

The Art of Being Blunt

EMILY BLUNT,
THE STAR OF THE
HAUNTINGLY DARK
FILM *THE GIRL ON
THE TRAIN*, OPENS
UP ABOUT LOOKING
DRUNK, ACTING
TRUTHFUL, AND
CHOOSING HER
WORDS CAREFULLY

by **AMY SYNNOTT**

photographed by
THOMAS WHITESIDE

styled by
MELISSA RUBINI

Gucci Chantilly lace and velvet gown with a detachable brooch.



Marc Jacobs
embroidered and
handpainted wool
coat. **Stella
McCartney**
lace-embroidered
satin dress.

Hair: Laini Reeves
for ASM. **Makeup:**
Jenn Streicher for
Forward Artists.
Manicure: Casey
Herman for The
Wall Group. **Set
design:** Bette
Adams for Mary
Howard Studio.



It

wasn't easy transforming Emily Blunt into a bloated alcoholic for her starring role in the highly anticipated thriller *The Girl on the Train*. First, there were the cheek plumpers. "The prosthetic people created these molds that clipped onto my teeth to make my face seem puffy," says Blunt, who, along with her makeup artist, Kyra Panchenko, studied mug shots of drunk drivers to get the look just right. "When we were filming, we were very specific about where she was during the day: how drunk she was, whether or not she was hungover," says Blunt. "Kyra is so talented. She used gray eye shadow under my eyes to bring out the circles and a little brush to paint spider veins all over my face." And perhaps the strangest act of makeup subterfuge? A series of bloodshot contact lenses that were switched based on her level of intoxication (pink for tipsy, red for drunk, yellow for hungover). "She's beautiful, so it was quite hard to make her look horrible," says Tate Taylor, who directed the film. "I kept saying to the crew, 'All right, can we get them back in here and make her look a little more drunk and ugly?'"

At first, Blunt admits, it was challenging to wrap her mind around the character, a depressed alcoholic who is obsessed with her ex-husband and his new wife (not to mention a random couple who lives a few doors down from them). "The way I live my life is just so dissimilar," says the actress, who was pregnant with her second daughter, Violet, during filming. To prep for the role, she watched episodes of the documentary series *Intervention*. "I needed to understand what addiction does to you physically and mentally and how it affects your self-esteem. This woman I play onscreen is so damaged, so broken down, that people don't even want to breathe the same air as her."

The exact opposite could be said for Blunt. When we meet for lunch at a cozy local restaurant near the new Brooklyn home she shares with her husband, actor John Krasinski (*The Office*), and daughters Hazel, 2, and Violet, 5 months, she radiates a kind of low-key, self-deprecating charisma that is hard to resist. Glowing with the flush of new motherhood and fresh off a round of publicity and photo shoots tied to *The Girl on the Train*, she breezes into the restaurant like some sort of Hollywood unicorn: an actress who is utterly enchanting yet completely unaffected. "I'm still breast-feeding, so I am hungry all the time," she tells me as she scans the menu. Dressed in cream culottes and a transparent black blouse from Maison Scotch, she looks like a slightly grown-up and more sophisticated version of her famous *Devil Wears Prada* character. Imagine Emily as an upgraded Miranda Priestly, editor-in-chief of *Runway*, all clean lines and sumptuous fabrics. "I love a

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high-waist slouchy trouser," she says, casually regarding her outfit. "I'm off jeans at the moment." As she speaks, she runs her hands over a gold Jennifer Fisher necklace that dangles from her neck. "I have a J and an E, and I'm going to get the girls' names engraved on this," she says, pointing to a blank gold bar. She and Krasinski chose the names Hazel and Violet because they liked their "antique" British vibe. "They sound like two little old ladies," says Blunt with a laugh. "They should be playing bridge or something."

Eight weeks postpartum, Blunt is still adjusting to the reality of having a newborn again. "After we got home from the hospital, I didn't shower for a week, and then John and I were like, 'Let's go out for dinner.' I could last only about an hour because my boobs were exploding. When the milk first comes in, it's like a tsunami. But we went, just to prove to ourselves that we could feel normal for a second." Transitioning from one to two kids hasn't been easy. "It's a zoo!" Blunt says. "When there was just one kid, somebody would get to sit down. Now nobody gets a break. But John is the most unbelievable daddy. He prioritizes Hazel so she doesn't miss me too much because I've been so consumed with the baby." Hazel is slowly getting used to having a little sis. "There have been no physical attacks or suffocations," Blunt says dryly. "She fluctuates between complete disinterest and moments of sheer passion."

If Blunt seems refreshingly unassuming, it may have something to do with her background. As a child, the actress suffered from a stutter. "I think whatever you have to overcome in life ultimately paves the way [for whom you

become as an adult,]” she says. “I got teased a lot, and to this day, I hate unkindness in people and bullies.” When Blunt was little, she used to tell people that her name was something other than Emily because, like many stutterers, she had a hard time saying her own name. “Names are always tricky because you can’t substitute a different word and there’s so much pressure attached to it. Even nowadays, when I’m tired or I feel put on the spot, I still sometimes struggle to get the words out. When I make a phone call—especially if I’m calling someone I don’t know—I have to mentally prepare myself. There’s always a big pause between when they ask ‘Who’s calling?’ and when I say ‘Emily Blunt.’”

The actress, who believes performing in school plays as a child helped her overcome her fluency issues, is now an outspoken advocate for the American Institute for Stuttering’s annual gala. “Bruce Willis basically strong-armed every famous stutterer I know into being a part of it,” she says. Vice President Joe Biden, Samuel L. Jackson, and Harvey Keitel have all been honorees. You never truly outgrow a stutter, she says. But most people learn to adapt. Take Willis. “He has always had a stutter. But he makes it work for him. You know how he speaks kind of quietly in a halting way?” It may seem counterintuitive that so many actors struggle with the disorder, but Blunt says it makes perfect sense. “If you speak to any actor, they will tell you that they never stutter when they act. Acting is a way of removing yourself

from yourself.” In becoming somebody else, she says, you escape the self-reflection that often gets in your way.

The same skills that allowed Blunt to overcome her stuttering have helped her forge a reputation as one of the most versatile actresses of her generation. “No one can put her in a box, because she’s done so many different movies,” says *Girl on the Train* cinematographer Charlotte Bruus Christensen. “Some actresses make a career out of playing themselves. But with Emily, it’s true talent. She can act any part.” Taylor agrees: “She really gets to the depth of what a character is on an intellectual level.” In addition to her scene-stealing performance opposite Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada*, Blunt has earned critical praise for her roles in period biopics (*The Young Victoria*), sci-fi thrillers (*Edge of Tomorrow*), and dramas such as the BBC TV movie *Gideon’s Daughter*, for which she earned a Golden Globe and a Peabody Award. But with her starring role in *The Girl on the Train*, which promises to be this fall’s box office equivalent of *Gone Girl*, Blunt is about to be catapulted to a whole new level of stardom. “It’s a hell of a performance,” says Christensen. “If she doesn’t get nominated for an Oscar, I don’t know ... she should be!”

For now, as she awaits the October release of the film, Blunt is lying low with her family. On weekends they sometimes escape to visit friends in Connecticut, New York’s Westchester County, or Martha’s Vineyard, where they recently stayed

Emily’s Fashion Hits

“I RARELY WEAR BLACK ON THE RED CARPET,” SAYS BLUNT, WHO FAVORS BOLD COLORS AND FORMFITTING SILHOUETTES THAT HIGHLIGHT HER HOURGLASS FIGURE.

1 In Alexander McQueen at the 2012 *Harper’s Bazaar* Women of the Year Awards. 2 In Carolina Herrera at a 2015 press conference to promote *Sicario*. 3 In Michael Kors Collection at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ 2014 Governors Awards. 4 In Oscar de la Renta at the 2012 SAG Awards. 5 In Michael Kors Collection at the Michael Kors spring 2017 runway show. 6 In Zuhair Murad at the 11th Annual Dubai International Film Festival in 2014. 7 In Michael Kors Collection at the 2013 Golden Globes.



with close buds Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen. “It’s hard to really travel much with a newborn,” she admits, tucking into a warm bowl of ricotta cavatelli with tasso ham. Fortunately, she doesn’t mind staying close to home. “Most people who live in Brooklyn are very respectful of our privacy, so I feel protected here,” she says. “You don’t get screamed at in the street. If anything, people are like, ‘Oh, I love your movie,’ and that’s it.” In L.A., where the couple recently sold their house to Kendall Jenner, it’s a very different scene. “Famous people are everywhere, so there’s a more cavalier attitude toward celebrities. There’s an expectation. ‘You’re going to take a picture with me’ is a phrase I’d hear a lot.”

As you might have guessed, the actress is not big on selfies. In fact, she is quite happy to completely eschew the entire social-media circus. “To be honest, I’m crap at all of it. I can barely keep up with email and texts, let alone send out a public account of what I’m doing all day.” Though she does maintain a private Instagram account (“The only people I follow—besides my friends—are Lena Dunham and Amy Schumer because they make me laugh”), she doesn’t feel any obligation to go public. In fact,

quite the opposite: “You’ve got to draw the line somewhere,” she says. “My job is to persuade people that I’m somebody else and allow them to go on that journey with me. If you share too much about yourself, people’s interest becomes about you as opposed to the roles you have played.” Blunt is nostalgic for Hollywood’s Golden Age, when the absence of social-sharing platforms such as Instagram and Twitter let movie stars maintain a sense of mystery. “There used to be such mystique to actors—you’d see them, and they were like rare birds.”

Blunt’s peppermint tea arrives. “Nobody in this town knows how to make a proper tea,” she jokes, ripping open the tiny sealed pouch and dunking her tea bag into the cup of lukewarm water in front of her.

This fall, when the actress and her clan temporarily relocate to London for her upcoming role in

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the remake of the classic film *Mary Poppins*, Blunt will have no problem finding a decent cup of tea. Her entire family lives there (including her oldest sister, who is married to actor Stanley Tucci—the two met at Blunt and Krasinski’s wedding at George Clooney’s estate on Lake Como), so she is thrilled to return home. Equally exciting to the theater buff, who made her debut at 18 on the London stage opposite Judi Dench? Appearing as Mary Poppins with *Hamilton* star Lin-Manuel Miranda. “I saw his show on Broadway three times, like a stalker,” she explains when asked whether she knew him personally before they started filming. “It’s heart-racing, the whole project.” In the new movie, Poppins comes back after the Banks kids have grown up and now have their own children. “And miraculously, Julie Andrews has turned into me,” Blunt says. “But she’s not as good of a singer.” Truth be told, the actress—who had extensive lessons before she sang in the musical fantasy film *Into the Woods*—is no slouch when it comes to vocals. In fact, she has been quietly making money off her voice for years, playing parts in animated films such as *Gnomeo & Juliet* and the upcoming adaptation of the popular children’s TV show *My Little Pony*. “It’s nice to do these films, because my kids will be able to see them one day,” she says. “That and I like to show up for work in my pajamas.”

When not wearing her PJs, Blunt leans toward more structured silhouettes. “For the red carpet, I like formfitting clothes,” she says. “I’m not so good with the sort of ethereal, girlie, whimsical things. I tend to go for dresses that have bold cuts and strong colors.” After Blunt leaves the restaurant this afternoon, she is heading home to try on a bunch of dresses for *The Girl on the Train* premiere. “My friend is coming over with a nice bottle of pinot noir, so it might be a pump-and-dump night,” she says. But first she will tend to priorities: feeding Violet and putting on a fashion show for Hazel. “My daughter thinks it is thrilling when my stylist comes over with racks of clothes. I always let her try on the stilettos.” n

