

MET IN THE LOBBY

Rene Russo

The actress on things that despair can drive you to, working together with her husband, and laser treatments.



You are here for the Zurich Film Festival. Is this your first time in the city?

Yes, it's my first time in Zurich. I've been to Lucerne - about 20 years ago. It was so beautiful and I thought that I would have to make it back to Switzerland. It's one of the most beautiful places I have ever been to and ever seen. You're used to it, but it is absolutely spectacular.

Your new film "Nightcrawler" brings you to Zurich. In movies, the audience knows you as a chic, clever and smart lady, or a vulnerable mother. Now you are a news shark. What did you think when you read the script?

I thought this was so different and I didn't know how I was going to manage it. I have never played such a role before. The way that I found her was more through desperation than by being a shark. Because when I thought about being just a shark, I couldn't find that place in myself. The time when I crossed boundaries to get where I needed to go - that always had to do with the fact that I was desperate, or that I was afraid. In desperation and being afraid I think we do things that we wouldn't normally do. The exploration of that is what was exciting to me. It's an interesting question. It really took me a while to figure out what would make me do things I normally wouldn't.

So: Nina, a woman of my age, 60 years old, holding on by her fingernails, has to compete against young women and men at her place of work, plus she is losing her health insurance. Where is she going to go? I saw something heartbreaking in that. I knew that Nina was tough and mean outside and in, and people would judge her morally. Of course, she crosses more boundaries. I really wanted that to come from somewhere.

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I hoped that people could see that I was coming from a different place. And what's interesting: some people do and some people don't. Men don't see that vulnerability as much as women do. I wonder if it's because women, in some ways, have a little bit more of a struggle.

The scene in the restaurant is particularly interesting.

It's funny; one journalist said I gave in too easily there. But he was young, and he was male - it's a different generation. I looked

at the role: I am a business woman and I am practical and you heard him (*editor's note: Jake Gyllenhaal as Nightcrawler*) say, you are the lowest-rated station, your two years are almost over, and you don't have health insurance. It's like a negotiation and Nina had been negotiating before. There was a lot going on, on the inside. She needed this guy and she said ok, and didn't look back until he didn't bring the goods. And when he didn't bring the goods, she just exploded on him, but he thought differently.

Do you think it is because we expect men to be that way, but we find it surprising when women are?

Look, I find in general that men don't like women who are less sensitive, less in line with their idea of what is feminine. And if they are - without wanting to put it too strongly - in control, I find that some men don't deal well with that. So if you are at all demanding (like a man would be, which would be ok), it might just be too much for a man. I don't know if it's even in their DNA, and they can't cope. I don't mean that insultingly. There's a fine line; women can be bitches and men can be a...holes - I mean, let's face it! Maybe they are threatened a little bit by women like that. But I do notice that a lot of men are telling me that I as Nina was strong and kind of bitchy. That is interesting.



Will we be seeing you more in this kind of role?

I just take one role at a time. And once I've been doing a role, I don't want to do it again. I would love to do comedy, more comedy. But it's very rare to find good roles.

You have been married for 22 years. How did you find working with your husband?

You know, it was great; Danny (*editor's note: Dan Gilroy, her husband, the director of "Nightcrawler"*) is so easy-going that there wasn't any friction; we talked about the film and the role beforehand.

Did you set some rules on how you should work together?

We didn't, because Danny is really open to collaboration and he

didn't put any restrictions on me in terms of the role. He allowed me just to find it. The only thing is that I was a little bit worried because it took me some time to find out how I thought she was.

He is also a scriptwriter. Did you suggest changing the script?

I didn't in this film. At first I said, "I think Nina needs a little work", and then I realised I couldn't find her. I wasn't able to find her right off. But sometimes he gives me his scripts while he's writing them, and I give him a suggestion from an actress's point of view. That can be helpful to a writer.

Are you a news person?

I don't watch local news; it scares me. It gives me bad dreams before I go to sleep. I'm a news junky, but

hard news, I guess. In the USA, you have NBC, which is quite liberal, and you have Fox News, which is not very balanced. You just have to listen to everybody, everybody has a different view. I am a news junky but not local news. The thing I really enjoy is: I get in bed, I have a bowl of yoghurt or cereal, and I turn on the news.

But do you take time off?

No, I don't, not from the news, because it's such an interesting time that we're living in, and a scary time too; it really is frightening. But I don't take time off from the news.

What about travelling privately, besides film tours?

Actually, I don't. When you have a teenage daughter, and when you're

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trying to get them through, from fifteen, to get them into college, into their twenties, it's a lot of work. And especially senior year in high school. There wasn't a lot of time to travel, to be honest. I love my in-laws so much, so instead of travelling, we're going to visit them on the East Coast. We haven't been on a real big vacation for so long. Coming here, looking at this view, I realise we need to do it, get out there a little bit more often.

And how do you recover?

I work out. I don't do it for a long time; I can only stay on my bike for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes I'm so bored I want to stop. That's the best thing for me, I think. And then a nice warm shower. I went into your workout room here at the hotel and got on your bike. I might even do it again.

But you look marvellous, how do you stay in shape?

You know, people ask, "What are your beauty secrets?" There are a few. One is that smoking is bad for your skin, and too much sun is not good for your skin. Those are obvious ones that age you literally overnight. And I just eat reasonably; I don't eat perfectly. I exercise moderately, and what I love to do is laser beauty treatment. I find it's really good for stimulating collagen in your skin and it really made a difference to my skin.

Cutting and pulling and all that is not what I really want to do. But I support it wholeheartedly. If it's what a woman wants to do to feel better about herself, then go for it.

Do you go swimming, have massages, facials or anything?

Heat isn't good for me. I just get dehydrated and weak. But I love facials and I love massages. I did get a tour of the spa here. What a beautiful spa! I loved the meditation walk.

Are you enjoying your stay at the Dolder Grand?

Honestly, the room is so beautiful. I looked out the window and it's truly one of the most beautiful views I've ever had. The hotel is just spectacular. I'm sure it's one of the nicest hotels. What could be better than this?

Rene Russo

The American actress Rene Russo starred in "The Thomas Crown Affair", "Lethal Weapon", "Outbreak", "Get Shorty", "Bounty" and the "Thor" films among others, together with Mel Gibson, Clint Eastwood, John Travolta and Pierce Brosnan. Now she is playing a news-hungry TV producer interested in violent crime in the thriller "Nightcrawler". Rene Russo has been married to screenwriter Dan Gilroy since 1992 and has one daughter.



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