

## Magical Realism *CineVegas Honoree Anthony Hopkins Knows How to Play It*

**O**n Friday, June 15th, Academy Award-winning actor Sir Anthony Hopkins—in Las Vegas to receive the 2007 Marquee Award from the CineVegas Film Festival—sat down at the Palms Casino Resort for an insightful tête-à-tête with *Vegas*' very own pop-culture pundit, Michael Shulman.

**ANTHONY HOPKINS:** Hello. Call me Tony, please.

**VEGAS:** Well, then, welcome to fabulous Las Vegas, Tony. And I know I'm most likely mispronouncing this, but *cymru am byth* [a Welsh motto meaning 'Wales forever'].

*Cymru am byth* [pronouncing it cumree um bithe].

**In speaking of your film *Slipstream*, you commented on your fascination with time, saying, 'If there is a god, that god is actually time.' Could you expound a bit?**

I've always been interested in the mystery of time, because you can never grasp even a microsecond, can you? What happened over there a few minutes ago—is that all gone now, forever? Dennis Hopper saw *Slipstream* at Sundance and described it as what happens right before death—that last 10 seconds of life.

**How would you describe the experience of filming for motion-capture as you did for your portrayal of King Hrothgar in the upcoming release of *Beowulf*?**

It's really very interesting, and of course [Robert] Zemeckis is a genius. You know, it's really his obsession. While we were doing *Beowulf*, they developed a technique that is more advanced than that of *Polar Express*; they put these little beads around the eyelids and track all of the muscles that make up the eye. I've seen a few minutes of it, and it's really extraordinary. After each take you have to do a number of strange poses. When I was doing it, I had no idea what the purpose was, but once I saw it—limitless freedom.

**It had to come sooner or later, but Hannibal Lecter.... [Hopkins grins.] The American Film Institute has rated your portrayal of Dr. Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* as the greatest film villain of all time. When you received**



Screen legend Anthony Hopkins received the Marquee Award at this year's CineVegas Film Festival.

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**the script, did you have any idea just how integral a part of the Zeitgeist that role would become?**

I had a hunch. I don't know why, because I'm not Hannibal Lecter. I just had this uncanny feeling as an actor.

**So something inside of you just said....**

Actors are supposed to have this highly developed sense of intuition. Some actors act from their heads, but I tend to act....

**From the gut?**

Yeah. I had a sense that this was going to be one of those parts that give me a whole different look at the movies. And I knew how to play it.

**Before that, you were leaving Hollywood and going back to the stage, no?**

I'd gone back to London. And it's interesting, but I'm sure you know the film *The Third Man* [1949 Oscar and Palme d'Or winner starring Joseph Cotten and Orson Welles]? It's this incredible film in which you hear about the main character for 15 minutes before you ever see him. He's this very charismatic con man. We talk about Lecter the same way.

**Has the mantle of Hannibal Lecter (who remains the archetypal antihero) ever seemed unshakable? Because very few moviegoers, especially Americans, will ever think, Tony Hopkins—he's that guy who understudied for Olivier at The National and received a Drama Desk Award for *Equus* on Broadway. Has there ever been a morning when you have woken up wishing that De Niro, Duval or Hackman had taken the role?**

I'm in great company there, but no, never. And the script had been changed sufficiently. Ted Tally wrote the script and maybe toned it down a bit.

**You've said that you play monsters well because you understand monsters and madmen. How so and why?**

When I say, 'I understand madmen,' I'm saying that when a part is really well written, you can pretty well fit into it. It's just that those monster guys like Lecter are....

**They're meatier roles?**

Because the audience is really attracted to them.

# ANTHONY HOPKINS



Hopkins with fellow honorees Ben Kingsley, Charlize Theron and Mike Newell at the CineVegas awards reception at the Palms.

**Will you return to the stage, or do you feel more at home now on the screen?**

You never know. Maybe a great stage play will come along one day. I've turned down a number of plays, but I did it for many years.

**You stated a couple of years ago that your favorite role was Burt Munro, whom you portrayed in *The World's Fastest Indian*. Does this still hold true today?**

Burt Munro was different from anything I'd played. I was able to get outside myself. He was such an optimistic, sort of roguish guy. When Roger Donaldson offered it to me (I worked with Roger before), I read the script and thought, This is interesting. And then I saw Roger's interviews with the real Burt Munro from 30 years before and I thought, Yeah, I'll have a go at this. And I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it tremendously.

**You've performed opposite the best of stage and screen. I'm going to name some very quickly: Dame Judi Dench, Emma Thompson, Anne Bancroft, Jodie Foster, Vanessa Redgrave, Jessica Lange. In *The Bounty* alone you were with Laurence Olivier, Mel Gibson, Daniel Day-Lewis and Liam Neeson. Of the new breed seen today in film and on television you've acted alongside a roster that would give James Lipton a hard-on bordering on priapism [Hopkins laughs]—including such actors as Gary Oldman, Gwyneth Paltrow, Cary Elwes, Sean Penn, Brad Pitt, Henry Thomas, Bridget Fonda, Ryan Gosling, Ben Chaplin, John Cusack, Penelope Ann Miller, Matthew McConaughey, Milla Jovovich, Diane Lane, Jake Gyllenhaal, Colin Farrell, Heather Graham, Jared Leto, Jude Law, Chiwetel Ejiofor. We're talking eight seasons of *Inside the Actors Studio* here. Whom do you see as the 'great hope' of cinema?**

Ryan Gosling. Is he on that list?

Yes.

Well, Ryan Gosling. And Brad Pitt, but he's an older generation.

**What advice do you have for young artists starting out in the world?**

Don't take yourself so damn seriously.

**“I've always been interested in the mystery of time, because you can never grasp even a microsecond, can you?”**

in London—Goldie Hawn and Hal Holbrook and myself—and George Feifer, the author of *The Girl From Petrovka*, showed up. I'd met him a couple of times, and we had lunch and I said to him, 'Do you have a copy of the book? I can't get one.' And he rang me up the next day and said, 'I can't find my book. I gave it to a friend.' This was a long time ago—33 years—so I said, 'Okay, well, I'll just get one in America.'

Anyway, we were rehearsing in Sloane Square. I'd finished rehearsal and I was getting on the tube. A train had just gone out and another was coming in. And I saw a brown paper package sitting on the seat. This was at the height of IRA terrorism. So I went around to it and saw it was a book. I picked it up: *The Girl From Petrovka!* I looked around thinking I was on *Candid Camera* and George was going to appear. And there were all of these pen marks—red pen marks—in the margins. It was George's copy [that he had lent to his friend], and it was just sitting there on a bench in Sloane Square. To this day I don't know how it got there or who put it there. But it ended up in a book called *Synchronicity*.

Many years later, I was in Mexico City; I was going to go and take a walk, and stopped into the bookshop at the hotel. I didn't expect to find any English books, but there was this book, *Synchronicity*. So I pulled it out, because I've always been fascinated by that sort of thing (which is why I did *Slipstream*), and there's my name.

What I found interesting was I'd read the book one morning. I went out for lunch and I was walking back to the hotel when I thought I saw Robert Mitchum in a car. I thought, He must be here making a movie. And I'd never met Mitchum, but always admired him. And I'd never seen the film *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (1957) but had heard a lot about it. I go back and turn on the set, and there it is! ♠

**Bravo! Are there any roles—film, television or stage—which you've turned down and have later regretted so doing?**

There have been a few roles that I would have loved to have played, but no. I've made some bad choices, but that's what you do.

**As a Welshman, is it the duty of all Welsh men, women and children to see Dame Shirley Bassey perform live at least once?**

I've seen her once. And she's great. But no.

**Rugby or football?**

Rugby.

**Dogs or cats?**

Cats.

**Monty Python or French & Saunders?**

Monty Python.

**Can you briefly tell me about the whole saga involving George Feifer and *The Girl From Petrovka* (1974)?**

Oh, yeah. It was in *Synchronicity*. That was weird. We were rehearsing