

Hidden dragon

Shy star Rooney Mara reaches deep for one of the performances of the year. By **Jenny Cooney Carrillo**.

Rooney Mara is set to be one of the biggest actors this year, thanks to her Golden Globe-nominated performance in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Yet the 26-year-old admits she is still settling in to the role of movie star.

"It's quite strange seeing posters everywhere and, especially, right now in this room, all these giant heads of me," the soft-spoken actress says with embarrassment as she glances at the displays all over the walls of her hotel room.

"But I feel quite lucky because while it's me on the poster, it's a very different look [from] how I'm sitting here right now and I think that's going to be really helpful in the next few months."

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo is based on Swedish journalist Stieg Larsson's best-selling novel, which became a global phenomenon as a trilogy released shortly after the 50-year-old author died of a heart attack in 2004. The Swedish movie adaptations have been hugely popular but now Hollywood is

'It never really felt like me, so it was easy to detach.' Rooney Mara

taking on the story of crusading journalist Mikael Blomkvist (Daniel Craig) and Lisbeth Salander (Mara), the psychologically troubled, antisocial computer hacker who helps him investigate a 40-year-old murder mystery.

Wearing minimal make-up, a grey Chanel dress and Christian Louboutin boots, Mara makes a good argument for why it's unlikely she would be recognised as the pierced, tattooed character in the film. She's also surprisingly shy, which makes it even more impressive that she pulled off one of the boldest performances of the year, including a brutal rape scene in which her character is betrayed by the man who serves as her



It girl... Rooney Mara (above) stars with Daniel Craig and Christopher Plummer (left) in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

guardian, played with menace by Yorick van Wageningen, a popular Swedish actor. "Yorick is the sweetest man you could ever ask for," Mara says. "But that also made it harder because he was so gentle and sweet and when we started out, he would say, 'Are you OK?' and apologise after every take. I had to tell him not to do that because I didn't really want to think of him as that sweet man in those moments."

Mara was discovered by director David Fincher – no stranger to edgy movies, including *Alien 3*, *Seven*, *The Game* and *Fight Club* – when he first cast her as the girlfriend who dumped Mark Zuckerberg in the opening scenes of *The Social Network*. Despite actors from Scarlett Johansson to Carey Mulligan lobbying for the role, Fincher gave it to Mara.

"I'm slow to trust people but David had a weird way of making me comfortable and I probably would have done anything for him," she says. "I never felt exploited making the film and I never felt uncomfortable but I also think because the character looked so different than me, it never really felt like me, so it was easy to detach."

Mara grew up in Bedford, New York, as a member of a sprawling sports dynasty that started with

great-grandfathers Art Rooney sr (from whom she took her stage name) and Tim Mara, founders of National Football League franchises the Pittsburgh Steelers and the New York Giants, respectively. Her grandfather, Tim Rooney, ran Yonkers Raceway and her grandfather, Wellington Mara, was an influential co-owner of the New York Giants. His son, her father Timothy Mara, was the vice-president of player evaluation for the Giants. "It was pretty clear from the beginning that sports wasn't going to be my path," she says.

"But my dad is one of 11 children and there are over 40 of us grandchildren, so there was never any pressure to be involved in sports; we've all just been encouraged to do what we love."

Mara's older sister, Kate Mara, 28, is a veteran actor – appearing in the

TV drama *American Horror Story* – and helped Rooney get started with a small role in a 2005 horror movie, *Urban Legends: Bloody Mary* (she was billed as Patricia Mara).

"My sister's been acting since she was 12 and I'm not sure how things would have been different if she hadn't been doing that and I didn't know it was possible," Mara says. "I didn't even want to admit that acting was what I wanted to do until suddenly I was doing it."

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

GENRE Drama.
BUZZ The next big franchise.
STARS Daniel Craig, Rooney Mara.
DIRECTOR David Fincher.
RATED MA15+.
RELEASE Thursday.

He shoots, he Scorsese

Hugo reveals much about the director's passion, writes **Kaleem Aftab**.

Martin Scorsese says he was the last person to realise his new film, *Hugo*, was autobiographical.

"As I was making *Hugo*, this was mentioned to me by my editor, my manager and my wife, Helen," says the 69-year-old filmmaker. "I didn't quite see it directly – except maybe for the boy's fascination with life and that he was isolated. That feeling of isolation I felt growing up, especially as I had asthma, which has played a strong part in my life, especially when I was just three."

Indeed, before we start talking about his adaptation of children's novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick, one of Scorsese's entourage enters the London hotel room to pass an inhaler to him.

Hugo, set in the 1930s, stars young Brit Asa Butterfield as an

orphan living in a Paris railway station. He befriends the daughter (Chloe Grace Moretz) of a toy-store owner (Ben Kingsley) who is George Melies, a forgotten filmmaker and one of the great pioneers of cinema.

Melies is often considered the father of narrative cinema and a special-effects innovator; his most famous work, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), is even recreated in *Hugo*. World War I put an end to Melies's work and many of his films were melted down for nickel or lost. In recent years, Scorsese has spent a great deal of time restoring the films and working hard to ensure they are preserved for posterity.

Given this, it's no surprise Kingsley used Scorsese as the inspiration to play Melies. "I think there is an autobiographical streak

in all his work," Kingsley says. "Martin has endless energy and passion and enthusiasm and curiosity and that's what I had to bring to George the filmmaker."

For his part, Scorsese says common traits are shared between all directors. "You have to be a little crazy to make movies and you have to be open to everything," he says. "You have to have a certain style. I just like to explore the image and see how it moves – for me, that's the game that we are playing."

Hugo is Scorsese's first foray into children's filmmaking and will be the first of his films he will show Francesca, his 12-year-old daughter. "It was the idea to make a film Francesca can see," he says.

As for when he will show his daughter his other films, he says: "My wife and I talk about it a lot.



Moving pictures... *Hugo* (Asa Butterfield) and Isabelle (Chloe Grace Moretz).

Kundun, I'd like to show her first, or *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*."

Watching the director's movies is a problem shared by the two 14-year-old stars of *Hugo*. "Most of his best films are a little over our heads," Butterfield says.

They'll have no such problems with *Hugo*.

HUGO

GENRE Children's adventure.
BUZZ A winning move for a director better known for gangster flicks.
STARS Ben Kingsley, Sacha Baron Cohen, Chloe Grace Moretz, Asa Butterfield, Ray Winstone.
DIRECTOR Martin Scorsese.
RELEASE Thursday.