Miami and largely grew up in Argentina. She only spoke Spanish when her parents moved her and her five siblings to England, where Taylor-Joy struggled to fit in and learn English.

Although she has escaped the bullying she struggled with at the time, she's still learning how to be kind to herself.

"A friend of mine once told me, 'You would never speak to your friends the way that you speak about yourself,' which was huge," she said. "It's such a difficult journey for every individual to become friends with themselves. Some people are born and they just have it and I applaud those people. I was not one of them."

Though she says her skyrocketing fame "can be a bit intense," the journey has been "a beautiful process."

"I have a ton of energy, and I think this career and the hours of this career requires, they make me tired enough to be sane, which I appreciate," she said.

"Making films is hard. Any film that is made, it's a miracle that that film was able to be witnessed by other people. The fact that it even made it there is a baby miracle, and working with so many talented people and so many different people to make that come true and come to life, it's weirdly life-affirming. It just makes me really happy." (AP)

Film

Variety



This image released by NBC shows Ted Danson as Mayor Neil Bremer, (left), and Bobby Moynihan as Jayden Kwapis in a scene from the new comedy 'Mr. Mayor,' premiering on Thursday. (AP)

Television

New NBC show is satire on lame side of humanity

Danson, Hunter combine for 'Mr. Mayor'

LOS ANGELES: Veteran talk show host **Larry King**, suffering from COVID-19, has been moved out of the intensive care unit at a Los Angeles hospital and is breathing on his own, a spokesman said on Monday.

King was moved to the ICU on New Year's Eve and was receiving oxygen but is now breathing on his own, said **David Theall**, a spokesman for Ora Media, a production company formed by King.

The 87-year-old broadcasting legend shared a video phone call with his three sons, Theall said.

King, who spent many years as an overnight radio DJ, is best known as host of the "Larry King Live" interview show that ran in prime time on CNN from 1985 to 2010.

King has received many broadcasting awards. He won the Peabody Award for Excellence in broadcasting for both his radio (1982) and television (1992) shows. He has also won 10 CableACE awards for Best Interviewer and for Best Talk Show Series.

In 1989, King was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame, and in 1996 to the Broadcasters' Hall of Fame. In 2002, the industry publication Talkers Magazine named King both the fourth-greatest radio talk show host of all time and the top television talk show host of all time. (Agencies)

NEW YORK: In a message taped for what turned out to be his final week as "Jeopardy!" host, **Alex Trebek** urged the game show's viewers to honor the season of giving by helping victims of the coronavirus epidemic.

Trebek's plea aired in the opening moments of the show that aired on Monday.

"We're trying to build a gentler, kinder society and if we all pitch in just a little bit, we're going to get there," he said.

Trebek died Nov. 8 at age 80 of pancreatic cancer but had pre-taped several weeks of shows that have continued to air. Monday's show began the final week of programs that he left behind.

His last week of shows were originally scheduled to air on Christmas week; two categories of clues on Monday were "December 21" and "Christmas on Broadway." But to give Trebek's final week wider exposure, "Jeopardy!" put them off until this week.

NEW YORK, Jan. 5, (AP): There's a government office right there in the very title of Ted Danson's new series, but the new NBC comedy "Mr. Mayor" is anything but political.

"If you consider politics the headlines in the papers and the breaking news on CNN, that ain't us," said Danson, who stars as Los Angeles' mayor Neil Bremer.

"We point out the foibles and silliness, and wonderfully lovable, pathetic, lame side of humanity but we don't stop and preach. We never are preaching."

The show is from Emmy Award-winners Robert Carlock and Tina Fey, the brains behind "30 Rock" and "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt."

The 30-minute comedy takes over the 8 p.m. anchor slot in NBC's Thursday comedy block starting Thursday. Danson considers the show more an office or family comedy.

Danson plays a businessman who made a fortune on billboards and then retired. He ran for mayor just to impress his daughter, a sophomore in high school played by Kyla Kenedy from "The Walking Dead."

The new mayor is not a very polished political figure, prone to mangling Spanish and saying things like "I'm very open to a robot police force."

He's got a dubious staff behind him — the trio of comedians Bobby Moynihan, Vella Lovell and Mike Cabellon — and a chief rival in Holly Hunter, who plays an ultra-liberal councilmember. "Like underwear bought in a drug store, you're not going to last two months," she warns the mayor.

In the first episode, the mayor, hoping for a winning issue, steals the idea of a plastic drinking straw ban from his daughter and it blows up in his face. Hunter's character offers to help — but only if he will rename coyotes as "mini-wolves." There is satire, but nothing that might pit red states against blue ones.

"Immediately, I think the audience is alerted to the fact that we're not going to be dissecting the Trump administration," said Hunter. "This is not some new angle on a political conversation."

Danson — a veteran TV star of such shows as "Cheers," "Becker" and "The Good Place" — hadn't worked with Hunter, the Oscar-winner for "The Piano" and star of the TNT drama series "Saving Grace." The

two instantly clicked, a pair of show biz pros.

"There are some benefits to having been around for a while, which is there is a relaxation and a recognition of, 'Oh, I'm in good hands. This other person's got me,'" Danson said.

The cast and crew have endured a lot during the pandemic. They shot three episodes until production had to shut down for nine months. The cast kept in contact during the hiatus, even going over scripts virtually.

"We had jam sessions Zooming together and I think in a way that created a certain feeling of tightness," Hunter said. "We would just read a new script just to hear it between us. You know, it formed a different kind of bond."

Reunited

When they all reunited, a TV set designed for a fast-paced, whacky comedy now had real-world boundaries — face masks and shields, social distancing, daily COVID-19 tests and van rides that held only one actor.

"It's all very different. They're a little bit sad, a little bit lonely because the kids don't get to rush into the playground and embrace each other because we're so happy to be working," Danson said.

"The first day or two, it's weird. And then all of a sudden you get used to the new normal," he added. "After years of doing this, when they say 'Action!' and you've taken the masks all off, it comes back."

But Danson is quick to put it in perspective. "It's tricky as actors to talk about sacrifices," he said. "We came back after nine months of the pandemic where the whole world saw who the heroes were, who the celebrities really were, who the people were that really, truly put their lives on the line."

The time off might actually have helped the show, giving the cast time to digest the rat-a-tat scripts, which are stocked with Carlock and Fey's astute cultural observations and sometimes absurdist flights of fancy.

"It's practice, practice, practice, practice, practice before you show up so that those words can come trippingly off your tongue," said Danson. "You have to play the music and you have to play Tina and Robert's music."

Also:

NEW YORK: **Chuck Rosenberg** makes no secret of his admiration for **Robert Mueller**.

Keep that in mind, along with the format of Rosenberg's podcast "The Oath," now that NBC announced that the former special counsel who looked into Russian interference in the 2016 election has given an extensive interview that debuted last month.

Mueller, the ex-FBI director, rarely speaks publicly and has been virtually silent about his special counsel experience since testifying before Congress in July 2019.

In two separate podcast episodes, each nearly an hour, Mueller doesn't talk about his work as special counsel. He isn't even asked.

"There are some questions that you simply don't have to ask," said Rosenberg, who worked for Mueller as an FBI counsel. "I knew he wouldn't talk about it and I had really no intention of asking about it."

He took Mueller at his word that he wouldn't talk about his work as counsel after his testimony. Mueller made an exception in September, pushing back after one of his former prosecutors suggested in a book that the counsel's team wasn't aggressive enough.

Rosenberg's stance is consistent with the format of "The Oath," in which present and former government officials who have taken an oath to protect the Constitution are interviewed about their lives and careers, while steering clear of current events and political controversies.

Rosenberg, also a former federal prosecutor, has taken the oath nine times. He's been an analyst and podcast host for NBC News since quitting as acting head of the Drug Enforcement Administration in 2017, after President **Donald Trump** suggested to law enforcement officers that they "don't be too nice" to suspects in custody.

Even in an era of suspicion about the "deep state," or perhaps because of it, there has clearly been a public taste for "The Oath." The Mueller interview leads its fourth season.

The show has been in the Top 200 of the Apple Podcasts charts for more than a year, said **Andy Bowers**, co-founder of the podcast hosting company Megaphone.

The show's executive producer, **Mike Richards**, told NBC's "Today" show on Monday that Trebek was "an absolute warrior" in his last taping sessions.

"He was in enormous pain," Richards said. "He was, you know, 10 days away from passing away. And you will not sense that in any of these episodes."

A successor hasn't been named.



Trebek



King

Longtime "Jeopardy!" champion **Ken Jennings** will be the first of a planned series of guest hosts on episodes that begin appearing next week.

Asked whether Trebek had given any suggestions about a successor, Richards told NBC that "he mentioned a couple of names but he wanted to stay out of that ... No one is going to replace him, and he

knew that."

Trebek was a longtime philanthropist and activist. He was active with multiple charities, including World Vision Canada and United Service Organizations. For World Vision, Trebek travelled to many developing countries with World Vision projects, taping reports on the group's efforts on behalf of children around the world. Trebek

and the Jeopardy! crew became involved with the United Service Organizations in 1995, appearing on several military bases throughout the world, both in an attempt to find contestants and as a morale booster for the troops. He donated 74 acres (30 hectares) of open land in the Hollywood Hills to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in 1998. (Agencies)

Features

ARABO TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2021