

APRIL 28, 2013

PRESENTING  
**CAREY  
MULLIGAN**

THE RELUCTANT  
STAR WHO WON THE  
ROLE OF HER LIFE

GAGA FOR  
**GATSBY**

THE FILM, THE FACES,  
THAT FASHION!

sunday

**style**



(cover\_story)

# THE GREAT CAREY

*With the plum role of Daisy in *The Great Gatsby* under her belt, Carey Mulligan has hit the A-list, discovers Vanessa Keys*

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**I**t's mid-November in 2010 and winter is knocking at the door of New York City. Over at Center548, a 110-year-old warehouse smack-bang in the heart of Chelsea, the Council of Fashion Designers of America/*Vogue* Fashion Fund Awards are in full swing.

Carey Mulligan waits her turn on the reception line, watching Anna Wintour and Karl Lagerfeld (who she is to introduce at the dinner later that evening) tolerate a frenzy of photographers. Moments before the cameras swing in Mulligan's direction, she's surprised by the vision of Baz Luhrmann's wife, Catherine Martin, walking towards her brandishing a mobile phone.

"Catherine handed me the phone and it... it was Baz," Mulligan tells me, her voice still solemn with incredulity. "And he told me I had the part. He said, 'Hello Daisy.' And I burst into tears. It was quite a dramatic moment."

Mulligan's impersonation of Luhrmann's lazy drawl is eerie. "Heeeello Daisy," she repeats, obliging me with an impersonation that has me marvelling at her mimicry. It's been 18 months since *The Great Gatsby* had its last day of filming in Sydney, and just over a year since the shoot wrapped officially, but it's clear the memories loom large.

Not only because she's about to dive into a sea of *Gatsby*-centred magazine shoots, promotional tours and talk show appearances, but because Mulligan tells me she won't forget. "It was a very intense project," she says, and her voice indicates I should leave it at that.

Mulligan's is the classic girl-next-door done good story. Born in 1985 in Westminster, London, Mulligan grew up living in hotels with her brother, mother and father, who moved the





ART DECO-RATION Daisy's Prada wardrobe is the height of '20s glamour.

“DAISY WAS A BIG DEPARTURE FOR ME. FITZGERALD’S WIFE ZELDA CALLED HER THE CREAM ON TOP OF THE BOTTLE.”

family across Germany and Britain while he managed boutique hotels. She discovered acting at 16 when she saw *Henry V* starring Kenneth Branagh; at 17 she applied to three London drama schools (three rejection letters duly arrived).

A chance encounter with *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes led to Mulligan meeting a casting assistant and, not long after, a try-out to play Kitty Bennet, the younger sister of Keira Knightley’s Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride & Prejudice* (2005). After three auditions, the part was hers. But her real breakout role came in 2009, when she was cast as the impressionable Jenny Mellor in Nick Hornby’s *An*

*Education*, which earned her an Oscar nomination. Choice roles followed: the impenetrable Kathy H in *Never Let Me Go*, erratic extrovert Sissy Sullivan in *Shame* and Irene in *Drive* opposite Ryan Gosling.

And then there’s Daisy. Vacuous, shallow Daisy; the unlikely heroine of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby* and the catalyst that spurs the five central characters’ hopeless spiral into self-destruction. She’s one of literature’s most contradictory, conflicted enigmas; no wonder Mulligan felt daunted.

“I was terrified,” says Mulligan. “I had two auditions in two days and the first day they asked me to read

with Leo [DiCaprio, who had already been cast as Gatsby]. They called me again and I had to go in for a screen test with hair and make-up. Honestly, just getting to act with Leo for an hour and a half was pretty amazing. If it had all ended there, I would have been happy.”

Months before the cameras started rolling in Sydney in September 2011, Luhrmann gathered his key players (Mulligan, DiCaprio, Tobey Maguire, who plays protagonist Nick, and Joel Edgerton, Daisy’s husband Tom) in New York for a week of workshops.

“Baz organised people to come in and speak with us,” says Mulligan. “We had lectures on the 1920s and rehearsed scenes and talked a lot.” The cast received folders bulging with character-specific research material, plus iPods loaded with songs and videos. “I’ve never worked with



**ROARING GOOD TIME** (clockwise from right) Mulligan with on-screen husband Tom (Joel Edgerton); Mulligan glamming it up, 21st-century style; designer Catherine Martin's original sketches for Daisy.



anyone with so much breadth of knowledge," she says.

Conversations between Mulligan and Luhrmann about how best to play Daisy started early. Mulligan had read the book but didn't want to watch previous film adaptations. She relied solely on Fitzgerald's text and research material she'd gathered about the Fitzgeralds, particularly his flamboyant wife Zelda, on whom the character is partly based.

"Daisy was a big departure for me," says Mulligan. "I've never had to play a character who had such a defining 'look'. She's definitely been my biggest visual project. I kept remembering

something Zelda said, where she referred to Daisy as the 'cream on top of the bottle'."

In the book's first few chapters, Daisy makes a comment about her daughter — "I hope she'll be a fool; that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" — that's always struck me as poignant. When I mention this to Mulligan, she adds an idea new to me: that even in her most selfish moments, Daisy protects her child. "She's obviously shallow, she's obviously fickle, but there's a social context to why she behaves that way," Mulligan says. "She was a product of her society."

Her castmates' time in Australia may have been painted as a series of sun-drenched parties on yachts (we're talking about you, Leo), but Mulligan squashes speculation she was involved in the scene.

"I certainly didn't have a good social life," she says. "We had a couple of cast dinners together and Baz and Catherine really looked out for us and wanted us to feel happy and comfortable. But we were filming six days a week and on Sundays everyone was exhausted. Everything was done with a spirit of adventure and fun — that's how it is when you work with



encouraged to play, and then there are scenes where everyone just knuckles down. We all felt the weight of responsibility to get this right.”

After months of delay, *The Great Gatsby* has been selected to open next month’s Cannes Film Festival. A trailer on YouTube has amassed more than nine million hits and critics seem to get more panicky by the day – can Luhrmann pull this off? Will *Gatsby* be another *Australia*? And is Ms Mulligan, an actress who has flown relatively under the radar for eight years, ready to have her face plastered on billboards across the world? Will she be hounded?

“I don’t think so,” she says, as if she actually does think so but doesn’t want to go into it. “I don’t really look like Daisy. Daisy was this thing that we made up and I wore a wig and had period make-up on and I wore beautiful clothes. I won’t be wearing any of that when I’m walking around London so, you know, I think it will be OK.”

One gets the feeling Mulligan would rather invite the paparazzi round to her house for tea than talk about her private life. Her musician husband Marcus Mumford, of Mumford & Sons fame, is off-limits – “I’m not

comfortable talking about that, sorry” – and when I compliment the clean, traditional silhouettes she chooses for the red carpet, she responds with deathly silence. She shies away from talking about her nude scenes in *Shame*, and when asked about previous statements about being too “prudish” to look at her naked body, she chooses her response carefully.

“I just don’t like wearing anything where I feel sort of... insecure,” she says slowly. As for being the centre of attention, she’s finding it easier – just about. “I think I’m getting used to it,” she says. “I’m definitely finding it less nerve-racking. It’s not particularly enjoyable, but it’s not a terrible thing. No more uncomfortable than singing – or dancing in *The Great Gatsby*.” She laughs. “That was an experience.”

*The Great Gatsby* is in cinemas May 30. See our main fashion story for *Gatsby*-inspired style and *The Interview* for our chat to production designer Catherine Martin.



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## GATSBY: A STYLE GUIDE

*Because fashion follows film – especially a Baz film*

Designer Miuccia Prada collaborated with costume designer (and Baz’s wife) Catherine Martin on a 40-piece collection specifically for the film. The *pièce de la résistance* was a chandelier crystal dress.

*Gatsby* author F. Scott Fitzgerald was a Tiffany & Co customer back in the day. The association didn’t escape the jewellery brand, which will launch the Ziegfeld Collection, in collaboration with Luhrmann and Martin, in May.

The dudes aren’t forgotten, either – Martin worked with menswear label Brooks Brothers (yet another Fitzgerald fave) to create upwards of 500 items of clothing for the film, many adaptations of which are now available for sale.

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