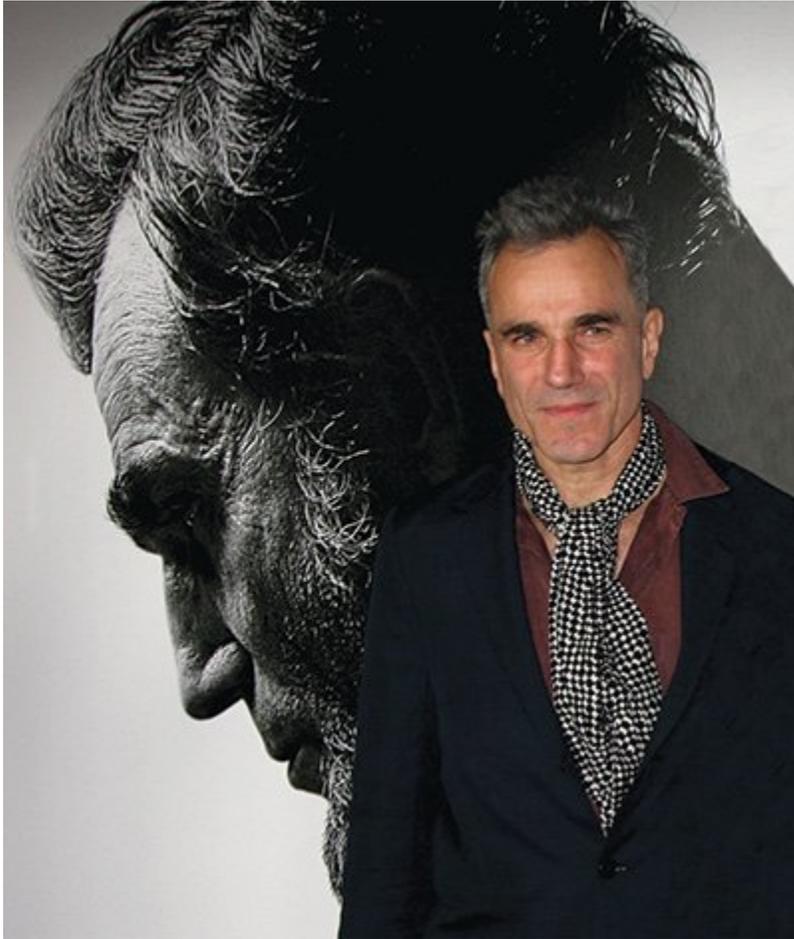


Honest Dan

Daniel Day-Lewis at home in Roxbury

ELIZABETH MAKER



DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

On a damp day in December, Daniel Day-Lewis rumbled into the parking lot of the rustic Bantam Cinema on his sleek, white-and-orange KTM motorcycle, strode inside, stripped off his biker jacket, and sat for a question-and-answer session with about 90 lucky people who had just watched his performance in *Lincoln*. In the coming days, Day-Lewis will visit a very different theater, on the opposite side of the country, with very different transportation and attire, when the two-time Oscar-winning actor glides up in a limo, wearing a tux, to the Dolby Theatre in L.A. for the 85th Academy Awards on February 24.

Day-Lewis lives part-time in Roxbury with his wife, Rebecca Miller, and their sons, Ronan, 14, and Cashel, 10, and his son from a previous relationship, Gabriel, 17. He visited his favorite cinema in nearby Bantam, housed in an old red barn with no marquee, at the request of its owner, Sidney Koch.

"There's a real warmth and intimacy here that's rare these days," says Day-Lewis of the cinema, which opened in 1927 and is Connecticut's oldest continuously operated theater, beloved not only for its eclectic films but also the revolving art that hangs in the lobby, the organic snacks, and real butter on popcorn. "It's not surprising that Daniel would do this," says actress Mia Farrow, a friend who lives in neighboring Bridgewater. "He's one of the most down-to-earth, lovely people you could know. There's a mystery to him, but peel away the layers: he's the man you wish your son will be; your daughter will marry; the role model for the best father, brother, friend. There's no more sensitive or gentle man."

"Okay, fire away," Day-Lewis tells the audience, congenially welcoming questions and conversation about his latest film role—one that has people buzzing about a probable third Oscar for the actor.

One person asks, "It's the trust thing, we trust in the actor. At what point do you trust that you can do it?"

Day-Lewis answers, "I felt the vulnerability of Lincoln that you don't see in public figures these days. Perhaps that was a key to some of his finest achievements as President, most particularly his passing the Thirteenth Amendment. His compassion and empathy for other human beings was so developed."

The chiseled-cheeked, salt-and-pepper-haired actor sits on a stool, wearing a scarf and sky-blue T-shirt that reveals muscular, heavily tattooed arms. Still, his tall stature and long, slender frame bears a striking resemblance to Lincoln's.

When Steven Spielberg asked him in 2003 to play the role of Lincoln, "I certainly didn't feel I was the right person for it," says Day-Lewis. "It was seven years later that something in me changed." He was intrigued, he says, by a revised script that portrayed the last four months of Lincoln's life, when the President convinced Congress to abolish slavery.

"My biggest concern was never being able to set foot in this country again," had his portrayal been a flop, he admits. "How do you present that back to people who love Lincoln without even knowing him? Someone who's revered perhaps as the greatest President this country has ever known? How do you presume to think you can present him in a way that's going to enrich an understanding of that man's life?"

How did Day-Lewis, 55, with his English-accented bass voice, adopt and make convincing the folksy, higher-pitched, American voice of Abraham Lincoln? "There was a lot of reading that had to be done, and I'm a really slow reader, so luckily we had time for that," Day-Lewis says of the more than hundred books he read on Lincoln. "The clues are there, the early life he spent in Kentucky, then Indiana and Illinois. There are many suggestions that he spoke in a higher register. Luckily for me, there are no recordings, so no one can say categorically that's not what he sounded like."

Day-Lewis's voice and entire persona are so vastly different in each of his movies, one can barely detect that it's the same actor. His films include *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Age of Innocence*, *There Will Be Blood*, *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (which his wife, daughter of renowned playwright Arthur Miller, wrote and directed), *The Crucible*, *Gangs of New York*, and *My Left Foot*, the latter two for which he won Best Actor Oscars.

He immerses himself so fully in the role that he becomes the character even when he's off set. For *Last of the Mohicans*, he taught himself how to trap and skin animals. For *My Left Foot*, about an artist with cerebral palsy, he played records on a turntable with his foot. For *Lincoln*, he lumbered around with the stiff gait of the 16th President, and even wore a square-ish black hat around town.

"The last time I saw Daniel was at La Piccolina in New Milford, which is one of his favorite restaurants," says Ellen McCourt, widow of the late Frank McCourt and neighbor of Day-Lewis. "He was sporting a beard and a hat, looking sort of Lincoln-esque. But he was there with Rebecca and their sons; he was very much in the role of husband and father." ("He always gets the fennel and orange salad," says La Piccolina waiter Andres Monroy. "And he loves the pappardelle with lamb.")

Day-Lewis and Miller live in her late father's home. Arthur Miller, who wrote *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*, bought the property with his former wife, Marilyn Monroe, in 1958, and planted 6,000 pine trees on its 350 acres. "It's

paradise, really,” Day-Lewis says. When the family is not in Ireland, which is about half of the year, Day-Lewis relishes his time in Roxbury, riding his motorcycle and doing carpentry in the workshop created by his father-in-law.

He also loves to play guitar and spend time with his sons, according to Roxbury postal officer Rose Krantz. “He loves his family, I can tell you that,” she says. “He comes to get his mail, and sometimes he sits out in the parking lot in his antique-looking, silvery-blue car and plays his guitar. His sons sit there with him, or they run around. Everyone’s laughing.”

Another Tophet Road neighbor, Marc Olivieri, who is a director of the Roxbury Land Trust, says, “Daniel and Rebecca have been very generous to the Roxbury Land Trust. Preserving the natural beauty of this area is very important to them.” Olivieri’s son, John, gives Day-Lewis’s son, Ronan, painting lessons. “Ronan is really a fine artist,” Olivieri says. “It must run in the family,” adding that Miller is an accomplished painter and sculptor. “That’s how I met Rebecca,” says Farrow. “When she was in her twenties, in the 1980s, she had these massive, brilliant paintings, and she was storing them at my friend’s house. I mean, major talent. It was breathtaking.”

The young Miller then became Farrow’s part-time nanny. “I asked her to care for my daughter Malone”—formerly Dylan Farrow but changed her name—“while I was making the film *Radio Days* in 1985. She would come down and watch the filming. She was so good with Malone, and she was fascinated by the film. She became this mermaid-like, stunning beauty—as brilliant as she was beautiful.” Farrow says her friend, acclaimed novelist Philip Roth, who lives in Cornwall, was smitten when he met Miller. “Philip said he could hardly look at her, she was so beautiful.”

Farrow met Day-Lewis in the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland, where she used to own a cottage near what is now Day-Lewis and Miller’s other home, a rural, 18th-century estate. “I met Daniel through a friend at an Irish pub when I was out having a beer with friends, around 1992,” Farrow says. She recalls one day when she was with her children, “and Daniel’s eyes filled with tears because he missed his son, Gabriel. That separation was deeply, deeply wrenching for him. I knew what a profoundly important thing it was for him to be a father.” Adds Farrow, “When I found out that Rebecca was engaged to Daniel, I thought, ‘Perfect! How perfect!’ I got an actual rush of sheer joy.”

Day-Lewis and Miller, 50, an artist, screenwriter, actress, and director, met on the set of *The Crucible*. The couple married in 1996.

Rose Styron, widow of the late Pulitzer Prize–winning novelist William Styron, was a close friend with Arthur Miller and his late wife, photographer Inge Morath. “The absolute highlight of Arthur’s life was his grandchildren,” Styron says. She remembers when Rebecca and Daniel brought their baby, Ronan, to his grandparents’ house. “Arthur was so happy to have a grandson, he was down on the floor, cooing and playing,” Styron recalls. “Then Cashel came along, and he was over the moon.”

Day-Lewis and Miller have become avid tennis players, Styron says, and sometimes play at the home of Dustin Hoffman, who also lives part-time in Roxbury. They used to play often on the Styron’s court before the property was sold last year.

After the Q&A session, Day-Lewis invited a few admirers to check out his beloved bike. “It’s a 990 Adventure,” he says. “I had a KTM Superbike before this, but I had to trade it in because I was getting too many speeding tickets. The Litchfield Hills are a bit like the Wicklow Mountains. They just beckon you to fly through them.”

Farrow says she remembers being surprised when she saw Day-Lewis racing through the rural roads of Ireland. “Here I thought he was this subdued, gentle, shy guy, but he would ride his motorcycle like a madman. So there’s another side to Daniel. He’s a man of many capacities, many thoughts, many hues.”

His role as Lincoln is the most impressive she’s seen. “He is brilliant and incomparable. Hands down, he’ll win the Oscar. How could he not?” n