

'Children are

MADNE

Being pregnant wasn't going to stop Lena Headey from playing ruthless Cersei in *Game Of Thrones* season five

Not every actress can hack playing a tough-talking female character. However, Lena Headey knocks it out of the park as the ferocious Cersei in the mysteriously dark drama series *Game Of Thrones*.

"Certain people see Cersei as just a crazy bitch!" the 41-year-old laughs.

"But she's in this world and doesn't make apologies for being female. She plays the way she can to keep her safety and her position."

Lead female television and movie characters can often be wishy-washy, but throughout her career, Lena has

always managed to buck the trend

From her role on *GOT* to playing Sarah Connor in *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, this actress isn't afraid to take on a kickass female role!

Lena, who has a five-year-old son, Wylie, and a baby girl on the way this year, explains why she will always choose a character who's strong rather than sexy.

And, of course, she reveals what it was like being pregnant while filming *GOT* and how she identifies with Cersei.

Tell us about Cersei's journey this season?

Things for Cersei begin quite brilliantly for her. She feels she's in the place she's wanted to be – that her father's gone, Tyrion's [Peter Dinklage] gone and she's got a bit of control. Or, so she believes.

Is it fun when your storylines run parallel to the books – and even sometimes get ahead of them?

It's brilliant. When I first met [executive producers] David [Benioff] and Dan [Weiss], season five was the season we first spoke about. This is the story of

Cersei. So, when we spoke about her from season one to now, I knew this was coming. I've looked forward to this one so much, because who doesn't like to destroy something?

And Cersei's relationship with Jaime [Nikolaj Coster-Waldau] continues to be as complex as ever.

She and Jaime have had such a journey over the last two seasons. I think him

meeting Brienne [Gwendoline Christie], having that experience and returning to Cersei and seeing who she really is was a big moment for them. And

also her surviving without him for the first time. When he comes back, she's not really sure if she wants him, if she trusts him. He's kind of seen a new side of Cersei and they've slowly been... everything's come undone for them. But I love all that.

Do you think Cersei is misunderstood?

As an actor, I drive Cersei with the desire to keep her children safe and to not be defeated. Because she's a woman and that's it. And yeah, she's a little messed up, I concede that! She has some issues. But, it's far more interesting to play someone who's deeply complicated.

Cersei is such a strong woman.

Do you identify with that?

Yeah, you know, I'm in this crazy world and I have opinions and like to express them. I think strong women raise children, it's just part of the journey.

You've played a lot of strong female characters in your career. Where does that strength come from?

It's a curiosity and an intelligence. It comes from that more than anything. And not feeling vanity is a big thing,

"People see Cersei as a crazy bitch!"

Lena was expecting her second child as she filmed this season of *GOT*.



Lena's character Cersei (left) with rival Margaery Tyrell (Natalie Dormer).

such SS!'

I believe. I don't really think about that. I think I'm delivering this woman, this person and this being, and this is who they are. I get lost in that and whatever comes out, comes out.

You've had to be strong in your own life recently. What was it like being pregnant while filming the show?

I'd just found out I was pregnant [before filming season five]. You'll see I was pregnant towards the end of this season. I felt really nauseous. So, I was like, "Wait one sec!" and then I could be mean again. Luckily, my character was very emotional [this season], so it was a good season to be feeling emotional.

How are you feeling now, especially having a five-year-old at home as well?

I'm loving elasticised waists! And someone needs to bring out grapes for Cersei – that's all I know! I don't feel sick anymore. It's slightly different with number two, because you still have one running around. My son has no idea what's coming. He keeps saying, "It's my baby." And soon he'll be like, "Take her away!" I'm excited. I think he'll be protective-ish – until the crying escalates. Then, he'll just be like, "Can we get a dog?"

In what ways has this pregnancy been different to what you imagined?

With your first kid, you have that romantic vision. I used to think, "Oh, I'll just be walking down the beach, she'll be wearing a dress – and I had a boy! – and life's going to be just perfect." And then

Trivia time

Lena was born in Bermuda, where her dad was a policeman. She moved to Yorkshire in the UK when she was five.

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you have a child and you're like, "What just happened?" Right? Nobody tells you of the madness. So, now I'm aware of the madness, I feel less anxious about it. But having another kid, it's a little crazier.

Do you think it will be tricky to tend to the baby crying when you'll also have your young son?

I keep thinking about that and I think, "No, I'm going to be strict this time around." But childhood is really short and I understand that. Me and my son, we share a bed. Some people think that's... whatever. But there's such simple joy in that. When you wake up with your kid, do you know what I mean? And you're the recipient of their first thought at five – that's kind of the most joyous thing in the world. So probably, yeah, I'm going to have two of them.

What are you looking forward to about raising a boy and a girl?

Boys are really easy. They just want to fight you and then love you and then eat some food and then do a bit of fighting and knock down some Lego! I see girls at this age and they're already kind of, "You can't play with us." It's interesting. It's going to be an interesting journey raising a woman and raising a gentleman.



Lena's five-year-old son Wylie has a baby sister on the way.

Want to see what *Game Of Thrones* stars looked like *before* they were famous? Check out these five at tvweek.com.au

In what way has motherhood changed you personally?

Well, it's a journey that unless you take it, you don't know. I would've had no idea of what love was like. I look at the love I felt as an adult in relationships and now think, "I don't think I've ever loved anybody in my life." That's because the love you have for a kid just can't be compared to anything else. Also, I don't sleep much, because you worry all the time that something's going to happen. It's just loving another human being beyond words, beyond yourself. It's kind of extraordinary.

What's the standout piece of advice your mum gave you about parenting when you fell pregnant?

My mother just laughed and said, "Oh, prepare for some karma." And she's right.

How has your career and profile changed since *Game Of Thrones* shot to such massive popularity?

As an actor, I've worked for 21 or 22 years. *Game Of Thrones* is obviously the most high-profile, most celebrated [television show] I have ever been a part of. But there are perks and there are cons. You become slightly more high-profile, which is bizarre, because I like to keep my head down. So, when people become interested in your [personal] business, I don't love that. But in terms of people entertaining you and giving you time when they wouldn't have done before, that's brilliant. I can't lie – there are more opportunities!

What are the positives and negatives of being so recognised nowadays thanks to the success of the show?

People are more willing to listen to you [when it comes to other television or film project ideas], because you're part of a success. That's how fickle we are in this business. And, like I said, the downside is people. I turn around and somebody's following me to school and taking photos. That makes me really angry.

You don't seem to buy into the whole Hollywood vibe the way a lot of other actresses do...

I like to be private, do my work and do the best I can.

GAME OF THRONES
Monday, 11am and 7.30pm
(AEST), Showcase

SECRETS FROM GOT

Behind the scenes with the hit show's stars

Royal visit

A very high-profile *Game Of Thrones* fan stopped by the set this season – the Queen (below)! Kit Harrington (below right, who plays Jon Snow), 28, was thrilled. "It was amazing to meet her," he says. "I'm a shameless royalist. I love ol' Queenie!"



Who's next?

GOT loves killing off lead characters. "You've a feeling not many people will be left standing by the end!" Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, 44, who plays Jaime Lannister, laughs. "On a personal level, I'll be sad when that day comes and it's over. I'm very lucky and grateful to have been part of this."



Sophie's choice

Sophie Turner says she can relate to her character Sansa's worshipping of Joffrey (Jack Gleeson, above). "Sansa, who's 13, idolises someone like Joffrey, because he is who he is," Sophie (above), 19, explains. "I kind of had the same [feelings] when I was 13. I idolised people like Justin Bieber."

Fab feedback

Maisie Williams, who plays Arya Stark, loves fans' positive feedback to the show. "That's the wonderful thing," Maisie (right), 18, says. "Their reaction gives you peace of mind you're doing alright and people are happy."

