

“Skyfall”-ing for a Bond Girl

Written by Kam Williams

Thursday, 08 November 2012 12:08



Naomie Harris was born on September 6, 1976 in London, England where she was raised as an only child by Lisselle Kayla, a single-mom and TV scriptwriter. The accomplished young actress, who is of Jamaican extraction, has already made a name for herself in film, television and theatre, and just completed production on *A Long Walk to Freedom*, a biopic about Nelson Mandela in which she portrayed his wife, Winnie.

Naomie recently starred at the National Theater in London in Danny Boyle's production of "Frankenstein," and was last seen on the big screen playing a grammar schoolteacher who fights for the right of an 84 year-old Kenyan to be educated in *The First Grader*. However, her breakthrough performance was back in 2002 in Boyle's *28 Days Later* after which she went on to receive further acclaim for her role as 'Tia Dalma' in *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* and *Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End*.

Her other major feature film credits include *Miami Vice*; *Tristram Shandy: A Cock And Bull Story*; *Street Kings* with Keanu Reeves and *Forrest Whittaker*; and *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*. On television, she's starred in the BBC's "Small Island" and "Blood and Oil" and in the UK's popular television adaptation of Zadie Smith's bestselling novel "White Teeth," the adaptation of the novel "Poppy Shakespeare," as well as "The Project."

Naomie graduated with honors from Cambridge University with a degree in social and political science prior to training at the prestigious Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Here, she talks about

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her latest outing as a Bond girl opposite Daniel Craig as Secret Agent 007 in Skyfall.

Kam Williams: Hi Naomie, I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Naomie Harris: My pleasure, Kam.

KW: What's it like to be a part of such a storied, classic franchise? Were you at all intimidated?

NH: It was intimidating in the beginning, for sure. I was really nervous, because I was certain it was going to be bigger than anything I'd ever done before. But I was relieved when I actually discovered that there was a family atmosphere on the set, with a brother-sister team, Barbara [Broccoli] and Michael [Wilson] running it all. They're incredibly down-to-earth and really warm, so it was like making a little independent movie most of the time. That was quite surprising to me, because I'd expected it to feel huge. But it didn't at all. It felt quite intimate.

KW: I loved you in Ninja Assassin, which was an action-adventure that might have served as a preparation for Skyfall.

NH: Yeah, in some ways, except that in that movie I was mostly screaming and running away from the bad guys, whereas in this one I'm generally jumping into the action and fighting with them. So, yeah, it was somewhat similar, but also very different.

KW: I have a lot of questions for you from fans. Documentary director Kevin Williams asks: Was the audition process for this role physically-demanding?

NH: No, it wasn't, at all. Sam [director Sam Mendes] did say the role would involve a lot of action, and asked if I was okay with that. Of course, I said, "Yes!" because you say "yes" to anything when you're auditioning for a Bond film. But I didn't realize just how much physicality was going to be required of me.

KW: How demanding did it turn out to be?

NH: I did more physical preparation for this, than I'd ever done for any role. I trained for a couple months. I was out on the shooting range twice a week. I worked out with a personal trainer for two hours a day, five days a week. So, it was quite demanding!

KW: April Hughes asks: What was it like working with Daniel Craig?

NH: I really enjoyed working with Daniel, because he's a brilliant actor at the top of his game. That gave me an opportunity to learn from the best, which is what you're always looking for as a performer in order to grow and get better at your craft. It was also great because he was so nice and incredibly supportive, because it really was an intimidating experience for me. He sort of held my hand and said, "We're in this together and we'll get through it together." And he did look after me.

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KW: And how was Sam Mendes as director? He won an Oscar for American Beauty, but he's never made a movie like this before.

NH: Yes, it was a really departure for him, and it was fantastic working with him precisely because of that. What interests him are characters and relationships, and he was a genius at giving you the freedom to create the type of character you want, and also to explore and have fun with your fellow actors. For him, characters and relationships are really the heartbeat of the film, and then the action is the backdrop. By developing the characters, he makes you care that much more about the action and going on a journey with the characters. People are already describing it as the best Bond flick ever, and I really think it will be.

KW: Did you ever feel in danger doing any of the stunts?

NH: I definitely felt frightened, but never in danger, because they were always so careful about everything. Some of the driving, particularly on that road around the sheer-drop cliff was actually done by stunt driver Ben Collin, who is otherwise known as The Stig from the TV show Pop Gear. He's a brilliant drive, nonetheless, it was terrifying to be careening along when a wrong turn would mean a thousand-foot drop and you're not in control and you want to slow the car down.



KW: Larry Greenberg asks: Growing up in London, did you ever think you would be a secret agent in a Bond film?

NH: I never ever thought that I would be in a Bond film, ever, which is weird because I grew up loving these amazing movies. But I never thought of it as a possibility, because there aren't very many black Bond women. So, it never occurred to me. But I'm absolutely loving being part of it, and that not only am I a Bond girl, but I get to be an agent as well.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles asks: How do expect being a Bond girl to affect your career?

NH: I definitely think it will affect it positively, because it means that now I'm much more

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visible to a wider audience. Directors and studios in particular are a lot more interested. So, I expect it's going to have a very positive impact on my career.

KW: How did you enjoy shooting on exotic locations?

NH: That's one of the fantastic perks of the job. It was also great shooting in London at Pinewood Studios because of all its history. So many of the 007 movies were filmed there, as well as classics by everyone from Marilyn Monroe to Jack Nicholson to Martin Scorsese. It's like working on hallowed ground. So, I felt a responsibility to make sure I did as good a job as I possibly could.

KW: Ilene Proctor says: Naomie, your story is one of fortitude and survival under difficult emotional circumstances that many can relate to. You must feel that becoming a Bond girl is a major "I told you so!" to all those that made you feel like an outsider.

NH: Not anymore, actually. I think what Ilene's referring to is the fact that I was bullied at school as a child. When I started out in the profession, it was definitely about proving that I was worthy, but after achieving a certain amount of success, I realized I didn't have to prove anything to anybody. So, I let go of that feeling a long time ago. Instead, this is now about my own journey and for me to enjoy for myself.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

NH: "How to Leave Twitter" by Grace Dent. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0571277748/ref%3dnosim/thslfofire-20>

KW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

NH: Wow! I usually look in my eyes to tell the truth of how I'm feeling that day.

KW: The Ling-Ju Yen question: What is your earliest childhood memory?

NH: I don't remember my childhood very well at all, but my earliest memory is holding a man's hand as I was walking down the street at about 1½. I can still remember the shoes I was wearing, but I don't know who the man was or what the memory relates to.

KW: The Uduak Oduok question: Who is your favorite fashion designer?

NH: I have a lot of them. I really like Roland Moret, Alexander McQueen and Marios Schwab, a young British designer.

KW: What is your favorite dish to cook?

NH: Shepherd's pie, which is a classic British dish. But my version reflects my Jamaican roots, because I add jerk to it as well.

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KW: If you could have one wish instantly granted, what would that be for?

NH: **World peace! Yeah... it would be nice if everyone could get on with each other a bit more.**

KW: The Kerry Washington question: If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

NH: **A cat, definitely because I'm very independent and very comfort-loving. I'm always looking for the comfiest place to lie down, like a cat.**

KW: The Judyth Piazza question: What key quality do you believe all successful people share?

NH: **Determination, and they won't take "no" for any answer.**

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman asks: What is your favorite charity?

NH: **A charity in Sierra Leone called Hands for Africa. They provide prosthetic arms and legs for amputees who've lost limbs in the civil war due to the trade in conflict diamonds.**

KW: The Michael Ealy question: If you could meet any historical figure, who would it be?

NH: **It would definitely be Jesus, because I would love to know some of his answers as to why we're here.**

KW: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

NH: **I would say only be an actress if you genuinely feel the calling, because it's a tough profession. Only do it, if you don't want to do anything else. And know that it's a tough journey with a lot of rejection along the way. You have to have a lot of self-belief.**

KW: The Pastor Alex Kendrick question: When do you feel the most content?

NH: **When I have finished a job, done all the promotion, and it's been received well. Then I can allow myself the luxury of a break, and chilling out with my family and friends, and taking a nice break knowing I've done a good job.**

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

NH: **I'm afraid that what most people don't know about me is that I'm very close to my brother and sister, who are 16 and 13, and I think I'm a pretty good big sister to them.**

KW: Thanks again for the interview, Naomie. I loved the film and I loved your performance.

NH: **Aww, thank you very much. You take care, Kam. Bye!**

To see a trailer for Skyfall, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kw1UVovByw>