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MARGOT
ROBBIE
not all just good luck

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the making of MARGOT

She has already made 10 movies and been an Oscar nominee but Margot Robbie didn't just hit the jackpot through luck. She tells **Jenny Cooney Carrillo** what drove her from *Neighbours* to stardom.

When Margot Robbie received a G'Day USA Excellence in Film award earlier this year at a star-studded Los Angeles gala, the Aussie actor was full of emotion. "As a girl from the lucky country, living in the land of opportunity, I can say with absolute certainty when you have opportunity collide with luck, incredible things can happen," she told the audience after receiving the award from her acting idol, Amy Adams.

But when we meet up again a few days later, Margot seems more circumspect about using the word luck. Sitting in a sun-drenched West Hollywood hotel suite to talk about her voice role as Flopsy in the upcoming live-action/CGI film *Peter Rabbit*, the Gold Coast native kicks off her brown leather mules and curls up barefoot on a cream leather couch as she muses about the word she hears often when other people try to dismiss her incredible rise from soap star to Oscar nominee at the tender age of 27.

"Yes, I've heard people describe it as a happy accident," she says good-naturedly, "and it is kind of frustrating when someone looks at my career, assesses the situation and says, 'Oh, you hit the jackpot didn't you?' I want to say, 'Yes, I did, and there is luck involved, but it also doesn't just happen by mistake or accident or whatever, because it's hard work.'"

Eager to downplay any suggestion she is self-aggrandising, the down-to-earth Margot hurriedly insists, "I only say all that because I hope other people know that they shouldn't just wait for something to arrive on their doorstep. Do everything you possibly can, even if it seems like it's not going to lead to something at the time. Because you never know."

For the past few years, Margot has been diligently juggling her packed film career with voice recording sessions for *Peter Rabbit* and she's excited to finally

talk about the upcoming family film. To mark the occasion, she's wearing a special dress for the photo call later that day. Beaming when complimented on her blue-and-white-striped cotton shirt-dress spotted with tiny bunnies, she says, "My stylist said, 'I have the perfect dress for *Peter Rabbit* press' and I saw it and couldn't believe it. I mean, what are the chances Gucci would make a dress covered in rabbits?"

Based on the beloved series of books by Beatrix Potter, the film stars Domhnall Gleeson as the rabbit-hating Mr McGregor and Rose Byrne as his animal-loving neighbour, Bea. Talk-show host James Corden is the voice of the mischievous Peter Rabbit and Margot voices one of Peter's triplet sisters, Flopsy, along with fellow Aussie Elizabeth Debicki (*Mopsy*) and English *Star Wars* actress Daisy Ridley (*Cotton-Tail*).

"I really wanted to do an animated movie but I was waiting for the right one and this came along," Margot says. "I asked for Flopsy because I thought she'd be fun to explore. She

had a lisp and she had middle-child syndrome, which I understand as the third of four siblings! So I gravitated towards her immediately."

Margot's affection for the Beatrix Potter characters began long before the film. "In fact, last time I was back in Australia, I was eating my breakfast cereal and got to the bottom of the bowl and realised I was eating it out of my old Peter Rabbit bowl," she chuckles. "It's so funny now I get to be part of this story out in the world!"

While many falter after their breakthrough role, Margot has maintained momentum from the moment she played Leonardo DiCaprio's feisty wife in the 2013 Martin Scorsese film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*. She's appeared in no fewer than 10 films in five years, including *Focus*, *The Legend of Tarzan*, *Goodbye Christopher Robin* and the blockbuster comic-book movie, *Suicide Squad*.

Her starring role in *I, Tonya* – which earned her best actress nominations at the Golden Globes and the Oscars – stemmed from an earlier decision in

2016 to team up with her three former London room-mates, (now husband) Tom Ackerley, Sophia Kerr and Josey McNamara, to produce the film under their own banner, LuckyChap Entertainment. And yes, it's probably not a coincidence she has used the l-word again.

Margot is also reportedly in talks with Quentin Tarantino for another game-changing role. The actress is initially restrained when asked about rumours she will join the cast of his period drama *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* as Manson family murder victim Sharon Tate. This much-coveted role would place her alongside already-announced cast members Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio. Tom Cruise is also reportedly in negotiations.

"I genuinely don't know what's next, but if that actually happened it would be crazy," she says, suddenly barely able to contain her excitement. True to her nature, Margot left nothing to luck when it came to pursuing work with the screenwriter of her favourite

movie, *True Romance*. "I've been writing to Quentin over some time, just because I'm a huge fan and I adore his work," she explains. "So that's how our meeting came about."

Not surprisingly, the over-achieving actor and producer plans to expand her bucket list. "I want to direct. But not for a long time," she's quick to add. "I'm in a unique position as an actress who gets to work with a lot of great directors and watch how they run their sets, so I'm learning as much as I can."

Margot's tenacity was a driving force growing up in Queensland, the third of four children brought up by her single-parent physiotherapist mother. "If I wanted to do something, I would just make it happen," she says with a look of steely resolve in her blue eyes. "If I wanted to go to a friend's house, but I knew mum wasn't at home for another couple of hours, I'd look up the bus timetable and catch three buses to my friend's house."

She has admitted in other interviews that she was also determined to rise above the family's financial hardships,



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selling her younger brother's toys on the side of the road, charging family members to watch her magic shows and simultaneously working two or three jobs from age 14 onwards, including cleaner, surf-shop sales assistant, sandwich maker and bartender.

"Margot's always just been a hustler," said childhood friend and LuckyChap co-founder Sophia Kerr in an interview in *The Hollywood Reporter*.

So it comes as no surprise to hear that at only 17 and barely out of high school with a few drama classes under her belt, Margot moved to Melbourne and began hounding *Neighbours* casting director Jan Russ for a meeting that ultimately led to a three-year stint as Donna Freedman on the hit soap.

"I called her every day and she finally let me come in," she says with pride. "She hadn't realised I was so young and when she met me she said, 'Hang on a second, we're casting for a 17-year-old girl at the moment.' So that's how it happened."

In so carefully guiding her own career with the mantra of "quality,

versatility and longevity", Margot has impressed those around her.

Her Oscar-winning *I, Tonya* co-star Allison Janney has said: "I just keep thinking of Katharine Hepburn when I look at her. Katharine put together *The Philadelphia Story* because she wasn't getting the parts that she wanted, and that's what Margot did."

"She was going to be typecast as this beautiful young thing and she wanted to find interesting roles for herself and for other women, so she took the bull by the horns and formed this company."

After former roommate Tom Ackerley became the lucky chap who married Margot in a surprise Byron Bay ceremony in December 2016, the couple moved into their own modest home in Los Angeles, near the new office of their production company. Their only room-mate these days is a pint-sized rescue mutt named Boo.

"It truly hadn't occurred to us that we would all stop living together until the others said, 'You know that you two have to live alone now you're married?'"

"I hope other people know they shouldn't just wait for something to arrive on their doorstep. Do everything you possibly can."

she says with a laugh. "We were like, 'Oh, that's going to be weird!'"

On Oscars night, Margot, wearing a stunning Chanel dress in her first outing as a brand ambassador, made our hearts swell as she sat with her proud mum. She giggled with front-row neighbour Nicole Kidman and shared a meaningful hug with her fellow nominees, including Meryl Streep, who all lost to Best Actress winner Frances McDormand.

She may be back in contention next year as Queen Elizabeth I in the period drama *Mary Queen of Scots*. Unsurprisingly, any thoughts of having a family have taken a back seat.

"We don't see ourselves having kids for a long time," she says. "Both Tom and I are very career-driven and just want to build the best company we can build. Honestly, having a puppy is already a handful. I just don't see how people do it all!"

If anyone can figure it out, we're betting it's Margot Robbie. •

Peter Rabbit opens in cinemas on Thursday.

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