

Lashana Lynch on making history as 007 in 'No Time to Die'

By Jake Coyle

Lashana Lynch was in stunt training when she found out she was going to play a 00 agent in the James Bond film "No Time to Die."

Lynch had already been cast by director Cary Joji Fukunaga and the producers, Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson. But who she was to play had remained a mystery to her. She was doing her best to prep for an undetermined but apparently butt-kicking role.

"Nothing made sense. I'm plunged into stunts and they're teaching me everything under the sun," Lynch said in an interview. "And I'm like: Why are you teaching me this? What does it mean?"

Instead, Lynch just heard bits and pieces as she went. It felt, she says, like a TV series that carefully reveals a little each episode. Only when she was in the midst of summersaulting and firing fake guns did the full reveal come. Lynch would be the first Black woman to play a 00 agent in the six decades of James Bond movies.

Not only that, Lynch's character, Nomi, takes the codename 007, with Daniel Craig's James Bond AWOL and out of the British Secret Service.

"Auditioning for a mysterious film and a mysterious character turned into a possible Bond film and mysterious character," Lynch recalls. "That turned into definite Bond film and the possibility of someone entering and creating a really beautiful storm."

"No Time to Die," which opened in US theaters on Friday, is Craig's fifth and final performance as the super spy. But the film, perhaps more than any previous Bond movie, derives much of its

punch from its women. That includes Léa Seydoux, as Bond's most lasting romance and a character with her own complicated history, and Ana de Armas, in a brief but action-packed appearance.

Lynch's role, though, is a landmark in the franchise. With that history has come a brighter spotlight than ever before on the 33-year-old British Jamaican actor, who played a single-mother fighter pilot in "Captain Marvel." Lynch has been widely celebrated for expanding the historically homogenous world of Bond in a role that — like others who have brought wider representation to decades-old franchises — has also brought online hostility. When news first leaked in 2019 that Lynch would be 007, her Instagram lit up with racist and misogynistic comments.

Institution

"I was reminded of the institution that I was walking into and the world that doesn't support people like me, necessarily," Lynch says. "Once I got through that initial reaction, I plunged straight into work. I turned that energy into stunts, into filming, into spending time with family and also reevaluating how I use my phone. I now put them in cupboards. I take two-hour breaks."

"It's something that should always be brought up," she adds of the response. "Young people need to hear it."

Lynch first caught Broccoli's attention in Debbie Tucker Green's "Ear for Eye," a play at the Royal Court that Broccoli produced. Lynch was part of a largely Black ensemble that give individual testimonies of bias they experience in their lives.

"I was just blown away by her," says Broccoli, who also produced an upcoming film adaptation of "Ear for Eye," co-starring Lynch, premiering Oct. 16 at the London Film Festival. "She's an extraordinary, beautiful, talented actor. She seemed an obvious choice for Nomi, the 00 character. I think she's a big star."

Before Craig took over Bond, Lynch says, she had little relationship to the Bond films. But being invited to audition, she says, made her feel she was maybe entering the franchise at the right time.

"As a Black Londoner, I didn't have the opportunity to be able to connect to James Bond in a way that made sense," says Lynch. "Now, Daniel Craig entering the franchise and making him raw and dark and dangerous — I questioned his trauma for the first time — it really got me intrigued about how the new characters in the franchise respond to him."

In "No Time to Die," Bond eventually returns to the service where he's surprised to learn his trademark number has been taken. What follows between him and Nomi is part rivalry, part partnership. Nomi asserts herself, with proud confidence and moments of uncertainty. Bond adapts to her. To Lynch, she's most proud of how Nomi's strength doesn't also come with vulnerability.

"Like a lot of us, it's always a front. It's a front just to be in the world," Lynch says of Nomi's posture. "I want there to be a really natural, realistic and easy influence on our young people in that when talking about 'strong Black women,' we don't just assume that their strength fell out of the sky and landed in their brain." (AP)

Film

Variety



This image released by A24 shows Noomi Rapace in a scene from the film 'Lamb.' (AP)

Film

Features

ARABIC TIMES

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NEW DELHI: An Indian magistrate on Friday rejected the release on bail of Bollywood megastar **Shah Rukh Khan's** son, who was arrested this week in a drug raid on a luxury cruise ship, as the state narcotics agency expressed fear that he could tamper with evidence and influence witnesses.

Magistrate **R.M. Nerlikar** sent **Aryan Khan** to jail for two weeks pending an investigation of the case. Khan, 23, is the eldest son of Shah Rukh Khan.

Aryan Khan and seven others were detained when narcotics agents on Saturday raided a party and seized drugs on the cruise ship off the **Mumbai** coast. They were formally arrested on Sunday.

A total of 18 people have been arrested so far in the case.

Khan's lawyer, **Satish Maneshinde**, told the court that the narcotics agency did not find any drugs on Khan and allegations that Khan was in contact with drug dealers were untrue.

The narcotics agency said it had evidence in the form of WhatsApp messages that Khan communicated with drug dealers on a regular basis. It did not specify whether any drugs were found in Khan's possession when he was detained.

Government attorney **Anil Singh** said Khan's release could harm the case. The agency said Khan and the others were "regular users of contraband."

"They are influential persons. There is a chance of tampering with evidence. Had it been one person with a small quantity, it would be different. We have a lot of material. Protection like bail at this stage will hamper the investigation," The New Delhi Television news channel cited Singh as saying.

Shah Rukh, 55, is one of the world's most famous actors and is known as the "King of Bollywood." He has been acting in Bollywood films for nearly three decades and has starred in more than 105 movies. He has more than 42 million followers on Twitter and also owns the Kolkata Knight Riders team, which plays for the Indian Premier League, the world's richest cricket competition. (AP)

BRISTOL, Conn: Sage Steele will not appear on ESPN's "SportsCenter" the remainder of this week and has been pulled

Disarming and effective Icelandic tale

In 'Lamb,' a haunting film about motherhood

By Lindsey Bahr

Noomi Rapace flew into Iceland to film "Lamb" on a Sunday and on Monday morning, she was literally delivering baby lambs on camera. There wasn't time to wait or practice. It was the last week of lambing season and the crew had already told the mother sheep that they could not give birth until Rapace arrived. They were at least half-joking.

Although Rapace has been put to the test in films like "Prometheus" and "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," delivering baby animals was a new one.

"I had this adrenaline rush right before I stepped in and I could just feel my heart racing," Rapace said. "And then as soon as I was in the situation, it just felt so natural. It felt like I know how to do this weirdly enough. You don't have time to think or to be nervous. You just got to do it, you know?"

In some ways, it was an appropriately intense and bizarre start for what is certainly an intense and bizarre film in which a childless couple, María (Rapace) and Ingvar (Hilmir Snaer Gudnason), discover a half lamb, half human baby in their barn and decide to raise her as their own. It's almost a no-brainer that A24, the studio and distributor that has put out films like "Midsommar" and "The Lobster," would jump at the chance to bring this strange Icelandic tale to a wide audience (it opened Friday in North American theaters).

"Lamb" is the feature debut of Valdimar Jóhannsson, who has spent much of his career working various crew jobs for Hollywood productions that make a stop in Iceland. "Prometheus" was actually one such gig (he laughed that he worked in the "smoke and fog department") but he didn't cross paths with Rapace there. Still, he knew she'd be perfect for María, who wants a child of her own. Plus, she already spoke Icelandic, having lived there for a bit as a kid.

Jóhannsson can't quite remember how the idea came to him, but he started collecting haunting images and put together a scrapbook that he delivered to Rapace along with a script he co-wrote with Sjon, an Icelandic poet and novelist.

"It's a family drama with just one element that is off," said Rapace, laughing. "It's such a beautiful story about motherhood. She's like trapped in this limbo reality of grief in the beginning, and then she's given this opportunity to heal. María's journey was so inspiring and original and strange at the same time. I love the simplicity of the story."

The shoot was not quite as simple. To create the child, Ada, production used 10 children of various ages and four lambs and edited them together. There was very little CGI, Jóhannsson said. It's perhaps why the image is so disarming and effective.

Isolated

On top of that, the set was in a very isolated region of Iceland, where sheep already outnumber humans two to one, with no phone signal and where the sunlight shines for nearly 20 hours a day.

"I feel like I left the world and I was living within this reality for three months. María very much took over me and my body and my dreams," Rapace said. "But it helps you... And it really reflected the way a lot of people live in Iceland. My grandmother, family members of mine, they do live on those remote farms."

Rapace loves too that the film taps into something primal and mythological.

"When I was pregnant with my son I dreamt that I gave birth to like weird creatures. My worst nightmare would be to give birth to something that is half human. I've done it in 'Prometheus' and here I'm the mother of something that's in between," she said. "For me, films are freedom and there's

no rules and we can explore and investigate from a place of total freedom. There's no bad. There's no good. It's just like 'what are we? What is the human species and what else is there?'"

Jóhannsson didn't make the film thinking it would get a big international release, but he's excited that it is. And he said he was actually more nervous for the premiere in Iceland than at the Cannes Film Festival.

"The Icelandic people, you know if you shoot something in the North and then cut it with something in the South, they'll be like 'it's not how it is! I don't recognize that!'" he said.

But it turns out he didn't have anything to fear: Icelandic sheep farmers liked it too.

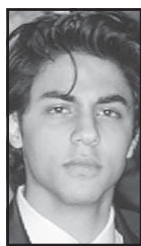
Also:

LOS ANGELES: It's a funny quirk that one of the highest grossing documentaries ever belongs to **Justin Bieber**. "Justin Bieber: Never Say Never" made more than \$73 million at the box office in 2011, a non-fiction total bested only by "Fahrenheit 9/11" and "March of the Penguins." A lot has changed in the intervening decade for both Bieber and the movies. "Justin Bieber: Our World," which debuted last Friday on Amazon Prime, tracks some of those changes in the now 27-year-old pop star while focusing on his preparations for his first full concert in three years — a New Year's Eve 2020 show in **Beverly Hills**.

Bieber isn't the only pop star trotting out a new documentary this week. The concert film "Madonna: Madame X" premiered Friday on Paramount+, showcasing the 63-year-old singer's latest persona, an international secret agent around whom she framed her 2019 album of the same name. The film chronicles her "Madame X" album tour, in which **Madonna** played a string of smaller, more intimate venues for the first time in decades. (AP)

from moderating an upcoming network event following comments she made on a recent podcast.

Steele appeared on a podcast hosted by former NFL quarterback **Jay Cutler** where she criticized ESPN and the Walt Disney Company's mandate for employees to receive the coronavirus vaccine. She also questioned former presi-



Khan



Steele

dent **Barack Obama's** decision to identify himself as Black on the recent US Census, as well as saying female journalists "need to be responsible as well" if inappropriate comments are directed at them based on how they're dressed.

Steele, who has been with ESPN since 2007, issued a statement through the network apolo-

gizing for her comments.

"I know my recent comments created controversy for the company, and I apologize," she said. "We are in the midst of an extremely challenging time that impacts all of us, and it's more critical than ever that we communicate constructively and thoughtfully."

Steele, who said on the podcast

that she identifies as biracial, also won't be the host and moderator for this year's espnW: Women + Sports Summit, which is scheduled to begin on Oct 18.

Steele also recently tested positive for COVID-19 but it is not clear whether her absence from programming this week was also due to that. (AP)