

# The Hot Seat



## Jessica Chastain

This rising star of the silver screen is still a spaz at heart. By **Sarah Bruning**

**It's been a tremendous year for you, with *The Tree of Life*, *The Help* and *The Debt* being released in relatively quick succession, plus there's *Take Shelter* this fall. Has it felt like a marathon?**

Yeah. I've had the past four years of making a film and then leaving it and going to another, so it's just been about the actual work. This year has really been [about] this other part of my career, where I get to talk about the films. With *The Tree of Life*, I felt like I was letting people in on this secret that I'd known but wasn't able to talk about for years.

**What do you say to people who complain that it's hard to understand?**

Isay, "Good!" I think those are the films that stand the test of time—the ones that you can see more than once and every time you see it, you take something new from it.

**Was working with Terrence Malick a little intimidating?**

For me, I always get scared before I meet someone because I'm such a fan of films. I geek out on people. I absolutely had that with Terry. [He] is as wonderful as his films; he doesn't really allow you to be nervous around him.

**Who's made you geek out the most?**

Meryl Streep. She came to a play I was doing in New York 'cause she knew someone else in the production. And then after the play, I'm standing there in the lobby talking to some friends and they look over... and I look over and I said, "Is that Meryl Streep?!" And my friend's like, "Yes, it is." And then she came over to me and started talking to me, and I absolutely made a fool of myself.

**What did you do that was so bad?**

There was just nothing cool about me. I looked at her, and I was like, "Oh, thank you for coming!" and walked away!

**So this is a regular thing?**

It's always like that with me. I was at an event talking to someone, and they go, "Jessica, have you met Zach?" I turn around and there's Zach Galifianakis. I just went, "Oh my God!," took my hand and put it over my face like a spider. Then I left it there and stared at him through my fingers. The look on his face was like, This girl is crazy!

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**I've read that you pick roles based on how much they scare you.**

Someone taught me that you learn more from your failures than your successes, and I absolutely agree. In *The Debt*, I speak

in an Israeli accent and I speak German. And in [*Wilde*] *Salome*, I'm doing *The Dance of the Seven Veils* and [there's] nudity. When I'm doing something really scary, there is a great chance I'm going to fall on my face and fail, but there's also a chance that I won't. Whatever happens, I'm going to learn something amazing.

**It'll be interesting for people to see you going from a genteel Southern woman in *The Help* to this ass-kicking Mossad agent in *The Debt*.**

The great thing about doing all these movies and having to wait for them to come out is that every part has been so different. People are going to be like, "I have no idea what to do with this girl."

*The Help* opens Wed 10. *The Debt* opens Aug 30.