

## Interview: Rebecca Ferguson of 'Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation'

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CHICAGO – When it comes to keeping up with the boys, actress Rebecca Ferguson is equal to any task in the upcoming “Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation.” She portrays Ilsa, an undercover spy who could be going rogue, and treats the audience to her signature leg clamp, motorcycle skills and action-based heroism.

Rebecca Ferguson is equal to all these characteristics, in her approach to career and performance. Born and raised in Sweden, she attended an arts high school in Stockholm, where she studied music. She broke into show business with a Swedish soap opera “Nya tider,” which gained her huge popularity in her native country. After more television roles, she was cast in the 2013 BBC miniseries, “The White Queen.” Her portrayal of the 15th century Queen Elizabeth garnered her a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress in a Miniseries. She made her American film debut opposite Dwayne Johnson in “Hercules” (2014), and landed the role of the virtuous spy Ilsa in the fifth film of the “Mission: Impossible” series.



Rebecca Ferguson and Tom Cruise in 'Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation'

*Photo credit: Paramount Pictures*

HollywoodChicago.com spoke at length to Rebecca Ferguson, as she made a promotional stop in Chicago to promote “Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation.”

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This was a more physically demanding role than your previous acting experiences. What helped you best in preparing for that type of performance?

**Rebecca Ferguson:** Once I got the part, and arrived in London, a car brought me right to the gym. [laughs] The schedule became six hours of training a day, six days a week, but it was part of my working day. For example, Pilates for a couple hours, then lunch, then a cardio workout

and then two hours of action choreography. Each type of film sequence would have its own workout procedure.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What is the best piece of acting advice you'd ever received, and how do you apply it to your role of Ilsa in 'Mission Impossible?'

**Ferguson:** While I can't hear anyone saying something specific, what I do is study the actors around me. I always apply behaviors, manners and thoughts in my creation, and how the others do that is what I observe as well. Tom Cruise for example, created an ambiance that was so welcoming that it was just an intoxicating environment to work in. I sat and listened, and did my stuff.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How much easier is it to perform a script that director Christopher McQuarrie also wrote? Did it allow for easier on-set adjustments?

**Ferguson:** I guess it does because there is always a fluidity in the creative aspect, with thought processes and changes, and we did change quite a bit while we were proceeding. There were shifts the we made, for example, that had to be adjusted in other scenes down the line – I was in the process and I could see that process.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Do you think it would be a different world if we lived in the reality that is presented in 'Mission: Impossible,' or would it present some different challenges?

**Ferguson:** [Laughs] Don't we live in the world already? What I think we were trying to create was a world undercover, even though I don't can speak to the specifics about secret agencies. We were just trying to create as real a world as we could in that context, with thought processes and emotions, and have the characters make the quick decisions that kept the fluidity in motion for the story. It's life, isn't it? Except the Mission movies has a more explosive dynamic and a more incredible movement.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What are the biggest and most distinct differences between the Swedish film and TV industry, and something huge and more American influenced like 'Mission: Impossible'?

**Ferguson:** Basically from a financial aspect, which we can't get away from, there is the possibility of creating something grand. We are able to travel the world for this film, and shoot fantastic motorcycle sequences in Morocco, or jump off the rooftop of the Vienna Opera House, because we can. This just opens up phenomenal possibilities, which is not to say it is better or worse, but in smaller budgeted films it's about finding creativity on another level – and we also sought that for this film.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Your student background is in music, according to your bio. How does the study of that particular art make you a better actor or performer overall?

**Ferguson:** I don't particularly think that study influenced my acting. My life is in my backpack, and the experiences I've had – and being open to them – creates the dynamic that allows me to work on my characters. I'm still learning how to do that, which is part of the reason I closely observe fellow actors. I didn't go to drama school, so I'm learning as I go, and I learn quite a bit just through instinct.



Rebecca Ferguson as Elizabeth, 'The White Queen'

Photo credit: BBC

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Your role as Elizabeth in 'The White Queen' is probably your most famous. What did you learn about the humanity of people brought into a circumstance that forces them into royal leadership?



**Ferguson:** We talked quite a bit about how we haven’t really come that far, that we’re still battling the same things we battled back in that day. The stakes were higher back then for those born into a royal life – a shift of the coin and your whole family could be killed.

Elizabeth was a commoner, and was brought into a life where she wasn’t loved or wanted by anyone else but the king. It empowered her with a voice in the court, which was fascinating, she just wasn’t sitting around sewing. She was into plotting and scheming, and being the brains behind the strong arms.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In your observation, what advantages does growing up in Sweden have over your mother’s native England or what you’ve observed about the American Culture?

**Ferguson:** I don’t have much to say about American culture, I haven’t traveled that much around the country. The more we travel, read, listen and see people, the better perspective we gain, and the world would be a better place if everyone had the time to do so.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since you are fully embraced by the entertainment industry, what has been the most unexpected life lesson in your adventure in being an actress as you’ve experienced it so far?

**Ferguson:** Understanding time and how to use it. I’m still young, but this business moves so fast, and I am grateful for the progress I’ve made in it. But time away from family keeps moving ever so quickly, and I don’t want to miss that much of it – I’m trying to embrace it in every which way, and trying to connect back to home as much as possible.

*“Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation” opens everywhere on July 31st, in regular and IMAX screenings. See local listings for IMAX theaters and show times. Featuring Rebecca Ferguson, Tom Cruise, Simon Pegg, Jeremy Renner, Ving Rhames and Alec Baldwin. Screenplay written and directed by Christopher McQuarrie. Rated “PG-13”*



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