

CUMBERBATCH, from page 8

there be romance? No, no, no – romance is a foreign concept to him. There might be something in the arena of proximity. But there is no romance.

A.L.: *How do you keep him fresh?*

B.C.: That is one of the biggest challenges. We throw him into these situations in the 21st century and see how he copes, which is always amusing or revealing. But I think it is even more interesting to understand how he came to be like this, in the 21st century.

A.L.: *How much of a thrill is it to finally reveal how he survived?*

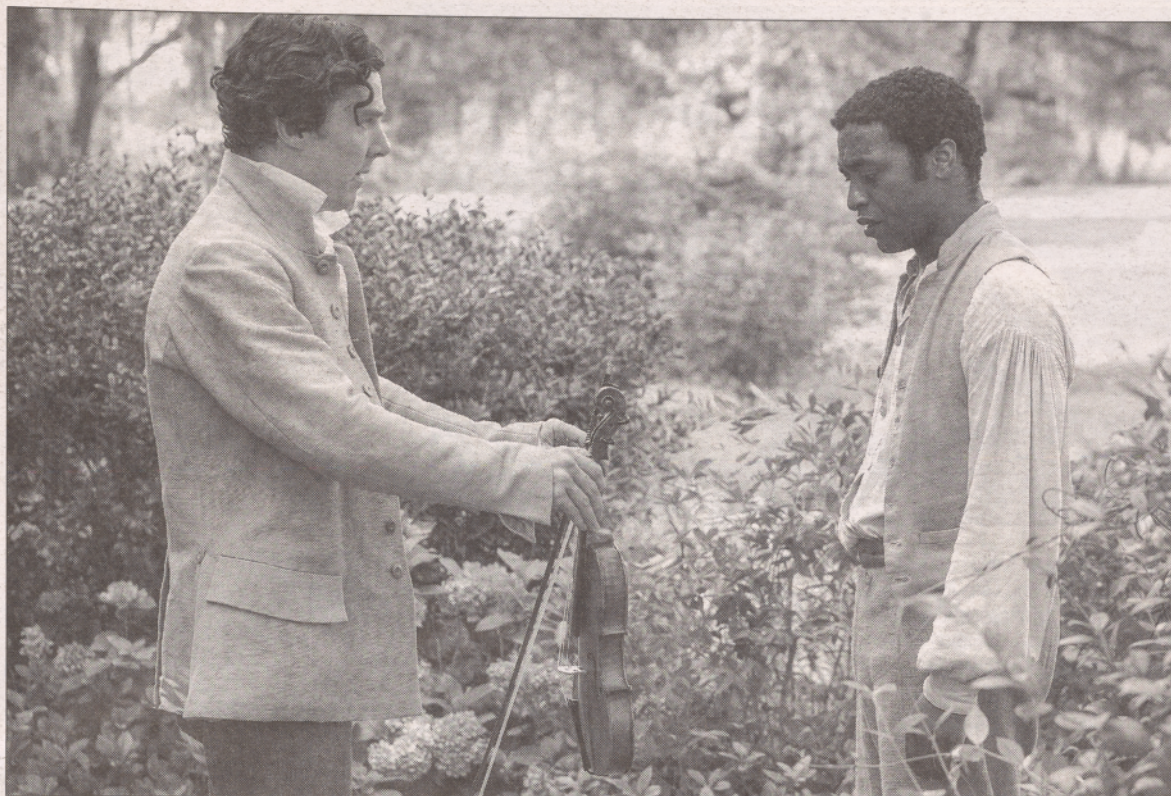
B.C.: Despite what it might look like, being bungeed is a lot of fun, falling onto an airbag is a lot of fun. People have their own theories, so I'm sure they will be going: "That's good, that's bad, that's disappointing, that's amazing." If I was on the receiving end, watching it, I would be really excited to find out what was going on. But as the people presenting it, it is different. I feel we have done a very interesting thing with it. Do I enjoy the cat-and-mouse element of it? It just happens without me, so it is not something I really take part in, to be honest. The only thing I am protective of is not wanting it to be spoiled for people who want to enjoy it on a Sunday night with their families. But it is great that we have such an ardent fanship, and that is testament to us doing something right.

A.L.: *So you've got, what, five big movies out at the end of 2013 and early this year...*

B.C.: [A rare pause] What was the fifth one? The Hobbit? Oh yeah! No, I'm joking forgetting about The Hobbit. Should I be worried about over-exposure? No, here is all the work I've been doing, I guess. I had a really busy year last year and the beginning of this year, and all of them are coming home to roost at about the same time, which is extraordinary. With Star Trek in the summer, then The Fifth Estate – which I was thrilled with, very excited. When I saw it in the States, it was terrifying. I cannot watch myself in something for the first time, especially something so removed from me, because everything about him is different. But I was thrilled. Bill [Condon, the director] made a beautiful film. It is incredibly balanced and intriguing, and what the film should do is ignite the debate. That is what should happen.

A.L.: *Your costar, Peter Capaldi – Alan Rusbridger to your Julian Assange – has a big new role.*

B.C.: Oh yes, that's great news. I'm very excited to see him in Doctor Who. He is a class act, Peter, and a great actor.



Cumberbatch, left, and Chiwetel Ejiofor in a scene from "12 Years a Slave." The film, by director Steve McQueen, is being hailed a masterpiece and a certain Oscar heavyweight.

A.L.: *Are you using your profile to stir debate on issues that matter to you (recently Cumberbatch held up cards carrying slogans dealing with issues of privacy and governmental snooping when he knew he'd be papped)*

B.C.: I know how lucky I am to be paid to be in a position to have a voice, do my work and also just the fact that it's really good fun. You owe society a little bit for that – your fans for giving you a good life, but also yourself, just to pay back. I feel very strongly about the little work I do when I have the time. I try to be principled. Of course there is a part of me (that is) a bit of a do-gooder – keeping the moral slate cleaner. But it is really enjoyable and I get a kick from it. It is not a sense of duty, it actually makes me feel good to do things for other people, where it can make a difference to talk to people who wouldn't normally have access to you, the kind of world you live in or the work you do.

A.L.: *Does your background come into play?*

B.C.: I have always been very grateful for the opportunities I have, because I wasn't born into them. My mum and dad worked really hard to afford them. Mum made commercial choices – and dad as well – to

keep me in school uniforms and keep the fees paid. I was like a walking mortgage! I was a very expensive child because of the way they tried to educate me. That was completely off their own bat. Dad had a pretty nasty experience at public school and was ready to pull me out at any moment if I didn't enjoy myself. I didn't have a great time – I had a mixed time. I really enjoyed some aspects, but I was far happier at the first school I went to. So I was of that world, but not because I was born into it. Not that that gives me any right to talk about how the other half live, or any other half – but it means, I guess, that I have a perspective on it. I'm not just what the label makes me look like, having been to a public school.

A.L.: *"12 Years a Slave" is hotly tipped for Oscar glory. And what a great cast...*

B.C.: Working with Steve McQueen and a fantastic cast was so special. I have scenes with Michael Fassbender and Chiwetel Ejiofor, who is brilliant, and Michael Kenneth Williams from The Wire. I'm still trying to really get into The Wire – my box-sets were in storage for a while when my flat was being redecorated, but I loved the first season.

A.L.: *Does making movies change the way you've perceived, or the way you perceive*

yourself?

B.C.: What, now I'm a movie star? No, I'm joking. I want to be known as an actor – not as a film star, or theatre actor, or television actor, or Sherlock, or for just one role. I want to be known as an actor and do a bit of everything. You don't have time to sit on a deckchair and sip on a cocktail between takes when you are making a film. There is this idea that filming movies is luxurious whereas television is all work and nothing else. They are both pretty demanding.

A.L.: *After all this book learning, could you imagine a future as a writer?*

B.C.: Writing? Oh God no. Well, maybe in the future some time, but not at the moment. I would prefer to direct than write. Behind the camera is where my future might be, I think. I would love to oversee a project from conception to completion. I would love to go on that full journey, because that is so much more than the actor gets – things stay in development for years, let alone the production and then the post-production, which goes on for at least as long as the production. I think that would be incredible.

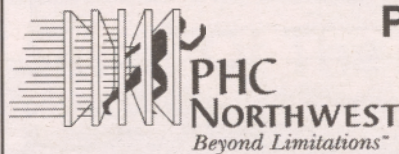
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