

“OOOH, DAVID BOWIE. I'M SORRY: MORE BOYS NEED TO WEAR EYELINER.”

an outsider. When I ask Wood, who recently passed her high-school equivalency test, if she's interested in college, she winces and fiddles with her napkin. "I don't know," she says. "Some days I think college would be really fun and other days I think I wouldn't get along with anyone, and I wouldn't be happy." When pressed to explain further, she smiles shyly, and adds, "I always feel like I don't fit in with most people, the majority of the population. And at a lot of the colleges I've been to, everyone's always drunk so I don't know if I want to be around that all the time."

For most of us, college was that magical place where we learned about good music, stopped doing embarrassing things to our hair, and finally met some like-minded people, but Wood already seems to have a head start on all that—especially when it comes to her tastes, which are unconventional, spirited, and fairly informed for someone her age. She's giddy about the Arcade Fire, says she's just now getting into Interpol, and loves Beck and Bob Dylan. As far as movies, Wood raves about Takashi Miike's cult hit *Gozu*, "the only movie that made me laugh, scream, and cry," and the '80s slumber-party staple *Labyrinth* takes the cake as her all-time favorite, if only for David Bowie's *Jareth the Goblin King*. "Oooh, David Bowie," she says, slowly rubbing her hands together. "I'm sorry, more boys need to wear eyeliner." Now that she's started, Wood proceeds to tick off a short but concise list of other favorite boys in eyeliner, beginning with Ewan McGregor and ending with Gael Garcia Bernal.

Few preferences reveal as much about Wood as the roles she desires to play in the future. Born in Raleigh, North Carolina to theater buff parents—both are actors and her father runs the prestigious Theatre in the Park—Wood was "pushed onstage as a baby and [has] been hooked ever since." It's no surprise then to hear that the two plays

she hopes to do "before I die" are *Les Misérables* and *Romeo & Juliet*. Yet, Wood also longs to star in "a really good classic horror movie. You never see them anymore. What happened to *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*? Those are horrifying movies, even today."

Ultimately, it's this kind of insightful versatility that makes her so appealing to watch. Whether she's a shoplifting wannabe hoochie or an insolent deer-gutting pioneer princess, Wood brings the whole range of her presence to her projects. Considering the fact that she's already worked with luminaries known for their chameleonic natures, from her beloved Cate Blanchett ("I want to marry her!") to Holly Hunter, Nicole Kidman, and Al Pacino, Wood seems well on her way to achieving that special brand of fame—the type that comes not from the greatest lightning of a fancy stylist and a savvy publicist, but from the kind of grit and perseverance that feels more old Hollywood than new, the kind of talent that would earn both sniffing respect and fearful sidelong looks from a Joan Crawford or a Bette Davis.

When no one knew who she was, Wood rarely got nervous, even around bona fide movie stars. For these last three films, though, she's been petrified. Comedy is unfamiliar territory for her, but she also admits that it's because she's getting older and therefore more aware. With each new movie, she worries that she won't be able to pull it off. "I've talked to a lot of actors about this, and they all go through the same thing. You think, 'Oh my god, I don't know how to act. I'm so screwed. How am I going to do this?' But the truth is you dive right back in. And you pick up where you left off." It sounds remarkably self-assured, but then Wood stops abruptly and a tense, pensive expression takes over her face. You can practically see the gears turning: *Did that sound stupid?* No way. Hollywood's newest ingenue has it all figured out—she just doesn't know it yet.

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