

Alice Englert wears
L'Agence top, \$1095, from
Belinda; **Paule Ka** top
(worn underneath), \$429;
vintage bra, \$280, from
The Vintage Clothing Shop;
Chanel skirt, \$4360,
and boots, \$1650; on
Englert's left hand, from left:
Cerrone ring, \$1900;
her own ring, worn
throughout; on Englert's
right hand: **Fiorina** bracelets,
\$60 each, from Robby
Ingham Stores. Styled by
Christine Centenera.

• The ingenue

Striking Alice Englert is on her way as an actor — despite her mother, director Jane Campion's protestations. She talks poetry, passion and the Pixies with Rachel Sharp. Photographed by **BEC PARSONS**



Chanel dress, \$1280,
boots, \$1650, necklace,
\$3570, and bracelets,
\$2070 each.



Valentino dress,
price on application;
Cerrone ring, \$1900.
Hair note: L'Oréal Paris
Elnett Satin Volume
Supreme Hold.



Christopher Kane dress, \$3500, from Belinda; Autore necklace, \$3600; Dolce & Gabbana necklace, \$950, from Cosmopolitan Shoes; on Englert's left hand, from top: Cerrone ring, \$1900; on Englert's right hand, from left: Cerrone rings, \$1900 each; Le Blob ring, \$495, from The Corner Shop.

Some teenagers will do anything to get out of school. For talented young Alice Englert, landing a plum movie role opposite Josh Hartnett that means weeks of filming in India at the start of her Year 11's first term does the trick nicely. Still, despite all of her modesty and sweetness, Englert is no ordinary teenager.

First, there are the looks. Sixteen-year-old Englert's first modelling job was with legendary fashion photographer Bruce Weber for Italian *Vogue* last year. For the record, this BAZAAR shoot is just her second foray into modelling, and could be the last — "I wouldn't do it [professionally]," she says pointedly. Then there's her silky voice. She's a natural performer, spontaneously breaking into a self-penned song for the BAZAAR crew during a set-up shot with her guitar. But it's her speaking voice that's captivating: theatrical and plummy. It's deep for her age, helping her get away with the odd expletive that peppers her conversation for dramatic effect.

Then there are her reading choices. Despite the teenager's disdain for school, she's "obsessed" with Shakespeare and is a confessed literary "geek", producing a book of Blake poetry she carries everywhere as evidence, followed by an antique-looking folio of sketches, song lyrics and pictures — not unlike the visual diary high-school arts students are obliged to compile for final assessment — which she keeps for fun.

Finally, aside from her emerging acting talent, there's another, unique, gift for which Englert is wildly grateful: her heritage. She's the daughter of Oscar-winning director Jane Campion and filmmaker Colin Englert, with grandparents who were stars of the theatre world in their day. The art of storytelling is in her blood.

"I grew up with it, but there was definitely a moment where I said, 'I want to be an actress' and Mum said, 'No, no you don't!' ... because she knows how hard it is emotionally ... it can be a blessing and curse. With acting, the most important thing is to be able to be vulnerable and ... to be vulnerable in front of so many people and to be up there for judgment, I think that's a very hard thing to do. [But] if you really want to do something it will be worth it, no matter what. You really have to trust your instincts and not be afraid. I think it does take guts."

She may be at the start of her career, but Englert has still had more practice than most novices. Her first movie role was in short film *The Water Diary*, directed by Campion, at age 11.

"That was when I was like, 'I love movies, I love the set, I love the way people come together, and somehow it all happens. I never liked school; I really didn't like it,'" she continues, despite having gone to several of the best and now being enrolled at a private college on Sydney's North Shore. "I mean, you go to school and everyone fusses around and nothing ever happens."

Not surprisingly, she intends to focus on drama and arts subjects for her HSC. "In maths I was always the one drawing on my hand and doodling in the back of my book." Short of school drama classes, Englert has no formal acting training, but considers years of watching and learning from her mum the best preparation. "I'm so lucky ... Mum's been great. I remember when I was doing a school play in primary school, we were going through my lines and Mum said, 'No, you don't have to put so much stress on that word' and I said, 'But the teacher said I need to emphasise', and Mum went, 'Yeah, but that doesn't matter', and I went, 'But Mum, she's the teacher', and she went, 'Well, I'm a director!' and that was the moment [I realised how lucky I was]."

Still, while Englert caught the attention of her current movie agent through a minor role in one of Campion's films, her big career break playing opposite Josh Hartnett in *Singularity*, directed by Roland Joffé [*The Mission*, *The Killing Fields*], was earned on her own through the regular tough audition process. "I don't get too nervous about things like this because for me telling stories and performing is sort of a natural thing. It's something that I don't get so anxious about ... it's sort of just something I feel at home with. They rang two weeks later saying I got the part." Within months she had filmed her first scenes on the Gold Coast, with another stint on location in India slated for March 2011.

The plot of *Singularity* revolves around a marine archaeologist (Hartnett). While laying in a coma after a diving accident trying to save his trapped wife, his mind is transported back to 18th-century India, where he falls in love with a beautiful she-warrior after embarking on a perilous mission. Englert's role as Dolly Egerton, the feisty, firebrand daughter of a British colonel posted to India, required her to both perfect an English accent and share an impressive amount of screen time with Hartnett, the latter being a bonus not lost on this teen, or her envious friends.

"I remember I had seen Josh Hartnett in *The Virgin Suicides* ... so it was brilliant when I found out [he was the lead role]. I went, 'Oh my god, that's Trip Fontaine!' I didn't tell my friends, but when they did figure it out they were all, 'I want to slap you.' But the thing is [with stars], when you meet them they're ... they become people. You just see them as themselves, really." She may have the looks, talent and determination to be household name, but Englert is equally determined to be an entertainer rather than an actor. "[Acting] is my world, but it's not the only world I want to be a part of. I don't want to be limited ... If you can do a good job at a lot of things, then you should go for it." She's passionate about music, plays the guitar, writes her own songs and poetry, and cites multifaceted performers such as Zooey Deschanel as her inspiration. "And Hugh Jackman — he's an amazing singer, a great presenter and a fantastic actor."

Her taste in movies and their makers hint at maturity beyond her age. French filmmaker Louis Malle and Gus Van Sant, for example, are among her favourite directors; for actors, it's Marion Cotillard, Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore and Helena Bonham Carter ("She is such a great actress; she doesn't think about what she looks like — she just is the character," she says). Her iPod favourites list is hardly teen mainstream, either. "I love Leonard Cohen and I've got an obsession with Nick Cave. And Bob Dylan, Joe Cocker, the Pixies," she enthuses.

Does she consider herself privileged? Without hesitation: "Yes". Under pressure to prove herself, given her connections? She pauses briefly to think. "I don't feel extra pressure, I feel grateful, because I think people work so hard at acting and it's really hard to get your foot in the bloody door. There are so many people that are good and in the end it comes down to some luck and an element of [meeting the right people]."

She may have an acting career in her sights, but Englert has no interest in Hollywood blockbusters — at least for now. "I'd like to move to England eventually," she concludes. "And I'd love to do theatre. During school I had a totally enlightening experience with Shakespeare ... I was raving about it like some nerdy lunatic."

This "nerd" may be moving far sooner than she'd planned; Englert recently screen-tested for a part in LA that would require a move to Europe for filming. And we suspect anything that combined deferred school with more professional storytelling would no doubt make this young lady one very happy, privileged almost-17-year-old. ■

Englert wears **Mami** top, \$1130, and skirt, \$1515; vintage bra, \$280, from **The Vintage Clothing Shop**; **Fiorina** bracelets, \$60 each, from Robby Ingham Stores. In this portfolio: hair by Peter Lennon at Company1; makeup by Liz Kelsh at 2c Management. See Buylines for details and stockists.

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