

Rachel Weisz's latest TV series calls for her to play both twins in a reworking of Cronenberg's dark and bloody classic, *Dead Ringers*. But then the famously private Oscar-winner is used to stepping in and out of roles. Here, she talks to Eva Wiseman about her life as an actor and producer, celebrity and mother

Photographs DANIELLE LEVITT  
Styling KATE YOUNG

# 'Life can be complicated'

**T**here's quite a lot of blood. There's really quite a lot of blood in *Dead Ringers*, but it's not the blood of bullet holes or stab wounds, or any of the other violence one might expect in a dark psychological thriller like this. It's blood on knickers and operating tables, and smeared on silk shirts, and the blood as a baby's head covers - the bloods of birth and loss, guttural screams, and in the middle of it all, Rachel Weisz, twice.

In David Cronenberg's original 1988 film, a grisly examination of the relationship between the physical and mental self, Jeremy Irons played twin gynaecologists whose dubious ethics led to all manner of horrors. In this gender-swapped adaptation, in which Weisz stars and exec-produced, she plays those twins identical in every way but character. Dr Beverly Mantle is the shy moral introvert, whose love affair with a patient triggers a psychic unravelling between the sisters, while Elliot is a modern mad scientist, hungry for meat, drugs, conflict, godliness, sex. What could come off as a soapy trick, in Weisz's Oscar-winning hands becomes campily surreal, uncanny, seductive, a little perverse - joy.

She meets me today from the study in her Brooklyn home after the usual "morning chaos" of getting her teenage son (with director Darren Aronofsky) and four-year-old daughter (with husband Daniel Craig) out of the house. "My stepdaughter took my littlest one to school, thankfully, but still," she takes a dramatic spoon of porridge, "chaos." A refined sort of cashmere chaos, but yes - she has a young family, and a large career which has recently encompassed both Marvel movies and independent cinema, and a marriage which, despite its quiet domesticity, reflects such glamour it feels almost blinding. Navigating all this does feel like it might require a certain level of splitting, or at least one more Rachel Weisz.

New York has been her home since 2002, but she grew up in London and has commuted, basically, "backwards and forwards since my son was born 16 years ago. Maybe I'm deluded, but I still feel pretty in touch with England - it will always be home." Her late parents came to Britain from Austria and Hungary as child refugees just before the Second World War. She chuckles. "They saw it as this incredible country that had welcomed and saved them. My father always used to say, with a very strong Hungarian accent, 'Buy British.' And I think of myself as the child of immigrants, for sure." They sent her to a private girls' school, where she excelled, until she didn't.

There is a grainy clip online of a 1980s episode of the breakfast show, *Good Morning Britain*, in which Weisz, then 14, is interviewed about having turned down a part in a Richard Gere film. "I remember that day well. What the fuck was I doing there? I guess my mum had arranged it. I looked like a little rabbit in the headlights, didn't I?" In the clip she is upright and wary, and quite clearly exactly the same person as the one sitting before me today, a person already formed, already taking themselves very seriously. "Yes I was quite serious. And then I became very serious about rebelling, I did everything pretty seriously." She was expelled from school soon after that breakfast show, "due to a good healthy adolescent rebellion. Now I'm much more respectful," she promises. She still has the flyers for the warehouse parties she frequented in those rebel days, a kind of omen, proof of propensity to defy.

At the next school she joined, the headmistress told her she wasn't allowed to apply for university as she was "a disgrace to the school", but another teacher took her aside and promptly changed her life. "It was that moment - having a grownup who was very stern, but who had a kind of magic to her. And she said - I think you can do this. It was like... being offered a different role." She got into Cambridge University, where she co-founded a theatre group, and her acting career took off soon after, with notable successes being her first Hollywood film, *The Mimicry* (with Brendan Fraser) and in 2006 an Oscar for her role in the



'We were daydreaming together.' Rachel Weisz wears jacket, trousers and shirt by Kallmeyer, mules by Paris Texas

*Danielle Levitt*

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