



"It feels a little bit like I've come full circle," says Thompson, who started out in comedy, of playing a comedian in her new film

Culture

Laughing all the way

EMMA THOMPSON GETS SERIOUS ABOUT COMEDY IN HER NEW MOVIE *LATE NIGHT*

By Eliza Berman



EMMA THOMPSON AND I ARE SUPPOSED to be shopping for sneakers. I've primed her with visions of the kinds of "trainers"—if you're British, and she is—we'll see on today's tour of Los Angeles' hip streetwear stores, guided by me, a person who knows about neither Los Angeles nor the fresh kicks for which the cool kids will sleep on the sidewalk but never actually wear. Problem is, the first three sneakerhead meccas I'd mapped out had their graffitied gates down. And I don't have the heart to tell her I've lost hope, because I've never seen a person greet so many closed doors with such certainty that the next one will be, *must* be, open.

Thompson, two-time Academy Award winner and Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, has been forcing open closed doors for nearly 40 years. We are on the hunt for sensible footwear because she disavows high heels, objecting to what she calls "a torture thing." At the 2014 Golden Globes, she went onstage barefoot, dramatically tossed her Louboutins over her shoulder "and never looked

back." For her damehood ceremony in November, she sauntered up to Buckingham Palace in Stella McCartney sneakers, prompting sore-footed fans on Twitter to upgrade her, by popular vote, from dame to outright queen.

Her latest character also has a fondness for sneakers. In *Late Night*, written by and co-starring Mindy Kaling and directed by Nisha Ganatra, she plays Katherine Newbury, a late-night host who has been on the air for three decades but, growing out of touch, is at risk of losing her show. (In the real world, there are no female late-night hosts on major networks.) Her mediocre jokes are pitched in a writers' room as white and male as the Alabama state legislature. She's uninterested in trading cerebral guests like Doris Kearns Goodwin for a YouTube star who makes videos about her dog's butt. Enter Kaling's Molly, whom Katherine reluctantly brings on as a "diversity hire" to help her recapture her relevance.

Katherine is a dinosaur who needs a woke, youthful guide to illuminate the

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