



From how they've dealt with hearing no to how they've learned to say it themselves, the actresses who delivered some of this year's most memorable performances are sharing their strategies for navigating a changing Hollywood — and a changing world. In November, Emma Corrin (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*), Danielle Deadwyler (*Till*), Claire Foy (*Women Talking*), Jennifer Lawrence (*Causeway*), Michelle Williams (*The Fabelmans*) and Michelle Yeoh (*Everything Everywhere All at Once*) gathered in Los Angeles for this year's annual *THR* Actress Roundtable.

**What do you do when you really want a role? What is the furthest you'll go?**  
**EMMA CORRIN** Write a letter. It's never worked.

**What did you say in it?**

**JENNIFER LAWRENCE** "Please?"

**CORRIN** Yeah, pretty much. "Please." Very deep and emotional. I've done that a couple of times.

**LAWRENCE** When *Winter's Bone* turned me down, they were doing L.A. casting that I went to, and they were like, "No, thank you." And then, they opened up casting in New York, and I flew to New York and just reentered like a stranger.

**CLAIRE FOY** They turned you down?

**LAWRENCE** Yeah. Maybe they were just scared at that point, and they were like, "OK."

**"She wants it."**

**MICHELLE YEOH** But isn't it good that [we] want the role? Don't you want someone who's really passionate and will bring their full game rather than just casting an actress who's like, "Oh, OK."



"I've seen emotional men. I've spent five hours on set. Female director(s) are the calmest, best decision-makers I've ever worked with," says Lawrence of the persistence of women helmers.

**CORRIN** I don't think there's any harm in it. There's probably a line somewhere.

**LAWRENCE** Don't go to anyone's house.

**YEOH** A lot of the times I get the script, and it's not written for a woman like me. I remember doing *Sunshine* with

Danny Boyle. It's a story about the astronauts going to the sun, trying to

save us. When I first received the script, it was written for a man to start off

with, so that was already such a joy that Danny thought, "Well, I would change

it for you." Then, at that point, I said to him, "Why do you think at that time it's

still the Russians and the Americans going to space? Wouldn't you have more

Japanese, Chinese?" It takes a director with great confidence of who they are

and their vision, and he changed it. We had Hiroyuki Sanada, Benedict Wong

and myself. That's the time when you think, "Can I make that bold step?"



JENNIFER LAWRENCE  
*Causeway*

Because the next thing they'll be like, "OK, bye. Thank you, but no thank you."

**MICHELLE WILLIAMS** It's also really nice to live in that passionate state. When

you want something, when you're so full of desire that it burns you to where

you have to go outside of your comfort zone, and make yourself so incredibly

vulnerable in front of a stranger, and say, "I want this with my whole heart. I'm in a flame right now for this

thing, and I don't know if it's going to be expanded or extinguished." I love

being in a desirous state — before you consummate something and you get

it. That's the most exciting time, when you're like, "This thing exists. Whether

I get to touch it or not, it's out there."

**Danielle**, for *Till* you submitted an audition tape of a scene where

Mamie Till-Mobley ties a necktie on her

son, and for your audition tape, you were

trying a necktie on your own son. What was that experience like?

**DANIELLE DEADWYLER** I've done a movie with my son before, and so he just lends me his skills here and there. That was easy. That was lighthearted. The other two scenes that I did were speeches, from the courtroom scene and the Harlem Rally speech. I've always auditioned for everything that I've ever had to do. It's the intuitive spirit of "I will do this difficult, challenging audition, and then throw it away, and let it go, and it'll come back in some other form if I don't get it."

**Was there any part of you with *Till* that was like, "Whoa, if I get this..."**

**DEADWYLER** It was difficult to even get to do the audition for it — because

I'm reading this very tension-filled, anxiety-ridden script, I had to go about it slowly. When I did finally finish

it after a week, they were like, "Hey, Danielle, you want to go ahead?" OK, do it and just relinquish it because it was

too much to continue to carry.

**Claire**, I had heard that Sarah Polley originally envisioned you for a different

role in *Women Talking* than the one you ended up playing. Is that right?

**FOY** It was for a part that I would've tried very hard to act, but I would've really been acting it. In the meeting

that we had on Zoom, she said, "Who do you like? Who's your favorite character?" And it was Salome. I just really

loved that she made the emotional weather in the room. She was allowed to be big, loud, angry, and nobody took it personally. I see all the time that if

you are that way, if you are quite a lot as a person, people tend to want to

squish it, or make it not quite so much for them to deal with. And the women in the room were capable of just letting her be who she was. I just loved being able to be big.

**Once you have the role, and you're starting to sink your teeth into it, what's the first thing you do? Michelle**, I remember

you telling me that you have an iPad and that you put every piece of research you have about a character on that iPad.

**WILLIAMS** I've just done that with women that I've played who actually were

[real people]. There's so much material. Marilyn Monroe, from *My Week With Marilyn* was the first person.

I was coming to set with this enormous, heavy bag every day that had all the books that had ever been about

Marilyn. Somebody said, "Why don't we compress this for you?" Trying to play somebody who had these beautiful, sloping shoulders, I thought, "Oh, that's really helpful." You have this

touchstone that you go back to, and you can put in your [ear]piece, and listen to a thing. It's a nice place to go in

between takes. You have this homing device for this person.

**How much does it help once you've got your costume, or your props, once you can touch something?**

**DEADWYLER** Mamie [Till-Mobley] is much more of a woman of a certain era, and I am a bit of a thing. The costuming,

it just pulls you up erect. She's already going through a particular kind of taut experience, a tightrope experience, but

the dresses just make you elongate. And then, not to mention the societal and cultural rigor of the time. There's a

discipline to womanhood. There's a discipline to beauty. So, yes, it definitely yanked me up in a certain way.

**Michelle**, in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, you're a million different characters. Are you just showing up on the day and looking at what's hanging for you in your dressing room?

**LAWRENCE** Did you have a favorite?

**YEOH** The rock. The most difficult was, in the action movies, I'm generally the one who's always in control, the

mentor, the teacher. And in this one, obviously, Evelyn has no clue what she's doing. She's a failure in every

thing, which makes her so vulnerable and wonderful to play because she

doesn't give up. I go to this universe where I'm a kung fu master, and then

I come back to this. And so, I'm doing all the moves, fighting with Jamie Lee

Curtis, right? And that's a lot of fun. Then the Daniels [directors Daniel

Kwan and Daniel Scheinert] come up to me and say, "Michelle, you can't look like you know what you're doing." I'm

like, "What does that mean?" Then, "Yes, of course. Evelyn Wong doesn't

know." It was completely out of my



CLAIRE FOY  
*Women Talking*



"I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I'VE SAID SO CALAMITY TO THE POINT OF I'M ALMOST ASLEEP. NO, I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT. AND I GET 'WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA.'"

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