

VOGUE DAILY

Emma Watson's New Day

by Amanda Foreman | photographed by Mario Testino



» **SEE THE SLIDESHOW** «

It's the pixie-cut hair and flawless skin that give her away. Emma Watson is dressed unobtrusively in a cotton flower-print French Connection dress and beige sandals, but she is unmistakable. Fans have accosted her five times in the past half hour alone. Today is the actress's twenty-first birthday, and she is determined to spend it as she pleases—which means a leisurely mid-morning latte followed by a stroll through the Joan Miró exhibition at London's Tate Modern.

Emma ignores the stares and continues to chat animatedly about Miró's willingness to take risks with his art. An avid painter herself—"I love it and have a need to do it"—she can talk eloquently about

every picture on the wall. Her favorite is *The Farm*, a painting once owned by Ernest Hemingway that brought the artist his first taste of success outside Spain. What she admires, Emma tells me, is that Miró was both a draftsman and a painter, unafraid to combine these talents to create something that was simultaneously surreal and hyperreal.

Her words could just as well apply to what is happening around us. The increasingly febrile atmosphere is, frankly, terrifying as word filters through that Hermione Granger, Emma's alter ego (who will make her final appearance in this month's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*), is in the building. A raucous band of teenagers turns around and heads straight toward her. "It's time to go," she says, and we head swiftly for the nearest exit. Outside, a photographer in a tree starts snapping away until she is inside the car and driving away.

This is not an experience most people would ever wish to repeat, but Emma resumes her breathless discussion as though nothing untoward just happened. "I have to really enjoy the good things because it makes the bad things OK," she explains. Learning how to put her life into some kind of perspective and carve her own meaning onto it has been the great challenge of the past two years.

As we drive through London, a completely different Emma emerges from the smiling birthday girl who met me for coffee two hours earlier. This Emma is passionate and vulnerable. She describes a recent turning point when she read *Just Kids*, Patti Smith's 2010 memoir, in which she writes of discovering that her true calling lay in "three chords merged with the power of the word." Smith's willingness to embrace the highs and lows of a creative life touched something in Emma. "I want to live like Patti. I want to write like Patti," she says. "The book was so honest and brave. I loved the way she sees the world. I really felt that life was more beautiful after I read it, and I felt more hopeful."

Conscious that her words might sound odd or a trifle self-regarding coming from one of the highest-paid actresses in Hollywood (she earned \$30 million for her last two *Harry Potter* films), Emma goes quiet for a moment. The hands stop moving, and her elfin features crumple. "I have had no control over my life," she blurts out. "I have lived in a complete bubble. They found me and picked me for the part. And now I'm desperately trying to find my way through it."

She gives me a quizzical look that clearly says, "Can I trust you?" Taking a deep breath, she invites me back to her house (under strict instructions not to reveal much about it) so that we can talk without fear of interruption and she can explain what she means by the "bubble."

Emma was only nine years old when her love for stories, and for one in particular about the adventures of a boy wizard and his two best friends, drove her to audition for producer David

Heyman. One minute she was living an ordinary existence in the picturesque university town of Oxford with her mother and younger brother, Alex; the next she was enclosed behind the gates of a converted factory near London, inside a fantasy world that was, to echo Patti Smith's description of the Chelsea Hotel, "like a doll's house in *The Twilight Zone*."

Nothing prepared Emma or her parents, who divorced when she was five, for the all-encompassing commitment demanded by the *Harry Potter* franchise as its success took off. Acting the part of Hermione was not simply a matter of taking the odd hiatus from normal life; the constant filming and promoting of the movies *became* normal life. All the rituals of adolescence, from dyeing her hair to trawling the mall in search of boys, had to be sacrificed on the altar of work.

Through it all, Emma's mother and father—both successful lawyers—tried to give her a stable upbringing, and Heyman did his best to keep changes to a minimum. "It was one thing I'm very proud of," he says. "We created a secure environment that allowed people to feel safe and know that support was there."

In time, the crew on the set of *Harry Potter* became Emma's surrogate family, too. It was not just about bonding with her costars Daniel Radcliffe and Rupert Grint: Heyman's emphasis on continuity ensured that year after year the same driver took Emma to and from Leavesden Studios, the same cafeteria lady doled out her eggs, and the same hairdressers combed her famous brown tresses. Emma grew close to the head of makeup, Amanda Knight, and would while away the hours experimenting in the makeup trailer. "That was my playground. I would sit and play with lipsticks, foundations, and eye shadows; and every now and then Amanda would let me do the extras' face paint for the Quidditch matches."

But in 2007 Emma turned seventeen, and the "doll's house" began to feel less like an alternate universe and more like an ordinary prison. "She is really, really bright," says Heyman. "She is curious and interested in everything: in fashion, culture, and literature. She questioned things more than Dan and Rupert. There were things that she needed to figure out for herself."

Despite the differences in temperament between Emma and Daniel Radcliffe, she never questioned his leadership of the tight little group: "He understood what his role was," she says, "not just as an actor but as the leading man in this enormous franchise. And I think that was almost more important in a way. He held it all together. I am very grateful for him." For his part, Radcliffe remembers the relationship as being "very much like brother and sister, and when one or the other of us was having a tricky moment in our lives, it was often that we would confide in each other. We would also help each other with relationship advice; particularly funny were the moments when we would help each other

compose texts to the most recent flames in either of our lives (not too flirty, but not too subtle either!). It was certainly a case of the blind leading the blind, but it was extremely funny.” The two remain supportive of each other; recently Emma flew to New York to watch Daniel’s performance in the hit Broadway musical *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

As Emma takes me on a tour of her house, the extraordinary depth and breadth to her talents become obvious. Every room is framed around a beautiful artifact—a piece of furniture or fabric picked up at a flea market in Paris or Los Angeles—and her artworks show that she can both paint and draw exquisitely. One picture stands out: It is a self-portrait of Emma holding a camera. The lens is aimed menacingly at the viewer, like the barrel of a gun, a neat illustration of what we had just experienced at the Tate.

She talks in fighting metaphors. “I have felt for the last ten years I have had this battle; I’ve been fighting so hard to have an education. It’s been this uphill struggle,” she says, clenching her hands as she speaks. “I was Warner Bros.’ pain in the butt. I was their scheduling conflict. I was the one who made life difficult.” Finally, Emma took the brave step of announcing that she would not renew her contract for the last two films unless changes were made to accommodate her desire to go to university. Warner Bros. agreed to do everything humanly possible, and, she says, “I just realized at one point that I can’t fight everything. I have to move in the direction of it—and go with it.”

But being the perfectionist she is, Emma couldn’t just “go with it.” Once she had agreed to commit herself to four more years, “I decided I would do it well.” The change became apparent in all areas of her life. Critics noticed a new energy to her acting. “As the role of Hermione became more interesting,” says David Yates, the director of the last four *Potter* films, “Emma became more engaged. She is an incredibly intuitive and instinctive actor. She can dig deep to find an emotion and bring it to the scene.” *The Deathly Hallows* parts one and two are the darkest of all the *Potter* movies, the innocence of the previous films replaced by a grim meditation on the nature of terror. The more complex material in the finale allowed Emma to stretch her wings. But, insists Yates, “she hasn’t had a role yet to show how she can really shine. There is a very serious and interesting acting brain in there that will surprise everybody.”

Yates’s most vivid memory of Emma is watching her suddenly let go of her steely professionalism and for once just be young and free. They were filming a death scene from *Hallows Part 2* on a freezing-cold beach in Wales. The actors were miserable, especially Emma, who hates the cold and dislikes getting wet even more. But out of nowhere, he recalls, “she ran into the icy water and stood there, holding herself against the waves with her arms outstretched, just laughing.” In that brief moment he got a sense of what it must be like to have a multibillion-dollar industry dependent on

your every move and be only nineteen years old.

As Hermione's perpetual adolescence has given way to Emma's young womanhood, the fashion world has taken notice. In 2009 she was invited by the designer Christopher Bailey to appear in Burberry's fall campaign (where she met her now ex-boyfriend, model and musician George Craig). But her real impact has been on the newer, edgier designers, such as Hakaan Yildirim and Erdem Moralioglu, whose recent collections she has deliberately championed. "I thought, If people are going to write about what I'm wearing, then I would wear young British designers who need the publicity." (This feisty side of Emma is familiar to her costars. "I think it's fair to say that Emma and I were the two most opinionated members of the young cast," says Radcliffe.)

At the same time, Emma has experimented with designing her own, ethically made clothing line sourced from organic producers. To date she has collaborated with People Tree, a fair-trade clothing organization, on three collections. "It was such hard work," she admits with a laugh. "I didn't realize what I was taking on. I was doing twelve-hour days on Harry Potter and then coming home to work for two more hours, sizing and cutting designs." She even paid to have the clothes photographed properly and supplied three of her friends to be the models. A few months ago she received a call from Alberta Ferretti, who wanted to collaborate with her on an eco-friendly line called Pure Threads. Emma was so happy, she says, "I practically cried." The result is a five-piece capsule that debuted in March to favorable reviews. Part of the proceeds will be donated to People Tree.

With all this going on, Emma somehow managed to find the time to enroll at Brown University in 2009. "I want to be normal," she said at the time. "I really want anonymity." Contrary to some media reports, she says this is exactly what happened: She lived in a freshman dorm with a shared bathroom at the end of the corridor. No one hassled her or shouted out "Three points for Gryffindor" if she answered a question in class. Emma was able to fit right in, wearing flip-flops to lectures and finishing her papers at four in the morning like everyone else. Only she wasn't like them, because they didn't have to take two weeks off here and there to shoot scenes or attend a junket, and then return tired and jet-lagged in time for finals. Briefly meeting the actor James Franco, then studying at Rhode Island School of Design, was helpful. "It was such a relief to speak to someone who is trying to do the same thing I'm doing. I talked to him about juggling studying and making films and going backward and forward. He's not afraid or limited by what he fears people will say about it."

Emma struggled valiantly to fit everything into her life, becoming increasingly exhausted, until over Christmas advisors at Brown suggested that she take a leave of absence, a turn of events Yates was not surprised by. "My only concern for her is that she puts too many demands on herself. For someone of her age, she is relentless in what she does. Even when we were shooting *The Deathly Hallows*, on her

day off I would see her doing press for a fashion house or having meetings about her fashion line. And I would say to her, ‘Emma, do you ever stop? You’ve just got to stop.’ ” Far from stopping, she has also revisited her old “playground” in the makeup trailer. In April, Emma signed a contract with Lancôme to promote its new fragrance Trésor Midnight Rose.

In hopes of restoring some sanity to her schedule, she will go back to school in the fall somewhere closer to home. With that decision out of the way, Emma is currently figuring out what to do with her newfound freedom. Single since she broke up with Craig last summer, she smiles wistfully when asked whether she might have time for a relationship again. One of her favorite courses at Brown was on the psychology of love. Far from being put off the idea, she remains an incurable romantic: “I’m a feminist, but I think that romance has been taken away a bit for my generation. I think what people connect with in novels is this idea of an overpowering, encompassing love—and it being more important and special than anything and everything else.” When Emma does eventually meet the right man, she hopes they will be able to keep the relationship out of the spotlight. “I would love to not date someone in the same industry as me. Otherwise it becomes what it means to everyone else.”

But before love comes work, as always with Emma. In 2008 she enrolled at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art for a course on Shakespeare, and last year took an acting class at Brown. Having played the same character for ten years, Emma could not help falling prey to self-doubt.

“Hermione is so close to who I am as a person that I’ve never really had to research a role,” she says. “I’m literally rediscovering what it means to be an actress.”

Now, says Heyman, “I think she is at a crossroads and is trying to determine what direction to take. She can, if she chooses to, do many things.” Which brings us back to the question confronting Emma as she enters full-fledged adulthood—the question Patti Smith asked about herself all those years ago—“What kind of artist am I?”

Parched from an afternoon of nonstop conversation, she pauses to boil the kettle for a cup of tea. As she leans against the wooden counter in her kitchen cradling the drink in her hands, her body language changes yet again, and Emma finally seems to relax. Her chin comes up in a defiant tilt: “I’ve probably earned the right to screw up a few times,” she says. “I don’t want the fear of failure to stop me from doing what I really care about.”

The fans of Hermione Granger will have to get used to seeing her in a whole new light. Recently, Emma read a script by Stephen Chbosky, based on his hit teen-angst novel, *The Perks of Being a Wall Flower*, and knew instantly that she had to play the role of Samantha, a character as far removed from

the wholesome Hermione as could be. In true Emma style, she went to Hollywood to help raise the financing for the movie. “Sam,” says Emma, “is such a different girl from who I am. I’ve been listening to the Smiths”—Sam’s favorite band—“on repeat for weeks.” In one sense, the troubled Sam is indeed a radical departure. But in another, more profound way, it is the right part for Emma right now. Near the end of the novel, Sam speaks for every young woman with a burning heart, a radiant soul, and a devouring need to experience all that life has to offer: “I’m going to do what I want to do. I’m going to be who I really am. I’m going to figure out what that is.”

June 13, 2011 12:01 a.m.

Find this article at:

<http://www.vogue.com/magazine/article/emma-watson-s-new-day/>