



What Lies Beneath

Sexy, talented and super-stylish – could Naomi Watts be any more perfect? But, as she tells *Marie Claire*, everyone has a dark side...

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN WATTS

Naomi Watts

BOASTS A CV PACKED WITH SOME OF THE DARKEST FILMS to come out of Hollywood in recent years. Think of her, and you probably picture her looking terrified. Maybe, in your mind's eye, she's cradling a corpse at

the bottom of a well, as in *The Ring*. Or trembling with incomprehension as she's held hostage by two psychopaths in *Funny Games*. Or drug-addled and grieving for her dead family in *27 Grams*. Even in *King Kong*, her most mainstream role to date, she spent much of the movie screaming in a muddy nightie.

I'll wager you probably don't think of her dancing like your least cool aunt after a few too many *Babybams*. And that's with a camera pointing at her. It's nearly the end of *Marie Claire's* cover shoot in New York but, right now, it feels more like a party. The studio is filled with deafening, slightly cheesy music and wide smiles, and the atmosphere is playful - perhaps partly because a couple of hours ago Watts' two gorgeous sons with actor Liev Schreiber, Sasha, two, and Kai, one, were on set, too, charming the socks off everyone.

Of course, it also helps that the photographer is her brother, Ben, a big name in his own right. As she tells me later: 'It's easier to make a fool of yourself in front of your brother. In fact, encouraged, I'd spend my life trying to make him laugh.' When he asks her to hunch down precariously in five-inch Louboutins for a shot, she sticks her chin out and says no, making the whole crew laugh. Perhaps another reason for her infectious good mood is the standing ovation her upcoming film, Woody Allen's *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger*, received recently at its Cannes premier.

Compared with her peers, Naomi Watts, 41, is an anomaly. Not just because it's impossible to think of any actress who got her break as late - she was 31 when David Lynch cast her in *Mulholland Drive* - and then parlayed it into such a successful career. Nor is it because, although she's

Story by Kate Russett

plainly got a taste for serious drama, she just as obviously loves fashion (she arrived in Daryl K leather leggings and a slouchy sweater layered over a long-sleeved tee), and she's the face of Thierry Mugler's *Angel*.

What really marks her out, as we sit down to talk, is that, despite her strongly held belief in the actor's creed that the less you know about the person, the more likely you are to get lost in their performance, she doesn't bat away a single question. Which, given some of what we talk about - in particular, how both ex-boyfriend Heath Ledger and her father died from drug overdoses - is all the more surprising.

You and your brother both chose creative careers. Does that stem from your mother? It took a while to realise I had the coolest mum - her clothes, the way she decorated the house. She'd pick things up at junk stores and make something of it. Then there's the fact that we moved around a lot, the people she hung out with... We were hippies, in the artistic, cool sense.

She was a very young mother... She was 19 when she had Ben, and 20 with me.

You had your kids close together as well.

Was that deliberate?

God, no! I didn't ever think I would be having kids this late. Then two under the age of two in diapers - it's the hardest thing I've ever done, but the most rewarding.

Did you worry about taking time out?

Not really, no. My career started late, so by

the time I was ready to have children, I felt like I had enough of a body of work under my belt. I was ready to say, 'OK, let's slow this down a little bit.'

You've built a reputation for choosing rather dark films, like *Funny Games*. Is it hard to come home to kids after working on something like that?

I didn't have kids then, but I did get pregnant on that movie, family enough. I was creatively fulfilled - obviously so much so that we conceived! Darkness has such an ugly reputation. Everyone has that side, in the same way that everyone has the lighter side. To face it is to undo it. It's not so much a form of escapism as the opposite.

You mentioned being a late starter in movies. What made you stick it out?

Everyone said it was an overnight success, but it was ten years leading up to that. You want to think, in retrospect, that you had really thick skin, but I didn't, I swear to God. I was so sensitive. I was hearing bits of feedback and taking it on board, trying to dilute myself into what I thought they wanted, to the point where every piece of [me] was gone. No wonder nobody hired me. It took someone like David Lynch to see beyond that. There are people who can walk into the room and just be themselves.

I wish I was that person but it's not me. I'm very shy. I'm terrible at parties. I went to a club the other night and felt so awkward and ungroovy. Everyone else looks so cool. It's just how I've always been.

Do you think that comes

from moving around so much as a child? Probably, yeah.

You grew up in Britain, moved to Australia at 14, and spent a long time in L.A. Where feels like home?

I have no idea. I always feel a bit like an outsider. But having said that, my home is my family, and right now we live in New York. Liev is such a New [continues]

'I was creatively fulfilled - so much so that we conceived!'



Yorker, I can't see him leaving any time soon. But, you know, we went to Sydney for Christmas and it felt like home. Then when I was filming in London, it was so great. I would love to live in London again.

Where are your closest friends?

A lot of them are in LA. I've got one close friend in London. When you've got small children it gets hard to keep up with your friends unless they've got kids the same age as yours. But I'm a girl's girl. My friends are definitely women.

Do you see Nicole Kidman? [They've been friends since their teens.]

We saw each other at Christmas in Sydney. We both travel a lot, but she does come to New York quite a bit. A lot of my friends exist on the phone or email these days.

'In the past, I definitely went after men who weren't right for me'

Now you live in a very male household...

Oh God... [She laughs.] People say, 'Are you done?', and I'm pretty sure I am, but I'd love a little girl.

You were just seven when you lost your father. [He was a sound engineer for Pink Floyd.] Do you think your grief was dealt with properly?

No, no. I mean, obviously I was comforted. But my mum was young. It probably didn't have the greatest... [She sighs.] When I did *21 Grams*, I researched this a lot. I sat in groups of people who talked about losing their children and other family members, and I learned so much. And in retrospect, I didn't deal with my grief at the time. My mum did her best. We lived with my grandparents, and she tried to keep us all together. **Is it true you had an argument before he died, and you told him you hated him?**

It was the last time I saw him. I had done something I wasn't supposed to, and he got cross. My grandparents were breeding goats and had cartons of vegetables, and Ben and I were mucking around, kicking the food over. I got in trouble. I wished bad things for him that day. *(continues)*

Did you carry guilt because of that?

Of course. I was very young - don't forget, he died when I was seven - but my parents divorced when I was four, so there weren't tons of memories. When you grow up and start thinking consciously, that's when you really miss that person, and you wonder what he would have thought of who you are and who you became.

Have you seen *The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus*, Heath's last film?

No. In time, I've always loved [the director] Terry Gilliam's films. And Heath was an unbelievably brilliant talent, I'm sure he's wonderful to watch. But, yeah, it's kind of... confronting.

Is it still very raw?

Mmm.

You were once quoted as saying that you attracted jerks...

I don't think I ever said that. It's not a word that I would use. But, in the past, I definitely went after men who weren't right for me.

'I wanted to impress [Liev]. I was thinking, "Does he think I'm good?"'

When did you know Liev was the right man for you?

I don't know, because we met here and there before the night we knew something was going to happen. It was never the right time, or we were with other people. But it was spoken about. We've got a couple who are our good friends, and they tried to set us up for years. When we finally saw each other at the Met Ball five years ago, we were both single, and we were both very aware of each other in the room. It was kind of an intense chemistry. Definitely. I don't know about love at first sight, but there was a strong desire for one another.

Do you have an arrangement where only one of you is working at a time so you can be together more?

We try to live by that. Occasionally it overlaps, but we're careful.

You've got *Fair Game* [opposite Sean Penn] coming out and the Woody Allen



At a premiere in Stella McCartney

Naomi Watts' style file

FAVOURITE DESIGNERS:

Roland Mouret, Olivier Theyskens, Stella McCartney, Chloé. They're all very classic but with a modern edge.

FAVOURITE SCENT:

Thierry Mugler Angel [above]. It's bold and really sexy - I always need a bit of that!



BEAUTY MUST-HAVES:

Sunscreen. I'm not a make-up person, but I will do mascara and gloss. Above, Thierry Mugler Cils Vinylé, £30; right, Thierry Mugler Latex Gloss in Light Pink, £24.50



FAVOURITE SHOP:

I like Colette in Paris [above], but I love the high street, like Topshop, too.

BEST FASHION BARGAIN:

I bought parachute pants for \$60 [around £40] at a store on Broadway. I can't wait till it gets warm - I'll wear them every day!

film *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger*, but you're also working with Liev soon [in a film from the producer of *There's Something About Mary*].

Yeah, it's a bunch of short films, and we're doing one together. We worked together before, on *The Painted Veil*. We'd only been together four months at that stage. Your on-screen relationship in that film wasn't exactly blissful - you spent a lot of it screaming at each other.

I know, before we'd even had our first fight.

It was hard because I so badly wanted to impress him, more than anything, and suddenly your performance is about him rather than the character. I was thinking, 'Does he think I'm good?'

Is it correct that you're engaged?

Yeah, I took my ring off for the pictures, but... Um... [She gets shy.] We're together.

Are you planning to get married soon?

We'll see. It's never been that important to me. If it was important to our children, I would do it in a heartbeat. We'll see. ■

Stylist: Sarah Flaxman. Hair: Jo Angerer/Carisma at The Mill Group, styling: Fabrice Faliss. Make-up by Isobel Jolani at The Mill Group. Makeup Artist: Veronica de Barros/Flawless at The Mill Group. Photograph by Markush at G5 Images. Opening credits: Steve Cohen & Catherine Ong. Absolutly softest: Second season jeans. Chic ring: Our audience. Third season: Steve Cohen. Fourth season: Steve Cohen. Fifth season: Steve Cohen. Sixth season: Steve Cohen. Seventh season: Steve Cohen. Eighth season: Steve Cohen. Ninth season: Steve Cohen. Tenth season: Steve Cohen. Eleventh season: Steve Cohen. Twelfth season: Steve Cohen. Thirteenth season: Steve Cohen. Fourteenth season: Steve Cohen. Fifteenth season: Steve Cohen. Sixteenth season: Steve Cohen. Seventeenth season: Steve Cohen. Eighteenth season: Steve Cohen. Nineteenth season: Steve Cohen. Twentieth season: Steve Cohen.