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From *Peaky Blinders* to now starring in *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande*, actor Daryl McCormack is going from strength to strength. Taking on the role of Leo alongside Emma Thompson, the 29-year-old talks representing sex work on screen, embracing our bodies and growing as an actor.

Good Luck to You, Leo Grande takes place behind the door of a single (and really quite fancy) hotel room. Meet Leo Grande (played by Daryl McCormack) and Nancy Stokes (played by Emma Thompson), two people who couldn't be further apart in terms of age, career, life experience – well, everything really. Leo is an enigmatic young sex worker. Nancy is a retired RE teacher yearning for connection. They unite with a single goal in mind: to have sex. Except just having sex turns out to be more complicated than they anticipated.

Directed by Sophie Hyde and written by Katy Brand, *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* is a heart-warming – and often heartbreaking – film diving into the wants, desires, hopes, and fears of two human souls. Staring alongside the stellar Emma Thompson, Daryl McCormack breathes warmth and vulnerability into Leo as his growing relationship with Nancy urges him to reveal more and more about his own life. Already holding a pretty impressive resume to his chest – with the likes of *Peaky Blinders*, *The Wheel of Time*, and upcoming role in *Bad Sisters* to consider – *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* is

see her at a café or something. They'll be like "Daryl, did you see? Saoirse's eating a scone!" Oh god. But yeah definitely one of my main inspirations.

CH What attracted you to your role in your upcoming film, *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande*?

DM The limitations in which the film takes place, between two people in one room. It's not often that you get a piece that's so stripped back. Yet, it felt very full in conversations and interaction. There was depth, comedy, heartbreak. I thought Katy [Brand], the screenwriter, had done an amazing job making the characters feel real. Making their kind of time together full of life and discovery. It was a no brainer!

CH How did you prepare for such a unique role?

DM There's been representations of sex work on screen before but this felt completely new. It was coming from a place that wasn't reductive and felt expansive in terms of what [Leo] was able to offer [Nancy]. I feel proud of that. We met with sex workers who felt close

to be working with one other person and for it to be Emma, whose of such stature. She's an incredible artist to work with – so generous and thoughtful. So inviting in terms of creative space and I felt like I was a part of that creativity. We were making the film together, that's what the film needed as well. We needed to lean on one another. We had this joke where we would need to "plug in" to one another to make the scenes work. One day, we felt a bit disconnected for whatever reason, and she held up a real plug and made a sad face. We had to rely on each other because there was nowhere else to go. The commitment to one another, in terms of Leo and Nancy, is what lays the foundation for growth to take place.

CH Were there any parts of filming that you found challenging?

DM Some of the pain and trauma that Leo carries in the film. Those days were challenging because, as an actor, you use your own pain. You align yourself with the character and ask yourself where you have pain you can draw on. Those days are tough because, when you open those wounds, you're using those memories. It's tricky because you have to leave it at work

"Ga Illendam sitam vent omnihiis mo omni cones arumquamus mo omni cones sitam vent omnihiis Illendam sitam cones arumquamus mo omni sitam mo vent omnihiis."

one of McCormack's best performances yet. Sitting down with *Wonderland*, McCormack talks about preparing for his role, working alongside Thompson, and growing pains.

CHLOE HARVEY Hi Daryl! Tell me, where did the journey into acting begin for you?

DARYL MCCORMACK I did a drama course at the Dublin Institute of Technology. That's where it started for me in terms of pursuing acting after school. Before then it was always something I was interested in. I left in 2014 and I was waiting tables, working in bars, or retail. That was the beginning of being free to look for work.

CH Do you have anyone then that you consider an inspiration when it comes to performing?

DM I used to go to the cinema with my mum practically every weekend. It was a running joke in our family that I was obsessed with Saoirse Ronan. I always thought if I was to work with her, I know I'd be doing well! In that sense, she's always inspired me. It's gotten to the point in my family WhatsApp that someone will mention Saoirse Ronan even if the paparazzi

to who Leo is. They found a lot more than just the vocation, they found a sense of self-authority, identity, strength and beauty in what they can offer people. I thought it was really transformative.

CH Your character, Leo Grande, is really fleshed out as well. What did you think about him?

DM There's a level of sensitivity to Leo that I also have. Leo has given his life to his vocation. That sensitivity was something that Sophie [Hyde] was looking for in the actor who plays Leo. I like to think that I'm also self-assured and I've gone through my own life experience to gain that assuredness. At the same time, the reason why he feels capable and confident is because he has gone through a journey to know who he is and what he stands for. That's amazing to see on-screen and in a young man as well, that vulnerability and strength.

CH Emma Thompson is one of the UK's biggest household names, what was it like working alongside her?

DM Crazy! I was pinching myself up until we started shooting the film. It was surreal to

and come fresh the next day. There was a lot of myself in that role.

CH The film addresses a lot of topics: sex workers, consent, being an older woman, and even age- gaps in relationships in film. Did tackling your role teach you anything?

DM It taught me that those stereotypes: age, gender, orientation, everything we put onto ourselves as human beings can sometimes limit our expression. It's a good example because you have two people in a room who couldn't be more different. Over time, they begin to understand each other. They gravitate towards each other and want the best for each other. Sometimes narratives don't give us the opportunity to experience connection outside the bounds which we think they should exist. It's an interesting examination of how they're inside a room in the world, but they feel away from the world – the rules can bend. What comes out in the end is freedom.

CH One of my favourite lines takes place when you tell Nancy that "it's not vain to enjoy your body, to love it."





It's a positive message to direct to audiences.

DM I agree. Leo comes from a different generation but he speaks on the struggle that he's had with regards to body image. It's not just a generational thing. We are born in a body that we somehow forget to love. This is our vessel. Where on earth did we go down this path in which we couldn't appreciate it and love it? The systems at play challenge our ability to look at ourselves and admire this beautiful thing that we're in. I hope people do take that away from the film.

CH You once said that in the lead up to your role in *Peaky Blinders* you felt nervous. Have you come into your own or do those nerves still happen?

DM I was nervous doing *Peaky Blinders* because it's such a big show. I admired and respected the cast and the show so I didn't want to be the new kid and it be like: "He stinks. Boo! Why is he making us look bad?" So I was nervous. But it was a growing moment. I got nervous when I started Leo because that was another point which required me to grow in order to get through it. I don't think I'm done with feeling nervous. That's the whole point, you're in a place of growth when you feel a little bit

overwhelmed. But I think that's a good sign, [It means] you're in exactly the place you're meant to be, sadly, with those terrible feelings, but they're good signs.

CH Growth can be uncomfortable, right?

DM It is. But it's inevitable as well, right? We can't go through life without growing. So, in a weird way, I look forward to feeling scared again 'cause I know I'm in a good place. I never want to take things for granted. Truly, look at what we get to do. It's a real privilege.

CH Okay, if you had to pick, what's your favourite role so far?

DM It has to be Leo. Not just the material of the film, but the whole process of making it and the trust with everyone involved. The growth I went through personally to get to the other side of that project was fundamental. It was a moment in terms of, personally, releasing the shackles because I did struggle with accepting actually being there. It's a role that a lot of myself is in. It's amazing when you get to give a lot of yourself to a performance. Hopefully there's more to come!

Good Luck to You, Leo Grande will be available in cinemas June 17th.





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