

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

Lily Collins proves that an unwavering drive and creative curiosity can forge a magnificent path.

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Full look by CHANEL.



Full look by Miu Miu.

SCANDINAVIA, WITH ALL ITS PASTORAL SPRAWL IS A REGION WITH ENDLESS POTENTIAL FOR DISCOVERY—SO IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT THE ADVENTURE-SEEKING LILY COLLINS AND HER HUSBAND, CHARLIE McDOWELL, CHOSE THIS DESTINATION FOR THEIR HONEYMOON.

Speaking over Zoom from Norway, the actor and burgeoning producer is elated to spend her post-nuptial getaway actively exploring new terrain, both geographic and cultural. “It’s been a nature-driven, immersive, foodie tour of Scandinavia. We’re still here experiencing the land, and it’s completely magical,” she gleefully admits. Rather than head to a secluded seascape to soak in the sun’s rays, Collins wanted to be a part of “something greater than ourselves and have memories of experiences we never thought we would be able to have,” crossing off a few entries on her bucket list in the process.

One might suspect that holding a wedding during a pandemic would also prove to be a surreal endeavour—however, for Collins, it was everything she could have hoped for. While certain precautions are inevitable when hosting a gathering of any sort, it did not impinge on the ceremony’s blissful atmosphere or hinder its celebratory aura. “It’s exactly as I would have wanted it to be,” she says. “We both feel very lucky to have had people around us—in these times, that’s the most important thing.” Intimacy trumped spectacle, allowing for a tight-knit group of loved ones to celebrate this milestone in the couple’s life.

Aside from planning a wedding and subsequent honeymoon, Collins used this time of global pause to reconnect with nature and learn how to surf—courtesy of her husband. “He was a great teacher, and it was really fun to get out there and try something new,” she reveals. “There’s also the possibility of failing miserably and publicly, which you don’t always lean into as an adult, but it was a really fun experiment for me.”

Collins also diversified her resume when it was possible to do so safely. “We were able to make a movie during the pandemic, which was a really interesting experience. It was really fun to be creative with a small group of people,” she acknowledges. *Windfall*—a Hitchcockian noir film directed by McDowell—sees Collins starring alongside Jason Segel and Jesse Plemons, assuming the role of a woman who, along with her husband, arrives at a vacation house while a robbery is in progress.

The film is pending a release on Netflix, and is another addition to her prolific working relationship with the streaming juggernaut.

However, the most high-profile collaboration between Collins and Netflix is surely the zeitgeist-snatching comedy series *Emily in Paris*. Helmed by Darren Star—the mastermind behind *Sex and the City* and *Younger*—the narrative centres on the titular character’s bumpy assimilation into the French capital as an American expat. As an imaginative marketing professional at a Parisian boutique firm, Emily grapples with hesitation, constant antagonizing from her coworkers, and the pangs of living with language and cultural barriers firmly in place.

Rather than cower under pressure, Emily remains undaunted, her drive unscathed. As an avid anti-bullying advocate, Collins recognizes an admirable sense of self-worth in the way Emily deals with the rampant animosity meant to break her down. Whether Emily is enduring the stream of insults hurled at her or having her marketing expertise constantly questioned, Collins lauds her character’s ability to remain vulnerable while staying resilient. “She doesn’t allow the fact that a lot of other people don’t embrace her right away stop her from persisting in her job. She also showcases how asking questions and reaching out for help is a strength, not a weakness.” Collins is also particularly smitten by Emily’s uncompromising authenticity, noting how the production team consciously chose not to film a scene where she “goes into a dressing room, and Emily from Chicago comes out as Emily in Paris. We wanted to reiterate the fact that she is unapologetically herself. She just learns and grows, takes little bits and pieces from people she is meeting, as well as the city she’s now living in, and adds them to her already-established moral compass, wardrobe, and personality.”

Emily’s idiosyncratic wardrobe, with all its vibrant hues and graphic prints, is a testament to the unique styling prowess of costume designer Marilyn Fitoussi and costume consultant Patricia Field (of *Sex and the City* fame.)

For each character, Fitoussi and Field created a collaborative working environment that allowed the actors' personal tastes and visions to imbue their clothing with layers of nuance. "Our fittings end up being hours and hours, because we have conversations about every outfit, the colours, and the way that they fit our bodies," Collins reveals. Vintage clothing, specific designer requests, and personal garments and accessories are ways for the cast to customize their onscreen personas, giving them a more complex visual identity. However, this doesn't mean that Emily's sartorial *je ne sais quoi* is a carbon copy of Collins's own tastes. "Even though Emily's fashion and my fashion are very different, there are still parts of me in that," she admits. While Emily may prefer to wear high-heeled shoes on the regular and sports neon hues with aplomb, Collins is able to "poke fun at myself in some of these outfits, because she really does go big or go home in a lot of ways that I probably wouldn't, but it's really fun to get to do it as Emily."

With a second season green-lit by Netflix to premiere in December and the return to set earlier this summer, Collins was elated to reunite with the cast and crew. Having taken on the role of producer during the first season, she was given a chance to assert more of a presence in the developmental and creative aspects of the series. "I felt like I was able to use my voice and ask questions and feel empowered to make changes, being a part of the process in ways that I don't think I was expected to be allowed to." This included "bringing a lot to the table in terms of ideas and changes, the characters I wanted to explore more of, and elements of Emily that I wanted to be able to show with costumes, locations, and casting—the whole thing."

While distinctly rooted in the titular character's personal and professional experiences, the second season allows for more diverse perspectives and storylines. Collins is excited about how the narrative centralizes the female camaraderie between Emily, Camille, and Mindy, and how it nurtures the relationship between Emily and her boss Sylvie, who is given a chance to gradually warm up to her American underling. "I'm excited for everyone to get to feel more invested in the other characters, since they deserve it," Collins reveals, alluding to how a multiplicity of voices and experiences will give

the show a greater feeling of universality. Even Emily's wardrobe undergoes a slight transformation as she further acclimates to French culture, pulling cues from New Wave cinema for a more Parisian aesthetic.

In keeping with the show's escapist roots, one thing the forthcoming season will not address is the current pandemic, as it consciously exists in a realm outside of quotidian reality. Collins notes how, after filming wrapped on season one, she and the rest of the crew were "unaware that it was going to be released during a time when people needed to laugh and remember what fun was like. We were so grateful to provide that when people needed it the most." However, this does not impede its ability to raise awareness of other sociopolitical issues that are directly related to Emily's experiences as an individual. The first season creatively dealt with matters relating to the male gaze, the objectification of women, and body dysmorphia. Collins adamantly states that "it's important to address the topics that we do, and to further the topics that were brought up in season one in a way that doesn't feel alienating, but feels conversational," rooting the narrative in Emily's "experience in Paris, with these people, and how she digests information and addresses situations while overcoming obstacles. She speaks up and uses her voice, and that only increases in season two."

In addition to her televisual roles, Collins is hard at work handling production duties on the upcoming live-action *Polly Pocket* film, which will be written and directed by *Girls* creator Lena Dunham. Although the film is still in development, Collins will also star in this adaptation, which presents itself as a nostalgic form of entertainment for those who grew up obsessing over these toys while also inviting a new generation to become transfixed by *Polly Pocket*. "They're still so relevant," she exclaims, "but there's also room to create new storylines and build on that history of the brand."

While on location shooting the imagery for this cover story, Collins was in awe of its setting, a grand Californian estate where she was excited to "play a character"—perhaps a jilted housewife, or a melancholic starlet exhausted by fame? It takes an inquisitive storyteller to transform a fashion shoot into a character study told through pantomime—show business is surely a natural fit for Collins. •



Full look by Prada.



Full look by Maryam Nassir Zadeh.

RIGHT
Full look by Dior; ring by Cartier.

