

STYLE


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FROM MEAN
GIRLS TO
MOTHERHOOD
**RACHEL
McADAMS**
COMES OF AGE

**WHY I GHOST
WOMEN**
ONE MAN'S HONEST
CONFESSION

**THE ONLY WAY
IS ESSEX**
WILL YOU WEAR THE
NEW WHITE BOOTS?

PLUS
YOUR WATCH AND
JEWELLERY EDIT



THE RACHEL PAPERS



*Rachel McAdams shot to fame in Mean Girls 14 years ago, before embarking on a critically acclaimed acting career. Now she tells **Helena de Bertodano** about her controversial new film – and why motherhood was worth the wait*

Photographs **Matthew Sprout** Styling **Andrew Mukamal**



THIS PAGE STRETCH DRESS, £2,195, AND PANTASHOES, £2,415, BALenciAGA. LOTUS EARRINGS, £38,200, AND COSMOS BETWEEN-THE-FINGER RING, £35,800, VAN CLEEF & ARPELS
OPPOSITE KNIT DRESS, £3,270, AND LEATHER CORSET TOP, £1,490, ALEXANDER McQUEEN. SOUTH SEA NOBLE PEARL EARRINGS, £4,250, TIFFANY & CO



THIS PAGE KNIT DRESS, £3,270, AND LEATHER CORSET TOP, £1,490, ALEXANDER McQUEEN. SOUTH SEA NOBLE PEARL EARRINGS, £4,250, ARIA DIAMOND RING, £10,758, AND T WIRE DIAMOND RING, £2,050, TIFFANY & CO **OPPOSITE** BEADED STRAPLESS DRESS, £4,610, RALPH LAUREN COLLECTION. SHOES WITH RIBBONS, £975, CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN. SWAROVSKI CRYSTAL TIGHTS, POA, WOLFORD

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CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

She may have made her name as a Mean Girl, but in real life the Canadian actress Rachel McAdams is absurdly nice. When the waiter brings our turmeric lattes — we're in LA, after all — he spills mine over the saucer as he places it in front of me. Quick as a flash, McAdams pulls it towards her. "I'm having that one," she says adamantly. No, you're not, I insist, pulling it back. It becomes a battle of manners and all we achieve is more bright-yellow spillage.

McAdams, 40, burst onto our screens in 2004 as the high-school queen bee Regina George in the hit teen film *Mean Girls* — "she may seem like your typical selfish backstabbing slut-faced ho-bag, but in reality, she's so much more than that," as one of Regina's classmates says of her. The same year, McAdams also appeared in *The Notebook*, as the enchanting heiress in love with Ryan Gosling's quarry worker. Both films garnered a huge cult following.

"Timing is such a funny thing," McAdams says. "They were very different roles and genres, which allowed me more choice." This is something of an understatement. What she means is that she has never been pigeonholed, establishing herself as a character actress of extraordinary range and versatility. She has played everything from a tenacious investigator in *True Detective* to a vituperative, dream-crushing fiancée in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*. She earned an Oscar nomination for her role in *Spotlight* as an intrepid reporter exposing Catholic child abuse in Boston, but also has a range of romantic leads and comedy queens on her CV in the likes of *About Time*, *Wedding Crashers* and *The Vow*.

It is her new real-life role as a mother, though, that brings McAdams the most joy: she and her partner, Jamie Linden, an American screenwriter, had a son in April. "It's the greatest thing that's ever happened to me, hands down. [People say] your life is not your own any more. But I had 39 years of me, I was sick of me, I was so happy to put the focus on some other person. I waited a long time [for motherhood]." Deliberately? "It's just how it happened. And I didn't want to do it before it was the right time."

**'I'M FEELING
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She means before meeting the right person. After *The Notebook*, she dated Gosling on and off for four years, and later the British actor Michael Sheen for two years. She once said her ideal partner would be a writer: "I always think you can persuade them away from their desks... Bring them tea. Soothe them." Does she remember saying that? "Yes," she giggles. "I think I said it off the cuff, I just wanted to be with someone creative. We live such a gypsy life as actors, so [it's great] being with someone who can be on the road as well."

They have not revealed their son's date of birth or his name. "I want to keep his life private, even if mine isn't," she says apologetically. "But I'm having more fun being a mum than I've ever had. Everything about it is interesting and exciting and inspiring to me. Even the tough days — there's something delightful about them."

We sit at a rickety corner table in the noisy cafe, McAdams is unrecognised in her grey linen shirt and baggy rust-coloured trousers teamed with glittery trainers. "I have clothes on and that's a good thing," she jokes, alluding to the chaos of motherhood. "I don't even know what I'm wearing today. The shoes are held together with glue. Isn't that sad? I need to get a life."

We are meeting to discuss her new film, *Disobedience*, which follows the lesbian daughter of a rabbi (played by Rachel Weisz) as she returns from New York to her Orthodox Jewish community in north London. It is based on the 2006 debut novel by the British author Naomi Alderman, which was both hugely controversial and critically acclaimed. Weisz bought the film rights and serves as producer, while McAdams stars opposite her as her secret lover, a married Orthodox Jewish woman. US reviews have praised the performances of both actresses.

Shot in Hendon, the film may be anchored in the hidebound traditions of the local Jewish community, but, McAdams says, the central theme of finding acceptance for gay love is all too familiar. "It's so tragic to think that, of all the problems in this world, we make it an issue who you want to love. It drives me nuts."

Their affair culminates in a visceral love scene that is graceful rather than prurient.

McAdams admits to “some trepidation” about the role, but more about the English accent (which she masters perfectly) than the sex. “[That scene] was so integral to the plot. My character was so penned in that there was something so freeing about being that literally and metaphorically naked... It took us a minute to get started, but it wound up being a really wonderful day.”

Following her early success, McAdams was hailed as “the new Julia Roberts”, but although there is a physical similarity to Roberts — dimpled, megawatt smile — she is nobody’s clone. There is a thoughtful toughness about her, a sliver of steel: she has never let herself be moulded by the expectations of the industry. She walked out of a Vanity Fair cover shoot in 2006 when she found out she was expected to pose naked, reportedly sacking the publicist who had kept her in the dark. Not long after, she withdrew from acting for a couple of years.

In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, McAdams told Vanity Fair last October how the film director James Toback attempted to manipulate her at an audition when she was 21. After saying he needed to build some intimacy with her, he later asked her to show him her pubic hair. She refused and escaped unscathed. It is the only time, she says, that she has experienced such predatory behaviour. “To that degree. But there’s the subtle stuff that’s harder to pinpoint.” Hollywood, she thinks, has turned a corner. “I’m feeling better about the world that young actresses are coming into.”

Unlike many actors, she does not draw on any obvious personal vicissitudes. “If she comes with baggage, it’s a carry-on,” said Tom Bezucha, who directed her in *The Family Stone*. McAdams laughs when I tell her this. “I hadn’t heard that. How sweet.” Yes, she agrees, her upbringing was idyllic. The eldest of three children, she grew up in St Thomas, Ontario; her mother was a nurse and her father a truck driver. For years she insisted she would never move to Los Angeles. “Yeah,” she says sheepishly. “Well, there you go!” The main draw is her sister, Kayleen, a celebrity make-up artist in LA. “She’s gracious enough to make time for

me,” McAdams says. “We do the whole glam thing together.”

In Ontario she spent her summers swimming in the Great Lakes and her winters tobogganing through woods and building snow forts. When she was seven, she wrote a letter to her parents declaring her ambition to be an actress, “Then I hid under my bed, I felt so shy.” Her parents were supportive: she started acting at school and summer camps. But she also loved sport, especially figure skating. “I was kind of a jock. I was not super popular,” she says. “I spent a lot of time observing the Regina Georges, curious about what made them tick.” Was she the victim of any mean-girl Reginas? “I think everyone is the victim of Reginas,” she replies.

When she auditioned for *Mean Girls*, she thought she was being considered for the nice-girl protagonist that Lindsay Lohan eventually played, but was thrilled to be offered Regina. “It’s much more fun to play the villain,” she says with relish.

Even today, she will be walking down the street and hear someone call out one of the most famous lines of the film: “That’s so fetch!”

“Dads especially like to quote *Mean Girls*,” she says with a smile. “They’re letting you know they’re cool dads.”

She doesn’t have any social media accounts. “I don’t even quite know how it works,” she says. “I’m not a great self-promoter, I wasn’t good at selling *Girl Guide* cookies or Christmas wrapping paper. Knocking on people’s doors and asking for money was just not my thing.”

She is clearly a conscientious mother, reading parenting manuals and making sure her son is not exposed to screens. “We never turn on the television when he’s around,” she says. “Pots and pans are good babysitters.”

And she admits to feeling more emotionally raw now that she is a mother. “You see everything through a particular lens: very sensitive, more open. It’s like being on an aeroplane all the time.”

It’s time to leave: she is breastfeeding her son and his next feed is due. I ask if she is thinking about having more children. She hesitates, as if considering whether to answer or not, then breaks into a smile: “I think there is definitely room for more.” ■

Disobedience is in cinemas from Friday

**DADS
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- THEY’RE
LETTING YOU
KNOW THEY’RE
COOL DADS’**

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