

**She has the classic good looks and beautiful voice that most women dream of and men wax lyrical about. Her enthusiasm for life and marvellous sense of humour combine with a wealth of creative acting ability. No one could dispute the fact that she is a very Successful Single. She is:**

# Joanna Lumley

## **When did you start your acting career?**

You know, I really felt like entertaining people and especially making them laugh, from about the age of seven when I was in my first school play. From that moment on I knew what I wanted to do.

## **Did you attend a drama school?**

Well, I tried. My audition piece for RADA was, looking back on it, absolutely awful! A badly chosen piece; a speech from Joan of Arc. I'd hardly started when I was turned down flat. I wanted to act very much but even so lacked a really competitive spirit. Even now auditions are like death to me. It makes me sweat just to think about them.

## **How, then, did you get your first break?**

Much later. I had to make some money and so I decided on modelling. The first six months were awful — dragging round photographers and agencies clutching a less than perfect portfolio. Eventually the work started coming in. I persevered. Once I had started, there was more work than I could manage. I worked hard at modelling for three years, but my love was still acting. I used to watch avidly the Royal Shakespeare Company and really felt that one day it would be me on that stage!

My lucky break was when I met Richard Johnson at a party. He was terribly sophisticated and very kind. At the time, casting was on for a small part in a film called 'Some Girls Do'. It was a one liner and I was terribly excited. I found it surprisingly hard to concentrate on set and it took several films until I had mastered it.

## **Are you very affected by other people's opinion of your work?**

Of course. This is a very insecure profession. So much depends on the response that you receive as a performer. Appreciation is wonderful, especially from a live audience. It can be such an inspiration. I try not to be upset by bad comments. Some one can learn from, others are just destructive. One mustn't become despondent.

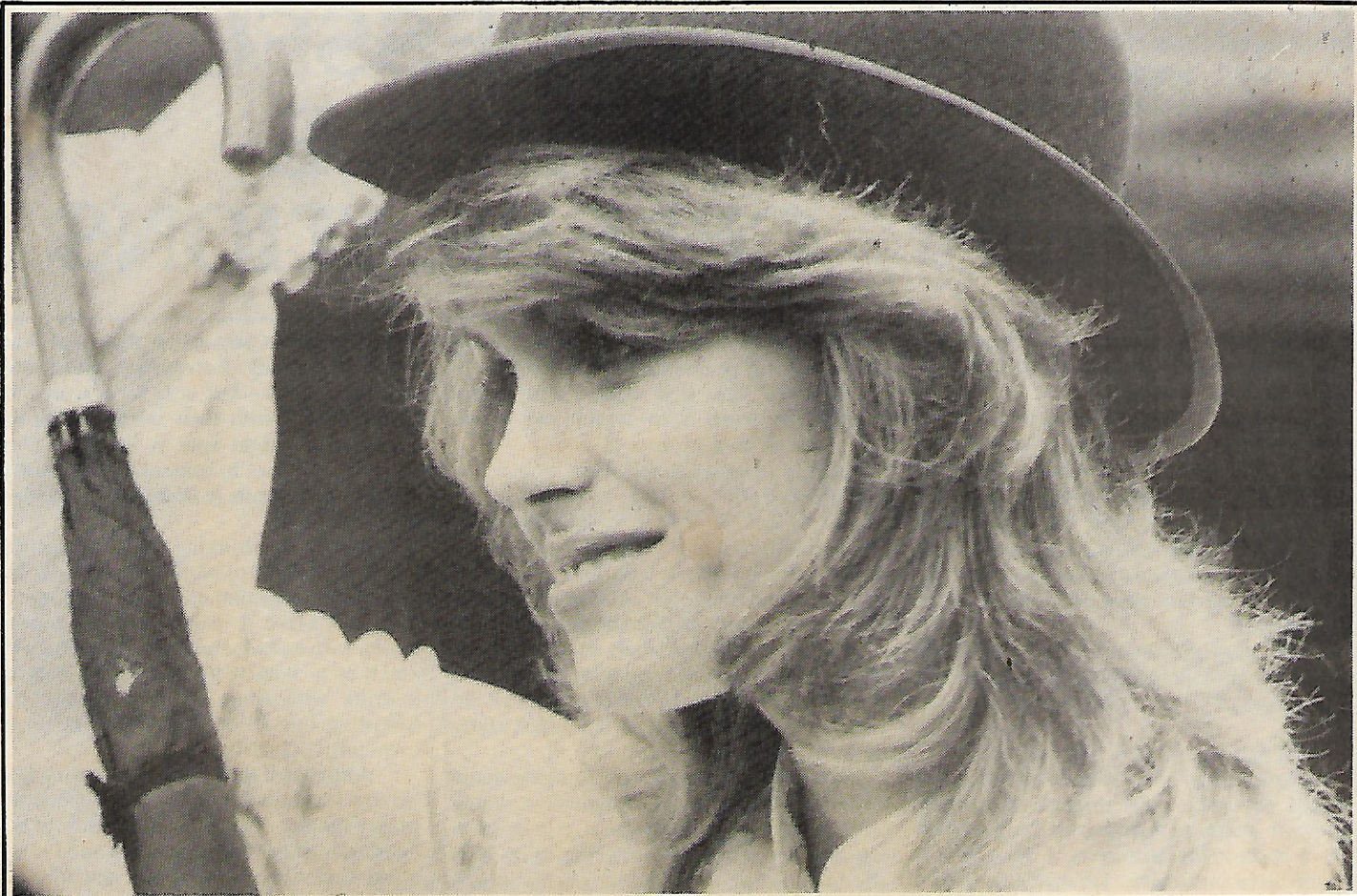
## **You mentioned live audiences. Do you enjoy theatre work?**

Oh yes! I spent ten months with Brian Rix in 'Don't Just Lie There, Say Something' which was great fun and very satisfying. My time spent working with John Osborne in Greenwich and Canterbury and playing the part of Rosalind in 'As You Like It' were very instructive and I enjoyed working with everyone and felt very stretched at the end of it. I would like to do more. It would please me to be able to find a part that would enable me to use different accents with a meaty dialogue but it's a matter of finding the right script.

## **Which of your many parts has been the most satisfying?**

No hesitation. Purdie in the New Avengers. I had three years to get into the part and really felt that I added a lot to the character. Being able to spend time and thought on a character is absolutely wonderful, one can expand the possibilities so. I'm very pleased with the popularity of Sapphire and Steel as it is well written and thought provoking for the viewers. It gives me a chance to play many different parts and yet basically within the one character, a bit like a split personality.





**Are there any parts that you would particularly like to play?**

Oh, I suppose that I still have no really concrete ambitions. I want to enjoy what I'm doing, and the people I'm doing it with. I would love to do a super Ibsen play at the National Theatre, or a season at the Royal Shakespeare, but I don't think I'm what they're looking for.

**Did it ever occur to you that you could have done better at another profession?**

Not really. I never seriously considered anything else, although at one time I considered myself something of an artist and even had work exhibited in the Children's Royal Academy. I have a strong intellectual need. I adore discussing things into the small hours, and read avidly when I have the opportunity.

**What do you feel have been the turning points in your life so far?**

Coming to live in England from the Far East as a child. It was so different, so refreshing.

Then, I think, the opportunities that modelling gave me. I love to travel and then I was actually paid to do it. It opened my mind and gave me a good perspective.

Obviously landing my first part as an actress was a special turning point, I felt that I was on the right path at last.

My fourth and, in a way, most important turning point, was becoming a mother. I had my baby at 21. Until that point I had been fairly selfish in my way of life but having another life depending on me changed my attitudes to many things. I found it very satisfying and worthwhile. Even now, if I am feeling low my child always brings a smile. He is adorable.

**What sort of people do you most admire?**

I'm not going to name actors. Of course there are those whose talents I admire and respect but the thing that I most admire in others is the great gift of giving that some have shown. Mother Theresa, Edith Cavell, Joyce Pearce. Those who have fought and suffered in an almost superhuman way. Rudolph Hess fascinates me. What does he feel in his aloneness? Has he given up all hope? Does he feel he's going mad?

**Do you have any political or religious feelings?**

I'm non party. I believe that freedom is essential. I'm always willing to do anything I can to help stop suffering and cruelty.

Religion? I have a basic belief, praying for strength works for me. Perhaps it's luck, but I mostly feel there's something there.

**Do you ever feel lonely?**

On the whole, no. I keep very busy and have a wonderful, loving family and lots of friends. I receive lots of letters from people aged six to sixty. I really appreciate it. I find it easy to make friends, particularly with women. I sometimes feel that I give out a 'Tall, bright, possibly fearsome' image to men. I'm not a flirty person.

**Being a mother has obviously worked for you. Not so being a wife?**

Women can live without men and to me a man has to be very very special to make me think of marriage. I'm very happy at the moment but wouldn't categorically say that I won't marry again or have more children.

**What sort of man, then, appeals to you?**

No particular type. He must be intelligent and have a sense of humour. Essentially outward looking and sensitive. Age does not worry me. I admire men such as Dirk Bogarde. Greatly admired his 'Spanish Gardener' and love to see, through his work and books, that wonderfully sensitive competency.

**There are probably lots of would be actors reading this. What is your advice to them?**

Difficult, but I'm glad that you asked me. If they are sure about what they want to do and feel that they have talent, they must never give up. Accept anything that comes along. It's all experience and you never know who you will meet. Be seen. Communicate, and above all be prepared for many disappointments and lots of hard work. It's all part of a highly competitive, but great profession!

**What work do you have planned for next year?**

Well I have many irons in the fire at the moment and I hope to do some stage work. In the meantime I'm rehearsing for the new Sapphire and Steel series which starts shooting soon.

**And finally, how do you intend to spend Christmas?**

I shall be making the most of the Christmas break to take my son home to see my parents and family. We'll have a really old fashioned Christmas. Nothing could give me more pleasure.