

The Luck of Rachel Weisz

Oh, that's ancient history," Rachel Weisz jokes when you bring up *The Mummy*, the 1999 movie that put her on the map. She's made more than a dozen films before and after, yet audiences still associate her with the role of Evie, the bookish heroine of the horror/action flick and its 2001 sequel.

"She's so *not* me," explains Weisz, who is shouting into her cell phone as she darts around Manhattan streets on a brief holiday. Nor is she anything like her current incarnation, Marlee in *Runaway Jury*. She stars opposite John Cusack, Gene Hackman, and Dustin Hoffman in the thriller based on the John Grisham bestseller, and describes her and Cusack's characters as partners in crime, very "*Bonnie and Clyde*, without the guns. Scheming, shrewd, manipulating." **BY SHERYL BERK**



Rachel Weisz teams up again with her *Confidence* co-star, Dustin Hoffman, in her newest film, *Runaway Jury* (above)



David) “but I didn’t really come out of the closet as an actress, so to speak, until college.”

At Cambridge University the English major formed her own theater company. “It was really very enterprising, very avant garde, almost like performance art,” she recalls. “We did these sort of violent, sexy, absurd pieces of theater—we could perform them anywhere, on people’s roofs, in the garden. We didn’t need a stage.” As unorthodox as those ventures were, audiences apparently liked them. In 1991, one of the plays Weisz wrote and acted in won a student drama award at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival. “We were quite the little

was this big classical role (Gilda) and I was virtually untrained, so it was quite a big deal,” she says modestly. Apparently so—in 1994 she was voted Most Promising Newcomer by the London Critics’ Circle.

Movies seemed the next logical step. But Weisz will tell you that luck—not dazzling talent—led her to stand-out performances in *Stealing Beauty* (1996) and *Swept From the Sea*. After being paired with Brendan Fraser in *The Mummy*, she starred with both Finnes boys (Joseph in *Enemy at the Gates* and Ralph in *Sunshine*), Hugh Grant in *About a Boy*, and Paul Rudd in *The Shape of Things*. “Of everyone I’ve played, I’m most like Rachel in *About a Boy*,” Weisz offers. “She

recognizable these days, especially after Revlon tapped her to be one of their spokesmodels (despite Weisz’s claim that she has “*Planet of the Apes*” eyebrows and a “problematic” nose). And rumor has it that *Playboy* once offered her six figures for a centerfold (she turned it down). “I don’t think I’m particularly beautiful,” she says. Nor is she one of those exercise-obsessed actresses. But going to the gym does have its advantages: “The other day I bumped into Hugh Jackman and he was just a lovely man. We talked a lot about theater, because he’s starring in a big Broadway show this fall and I’ll be doing a Broadway play, *Miss Julie*, next year. We both agree that



Hanks and Ryan



Kidman and Cruise



Kidder and Reeve



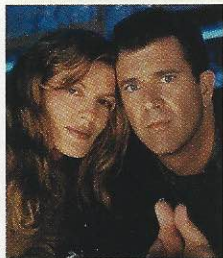
Lane and Gere



Fisher and Ford



Douglas and Turner



Russo and Gibson



Gere and Roberts

Cinema Couples

It’s likely that no matter what other roles she plays in future films, Rachel Weisz will be most popularly remembered for her on-screen pairing with Brendan Fraser in the two *Mummy* movies. Here are several other cinema couples who teamed up more than once, much to the delight of their fans:

Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford: *Star Wars* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Return of the Jedi* (1983)

Margot Kidder and Christopher Reeve: *Superman* (1978), *Superman II* (1980), *Superman III* (1983), *Superman IV* (1987)

Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise: *Days of Thunder* (1990), *Far and Away* (1992), *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)

Diane Lane and Richard Gere: *Cotton Club* (1984), *Unfaithful* (2002)

Julia Roberts and Richard Gere: *Pretty Woman* (1990), *Runaway Bride* (1999)

Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks: *Joe vs. the Volcano* (1990), *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), *You’ve Got Mail* (1998)

Rene Russo and Mel Gibson: *Lethal Weapon 3* (1992), *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998), *Ransom* (1996)

Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas: *Romancing the Stone* (1984), *Jewel of the Nile* (1985), *War of the Roses* (1989)

stars,” she remembers. “It got transferred to London, and that’s how I got an agent. I’ve sold out steadily since then.”

Weisz feels just a wee bit guilty that she hasn’t had to pay her dues (no waiting tables while waiting for her big break). Right after graduating, she was cast opposite Ewan McGregor in the BBC miniseries *Scarlet & Black*, and had a healthy run of roles in West End theater, including a much-lauded revival of Noel Coward’s *Design for Living*. “It

had the same name, so I kind of just let her be me. How would I react in these situations? It felt very real.” She loves the idea that she can keep audiences guessing: “Some people are surprised when they hear I have an English accent,” she says. “Do they think it’s put on? Or they don’t know if I’m overtly sexy [like Petula in *Beautiful Creatures*] or virginal [Evie in *The Mummy*]. I rather like that I’m a bit of a mystery.”

Mysterious, perhaps, but she’s also very

Broadway is terrifying—but that’s part of the kick.”

Also “terrifying but very exciting” were her two film roles opposite Dustin Hoffman—currently in *Runaway Jury* and earlier this year in *Confidence*. “You just hope some of his genius rubs off on you,” Weisz says of her co-star. “He’s one of those actors who doesn’t necessarily go word-for-word from the script, so you have to stay on your toes.”

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health regulations.

Another theory holds that Tchaikovsky was either poisoned or forced to poison himself so that the tsar would not learn of his romance with a highly placed male member of the royal family. Others maintain that the emotionally unstable composer committed suicide from disappointment over the critical failure of his beloved *Pathétique* Symphony. Recent discovery of letters between Tchaikovsky's physician and his brother, which mention suicide, supports this claim. Still, the jury remains out.

But Tchaikovsky's music lives on. Today, more than a century after it debuted, the *Pathétique* is recognized as a masterpiece of classical music. ●

MELISSA BURDICK HARMON IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF THIS MAGAZINE.

Rachel Weisz from page 81

And in *Runaway Jury*, she did just that, according to director Gary Fleder. "Finding someone to play the role of Marlee was enormously challenging," he says. "We needed someone who had that impossible combination of strength and vulnerability; we also needed someone who'd be fearless in going face-to-face with Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman. Rachel Weisz was that person."

Down the road, she'll star in a movie with Keanu Reeves (who she appeared with in 1996's *Chain Reaction*) called *Constantine*. "It's kind of gothic-horror. It's about heaven and hell and redemption," she explains. And should a third *Mummy* movie evolve, Weisz would like to state for the record that she's onboard. "It's so not true that I've turned down a third one," she insists. "I would do it in an instant. It was a lovely, fun experience, which is why people like watching it again and again."

As for any other plans, Weisz refuses to speculate. "I don't think I ever really set my sights," she admits. "For me, it's all about trying new things. It's all about the journey, wherever it may take you. That's the great luxury of my job—I don't have to do the same thing every day. And how many people can say that?" ●

SHERYL BERK IS SENIOR ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR FOR THIS MAGAZINE.

George Clooney from page 50

Richard Kind (from *Spin City*—probably the best known of the group after Clooney) died of a heart attack in New Jersey, Clooney chartered a jet and flew around the country to pick up the rest of their friends. They

didn't tell Kind they were coming, just arrived at the Trenton synagogue and sat in the back row while Kind was in front with his back to them. When he got up and started to talk about his father, he spotted his best friends at the rear and broke into sobs.

"Actually it still sort of chokes us all up," Clooney says of the memory. "We just dropped everything and made it. There's a beauty in that that's really nice."

The friends have also been visitors at Clooney's 18th-century villa on the shores of Italy's Lake Como. He purchased the 25-room home a year ago and last summer "spent three months sitting on a deck in front of a lake, not moving. It just felt really great. They live their lives differently there. They take their time, eat better food, drink good wine, and don't rush anything. I've never been anyplace you didn't *have* to show up somewhere."

As he heads into his 40s, Clooney says he doesn't waste time worrying about getting older. "It's inevitable. And I don't fight it because there are great things that come with getting older. I mean anyone who thinks they can stay in front of the camera—how many Paul Newmans are there? Really not many. So you have to have other things. [Director] Steven Soderbergh and I have a really successful production company, Section Eight [which is behind *K Street* and the upcoming CBS film on Murrow and McCarthy]. We're doing interesting films, and I'm having a really good time with that."

And what exactly does Section Eight stand for?

"It's what you use to get out of the Army on an insanity plea. Remember how Klinger [on *M*A*S*H*] was always trying to get out on a Section Eight?" And he laughs that unmistakable George Clooney laugh. Clearly life is, as he says, "a fun ride." ●

JANET CAWLEY IS SENIOR WRITER FOR THIS MAGAZINE.

Liza Bercovici from page 90

that although she gets the credit, the program has been a team effort from the get-go. Zee thinks Bercovici deserves the accolades. "Liza, in my eyes, is a model of strength and love in the truest sense. She created this program from a terrible loss in her life. When most people would fold, she became active and created a program that is an enormous gift to this community. Gabriella's memory is celebrated every day in these children."

Bercovici never talks about her daughter to the students, but they seem to know about her anyway. "Little kids will ask me, 'Are you the mother of the girl who died?'

One little girl came up to me and said, 'I miss your daughter.' She didn't know Gabri, but it was so sweet."

Now 50, Bercovici was born in Los Angeles. Her mother, Antonia Madison, was a psychologist who divorced Bercovici's father, Leo Liberman, when their daughter was 3. Madison then married Leonardo Bercovici, a screenwriter who was blacklisted during the McCarthy era for being a communist. No longer able to work in Hollywood, he moved with his family to Italy when Bercovici was 6, and she was schooled in Rome. She returned to the U.S. as a teenager and graduated from University of California, Berkeley in 1972. In 1978, she graduated from University of California, Hastings College of Law, where she met her husband, David, now a civil appellate lawyer. The two were married in 1980 and had their first child, Joe, in 1981. Gabriella followed in 1986 and Jake in 1991.

Bercovici's enormous love and admiration for her late daughter is obvious when she speaks about her. "Gabri was a great kid, a beautiful dancer, and my closest friend," she says. "She was very graceful. She would go into a room and shut the door and dance by herself for hours. When she died, my world crashed around me. Starting *Everybody Dance!* has given me a purpose."

Though she considers herself to be a very logical, rational person, Bercovici knows no other way to explain the phenomenal growth and success of *Everybody Dance!* than to look to the mystical. "I think maybe Gabri is up there watching us and making it happen," she says. "It gives me some comfort to think that she's aware of what we're doing—because I'm really doing all of this for her." ●

CHRISTINA FRANK FREQUENTLY WRITES ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY, HEALTH, AND PARENTING.

Memory from page 73

scientific evidence that it can damage your brain. Researchers at Indiana University, for example, compared the incidence of Alzheimer's disease among African Americans from Indianapolis with that of Africans living in a major Nigerian city. The Americans, whose rich diet was high in animal fats, were three times more likely to develop Alzheimer's as their Nigerian counterparts, who typically consume yams and palm oil, plus modest amounts of fish and other foods.

Recently, another group of researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland reported that eating a lower-fat diet while you're young or middle-aged can substantially cut the risk of Alzheimer's