

EE British Academy Film Awards in 2013 – Winners Press Conference: Leading Actor

Q. Daniel Day-Lewis. Nice to meet you, congratulations.

A. Thank you very much.

Q. Yes, congratulations, Daniel. This is your fourth BAFTA so does it get easier with each win?

A. Easier to do what?

Q. Easier to -- to get up there on stage and to make a speech?

A. No, I don't think so, I don't think so. The less you know the less nervous you are, probably.

Q. So this character there's so much been written about Abraham Lincoln; the man, the legend. When did you start? What was the very first thing you did, the book you read, the first thing you looked at?

A. I think I screamed for help when I realised that the word "yes" had finally escaped from my lips.

Q. Because it had been a long time coming for you, hadn't it?

A. It had been a long time, I think it was about seven or eight years probably. But it was Doris Kearns Goodwin's book, *Team of Rivals*, that was a springboard for Tony and Steven when they began to work together on it and for me also, mainly because I suppose the hardest thing for me in even imagining trying to do the work was the sense of shyness that you feel in the presence of what you believe to be that figure, which of course is really just the mythologised figure that most of us grew up with. Doris's book, one of the remarkable things about it, is that it leads you towards an understanding as a human being in a really beautiful way.

Q. Do we have any questions? Yes, we have a lot of questions. Over here, please, the second row, then Joe and then we'll move this way.

Is the microphone still here? You have it first.

PRESS: Daniel, you don't tend to do very many films so how do you choose the projects that you do want to get involved in?

A. I honestly don't know, I mean, I -- I have the illusion at least that in the moment when I decide to go to work I have the illusion that -- that I really have no choice, I suppose, by which time I've tested every possible escape route and -- and it's really that feeling of being drawn irretrievably into the orbit of another life, another world, and a particular life of another human being. So it's almost a physical sensation, a compelling need really, but I don't know where it comes from.

Q. Yes, please, right over here in the second row.

PRESS: Many congratulations Daniel.

A. Hi.

PRESS: Many congratulations Daniel, hi.

A. Hello, thank you.

PRESS: I wanted to ask you because I read an interview with Spielberg in *Time* magazine and I think he said that he approached you several times before you said yes, and I wondered why you were initially hesitating?

A. Well, because I -- I mean I understood the importance of trying to tell the story and, you know, to whatever extent -- and finally you do have to do work that -- that you have a very personal need to do, you can't serve anybody, the story or the director, if you think you're doing anyone a favour, it has to come from a personal need. And at the time when he first presented it to me I -- not only did I not feel that need, but I felt quite positively that that would be a wonderful thing for somebody else to do. It wouldn't have occurred to me to try to do it. And in the passage of time that changed, but it took a long time for that to change.

PRESS: Why did that change?

A. I don't know. I -- I can only think that, you know, it's also true probably of every moment and you're asking about how these decisions are made. The decision is made I think at -- at least a large part of it is because -- and I never question exactly what it is, but there is a need in you to express something of yourself through the life of another human being and that you recognise some kind of -- even if it's only a distant communion between your experiences, and that comes in a moment in time. It's not something that tends to linger, I think. Although having said that, some people, you know, long to do work for many years and then achieve that work, but in my case it feels very, very, very particular to the time when I'm doing it.

Q. Yes please, Joe?

PRESS: Mr Day-Lewis, congratulations.

A. Thank you.

PRESS: I wonder if you could try and describe the process of creating this character and being in this movie with Mr Steven Spielberg and how he is as a director?

A. I wish I could. I -- in both cases I -- I mean, in the first case I wouldn't know how to describe it that would probably make any sense. In the second case I always feel when I talk -- try to talk about a working relationship which has been so important in my life that it invariably diminishes it by reducing it to a few sentences. It was a powerful and -- and for all time memorable experience working with Steven and in terms of getting ready for the film, I just do what I tend to do: I plug away and hope something comes out of it.

Q. Last question over here, please. Thank you.

PRESS: Hi Daniel.

A. Hello.

PRESS: Hello. I was just wondering, are you planning on taking another long break from acting or do you have some projects lined up?

A. I don't have any projects lined up, nor do I have a plan necessarily to be away from the work for any particular length of time. I can't imagine what I would try to do after this. It -- it's really -- I haven't really started even contemplating that because we're still at the tail end of this experience, but I know when I do start to it's going to seem really inconceivable I could do anything after this. But that's probably been true for a few -- you know, a few times in my life and maybe something will come along.

Q. So this is your fourth one, is this going to be beside the other three or are they scattered around your house?

A. They're not scattered they -- they all live, for the time being in the -- in the office of my very dear friend and agent, Tor Barfrage, and she's the custodian of these beautiful things for me. That way I know they will get a dusting!

Q. Excellent. Thanks again, congratulations. Daniel Day-Lewis, thank you.

A. Thank you.