

2011 **HOLIDAY MOVIES PREVIEW**



MUPPETSATIONAL

In a Canadian **exclusive** interview, The Muppets star Amy Adams talks of her love of all things Kermit



KEVIN
WILLIAMSON

Movies

LOS ANGELES — Midway through our conversation, Amy Adams bursts into song. The Muppets have that effect on people.

"Life's like a movie/ write your own ending/ keep believing/keep pretending..." she begins.

The line comes from 1979's *The Muppet Movie*, the first cinematic foray by the felt phenoms, which charted how the dauntlessly optimistic underdogs journeyed to Hollywood in the hopes of signing the standard "rich and famous contract." (Spoiler alert: They did.)

It was a childhood favourite for Adams, 37, whose own aspirations were at least as hopeful.

"It's not that it's just optimistic," she says in a Canadian exclusive interview ahead of *The Muppets*, the big-screen re-launch of the beloved characters that opens Wednesday.

"You really have to have that sort of attitude and believe in your own path and not make comparisons and figure out how to be comfortable in your skin. And in a lot of ways, that's like the Muppets. I think everybody's on that journey. Just because I chose to be an actress doesn't mean that journey's exclusive to me. I think everybody has a dream, whether it's being a doctor or a teacher. It's trusting your intuition about what you should be doing."

Which is something Adams has lived herself. She worked for years in musical theatre — which would later come in useful, admittedly, while making the song-and-dance-heavy *The Muppets* — before memorable roles in *Catch Me If You Can* and *Junebug* jump-started her career. Thrice nominated for Oscars — for *Junebug*, *Proof* and last year's *The Fighter* — she's also starred in such lighter fare as Disney's fantasy *Enchanted*.

Despite her obvious affection for the Muppets, however, it was star and co-screenwriter Jason Segel who approached her to co-star as his girlfriend, Mary.

Adams remembers receiving a DVD from him. "Jason and Kermit were there, sitting talking to each other about how they wanted me in the movie, and then they go, 'Hi Amy!' and break the fourth wall."

Her answer was immediate. "I'll do it! I'll do it! That was kind of my response."

After all, like most of her generation (myself included), she can't remember a time when there weren't Muppets.

"They've kind of always been in my life. For me, it's probably more *The Muppet Movie* than *The Muppet Show*. I didn't see them with as much regularity as *The Muppet Movie*, which we saw all the time in my house. That was actually the first movie I gave to my nephew when he was three. We watched it together."

That he enjoyed — and

was fascinated by — the film also speaks to skeptics who question if there's a place for characters made of cloth in the age of pixilated slickness.

"Whenever I see a Muppet interact with a child it's pretty easy to believe there's a place for them," Adams says. "I know kids are a lot more savvy now. But kids know a good story, kids know when something makes them laugh, kids know when something makes them want to watch it. They don't know whether it's generated on a computer or by a man holding a stick. So even though they're savvy, they're still willing to believe."

As was Adams when she arrived on set, suddenly acting opposite the characters she'd grown up with.

"I accepted them as other actors when I was working with them. I didn't even associate the puppeteer with them. I really saw them as their characters. So it's great to see that other people respond to them the same way. That's what's

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The Muppets star Amy Adams



genius about the Muppets and the puppeteers that operate them — how they really do disappear. If there's something they need, they talk through the characters."

Nevertheless, it was a highly orchestrated, technical shoot. False floors? "Not as many as you would think. What they're able to accomplish is, I don't know how they do it. I really don't. We were doing a press conference earlier for half-an-hour and that's someone holding their arm up for half-an-hour. They're amazing. There were a lot of technical aspects to it, but you get used to it."

What she didn't have to get used to — thanks to her aforementioned training — were the multiple musical interludes, which, for the climax, spill onto Hollywood Boulevard.

"We learned the dance numbers the day we did them essentially. I had been a dancer so that helped. And the singing was you had to practice on your own and then show up in the recording studio and lay it down. I'm glad I had that skill set under my belt already from working in musical theatre. For me it was kind of like coming home."

Nor, with *The Muppets* about to open, is Adams finished with revisiting her childhood. She's currently in Vancouver shooting *Man of Steel* as Lois Lane opposite Henry Cavill's Superman.

"I thought Superman was the best thing ever when I was a kid. And I thought Lois Lane was the coolest girl. I wanted to be just like her — spunky and intrepid. I wanted the affections of Superman when I was about five years old."

When it's pointed out *The Muppet Movie* and 1978's *Superman: The Movie* were released within a year of each other, she laughs.

"Yeah, well, there's where I'm locked."

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MISS
PIGGY

Out of the mouths of Muppets

LOS ANGELES — It's an indelicate question to put to any actress of a certain age. Especially one known for well-placed karate chops.

But given that Miss Piggy doesn't look a day older than she did in the 1970s, it's inevitably asked: Has she had any work done?

"I'm perfect in everyway. Let's just say I've gotten a little more perfect over the years."

Not that she's alone in appearing as youthful as she did before the death of disco. Consider her co-star Kermit the Frog.

"He doesn't have hair, so his hair can't turn grey," she says.

"If I turn grey," the amphibious superstar says, "it's all over and that's a different story."

Among other revelations from a press conference in which Kermit and Piggy were joined by actor-screenwriter Jason Segel, co-star Amy Adams and new Muppet Walter:

■ Miss Piggy did not have her role in *The Muppets*, opening Wednesday, tailored for her, despite her reputation as a diva. "I did not demand any re-writes. I want to go on the record with that, but that's probably just because I didn't really read the script."

■ Already the Muppets are reaping the benefits of being once more at the fore of pop culture after an extended

absence. Says Kermit, "We've got a great rock star room upstairs with a great view and lots of cookies."

■ For the record, Kermit and Miss Piggy are a couple again. When the question of their status is put to Piggy, Kermit immediately asks for a rebuttal. Her response? "I was going to say, Kermie, that I haven't seen him in so long because I've been on the road. And I missed him. I was just going to say how much I love him. You want to rebut that?" Chastened, Kermit says, "I'm thrilled always to perform with Miss Piggy; I think we make a great duo."

■ It's not easy being green, but it's equally tough being a Muppet who, far away from Hollywood, is growing up in Smalltown U.S.A. "The worst thing that happened to me growing up was that someone mistook me for a pinata," says newcomer Walter, who reunites the Muppets in the new movie. "Not good."

■ Walter spent the shoot amazed by the craftsmanship of all involved. "It's just so deliberate and crafted and gone over with a fine tooth comb, and I think that speaks to the professionalism of everybody who worked on it, and Jason and Amy —"

"Save it for the Academy," Kermit interrupts.

— Kevin Williamson