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WITH ROLES LIKE NANCY SPUNGEN IN PISTOL AND MAGGIE IN *EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT LOVE*, THIS REALLY IS SHAPING OUT TO BE EMMA APPLETON’S BREAKOUT YEAR.

“NEARLY EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT LOVE, I’VE LEARNT IN MY LONG-TERM FRIENDSHIPS WITH WOMEN,” DOLLY ALDERTON WRITES IN HER 2018 MEMOIR, *EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT LOVE*. IT’S ONE OF THE MANY LINES THAT RESONATED WITH READERS LIKE MYSELF AND, IN TURN, TURNED THE BOOK INTO SOMETHING THAT CAPTURED WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE U.K. FOR A YEAR OR SO, YOU COULDN’T GET ON A TUBE WITHOUT SEEING A WOMAN DEVOURING IT, COMPLETELY ENRAPTURED IN ALDERTON’S WORDS. ONE OF THOSE WOMEN WAS ACTRESS EMMA APPLETON.

Appleton’s rise was a bit of a slow burn; her entry into the entertainment industry was by the way of modelling first. It was her first acting gig — a short film called *Dreamlands* — that she filmed 6 years ago that would be the catalyst to everything that followed. In those 6 years, Appleton has curated a filmography of roles and projects that are distinctly different from the last, showcasing the rising star’s commitment to morphing into something new. For Appleton, it doesn’t really matter who the character is — what matters is whether she can find (and relate to) their humanity. And with *Pistol* and *Everything I Know About Love*, she found that and then some.

There couldn’t be two TV shows that are more different than *Pistol* and *Everything I Know About Love*, but that’s what makes watching Emma Appleton in both so fascinating. In the biographical drama *Pistol*, inspired by the rise of Sex Pistols, Appleton plays Nancy Spungen. For many, the knowledge of Nancy begins with Sid and ends with her death. Being the inquisitive actress that she is, Appleton shows a different side to the overly mythologized real-life muse, turning the gritty acid blonde punk icon into something that shows the sense of warmth and wonder that was bubbling beneath Spungen’s surface.

Appleton’s commitment to showing the inner workings of a character and their world is further demonstrated as Maggie, the character loosely based on Dolly Alderton, in *Everything I Know About Love*. The highly anticipated adaptation is just as dedicated to showing the importance of female friendship as its book counterpart was, detailing the complexities and depth of what it means to be a friend to other women as you navigate your 20s. Much like with Nancy, Appleton brings the viewer into Maggie’s mind as she grapples with feeling like she’s falling behind the rest of her friends.

After spending 2021 working on the two aforementioned projects back-to-back, it’s only fitting they are both released around the same time. For Appleton, it’s a period of reflection. It’s a visual representation of why she chose to pursue creativity and acting — and it’s clearly paying off.

1883 Magazine’s Editor Kelsey Barnes speaks with Emma Appleton about portraying Nancy Spungen in *Pistol* and Maggie in *Everything I Know About Love*, finding similarities between two antipodal characters, what recipe she’d include in her memoir, and more.





I like that you bring up modelling because models don't always have a lot of agency, whereas now you're able to take ownership of a character. How has that change been for you?

'I'm allowed to have an opinion?!'

You want to feel like you're properly embedding yourself within a role and project. With that in mind, since *Pistol* and *Everything I Know About Love* are both released around the same time, I'd love to know if there is anything, in particular, you look for in a role or project?

Getting the script for a character like *Pistol's* Nancy must've been a thrill to dive into. What a great character study.

You did an amazing job of that in your portrayal of Nancy. I loved that scene in the car where they want her to get out but she says I'm not done with my story! You see such a pure and innocent side to her that I don't think many people are aware of.

Speaking of stories to tell — I was able to watch *Everything I Know About Love* a few weeks back. What a show, congrats! I, like the rest of the world, was gripped by Dolly's memoir so to see moments playing out on TV is incredible. I'm assuming you read the memoir?

Was there anything else you did to prepare for the role to get into Maggie's mind?

It's such a perfect snapshot of time. Dolly was very involved in the show. What was it like having her guidance?

I like diving into characters that can be difficult to understand, especially the tricky ones. Being able to find something that I can empathize with and connect to in a character matters to me. I have to understand them to make them believable

Exactly! [Laughs] They are two very different jobs but it has been incredibly liberating. It made me realize how much I love being creative and collaborating with creative and inspiring people. Talking about costume

or hair or make-up or acting choices makes me feel at home. I like to feel like a part of the creative process rather than just turning up and saying several lines and leaving, you know?

Yeah, absolutely. I think I've always had a love for 'unlikely' and messy characters. I like the challenge of fighting against perceptions. If an audience already thinks they know the story of a character, how can I make them understand or empathize with them? It's about subverting that impression they might already have.

Absolutely. One of my fun things with Nancy is that she doesn't have much of a filter. She doesn't have the social ability to realize when people aren't listening to her or that they aren't bothered by her. She doesn't care — she's got a story to tell.

I made a playlist of all the songs that were in the script. There were so many! It helped me get into that moment, like what I was dancing to back in June 2012. The script was my bible; I had so many lines and not a very long time to learn them, so that's all I read! I also watched some shows that I knew were very similar and that Dolly recommended, like *Girls*. It was a great excuse to sit down and watch that whole show, which I think is an absolute masterpiece.

She's such a warm and open person to work with. Any questions we had, we could ask. Nothing was off the table. But I was also very aware that Maggie is inspired by Dolly but not Dolly herself. It was striking the balance of being inspired by her but also knowing we needed to create some distance. Maggie, like Dolly, is still a heroic character, just not an imitation of Dolly. I would ask vague questions, like who she is when she's around her parents like what happens in episode 3. I wanted to hear Dolly's thoughts and then combine my instinct with those.



Full Look Hornets Kensington

My next question was about the argument she has with her parents in episode 3 — when her mum basically tells her to get her shit together. We’ve all had conversations like that with people. Is there a scene in particular that sticks out to you and you thought, wow, I’ve experienced that. God, so many things. A lot of the moments that just feel so true to life, like talking to your friends about a new guy you’re dating or getting ready for a night out or knowing what your passion is but not really knowing how to reach it. Basically, being in your 20s and thinking you’ve got it together when you don’t have anything together [laughs].



Top Found and Vision
Jeans Emma’s Own
Hat Lock and Co

It’s those mundane moments that you don’t really think matter until you’re looking back and you remember they were pivotal experiences. Yeah, exactly. The whole dating thing for Maggie is something I find really interesting. She’s so sure of herself around her friends, but then as soon as there’s a romantic interest involved she wants to change herself. I think we can all relate to that — especially in my younger years.

<p>A lot of my favourite Maggie moments are the scenes where she's quietly freaking out internally. You can see her brain going 100 miles a minute, like when Nathan comes over and she's asking herself what the hell is going on. Were those internal cues something you fleshed out on-set or something you picked up in the script?</p>	<p>A quote that I love from the show is when Maggie says to Birdy "I think I'm jealous and I'm finding it hard that you're going ahead and doing something that I've never done before because we normally do everything together."</p>	<p>There is a certain level of responsibility that comes with playing a real person. Was that daunting at all for you playing Nancy?</p>	<p>It might be strange to make some connections to Nancy and Maggie—</p>	<p>I think a lot of what they want is the same. The scene with Nancy crying in bed about whether Sid loves her or not and Maggie telling Street she loves him and he laughs in her face are quite similar when you really break it down. I know you filmed these shows basically back to back. What was it like exploring the different themes in each show and the turbulent ways these two female characters show love?</p> <p>That's so fantastic. I'm so glad you picked up on that because I think what it comes down to is that they're universal themes, too. You can pick these things up and put them in any human being. Humans are multifaceted; we all have emotions and we all want to be loved. We're fragile, vulnerable, chaotic, and joyful. All of those traits can be found in different degrees in both of those characters. I didn't feel like the characters were the same at all, but I think you hit the nail on the head by drawing a connection between the two of them.</p>	<p>Everyone knows Nancy as this chaotic person, but she's just a regular human. I guess your job as an actress is to tap into that human aspect.</p>
<p>Great question — I have to recall back to the script! Dolly definitely wrote them in, but we fleshed them out in situ. We were always reminding ourselves that we're seeing things from Maggie's point of view and you're in her head. There's moments where you're with her and you're experiencing it, but there are moments where you're observing her, too. It helps the audience understand more about her and why she wants to hear that everything is fine while she is having this internal turmoil that she doesn't know how to deal with.</p>	<p>Dolly peered into all of our minds with that one, none of us have ever had an original thought or unique experience!</p>	<p>In the beginning, it was and then when I read the version of Nancy that Craig [Pearce] had written in the script I realized I wasn't doing an imitation. Danny [Boyle] was very clear on letting me know that he didn't want a carbon copy of Nancy. I would say I look nothing like her and he'd say, "That's not what I want. I want you to have the essence and some truth of her." As soon as I knew that, it took a lot of the pressure off. Then it was just a case of using source material and watching videos to get her right. It was, like with Maggie, striking the right balance between real and interpretation.</p>	<p>Oh, please do.</p>	<p>Absolutely. I think a big thing for me was taking this person that has kind of been mythologized and vilified in popular culture and removing all of that. I can't claim to know her so it's a semi-fictionalized account, but it's all about showing who the human was. Who was she behind this name? What was she like behind closed doors? That's when you can start connecting these characters to real life.</p>	



Top and Belt Chanel
Trousers Hornets Kensington



Full Look **Saint Laurent**

Friendship is a theme that is incredibly prevalent in *Everything I Know About Love*, but there's also a moment in *Pisto!* that I found quite touching — when Nancy turns at the airport to hug Chrissie to thank her for being kind. With *Everything I Know About Love* in particular, has this show changed how you view or approach your friendships?

I always hold my friendships so close to my heart. I've been a believer that you need to put as much time into your friendships as you do romantic relationships because they are just as important. They've probably been around longer and they might be around longer after depending on what happens. If anything, it has just solidified the need for strong friendships. There's this amazing quote that says “*Put more romance into your friendships and more friendship into your romance.*” which I think is so lovely. Take your friends on dates, why not! Buy them some flowers every now and again. Pay as much attention to your friends as you do your romantic relationships.



Trench Coat **Found and Vision** Top **Found and Vision** Jeans **Emma's Own** Hat **Lock and Co**

Something Maggie's boss says to her is that she shouldn't waste time trying to be liked by everyone. Knowing her arc, what's some advice you'd give to Maggie as Emma? She shouldn't waste time trying to be liked by everyone. I can emphasize with that especially when you're in your 20s. I also would encourage her to learn how to be on her own and sit in silence. I'd tell her you don't have to surround yourself with people all the time. She just needs to get to know herself and like herself. I think if that happens then the rest will follow. In her memoir, Dolly made a point of including recipes since she's a big foodie. If you were to include your favourite dish, what would it be and why? Oh my god, great question. It would be scrambled eggs but that's already in there.



Full Look **Hornets Kensington**

I make it all the time, I swear by Dolly's recipe. Right! There are only a few recipes I do well. Maybe like a dahl — a sweet potato and Spanish dahl. Very simple with a soft-boiled egg — that way it fits in with the egg theme. Lastly, if you could manifest something for yourself this year, what would it be? Another job? [Laughs] I think you have to have a mindset of just knowing things will come and go. I've been so spoiled with work over the last year, I really can't quite believe it. So if I can just continue to do work that I enjoy, play characters that fascinate me, and work with really inspiring and creative people, I'm good. That's all I could ask for.

Pistol is out now on Disney+ and Hulu

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