

1883

magazine



J O S E P H Q U I N N

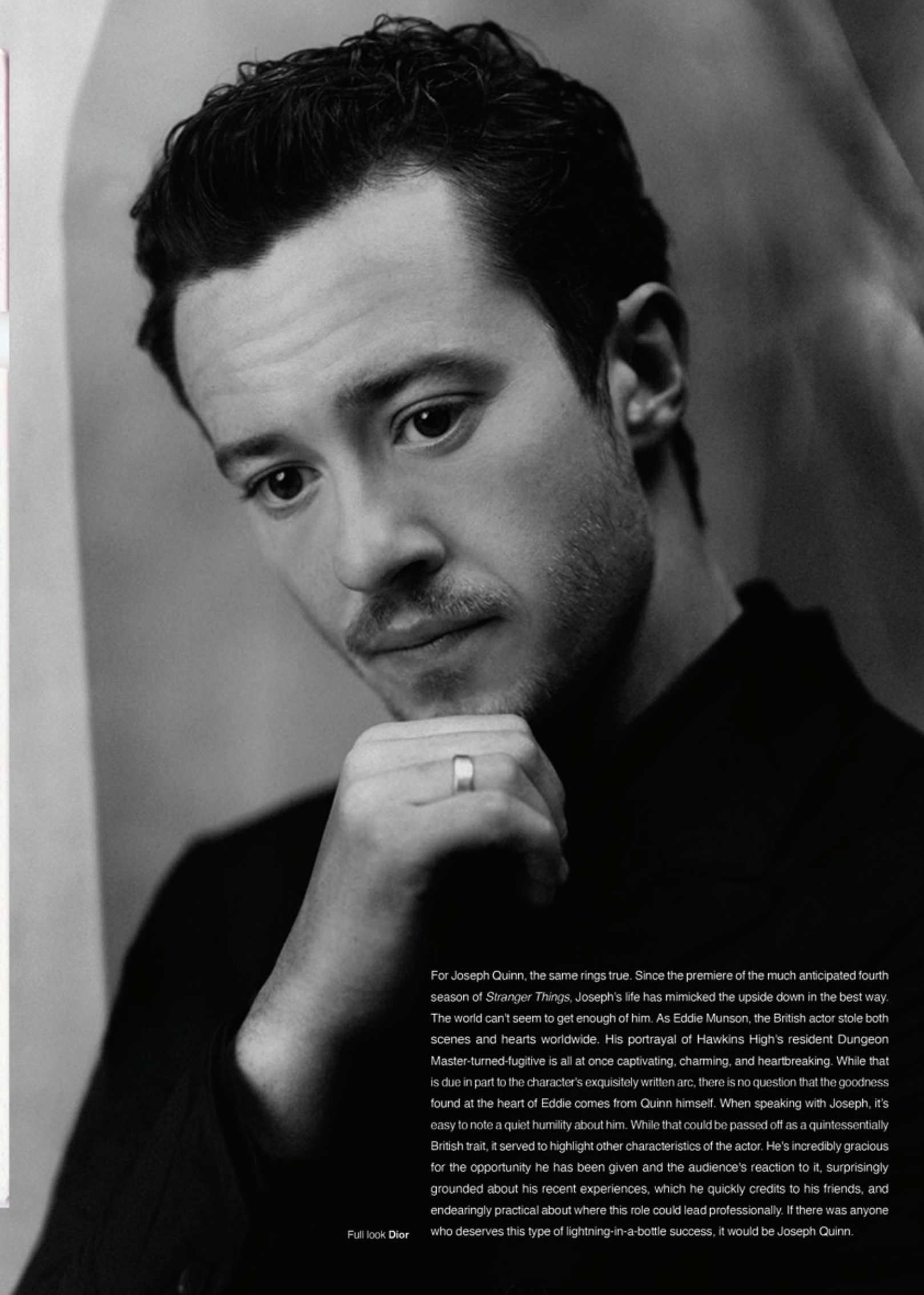
Joseph Quinn

PHOTOGRAPHY PIP / STYLING FABIO IMMEDIATO

WITH THE RELEASE OF THE FOURTH SEASON OF *STRANGER THINGS*, THIS YEAR IS PROVING TO BE JOSEPH QUINN'S — AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF EDDIE MUNSON.



"I think it's my year, Henderson. I think it's finally my year." When The Duffer Brothers penned the script that would carry one of Eddie Munson's final lines, they couldn't predict how much the world was going to love the latest addition to the *Stranger Things* party. On July 1, an estimated 55 million households watched through tear-filled eyes as Dustin held his newest mentor during his final breaths. In the month since, that number has grown to around 232 million, allowing for repeat viewings and, in turn, becoming a record for both the show and Netflix. Proportionally to those numbers, so has the online outrage from those not ready to lose the character — from fan theories on how Eddie could still return for the final season to TikTok edits, cosplays, inspired art, and the like. There is a certain irony to be found in the fact that while 1986 may not have been Eddie Munson's year, it turns out 2022 is.



For Joseph Quinn, the same rings true. Since the premiere of the much anticipated fourth season of *Stranger Things*, Joseph's life has mimicked the upside down in the best way. The world can't seem to get enough of him. As Eddie Munson, the British actor stole both scenes and hearts worldwide. His portrayal of Hawkins High's resident Dungeon Master-turned-fugitive is all at once captivating, charming, and heartbreaking. While that is due in part to the character's exquisitely written arc, there is no question that the goodness found at the heart of Eddie comes from Quinn himself. When speaking with Joseph, it's easy to note a quiet humility about him. While that could be passed off as a quintessentially British trait, it served to highlight other characteristics of the actor. He's incredibly gracious for the opportunity he has been given and the audience's reaction to it, surprisingly grounded about his recent experiences, which he quickly credits to his friends, and endearingly practical about where this role could lead professionally. If there was anyone who deserves this type of lightning-in-a-bottle success, it would be Joseph Quinn.

Full look Dior

While the Netflix mega-hit is what has propelled Quinn into the mainstream, it is far from his first foray into the industry. Since graduating from LAMDA, he has landed enough roles to be considered seasoned. Among other things, he has starred in BBC 1's *Dickensian*, appeared in *Game of Thrones*, played Luke at The National Theatre's *Mosquitoes*, and lent his talents to *Les Misérables*. Eddie Munson, his most recent role, is one that will define Joseph Quinn's guaranteed long career. It has set him up as a household name, gained him legions of fans, and wonderfully showcases his intuitive talents as an actor.



Top Sandro
Trousers Valentino

On the hottest day in London's history, Joseph Quinn took some time out of his still crammed schedule to speak with 1883's Sydney Bolen about life in a post-*Stranger Things* world, what playing Eddie Munson has taught him, his wishes for the character if things had played out differently, and more.

I have to start by saying congratulations on *Stranger Things*.

This season was my favourite. It pulled me back in. The addition of Eddie Munson was a big part of that. I watched it again to get ready for this interview and loved it, even more, the second time. Oh hey, that's a good thing.

In a past interview you said, "being offered the part of Eddie was disarming" and "made you paranoid that The Duffer Brothers were going to think they made a mistake." Now that everything is out and fan reaction is rampant - it's obvious it wasn't a mistake. Has the experience made you trust yourself more? I would say, professionally: yes. I think it's very gratifying to know that I didn't ruin *Stranger Things* [chuckles]. That's quite a nice feeling. You have to doubt yourself, I think. You can't doubt yourself too much because when it becomes too crippling you're lost at sea but I think if at any point you're thinking that you're making it, you're probably in trouble. So, has it made me trust myself? A little bit, but not much.

Well, for what it's worth, I honestly think that Eddie is one of those characters that couldn't have been played by anybody else. I can't see anybody else doing what you have with the role. I don't think I'm alone in that sentiment, so just take that along to whatever you do next. That's kind of you to say.

With the love for the character and the massive audience *Stranger Things* has, you now experience another level of being an actor besides just the craft — it's brought fan events, meet & greets, and more. Based on what I've seen online you're handling it all very well. Has it been intimidating at all? The whole experience has been very overwhelming. It's very touching to see people respond how they have to Eddie. I did not predict that. That's very warming. There's a lot of stuff around the role that has nothing to do with the work which is very new to me and different. It's exciting. It's a little bit odd. Professionally, it is 100% positive. Personally, it's 90% positive, and 10% insanity. Managing that 10% is the job at the moment.

I totally get that. It's not something you can prepare for at all. No, definitely not. There are no courses on this. But it's okay. I'm very fortunate, I've got good people around. I can't imagine what it must be like trying to negotiate this without a really solid support network.



Full look Dior homme

Emotionally, I always feel better once something I've had a hand in creating is out in the world than when I'm waiting to make it, so I understand that feeling. I have a lot of favourite Eddie moments in the season, but one from the last two episodes that I haven't seen anyone talk about is the scene in episode 8 in the meadow prior to the attempt to kill Vecna. I think it really gives viewers a glimpse into the fact that these characters are just a bunch of kids and young adults and they are planning to do a very brave thing. What was filming like on that day, particularly for you and Gaten Matarazzo?

It was a very hot day. I kind of feel that from back there now. It was just baking and quite fun. We were all split up and there's that gorgeous little scene, which is beautifully written, between Eddie and Dustin. I remember we really wanted to lean into the fraternal aspect of love. Guys, when they're expressing love, tend to be quite physical. Gaten and I talked about that and how we wanted to lend it that way. It really was just so hot. I think you can tell that we're pretty sweaty in it.



Good, I'm glad. Based on what I've seen of your schedule, you've been going and going and going since before Volume Two came out. Do you think you've been able to process it all yet? Or do you still feel like you're in the middle of it? I think I'm just adjusting, really. It's also important to bear in mind that it's not going to be like this forever. It's temporary. The show is out at the moment and it's brilliant. I feel so proud to be a part of it. I think they've done something extraordinary with this season, it's so bold and ambitious. To be a part of something like that is such a gift. It's been roughly seven weeks since the show came out, but it feels like half a year. It feels like I've been burning my own hole in the ozone layer flying around doing lots of different things. It's kind of the antithesis of lockdown. I went to Brazil for two days — that's such a weird thing to do, but it was amazing. I don't think you can get used to it. Getting used to it would be terrible, I think. It feels a little bit like a video game. But, it is what it is right now.

There is an interview I love with Florence Pugh and always think about when anyone lands a "break out" role. She's on the red carpet for either *Midsommar* or *Little Women*. When an interviewer asks her if her rise in popularity feels sudden, she says, and I'm obviously paraphrasing, "it may look that way from the outside, but to me because of all the work I've done to get here, it has felt like a very natural progression." I was wondering, do you feel like that as well? Well, I feel lucky in the fact that I've been working in this business for seven years before this. So, it doesn't feel like it's my first job. That kind of created whatever this thing is. I wouldn't say it feels like a natural progression. All you want as an actor in this game is to have choice and as much agency over your career as you can. Even then, so much of it is out of your hands. It feels like, and I say this very cautiously, this job and the success of the show might be providing me with the suggestion of that, which is an enormous gift and a luxury that I never anticipated. It does feel different now. I got recognized maybe three times in my life because of the work that I did before this job. This feels like a very seismic shift for me personally. Professionally, I'm glad that I had jobs before this, but this job comes with something else that is very different but amazing.

Speaking of this job specifically, you got to sit with the character of Eddie Munson for some time before getting to film. You got the part in 2019, but filming wasn't able to start until 2021. Do you think this affected your performance? That's a very astute question. It must have. The longer you have to prepare, the more time you have to ruminate and think about it. I was talking to Jamie [Campbell Bower] who plays Vecna. He said he used the COVID hiatus to really jump into being a big evil man. It clearly shows because his performance is astounding. For me, it was helpful. But you also don't want to sit on anything for that long. I've never done anything like this before in terms of a project's scope. It was very weird sitting on it for as long as I did. It's a massive exhale now that it's out. Weirdly, I feel less crazy than I did in the months before it came out because anticipation can be pretty poisonous.





I love that scene for everybody, but particularly for those two characters. It feels very pivotal in their relationship and primes you for all of the emotional distress later in the episode. Yeah, I think there are little suggestions there.

That's when I first got an inkling of what the end of Eddie's arc would be even if I didn't want to accept it. It's a testament to how wonderfully written he is. At the beginning of episode 8, Eddie really chooses to join the "party" in taking down Vecna. Where do you think his head is at that point in the story? It's a tale of redemption for Eddie, isn't it? t



Full look Dior

He feels enormously guilty about Chrissy's fate and responsible for it, which I don't think is fair, and then he's blamed for it. He's in such a state throughout most of the season because in addition to all that he's realizing there's this whole dimension underneath him. He talks a lot about running away. We get to a point in that episode where he says, "there will be no more retreating for Eddie the Banished." I think he's galvanized, impressed, and surprised by the acts of heroism he sees his peers do constantly. When Nancy and Robin jump into Lover's Lake to save Steve, they display enormous bravery. It's infectious. I think those kinds of people are infectious people. We see brave people and we want to be around them and emulate them. I think that's why he decides that he's going to be a big brave boy.

I would have loved for that to have worked out better for him. Regardless of how Season 4 ended, I think Eddie will remain a very important part of the overall story. I have plenty of theories that I won't make you listen to, but what they all boil down to is: I don't think Eddie is dead. I do not care if you tell me you haven't got the call. I will not believe he is dead until the credits for the series finale roll and you haven't shown up. So, in the name of hope and manifestation, if you could continue playing the character, what would you wish for him? Oh, it'd be lovely to see him graduate, wouldn't it? I'd love him to graduate and carry on with his life. I think it would be great if he got to go on tour with Corroded Coffin. Maybe meet a nice girl, dress in better clothes. Live a nice life.

Speaking of Corroded Coffin, it's not here yet, but I bought a Corroded Coffin t-shirt. Good for you! I love that.

I'm very excited for it to get here. I am a big fan of subtle merch that if you don't know, you don't know. Yeah, that's classy merch.

As far as Eddie's alternate ending goes I think everybody else would have loved to see that, too. When Netflix announced spin-off shows were happening, my friend said "one show could be seasons 1-3 from Eddie's point of view. I don't care if he's just in class and playing D&D. I would watch it." You should pitch it.

I mean, Netflix is right down the street. If they would let me in the door, I would do it. You should!

While most of your recent work is in film, you've done theatre work in the past, including *Mosquitoes* with Olivia Coleman at London's The National Theatre. Is that something you'd like to do more of in the future? Absolutely. I think it's important to keep that muscle strong. It's scary. I think the older I get the more I'm scared by it. But I think that's a good thing. I had such a great time on that job with Olivia Coleman and Olivia Williams who was also in it and was brilliant. On top of that, it was directed by Rufus Norris who runs The National Theatre here in London. That was a real pinch-me moment in my career. I remember thinking "this is insane." Lucy Kirkwood wrote it and she is such a genius writer. I've always wanted to play at The National and I would love to go back, if they'll have me.

When you say "it scares you," in what way? You become more aware of what it is that you're actually doing. You're getting on a stage in front of loads of people. It's really easy to forget your lines. You could really easily look like an idiot. But that is the gig. If you zoom out and look at it, why are you doing this? Do you need people's attention this much?

[both laugh] But, it can be so fun as well. It's terrifying. I think after you open a show and press run is over, and you've gotten through a few weeks of doing it, it's fun. It's a completely different thing to screen acting. It's a lot about stamina. It's a very physical thing. I feel very old at the moment. I think it's because I've been playing a teenager and I see people's disappointment when they meet me.

Oh no. Don't say that! [chuckles]

I get it through. I actually work in meet & greets as well as write for 1883. I had one artist tell me that as much as people enjoy them, it can be hard because you can tell in an instant if someone is disappointed. I commend people who do them over and over again because I don't think I could. I did my first Comic Con recently. It was a very wild experience. It's going around that I was mistreated by the staff, which is totally not true. I want to clear that up. They were very amazing. They made me feel very safe and looked after. We just weren't prepared for the number of people that turned up. As I was saying earlier, it's extremely gratifying to see Eddie have this effect on people. I got a bit emotional as well, but it had nothing to do with the way I was treated.





Top Sandro
Trousers Valentino

I'm so glad. I wasn't going to ask about it, but I'm glad it wasn't what has been going around. That makes me feel a lot better. We started this part of the conversation talking about stage acting, because of what you were saying, would you say you like doing film more? The grass always tends to be greener on the other side. When you're doing theater, you wish you were doing telly or film and when you're doing a film you wish you were doing theater. You get different things from both of them. The instant reaction from the audience is very addictive and very thrilling. When you're doing it with lots of other people that you like, and think are good, it can feel very empowering. Especially if there's an important story. It's great. There's nothing really like it. But they pay you a Snickers bar every week and a bus fare. No, I'm joking. [chuckles] It's a lot of work for not very much money. But we don't do it for the money. It's great fun.

However, when you're eight weeks into a run, you've got another eight weeks to go, and you're saying the same thing over and over, you can start wishing you could just have a green tea in between takes and chat to your mates. But then, if you're waiting a long time between setups, you don't have much to do in the scene, and it's a bit slow, you can wish that you were backstage, hearing an audience walk in and get excited. It's amazing to be able to do both. I feel very grateful that I've been able to do both.

Of all the roles you've played, is there a performance you're proudest of? I think I'm the proudest of Eddie, really. I don't know if proud is the right word. I enjoyed my time on *Mosquitoes* a lot. I was very proud to be a part of that. I'm very proud to be a part of *Stranger Things*. I'm relieved that Eddie hasn't been laughed out of town. I'm English, so it's very hard to be proud of yourself. But I guess I'm proud of Eddie.

I think you deserve to be. Is there a particular type of role you've yet to take on, but would like to?

I get asked this and I never know what to say. I don't have a particular classic role that I'm desperate to get my teeth into. I try to look at it the way I've always looked at it. Whatever comes my way, I'll see what happens. You don't want to be passive, you have to be active about it. You have to be front-footed to get stuff done now. As an actor, I think working on something from the infancy of an idea is a really exciting prospect. There seems to be a lot of actors doing that now. However, there isn't a particular role I'm desperate to play. We'll see what happens. It's beyond my control.

I ask that question a lot. Your answer is my favorite brand of answer. You're not pigeonholing yourself and you won't get disappointed by going after one particular role. So, for not knowing how to answer the question, I think your answer is the correct one. I got it right [chuckles].

You did. You got it right [laughs]. Finally, to bring everything back to *Stranger Things*, if you could give Eddie one piece of advice what would it be? Get a haircut.

Oh, people would not agree with you.

I know! They love it. The wig is a whole different thing. What would I say to him? Maybe panic less? Panic less. Because it's going to - well, it's not going to be ok. I guess.

[laughs] I was going to say.

I think I would still say panic less.

Season 4 of Stranger Things is streaming now on Netflix.

Interview Sydney Bolen
Photography Pip
Styling Fabio Immediato
Grooming Liz Taw
Production Kelsey Barnes

