

A photograph of Emma Watson sitting on a brown vinyl chair at a diner table. She is wearing a sleeveless dress with a gold and green floral pattern and a red sash. Her right hand is resting on the table, and her left hand is near her face. In the background, there are condiment bottles on the table and a window.

# VOICE OF A

*"I can be blunt and direct and quite confrontational!" From child star to UN ambassador, Emma Watson is making herself heard. Violet Henderson listens in as the 25-year-old actress comes clean on thwarting fame, recovering from heartbreak and learning not to be a control freak*

Photographed by Josh Olins. Styled by Lucinda Chambers

# GENERATION

Watson has been looking back to try to make sense of who she is today, an identity that rests on a single decision she made when she was a child

*Opposite:* brocade dress, worn back to front, £5,240, Antonio Berardi. Leather boots, £870, Louis Vuitton. Ear cuff, £230. Ring, £246. Both Vickisarge

*This page:* tapestry dress, £1,400, Simone Rocha, at Dover Street Market. Ear cuff, £157. Earrings, £218. Both Vickisarge. Hair: Shon. Make-up: Sally Branka. Nails: Lorraine Griffin. Set design: Max Bellhouse. Digital artwork: Hempstead May

# S

itting on a wooden chair behind a school desk in Fleet Street's Mayday Rooms, a marginal library for marginal social movements, Emma Watson is talking strategies. But right now, not world-changing ones, just small, life-enhancing ones, the sort that would be totally alien to most of us. "I've literally written out how I should deal with people when they first recognise me," she says, "because unless you are really quick about engaging them then they start to slip in to this weird space where they look at you as this external being." And that "being" is a global star, the sum of many dazzling achievements: a child actress, a multimillionaire, an Ivy League graduate, a sometime model and fashion plate, an emerging Hollywood player and now a newly crowned UN ambassador, whose internet fans number more than 45 million (however, unlike a Kardashian, she has never once posted a bikini selfie to attract them).

But thwarting fame is tiring work. Watson, who turned 25 in April, hugs her leg to her chest and rests her head on her knee. "I think that's why, at times, I need to be on my own, to recharge. Because I get..." She breaks off as she searches for the right words "... not overwhelmed, but now and then I need to be in a space where I don't have to negotiate that kind of conflict." It was Watson who chose our location for today's interview. Among anarchist posters curling up on dusty corkboards and spider plants yellowing on sunny windowsills, she comes regularly to read or research (her current volume is a Fifties treatise on early feminism) and to enjoy the >



"I've literally written out how I should deal with people when they first recognise me, because unless you are really quick about engaging them then they start to slip in to this weird space where they look at you as this external being"

Shearling jacket, £3,495, Burberry Prorsum. Embroidered velvet and organza skirt, £380, Ryan Lo, at Net-a-Porter.com. Ear cuff, £266. Earrings, £378. Ring, as before. All Vickisarge

gentle company of academics who are propelled by politics, not celebrity. "Isn't it incredible that a place like this exists in London?" she asks, more than once.

In the flesh, the actress is at once ordinary and extraordinary. Swaddled as she is today in a camel cashmere V-neck that once belonged to a boyfriend and black Gucci jodhpurs that took her to a riding lesson earlier this morning, you might pass her here in the corridor and not realise until some moments afterwards that she was the same girl who played Hermione Granger in the most successful film franchise of all time. She is slight in physique – she stands at 5ft 4in and takes a dress size 8. She is neither taut nor Hollywood-honed; her hair falls straight and thick to the top of her shoulders. She wears no make-up or look-at-me accoutrements, so she is bare of necklaces, rings, even nail polish.

Despite this, recognition remains a life-limiting problem for Watson, outside, in the real world. In terms of logistics, getting from A to B isn't simple. "I could walk down Oxford Street now if I really wanted to, but I'd have to keep up a pretty mean pace," she says. "If I've already passed someone, by the time they're ready to do their second take then I tend to be all right." Shopping at Topshop, however, with the rest of the world's 25-year-olds, is more testing. "I wouldn't do that without a friend," she admits (she does most of her shopping online). "If someone recognises you, there tends to be a bit of a domino effect, which is why I'll try to get anyone who approaches on side. I'll ask them, 'Can you do me a massive favour? I can't do a photograph right now because, if I do, a camera flash is going to go off, and if a camera flash goes off then everyone's going to stand around and look at me. And then I'm not going to be able to manage the situation.'" She pauses. "Generally, people understand."

She speaks of further strategies. How she is careful about what she wears if she walks down the street. "Big designer handbags and sunglasses attract attention." As do, she says, cars with tinted windows, baseball caps, high heels in the daytime and entourages. "Often people don't notice you out of context. For instance, if I fly Easyjet, no one ever approaches me because

they don't expect me to be there." That's terrible luck, I laugh, but Watson doesn't join in.

This is the first of several meetings, and Watson is a good interviewee. Her capacity for expression is mesmerising. On her pleasingly symmetrical face, her eyebrows and chin compete to articulate most loudly. And when she talks – usually in long, eloquent, mult clause sentences, which revise and edit ideas – she fidgets left, right, back, forth, lending her physical weight to what she is saying. And nothing *seems* off-limits. We discuss how she practises ashtanga yoga; well enough, she says, that she could teach it (how Hermione is that?). She also meditates and writes poetry and, when she is unhappy, a diary. "It's interesting,

## She discloses how, within 12 hours of her inaugural UN speech, a website went up threatening to publish naked pictures of her

actually," she remarks, more to herself, "I haven't needed to do that for a while."

We talk about love, and how she broke up with her rugby-playing student boyfriend Matt Janney about seven months ago, and it was – deep exhalation by Watson – "horrendous". She considers why, at first, she hated being single. "I felt really uncomfortable," she says, "even before my relationship ended, I went on a silent retreat, because I really wanted to figure out how to be at home with myself."

And yet, she is watchful. Her habit is to respond to questions with "really interesting", nodding her head, biding her time before she answers. When I ask if she thinks men, particularly those who are not serial high achievers or similarly high profile, are too intimidated to ask her on a date, she falters. "Um, I don't think, I haven't found it..." She trails off, this time not managing to finish her answer. She admits to finding interviews stressful: "I probably do send myself slightly mad because I'm like, 'What's your angle on this?'" And then she recalls, with a jutting jaw, how journalists took

advantage of her when she was young, putting answers to loaded questions in her mouth to make headlines. So her focus, for the most part, is strict.

Singer Patti Smith has become an unlikely mentor to Watson. The actress repeats Smith's advice to her for dealing with criticism and interviews: "She said I needed to find a way to block out the noise." Calling from New York between performances, Smith remembers Watson coming to one of her concerts. "And I was interested," she says, in that distinctive voice that sounds like rasping autumn leaves, "that despite everyone watching her, she still managed to dance and interact with her friend that night as any girl her age might." In Watson's situation, then, focus is perhaps a prerequisite for maintaining a sense of self.

Born in Paris to lawyer parents, Watson moved to England when she was five years old, the same year her parents divorced. It's clear that, of late, Watson's childhood has been at the forefront of her mind, and her conversation repeatedly refers to it. She recalls how "school was a really important place for me, because my mother often worked late and I stayed on and did every activity going," and that many of her friends today remain the ones she made during this time. Recently she's even made the physical pilgrimage back to her secondary school, Headington in Oxford, to visit her old art teacher. They chat while she draws or paints, "which is really nice because he has known me since I was 12 years old and I find that personal history very grounding."

She is quick to dismiss the theory, however, that she is searching for a lost childhood spent largely on a film set: too much has been made of that, she says. Yes, inevitably there were moments of normality she missed out on, including so much time spent away from her family. She was the only small star who did not have her father or mother as a chaperone. Instead she paid for her teacher's sister from America to assume the role. But she is firm that she didn't see this as neglect. "My parents couldn't take the time off; they had careers and they weren't together. They couldn't swap in and out like Rupert Grint's and Dan Radcliffe's parents. And my mother had my younger brother to look after, she couldn't leave him."

Instead, Watson has been looking

back to try to make sense of who she is today, an identity that rests on a single decision she made when she was a child. So did she ever really want to be an actress, or was it a profession that has simply come to be her own? "I don't know," she says slowly. "It's so hard to articulate..." she continues, now looking at the ceiling. "It's something I've really wrestled with. I've gone back and I've quizzed my parents. When I was younger, I just did it. I just acted. It was just there. So now when I receive recognition for my acting, I feel incredibly uncomfortable. I tend to turn in on myself. I feel like an imposter." And she says it again. "It was just something I did."

Her decision to go to Brown University in 2011, after she had petitioned Warner Bros executives to change the filming schedules of the final two *Harry Potter* films to allow her to do so, suggests a desire for another life. (She turned down a place at Cambridge because nothing this side of the Atlantic could provide the freedom she was seeking.) But Watson does not answer whether, then, she came close to giving up. Instead she tells a story: "I was sitting in a morning seminar listening to a group discussion," she relates. "The night before, I'd done the *Late Show with David Letterman* and then I got the train back to Providence to make it in time for this class. And I felt so relieved to be there among incredibly clever people who I got to learn from."

And yet, Watson continued to straddle the very disparate ecosystems of acting and academia, even when there were hopeless periods spent worrying she was "doing a bad job at both places and not really fitting in to either world". Since 2011 she has made roughly one film a year, and while studying might have constrained her from taking the lead roles that her fame could command, through a careful, calculated range of work, she's proved her acting credentials. From her first post-*Potter* role as Eddie Redmayne's naive and fleeting love interest in *My Week with Marilyn*, she later shone as the vile and deliciously brittle Nicki in Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring*. And she's just as good as the complicated Angela Gray in Alejandro Amenábar's latest thriller, *Regression*, which skewers satanic-ritual conspiracies and co-stars another former child actor, Ethan

Hawke. Calling from Spain, Amenábar doesn't just talk up her talent – "she's one of the greats," he says – he also pinpoints her drive: "She has this intensity; she's willing to give more and more. She was really tough." He also mentioned that he didn't approach Watson for the part – she approached him.

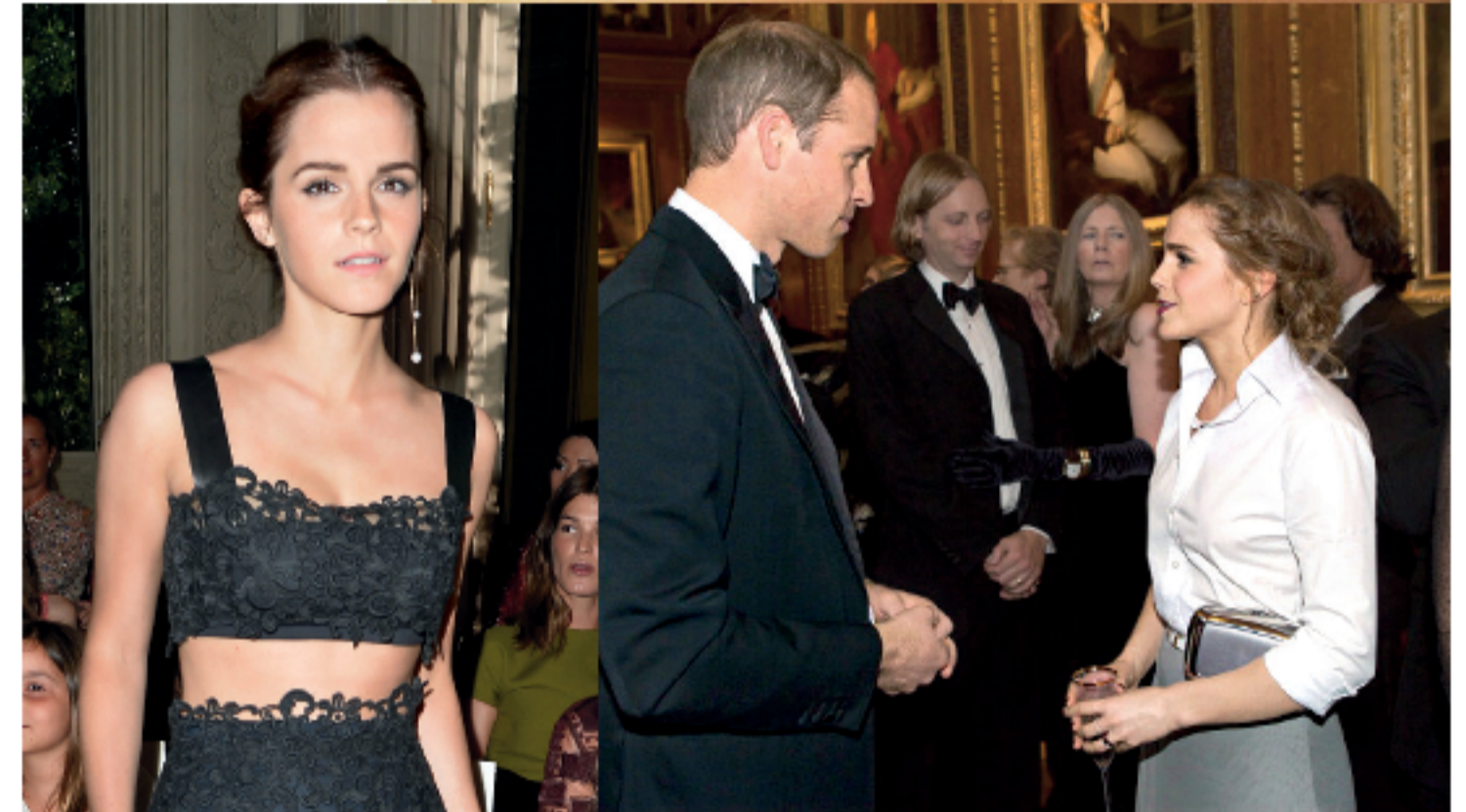
The sun is setting on a cool, windy day in London. Outside the city's Facebook HQ, a group of fans – girls and boys, none older than late twenties, none younger than early teens – waits patiently. My car has blacked-out windows and as it pulls up to the entrance, the group doesn't exactly surge, but gathers in an orderly fashion around the door. As I get out, very obviously not Emma Watson, they retreat disappointedly. A boy, who doesn't look unlike Harry Potter, whispers to me, "If you get to see her, you're so lucky," providing a timely reminder of the franchise fan's peculiar fervour.

This is Watson's second official outing as a UN Women goodwill ambassador. She is here today to talk more about the He For She campaign – an initiative to fight gender inequality by enlisting men and boys – which she launched last September with an impassioned 12-minute address at the UN's New York headquarters that resulted in global headlines. Its subsequent footage received 17 million views on the internet.

Then she wore statesmanly ivory Dior; today, she emits a different message entirely, in a tartan shirt and navy culottes, both by ALC, as she strides across the floor to a collective cheer, whooped by a carefully profiled audience of 150 He For She enthusiasts who applied to come today via Facebook. Even without a script, Watson is good. She mixes the official message with just enough of her own personal experience. So she discloses how, within 12 hours of >

Right: wearing Dior for Haute Couture Fashion Week, 2014. Centre, from top: an 11-year-old Watson at the 2001 American premiere of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*; in London a year later, at the opening night of *Scooby-Doo*

Right: Emma launches the He For She campaign at the UN last year. Below right: with Prince William at Windsor Castle for Ralph Lauren's Royal Marsden Dinner, May 2014. Below: wearing Valentino, at the house's couture show in Paris, July 2014. Centre: at Brown University



Above: wearing Louis Vuitton for *The Bling Ring* party in Cannes, 2014

GETTY; DMI PHOTO/FILM MAGIC; WIRE IMAGE

her inaugural speech, a website went up threatening to publish naked pictures of her. And how when she went on a recent date she made the decision to have the “awkward and uncomfortable” discussion about why she should pay this time round, in the name of equality, even if it did make him “tetchy”.

When we discuss her UN work, Watson relates how “part of me relaxed after I took on that position, it gave me a sense of belonging and purpose. Everything clicked in to place, in a way that it hadn’t before. I understood what I’m here to do and knew where to channel all this energy that has been coming at me.” She then adds, “I now feel this sense of peace. People say that I’m different since I did it.” It may be surprising to learn that Watson’s first UN address was resolutely her own endeavour. Fashion consultant Caroline Sieber says this is typical of her friend. “Emma is extraordinarily focused in her pursuits and sober in her thinking. What has always struck me about her is her absolute confidence in herself and her intuitions. And her resulting independence.”

Watson remembers, “Initially I was supposed to launch the campaign by writing something that a newspaper might publish. I wrote a draft and sent it to my mum, dad, the UN and my publicist, and everyone had a different critique. By the end, I didn’t even know what I was saying any more. I felt like people were trying to silence my voice.” So she approached her second attempt differently. The idea of a newspaper article was scrapped and a speech delivered by her, in her own words, was born. She wrote alone, telling no one of its contents. The night before its grand unveiling, she suffered something close to a panic attack. “I was hysterically sobbing in my hotel room, thinking, I can’t do this. I was just terrified. And then I Skyped a friend who said, ‘Go through it again and ask yourself, if you were hit by a bus tomorrow, would you be comfortable with every single line?’” She didn’t remove a word.

The next time I see Watson, we are in a photographic studio the size of a hangar as the actress glowers and glows before Josh Olins’s lens, in an emerald-green Erdem dress. The actress has known the designer for many years, first visiting his east

London studio for a fitting and remaining his friend ever since. He later tells me, “Emma loves fashion, she embraces it because she isn’t afraid of it.” Once awkward on the red carpet in the chiffon dresses she borrowed from her mother, aged 17 she discovered Chanel (or Chanel discovered her) and she graduated from a young girl playing ill-fitting dress-up into a fashion reference. Her recent crush is Dior – “I’m not paid to say this, but I think Raf Simons is a genius” – and like everyone else in fashion, she cites Joan Didion, the star of the s/s ’15 Céline campaign, as a style pin-up.

## “I certainly haven’t found that with doing all that I do or being all that I am, that I’ve struggled in my love life”

On the shoot her focus and confidence are as evident as ever. There is a dress she won’t wear, point-blank, and after each set-up she turns to the monitor to scrutinise the images. “I wouldn’t say I am a control freak, I just really want to have things be clear in some way. But to be more OK with the messiness of life is something I’ve been trying to learn through meditation...”

Nevertheless, when Watson’s full-time stylist Sarah Slutsky discusses the actress’s fashion on the phone, she is careful to speak with few specifics and becomes flustered when asked if she helps the star with her off-duty look. “I don’t know if I can answer this question,” she stumbles. “I’d need to discuss this with the rest of Emma’s team and get back to you.” She never did.

**O**n a bright morning in Ascot, Watson, in a crisp white shirt and black Topshop jeans, meets me for lunch. Next week, she’ll start filming her first big-budget lead role as an all-singing-and-galloping Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, slated for cinema release in 2017. It’s clear from the energy with which she enters the room that she is excited. Over a course of salads, the bread basket and

full-sugar Coca-Colas, she seems less vulnerable than she has been before. In fact, she makes use of this meeting to try to shore up any weak patches she may have exposed last time.

“One thing I wanted to bring up,” she begins, her consonants cracking, her eyebrows pinching, “I’ve been thinking about it since the last interview. You asked whether guys find me intimidating and does that make it difficult dating?” Given all that she had mentioned about the complications of meeting new people, it hadn’t then seemed an unfair question, but Watson’s irritation is tangible. “I think it’s a myth and I think it’s fear-mongering. I don’t think it’s the truth at all.

“The boyfriends or partners I’ve had have generally made me feel really cherished. They’ve built me up. I certainly haven’t found that with doing all that I do or being all that I am, that I’ve struggled in my love life. I just think it’s very patronising towards men. It undermines them.” And I’m reminded of her earlier admission, “I can be blunt and direct and quite confrontational!”

We move on. Watson tells me she’s begun work on a September concert, at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, the next step in the He For She campaign. “So I’m writing letters to acts to figure out who will perform.” And there is something else, too, which she can’t tell me about, but it’s another He For She development that makes her rock on her chair, because “someone just wrote me a big cheque.” There are, inevitably, other things on the agenda, too: after filming, before the concert, she’ll maybe go on another silent retreat, and perhaps she’ll take a trip to Istanbul – after all, she likes to travel. She’ll also make time for a swim in Hampstead Heath Ladies’ Pond and visits to the Tracey Emin and Francis Bacon exhibitions at the Tate. And there is that jigsaw puzzle on her dining-room table she needs to finish “before I lose all the pieces.”

And, as if that’s not enough, I get an email the following week which reads: “Directors I’d love to work with: Joe Wright, Danny Boyle, Kathryn Bigelow, Jean-Marc Vallée, Ron Howard, David Fincher, Luca Guadagnino, Clint Eastwood.”

I’m just grateful I didn’t ask her for her bucket list. ■

**“To be more  
OK with the  
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meditation”**

Jacquard dress,  
£2,045, Erdem.  
*For stockists, all pages,  
see Vogue Information*