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AUGUST 2014 | \$5.95



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Toni Collette on the latest big screen endeavor that showcases her sass and no-nonsense style perfectly

Lucky Star

The hot word on everyone's lips? GIFF—which stands for the Greenwich International Film Festival. As one of many kickoff events leading up to the festival, which will take place in Greenwich in June 2015, GIFF hosted a screening of *Lucky Them* at the Avon Theatre, written and produced by GIFF board member Emily Wachtel. As luck would have it, we were able to catch up with the film's star, the inimitable Aussie actress Toni Collette. Grab some popcorn and read on, because Toni rocked this film ... and is on a serious roll. —*Riann Smith*

GM: What was your experience like working with the personalities behind *Lucky Them*?

I loved the script and had an immediate sense of trust with our director, Megan Griffiths, who had a wonderful understanding of my character's journey as well as the Seattle music scene. Our producer and screenwriter, Emily Wachtel, was telling a semiautobiographical story, but there wasn't a noose around my neck to portray her or be her. It was very freeing. The film had a small budget and the cast and crew put

their hearts and souls into it. It reminded me of why I started making films in the first place.

GM: Is your costar, Thomas Haden Church, really that funny in real life?

Yes! In a lot of ways he's very similar to his character. There's just nobody like him. When he talks, he kind of shouts, which can be incredibly funny. He loved to go "off road" with the script and do these incredible improvisations. Every day, the man made me laugh until I almost peed my pants.

GM: Tell us about the mysterious Johnny Depp, who plays your long-lost love interest.

He is very shy and very sweet. I think for any actor to come on set where everyone else has built up a relationship over the past few weeks can be intimidating, but he didn't seem affected by it at all. My character spends the entire movie looking for this guy and there is a lot of history in their relationship. In that moment when she reacts to seeing him, he was just so completely connected and made it feel so real.

GM: If there was a musician you had to follow like your character, Ellie Klug, who would it be?

Tom Waits and Neil Young. They've been creating for decades and will continue to create. I think they're not just incredible musicians but incredible human beings, and I wouldn't mind having a beer with them. I don't even drink beer!

GM: You're starring in Broadway's *The Realistic Joneses*—six nights and eight shows a week. How do you balance work and family?

There's no formula ... I wish I had a formula! It's one foot in front of the other. The thing is, I think wherever you are, just be present, because that way at least you're giving 100 percent to whichever moment you're in.

GM: Pretend you had a day to yourself here in Connecticut. How would you spend it?

I'd roll around in the grass and take a swim! I'm based in Sydney but living in New York City right now, and I find myself fantasizing about nature. [New York] is one of the most exciting cities in the world, but I find it very extreme, which can be overwhelming. I love the ocean in Sydney. There's nothing better than floating in the water and looking up at the sky.

GM: Why was it important for you to support the Greenwich International Film Festival?

I think human beings need to have life reflected for them in order to understand ourselves. To celebrate the beginning of this festival surrounded by this incredible group of women is f-ing awesome. —*Riann Smith*
Visit greenwichfilm.org for updates on upcoming GIFF events.