

comfort zone. I was suddenly doing comedy, physical comedy, action, horror, every single genre all packed into one, and jumping in and out of it. It was such a gratifying experience. I've waited a long time to receive a script like that. Because, as you get older, the box gets smaller and smaller. And especially for us, it's never been an easy ride to start off with. I honestly look at all of you with such envy because you got an opportunity to try all the different roles, but we only get that opportunity maybe once in a long, long time. *Crouching Tiger* was 22 years ago. With *Crazy Rich Asians*, suddenly, I am the mean mom. Then I was the auntie. Then when I receive a script and they say, "Please play the grandmother," I was like, "Please don't put me in that box."

Does anyone else relate to being put in a box?
ROY When I first started acting, and I was doing lots of British TV, it's just inevitable that everybody goes, "You've done that, so we'll give you this." I'm



MICHELLE WILLIAMS
The Fabelmans

like, "But it's almost identical." Very often, it's the things that you *don't* do that navigate your career. It's when you go, "No, I'm not going to do that because that's not going to stretch me, or that's not going to give me something that I need." Sometimes it is worth making the decision that seems a bit strange, but you have to be given the opportunity to do that. And that doesn't happen, and it hasn't happened for so many people for so long.

Jennifer, you've said that you felt like your career choices had been hijacked by other people and that you had to really take the reins back for yourself.
LAWRENCE Yeah, I was at a really big agency, and I just feel like I had given away my agency. But it was also my fault. I would watch things and be such a fan. I would watch *Uncut Gems*, and he like, "Oh my God, the Sadfies, that'd be so cool to work with them." But I didn't reach out, and that's something I've gotten better about in the last few years. I also think a lot of it was just losing touch with the world

a little bit. I was working so much, and so much of what we do has to do with observing people. I felt like I couldn't really observe anyone because everybody was observing me. And so, taking a few years and getting back to life. I feel like I can be creative again in that sense.

Has anybody else had that experience of feeling like a lot of people have a lot of opinions about what you should do, and it's hard to make your own choices?

CORBIN Yeah, [it happens] when success happens very quickly, when you're young, and you haven't quite found the power in your own voice yet. In terms of what you want to do, what's best for you and actually being able to advocate for what you need. That's been something I've had to learn really fast. I'm very much a people pleaser generally in life, and that's a wonderful thing in many respects. It can also be very, very harmful in this industry because it means you get taken advantage of very quickly. It's really important not only in navigating career choices but also on set in terms of the hours you're asked to work, the things you are meant to do, especially as women or nonbinary people. It can be really important to be able to know that you can say no, and draw a line, and that that's not disrespectful. I always felt I had such imposter syndrome, or felt like I was so green, or so inexperienced that I had to take everything everyone else was saying as gospel, and it's been a huge breakthrough very recently to learn to advocate for myself.

DEADWYLER See, when your body and your mind are pushed to a certain degree, and you understand your limit, you will resist, right? I was on a film, things were being asked of me, and I was expressing the need to not, and I was like, "How many times does a woman of color have to ask for something to go the way I need for it to go?" Why do women have to do that? Why do nonbinary people have to do that? It shouldn't be about being pushed to a certain degree in order to articulate your need.

ROY Some people just can't hear the no. I can't tell you how many times I've said something so calmly to the point of I'm almost asleep. "No, I don't want to do that," and I get, "All right. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa." I couldn't be less aggressive. I noticed when I first started acting, I was like, "Ooh, this takes up a lot of time, and I'm expected to give a lot of my life over."



Even then, I was like, "I don't think that's actually OK." What I've noticed is, I've just started to not think I have to do anyone a favor. I'm being employed to do a job. You're paying me. I'm here. I'm committed. I want to do this. This is great. Because an industry's creative, sometimes I think there is an idea that it doesn't have to be professional. It should always be professional. There are boundaries, and they should be respected. And that's why I think it's OK to say, "We are going to work until 8 p.m., and then we stop. Yes, I know the day's running long, but I have to go home, and I have a child. I have another life; today, I am not going to go over," and it not to be seen that you are bringing the film down. This industry sometimes really does need limits.

DEADWYLER Each production is a system. You say, "I've got to go home. My child needs me. I'm doing this, period." And then, they will adjust. The others will act crazy, but we have to force them to adjust.

LAWRENCE They'll call you a crazy bitch.

CORBIN There's a real fear of being thought of as a crazy bitch, or a diva, or

you hear these horror stories of people being like, "Oh, yeah, I work with so and so," and you're like, "Oh God, I don't want to be like that."

WILLIAMS What I'm thinking about is how often actors are made to feel like children, and that we don't get information. It's kept away from us because they feel like they can't trust us with the information, and it's so frustrating. But it's happening less and less in my experience. In the past few years, I really do feel a shift. I feel a difference after *McQueen*. I just feel like there's more information flowing between all of us. And we're a little scary and powerful. I see more information coming to me, and people saying, "Now, based on the information, what decision do you want to make?" That we're just being trusted more. Is that just me?

LAWRENCE No, it's not. I've definitely felt a shift as well.

ROY Sarah Polley, the director of *Women Talking*, said that with this film, what she did was prioritize the experience as opposed to the outcome of what the movie was going to be, and so rarely that's what happens. Often it's "Where are you trying to get to? Make



DANIELLE DEADWYLER
Till

something good." As opposed to just trying to believe that what you're doing in that precise moment is good. And the crew are happy, and everyone's fed, and everyone's had eight hours of sleep.

DEADWYLER I'll add that?

ROY Yeah. She's got three kids, so the hours were, "This is what we're going to try and do. If we can't do it, we're going to talk to you about it." My daughter was sick at the end of the movie, and I was by that point so homesick that she was like, "Just go. Just go. Just go." I was pushed onto the airplane. That would never, ever happen.

CORBIN Have you read [Polley's] book? She published *Run Towards the Danger*, and it's so beautiful. It's about experiences she's had in her life with so many things, but one of them is her experiences acting as a child, before there was any kind of shift in the industry. You just feel like she's learned so much through doing. Working with directors who've been actors themselves, there's an understanding. It creates this ability for you to be able to articulate something. It's relatable. Which makes such a huge difference.

How did that show up on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*? Your director, Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre, is also an actor.
CORBIN Because we were quite close in age, I just felt like I could talk to her

This Oscar Roundtable, presented by Virgin Atlantic, features the most compelling artists and filmmakers whose work has been recognized as award-season contenders by the editors of The Hollywood Reporter. Look for an extended video version of this Actress Roundtable on THR.com/Roundtables.

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