



She's Got Game

The straight-talking, convention-defying, butt-kicking kind. Natalie Dormer may have hit it big with *The Hunger Games* and *Game of Thrones*, but hang on to your knickers, America—this feisty Brit is just warming up.

By Dibs Baer

It's the asscrack of dawn on a Monday. Most people conscious at this time of day are IV'ing coffee and posting memes of grumpy cats on Instagram with captions like, "What's that stench? Oh, Monday." Not

Natalie Dormer. The star of *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2* just flew in to La-La Land from London and—despite jet lag in the first degree—is a bundle of energy and light. In fact, she's one of the earliest to arrive for her shoot at DogTown CrossFit gym, wearing a long, charcoal-gray cotton dress, a beanie, and Ray-Bans. "Oh my god," the native Brit jokes in a perfect Valley Girl accent. "I'm *suh* L.A.!"

We beg to differ. She may have the look down, but that's pretty much the only thing about Natalie that fulfills any sort of Hollywood stereotype. Rather, the 33-year-old is refreshingly unfiltered with a shocking ability to relinquish control. Case in point: Just as Natalie's really getting into the groove—posing and flexing to the beat of Jessie J's "Domino"—out pops her right boob in full #freethenipple glory. Does she get in the photog's face and demand that he delete every tit-tastic frame as she watches? Nope, she throws her head back, laughs heartily as she tucks herself beneath her black cropped tank, and continues mugging for the camera.

Okay, so maybe she's delirious. You can't blame her—the second this shoot ends, Natalie will hightail it back over the pond to film season six of the Emmy-winning HBO series *Game of Thrones* (she plays saucy Queen Margaery Tyrell, for the *GoT* uninitiated). We know, we know: Cry major tears for the in-demand starlet! Relax, Natalie isn't making any excuses; she's too busy pinching herself to complain. "I've had so many incredible experiences," she says amusedly, still coming to terms with her success. "It's actually kind of hard to believe."

Believe it, woman. Her romantic features—ethereally pale skin, sparkly



FASHION EDITOR: JACQUELINE A ZRIA. HAIR: MARK TOWNSEND FOR DOVE HAIR CARE/STARWORKS ARTISTS. MAKEUP: MATTHEW VANLEEUWEN/THE WALL GROUP. MANICURE: NETTIE DAVIS. KAELEN CROPPED TURTLENECK, MIKOH TOP, BLO BASICS CROPPED TOP, MAURIE AND EVE SKIRT, BY MALENE BIRGER DRESS, GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI DESIGN BOOTIES, ONE X ONE TEASPOON KNIT, JENNIE KWON DESIGN'S EARRING (LEFT), MELINDA MARIA EARRING (RIGHT), ME&RO NECKLACE AND RING, STYLE STALKER SKIRT, DOLCE VITA BOOTIES



blue eyes, and adorably lopsided mouth—may have made her a shoo-in for historical dramas like *Casanova* and lusty Showtime series *The Tudors*, but Natalie's never been content to play the period-piece “honey pot” (at this point, she could do it in her sleep). Starring as propaganda director Cressida in the *Mockingjay* films was a big step in catapulting herself out of that corseted life and onto Tinseltown's A-list. Now she's landed two more leading film roles, and there's not a Machiavellian prince, plunging neckline, or woe-is-me maiden in sight. In horror flick *The Forest* (out in January), Natalie portrays a sister on a take-no-prisoners mission to find her disappeared twin (inside Japan's infamous suicide woods, no less); and in the dystopian thriller *Patient Zero* (slated for next fall), she's a gutsy virologist tasked with saving the world from a zombie-like pandemic. “It's been very gratifying,” says Natalie of her career evolution thus far. “I was ready to challenge myself and shake it up a bit with roles that required additional concentration and exploration from me.”

One thing she's less satisfied with? The increasingly limited amount of time she's been able to devote to her best friends and family, many of whom live back home in England. “I just try to be present for the people I really care about when I am around,” she explains, noting that she's walking her cousin down the aisle later this year (but planning on wearing pants, in a respectful effort to not upstage the bride). “They're important,” she continues. “They were there for me when things weren't great and I wasn't working. I don't want them thinking I'm becoming a twat.”

Yep, she just said *twat*, clarifying that in England, the word is used more in the “douche bag” sense rather than as vulgar slang for “vagina.” Not that obscenities bother her. Natalie has a reputation for being blunt and speaking her mind, even if it gets her into a little bit of trouble. “Some people have misinterpreted my curiosity, my straightforwardness, as an overconfidence—maybe verging on arrogance,” she says. “I'm loquacious, but not because I'm trying to thrust my ideas on everybody. I'm opinionated because I want to have the debate.” After all, as Natalie sees it, life is too short for bad wine, bad coffee, and bullshit. #PREACH

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You want hot topics? You want real talk? You want Natalie on...

THE “F” WORD

As in feminism. Natalie has publicly called out fellow female stars, including Taylor Swift, who reportedly dodged the issue when initially asked. “She’s a phenomenally brave and intelligent artist, as well as individual,” Natalie says. “She has a massive following, so [in 2012] when she was like, ‘I don’t really think about things as guys versus girls,’ I was like, ‘That means you are a feminist because you’re saying [gender is] irrelevant.’ The dictionary definition is ‘equality.’ If you believe in equal pay, if you believe in the right to vote for women, and you believe in equality in all social standing, *you’re a feminist*.” (Hold your ire, Swifties—Natalie knows Tay has come around.)

SEXISM IN HOLLYWOOD

Natalie’s goal in her career is the same as in life: to have gender be a nonissue. “You don’t go, ‘This a great girl role’ or ‘This is a great boy role.’ It’s just, ‘This is a great role.’” Her rugged *Mockingjay* character, Cressida—with her half-shaved, tattooed head and military-issue body armor—is a killer example. To prepare, Natalie and several costars underwent SWAT training: “We spent a couple days ‘attacking’ a house—running around, crawling, jumping, shooting semiautomatics,” she says. Totally unglam, but as she points out, it’s the kind of down-and-dirty work that evens the playing field for the cast, regardless of their genitalia.

In fact, Natalie believes *The Hunger Games*—and specifically heroine Katniss Everdeen—has had a real impact on what she calls the “slow revolution” from female roles that embody either angel or whore to more nuanced characters. Of costar Jennifer Lawrence (they “lived in each other’s pockets” over the nine months they shot *Mockingjay* in Atlanta, Berlin, and Paris), Natalie says, “Her journey as Katniss is a message about what can be achieved by a female protagonist.”

GoT’s MISOGYNY

Natalie has jokingly lobbied for “more dick” on the notoriously boob-and-vag-heavy *Game of Thrones*, but that’s the most criticism she’ll ever have for the show, which was slammed last season over (huge spoiler alert for folks still working their way through the series) the rape of Sansa Stark and the full-frontal walk of shame Cersei Lannister had to endure.

Many fans threatened to abandon *GoT*. “It’s impossible to shoot that kind of subject matter without enraging or upsetting people,” Natalie argues. “That is the creature of *Thrones*. It grabs those unpalatable themes with both hands.” If fans are so pissed off, Natalie has one message: Do something about it. “Let’s make the conversation constructive as opposed to having a sensationalist uproar,”

she says. “Everyone was so upset because the rape happened to such a beloved character. There are beloved *people* out there that this happens to, and it’s horrific.”

Natalie does her part to spark change; for one, she’s involved with Plan U.K.’s “Because I Am a Girl” campaign, which combats issues like female genital mutilation and underage forced marriage. Of course, Natalie is well aware that her *GoT* character ascended to power by wedding a child (it’s fiction, people). Besides, the last we saw of wily Margaery, she was rotting away in a jail cell—karmic retribution. Not that she’s in there for the long haul. “She’s found an interesting way to get herself out of the situation,” the actress teases.

COMFORT ZONES AND BUCKET LISTS

Natalie has found ways to MacGyver herself out of crappy scenarios IRL. To get over her last breakup, she sky-dived out of an airplane. “I was like, ‘I’m so numb! I need to do something to feel again!’ Then when I was standing by the door of the plane, I’m going, ‘I don’t feel numb anymore!’ It was too late, so I jumped,” she says with a grin.

Her current love life is much more grounded: She’s engaged to director Anthony Byrne. “He’s never directed me in a movie,” she admits. “That’s on my bucket list. I am desperate to work with him in the very near future.” Speaking of the very near future... How about that marriage thing? “Oh dear,” Natalie says, then laughs for what seems like six years. Perhaps only metaphorical jumps scare her. ■

TRIPLE THREAT!

You might think Natalie approaches everything—exercise included—with a certain intensity. You would be right. Intel on the workout that centers her, the one that fuels her, and the one that has her reaching.

YOGA

One of her go-tos, she’ll try just about any style (whatever is nearby), but she often favors Hatha for its restorative, holistic sensibility. “Anywhere, anytime, any day,” she lists like a mantra.

RUNNING

At press time, Natalie was already training for the 2016 New York City Marathon. (Inside tips: Music is everything for her when running. She likes Haim, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Madonna.) While the goal of beating her previous time of 3:50:57 at the London Marathon motivates her, she’s driven by an even loftier finish line: “Next year, I’m running for a great charity, Team for Kids, that promotes physical education among young Americans,” she says.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

The avid hiker has Peru’s Inca Trail and Tanzania’s Mount Kilimanjaro on her to-conquer list. “It’d be cool to do it with a group of people for charity,” she says of the latter. “But you need to take three weeks out of your schedule.”

