

1883

magazine

Dafne
Keen

wearing
SIMONE
ROCHA



▼

**IN STAR WARS: THE
ACOLYTE, DAFNE KEEN IS
TRULY A FORCE OF NATURE.**

DAFNE *Keen*

It's been five years since Dafne Keen last graced the cover of 1883 Magazine and to say a lot has changed for her since then would be a slight understatement. Following the success of playing Wolverine's daughter in Logan and wrapping up three seasons of the hit fantasy drama His Dark Materials, Keen now enters the Star Wars saga — something she describes as a full circle moment.

Keen, who wears Simone Rocha for her 1883 cover story, arrives at her photoshoot with such a pep in her step that it's unfathomable to think she just stepped off a red-eye flight from LA. She's been neck-deep in press for The Acolyte, both skirting around questions that might reveal spoilers and lighting up every time someone mentions the excitement around the series. Even with the lack of sleep, it's clear just how committed Keen is to her craft and the projects she so deftly curates as an actor. And with The Acolyte, she is playing the role of a lifetime.

PHOTOGRAPHER
CONNOR HARRIS
FASHION
DELANEY WILLIAMS

After growing up quite literally on-screen, Keen has found a counterpart in her character Jecki Lon, a Theelin-human hybrid who also was ushered into her destiny at a young age. It's a role of a lifetime for someone who was a fully fledged Star Wars fan at a young age and approaches Jecki with the same childlike curiosity and reverence. Although recent developments in the show sees Jecki come face-to-face with her fate, she's a character that Keen both cherishes and admires — and will take what she's learned from Jecki onto the next journey in whatever galaxy or franchise she decides to step into next.

1883 Magazine's Kelsey Barnes chats with Dafne Keen for her 1883 cover story about her role as Jecki Lon in Star Wars: The Acolyte, why Jecki mirrors her own coming-of-age story, her time filming in Canada for her next film, and more.

▼
6



Full Look: Ernesto Naranjo, Jewelry: YSSO

TRAFTON

I was doing some reading and so many people have said it's been cool to watch you grow up on-screen as Laura in Logan and in His Dark Materials. You've been acting for over a decade — is it strange to think about how you've grown up on-screen? Wow, I feel like that's such a hard question to answer. It's just honestly been so fun. For me, I think having the opportunity to explore what I've always wanted to do — which is acting — has been the biggest privilege that I've had so far. I've been able to do things I'm really passionate about. It's weird, though, when I watch things I did years ago because I always thought I was so grown up back then. When I did the second series of His Dark Materials, I thought I was so mature. Watching it back, I see now that I was such a baby. In five years, when I rewatch The Acolyte, I'll probably think the same thing. It's like watching my home videos.

Seeing them as your home movies is a great way to put it. Do you feel like you're aware of your own growth as an actor, or is it something that you recognize when you have a bit of perspective? Looking back for sure. When I was doing it [His Dark Materials] I felt mature, but growing up is realizing just how young I was then. I think we all had the experience in school of thinking you're so much more grown up with every school year you move up. I feel like I measure projects almost like I do with school years [laughs]. I always remember just how different my mindsets have been for each project. It's kind of crazy because I've had so many different views on how to approach the work.

While growing up, can you think of a specific fairytale or childhood movie that resonated with you as a kid that made you want to step into a career in make-believe? That's a really good question. I grew up on Hans Christian Andersen stories, they were always quite visual and a magical creepy world. Andersen's The Little Mermaid is so dark and tragic, but that's the kind of world that I liked to navigate when I was younger. I grew up around a lot of theatre — my parents are very artistic and they are theatre actors — so I saw the inside of a lot of rehearsal rooms and workshops. They'd take me to see great arthouse films and go to museums often which is quite an artistic palette to see as a kid. I was always taking in a lot of art as a kid and I think that's helped inform what I want to do as an actor. I think the more I grow up, the more I'm being given the opportunities to explore that and it's really fun.

We talked a little bit at the shoot about you being a big Star Wars fan — you watched it for the first time when you were 7 I believe. What character did you gravitate to back then? Oh, Luke.

Yes! I love Luke.

Yeah, I was obsessed with him as a kid. I used to pretend that I was a Jedi and I was obviously Luke's daughter. I actually met Mark Hamill later which was amazing. I was 12 and we were doing Logan press. As a kid, I feel like you watch films and you don't realize people aren't their characters. When I was doing Logan press, I had so many experiences of meeting all of these amazing actors who I honestly didn't know who they were, the only person who I recognized was Luke Skywalker. I was so terrified of saying hi to him. He came up to me and I now have a very sweet picture of us. He was so lovely, he congratulated me. I remember how huge that moment was to me and how massive it was that Luke Skywalker came and said hello to me. Now I think about it as a grown up and it's so sweet that he came and said hi to a little 12-year-old girl.

I love that you thought of him as Luke, it just shows how pure and imaginative you were! Oh yeah, that wasn't Mark Hamill to me! [Laughs]

It must've felt full circle for you, I can only imagine what it was like booking this role.

Leslye Headland, the showrunner, thought of you for the role, right? I auditioned and she didn't even tell me she thought of me for the role until after I had auditioned for it. I found this out during press!

I bet you were so stressed about it too! Right! I was panicking about it! I did a self-tape, and my best friend helped me prepare it. It was really fun. I remember thinking, "There's no fucking way I'm booking Star Wars but at least I can say I've auditioned for Star Wars." A week later, which is so quick for an audition because it can take months, they asked me to hop on a call with Leslye.



This is one of the last things you're doing for press, right? How is it looking back at this full circle moment for you? Yeah, it is. It's really weird, I was talking to a friend earlier today at breakfast and we were talking about how weird it is as a creative to have something be yours for so long. Then, when it comes out, it's no longer yours and now belongs to everyone. That show belongs to us. For me, it was a year. For Leslye, it was seven years. Amandla too. It's so weird to think about how we had such a private experience and now it's not anymore. I went onto the show when I was 17, I turned 18 while filming it. It felt like such a cathartic experience. It's so weird that now everyone gets to watch it. It's like our little secret — like everything that happened behind the cameras is our ownership.

What kind of research did you do to learn about Jecki and Theelins? We had a man on set named Pablo, who is a Star Wars expert. I asked him to explain everything: the biology, the groups, the planets, everything. He provided all the information, and we figured out what percentage of human Jecki was and what percentage of aliens she is. We determined she was 90% human and 10% alien because, according to Pablo—don't quote me on this, this is Pablo's words—pure aliens have hooves. Since she didn't have hooves, it meant she was more human than alien, with normal feet. I found that fact really interesting and kept it with me throughout the project. I had many conversations with Pablo and Leslye. It's typical at Lucasfilm to have a strong support system with knowledgeable people. I also watched every film and show featuring the alien species the character was based on, especially one of the background performers in the cantina scene, who was Leslye's favourite alien from her childhood. She wrote the character inspired by that alien, so I studied it closely. Through the makeup process, we also discovered more about the character.

Yeah, I wanted to ask about the makeup because I read that she was initially meant to be a bit harsher and more distant. But as soon as you put the makeup on, you felt a bit of a transformation. Can you talk about the thought process behind that and what it was like for you? Yeah, it was really weird because, as you said, when I read the script, she felt much more distant, rigid, and cold. But as soon as the makeup went on, she became much softer, more excited, and felt younger. I didn't realize how young she came across until I watched the episodes at the premiere. I looked like such a little baby, and that was 100% due to the makeup. When they took my eyebrows—I've always had very distinct, arched eyebrows—and painted me without them, it completely changed my face and how I expressed emotions. She became a much softer and more open character. It was interesting to see how young she felt physically. Especially when you put me next to Nick, JJ, and Charlie, I looked tiny. I felt small, which was something I hadn't thought about during prep. On the day of filming, I felt so small, except when I was doing scenes with Amandla, which was nice for me.

Oh, that's so nice. Touching on her curiosity, there's a scene where they find out she has a twin, and immediately Jecki is like, "Could that be the evil twin?" which I thought was quite perceptive and played into her curiosity and youth. Did those characteristics jump out at you when you first read the script? 100%. Jecki was always such an intelligent character to me. She's also a fierce defender of Osha, which speaks to how perceptive and sensitive she is. She immediately meets Osha and thinks she's not guilty, even though she follows protocols. I think she's a middle point between Sol and Yord. Yord is very by-the-book and grapples with his duties, while Sol is driven by humanity and force, refusing to put Osha in handcuffs and believing her. Jecki is naturally more yielding but has had to master that softness. Meeting Osha completely changes her. You can see her intuition in her observations. She's a very intuitive Jedi, unlike Yord, who is more calculated and probably failed the trials a few times. Jecki is intrinsically talented and force-sensitive. In the scene where Yord suggests a plan, Jecki quickly adapts with her own approach. I loved her because she is completely herself. She cares about Osha's safety and doesn't pay much attention to the status of those around her.

Dress WED Studio
Shoes Christian Louboutin
Jewelry YSSO

KODAK 31 12 11 10 9



That's probably how it felt when you were growing up around other actors, realizing you don't have to be like that. It's okay to just have fun and not be competitive, even if it's just competing with yourself. Exactly. That was very much the experience on this set. It was lovely working with someone like Amandla because we had this huge unspoken bond. We understood each other and saw each other in a way that forms you as a person when you work from such a young age. It was great to be on set with someone who got that and felt the same way. We decided not to feed into the weird dynamic actors sometimes have and we wanted to break that. Instead, we became really good friends, and that's what we are.

Exactly, exactly. I know we talked a little at the shoot about their relationship, which I know we can't really dive into too much in this interview, but I do want to ask: can you describe Jecki's growth over the season? Most of Jecki's growth happens through Osha. Meeting someone as fascinating, charismatic, and cool as Osha, who was very similar to her but left the life Jecki is fully immersed in, opens her eyes to a world of possibilities. It shows her that it's okay to leave and live a different life. There's also the confusion of sharing a Master with another Padawan suddenly. It's such a special bond [Master and Padawan], and to share it out of the blue is weird and confusing. Seeing how her master is maybe more similar to Osha than to Jecki is also confusing for her. She's trying to figure it all out. Osha is definitely the driving force behind her growth, and you can see it in little scenes, like when they're in the cockpit together and

Jecki is trying to figure things out.

I love that moment when Osha says, "Just do this," and Jecki says, "Are you a pilot?" and she's like, "No, I'm not." Those quiet moments must have been really nice, showing that growth. I wanted to ask: when you look back, what have you learned from playing this role and your time on set? I learned so much during those eight months. I feel like I grew a lot. It made me much gentler. I was coming from a darker period in my life and I was in a harsher mental state, feeling more negative feelings towards the world. The process [being in the show] and meeting these wonderful people... I felt much more open to the world.

So many people on that job loved it so purely and deeply, and were so excited by what we're doing. It was really wonderful because you don't always get that in this industry. I'd just come from an emotionally intense job for years that, when you're that age, can be confusing and relationships on-set can be confusing. But this experience was different. I made great friends among the cast and crew. I met amazing people like Charlie, Amandla, and Leslye. I'm grateful to have seen them work and learned from them. Amandla, in particular, is not just an amazing actor but also a kind, sweet, profound, and intelligent person. Working with her was a really beautiful experience. As a child actor myself, it was inspiring to see how she navigates her life after being a child actor.



Watching Amandla navigate her career and handle it with so much grace is really admirable. She's handled so much and has always found a way to rise above it. Yeah, she's the strongest, wisest, and most talented person I know. She's dealt with a lot in the most graceful and true-to-herself way. That's so rare in this industry, where many people lose themselves. Amandla has been in major Hollywood projects and has remained true to herself. It's admirable because this industry tries to take your essence from you, but they haven't managed that with her. It's a beautiful thing to see.



Jacket + Skirt **Chet Lo**
Shoes **Christian Louboutin**
Jewelry **YSSO**

I always feel like

projects enter an

actor's life at the right

time and I think this

fits into that for you.

That is so beautiful. I

feel the same way.

You do have another movie in the works called **Whistle** which is a horror film, a bit of a genre shift for you. I know we can't

talk too much about it, but you filmed it in Toronto and that's where I'm from so I'd love to hear what you thought of the city.

Amazing! I was there for three or four months. I loved it. We went out a lot as a cast, we went to Toy Box once and we had to leave

because a fight broke out! [Laughs] **Sounds like a normal night there!** [Laughs]

It was a really fun shoot. We had

amazing actors and crew all from

Canada and they are all so

talented. Everyone was just so nice.

We have a really cool director and

it's so different from what I've done

before. I thought, "Fuck it, let me do

a fun horror." I got there and was

around an amazing cool young

cast who are now good friends of

mine. I actually went travelling

with two of the girls from it. We

went to Hamilton to shoot, too.

This is so funny because my

family is very close to

Hamilton, so the thought of

you just hanging out in

Hamilton is hilarious to me.

Yes! I love Hamilton. I met

someone recently who said

they were shooting something

there and I said, "Did you go to

the antique mall?!"

This is amazing that you even know it exists! Oh my god. It is such a vibe.

What was the casting process like for this one? I got sent the script when I was shooting something else and I didn't even have time to read it. I've been saying no to horror films because I was getting them offered to me so often, almost like typecasting me as the little creepy girl. It was easier to just say no to all of them. I systematically said no to a lot of horror, and then SAG strike came around and the director insisted and I finally had time to read it. I thought it was sick and I wanted to be a part of it.

I don't watch horror often, but the fact you filmed it in Hamilton will make me watch it. You'll recognize parts for sure. Shout out to the bakery that makes the pecan pies across the street. When I bought my first one, I was eating that pie for about three weeks.

I love this so much, Dafne. Lastly, what are you hoping the next year brings you? More pecan pies? Definitely more pecan pies and visits to the Hamilton Antique Mall! [Laughs] That's such a good question. I hope that the jobs that come my way this year are as fulfilling emotionally and professionally as the ones I had last year.

A beautiful way to end it, thank you so much Dafne. Next time I go to the Hamilton Antique Mall, I'll think of you. Yes! And you better have a slice of pie.

The Acolyte is streaming globally now on Disney+

Interview **Kelsey Barnes**
Photographer **Connor Harris**
Stylist **Delaney Williams**
Makeup **Eli Wakamatsu**
at **Stella Creative Artists**
using **Weleda Skincare**
Hair **Sandra Hahnel**
using **Living Proof** and **ghd**
Stylist Assistants **Katie Somavia**
and **Sabina Wacławek**
Production Assistant **Izzy Dimauro**
Location **Treehouse Hotel London**

4
8