

OUTFIT: DOLCE & GABBANA
WATCH: RICHARD MILLE



HUNT FOR GLORY

With roles as diverse as a Norse god and a '70s Formula 1 driver, CHRIS HEMSWORTH has certainly kept everyone guessing. He talks to THERESA HAROLD about his recent projects, parenthood and the support he gets from his actor siblings

PHOTOGRAPHY / DARREN TIESTE
STYLING / PARIS LIBBY
GROOMING / KATYA THOMAS FOR CAROL HAYES MANAGEMENT
PRODUCTION / SHAZ MOAVEN
PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT / MATTHEW LAWES
STYLING ASSISTANTS / KATHY LAM, GABRIELA GOWER, JOANNA GRZESZCZUK
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IT'S A SUNNY FRIDAY morning when I arrive in Marylebone, London. In the shabby-chic drawing room of a Georgian townhouse, Chris Hemsworth is striking a pose. As the final shutter clicks, and the shoot wraps up ahead of schedule – a testimony, if ever there was one, to the actor's easygoing nature – Hemsworth thanks the crew before heading off to an adjacent room to get changed.

A moment later, he's back. Dressed in grey T-shirt and jeans, with a pair of Ray-Bans tucked into the neck of his shirt, he looks younger than his 29 years. Life is evidently treating him well; earlier this year, he and his wife, Elsa Pataky, became parents for the first time, to a baby girl named India Rose. During the course of our chat, he beams at the mention of her, and a note of awe enters his voice.

For a man best known for his role as the cape-wearing, bicep-flexing, hammer-wielding superhero-god Thor, Hemsworth is surprisingly chilled. Born in Melbourne in 1983, Hemsworth moved with his family around Australia before settling on Phillip Island, off the coast of Victoria. There, he grew up as the middle of three brothers, hanging out and surfing in his free time. Today, with both his older brother (Luke) and his younger brother (Liam) working as actors, the bond between the siblings is stronger than ever. In fact, covers for *Prestige Hong Kong* are becoming somewhat of a family affair, as Liam's dapper turn for the May issue will attest.

But back to the man in question. For this Hemsworth, the road to global stardom was paved with classic Australian television – most notably, *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*. It wasn't until his short but memorable appearance as George Kirk in 2009's *Star Trek* that Hollywood came knocking in earnest. From there, it was a matter of honing his craft by working alongside veteran film actors such as Sean Bean (*Ca\$h*) and Milla Jovovich

(*A Perfect Getaway*), before landing his break-out part as Thor in 2011.

Shortly before the release of *Thor*, Hemsworth noted in an interview that he “went from being recognised in Australia, to being a fresh face in America, and for now there's that calm-before-the-storm feeling”. Given the subsequent success of *Avengers Assemble* and *Snow White and the Huntsman*, and with *Rush*, *Red Dawn* and *Thor: The Dark World* all coming out next year, it would be safe to say the storm has broken.

You're filming *Thor: The Dark World* at the moment with [Game of Thrones director] Alan Taylor. As a fan of the show, what's it like working with him?

Awesome. Yeah, I love the way he adds an incredibly organic element to the fantastical world of *Thrones*, and I think that's what *Thor* could benefit from. It's grounded in reality, no matter how mythical or science-fiction-like it becomes. There's a truth to it all. Certainly, working with him now, you can see he doesn't want Thor or the Asgardians to seem like some distant race or god-like. He still wants them to be relatable.

Does your background in TV – particularly with the pace and limited rehearsal time of soap operas – affect the way you approach projects now?

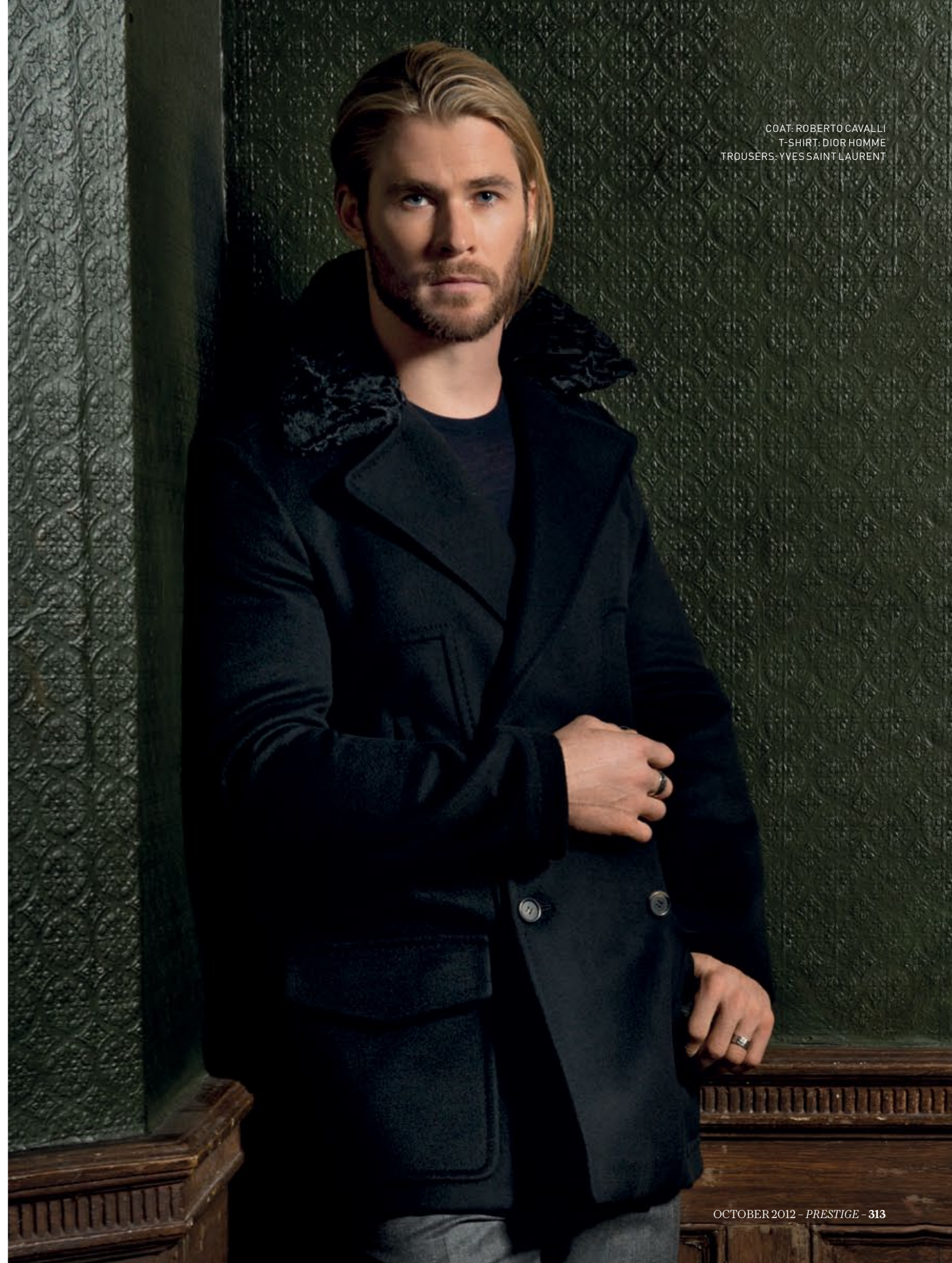
It was a great training ground. The conditions are tougher than a film set, where you have a lot more rehearsal time, a lot more prep and discussion, and the scripts have been worked on for longer. Whereas TV, in my experience, was incredibly fast paced and you're kind of thrown in the deep end. I credit a lot of my time in TV with whatever ability I might have now.

Both your brothers, Liam and Luke, are actors. Is there more than the usual amount of sibling rivalry in the Hemsworth family?

[Laughs] No, we have a healthily competitive relationship in everything – as brothers do. Whereas with [acting], all three of us are so aware of the instability of it all and how much is up to chance. It's far more of a supportive relationship [we have in acting] than backyard football, or surfing, or whatever else we do in our free time.

Earlier this year, *Prestige Hong Kong* interviewed your younger brother, Liam. He was saying something very similar: “I have great brothers who are my best friends in the world.”

COAT: ROBERTO CAVALLI
T-SHIRT: DIOR HOMME
TROUSERS: YVES SAINT LAURENT





SUIT: ALEXANDER MCQUEEN
SWEATER: GIORGIO ARMANI
BELT: BURBERRY LONDON
SHOES: GRENSON
WATCH: RICHARD MILLE

*“YOU WANT FREEDOM AND CHOICE, IN THE
INDUSTRY AND ANYTHING YOU DO IN LIFE”*

SUIT: YVES SAINT LAURENT
T-SHIRT AND SHOES: BOTTEGA VENETA



That stuff really does help in this industry – to have a tight, strong support system.” Do you think you would have become an actor if it weren’t for your family?

I’ve always had a love of film and storytelling in general, but I never thought seriously about acting until my older brother [Luke] did it. So, probably not. He definitely kicked it off, and was the catalyst to my interest in professional acting.

Liam famously also auditioned for the part of Thor. Was it a tense situation for your both?

It was never at the same time and, to be honest, we’ve auditioned for a lot of different things and a lot of the same parts over the years. That [time] was strange because it came right down to the wire. I was no longer involved in the audition process – I was set aside. It was Liam or a couple of other guys who were going to get it, so I was helping him run through the stuff. Then I got a call, and suddenly I was back in it and Liam was helping me! So it was a bit of a team effort.

On the subject of family – you’re a new dad, congratulations! How do you juggle your various commitments?

It’s tough, certainly. When you’re all in one place, it’s like a normal job. The hours can be inconsistent, but at least when you come home at night, the family’s there. The toughest thing is the press tours and the travel, which fortunately is only a couple of times a year for a couple of weeks at a time. So the time I’m away from them can be minimal. What will become harder is if my wife and I are both working at the same time in different countries – that’s what we’re going to try not to do. But, sometimes there’s an opportunity that arises for both of you which you can’t say no to. At the moment we’re lucky; it’s early days for us anyway.

You’ve just finished working with Ron Howard on Rush. Did you get any hands-on driving experience?

Yeah, we did a lot. We had a month’s worth before we started shooting – you know, learning how to drive these cars. They’re Formula 1 cars, but replicas of cars from the ’70s; very different from modern Formula 1 cars, but still incredibly tricky to drive. We were warned constantly about going too quick, but the adrenaline junkie in most of us takes over at times and we pushed a little more than we should. It got to the point where I was thinking, “Whoa, if this goes wrong I’m not in a good position...” They’re like go-karts on steroids.

What do you think of James Hunt, the character you play?

I fell in love with the character the more I researched him and his world. There was the negative side to his playboy lifestyle, which I think people admired from an entertainment point of view. I suspect there were also a lot of people who didn’t agree with his lifestyle. What I liked about him was the childlike quality in him. He was someone who loved to experience life

and did everything to the fullest. I admire his commitment and passion for things. On the track, nothing was left on the sidelines. Also, [I admire] his attitude of not wanting to conform to what the brands and the Formula 1 industry said he should act or dress or speak like. He wanted to be himself, and not fall into the box or be restricted by the industry. Whereas now, [Formula 1] has become very clinical. Ron kept saying, “The ’70s were when the driving was dangerous and the sex was clean, but now it’s the other way around.” That was a joke on set. We watched a lot of B-roll footage of [Hunt] in interviews and he’s just one of those people that owned his environment. He was incredibly charismatic and obviously fun to be around. I really enjoyed playing that part, and finding out about him was fascinating.

The Avengers is now the third highest-grossing film of all time. What’s it like to be a part of such a huge phenomenon?

It’s great. I think, firstly you want to make a film that you’re proud of and you enjoyed making. For me, that’s what it’s about. Secondly, you want people to see it. So to be reaching that kind of an audience is hugely satisfying. Especially when young kids come up and they’ve seen the movie 10 times. As a kid, I used to do that, and to think there’s a whole generation out there now looking at something you’ve been a part of...it’s a special dream.

With such an all-star cast, what was the atmosphere like on the set of The Avengers?

Most of the time we’re all on set together and it just became a laugh for all of us. We sort of fed off [the energy of] each other and before you know it, someone has to step in and say, “Come on, we’re trying to shoot a movie here!” Robert Downey Jr obviously has an incredible sense of humour and wit about him, which you see in all his characters. He’s like that in real life. You’re playing catch-up; always 10 steps behind what he’s saying. All those guys I learned something from and admired.

Did you have a comic-book hero as a child?

No, not really. I didn’t really read comic books

COAT: PAUL SMITH
SUIT: PRADA
SWEATER: SMEDLEY
SHOES: BURBERRY LONDON

*"WE HAVE A HEALTHILY COMPETITIVE
RELATIONSHIP IN EVERYTHING - AS BROTHERS DO"*





OUTFIT: GIORGIO ARMANI

as a kid. The ones that were most familiar to me were probably The Incredible Hulk, Superman, Batman – the obvious ones. I didn't know much about Thor until I got the part.

What's been the biggest change for you since the release of Thor?

The biggest change to be honest – I mean, yeah, people recognise you – but the most rewarding thing is being able to pick and choose who I want to work with. You have the opportunity to try and get in contact with people that you might not have had access to before. That's what you want; you want freedom and choice, in the industry and anything you do in life.

I read somewhere that to get yourself into the mode of a drunken huntsman for Snow White, you used to spin around before takes. Were there any techniques you used to get in the zone for Thor?

[That quote came about because] I was asked, "Do you have any prep?" and I said, "Not really." Then I sort of jokingly added, "Sometimes I'd spin around in circles to make myself feel drunk." But it's the one scene. I wouldn't say it's a ritual by any means. [For *Thor*], there's a lot of ongoing reading and rereading of the script. I have a guy that I work with a lot who's a voice coach, but also far more than that. We pull scripts apart and go into who these people are; his whole attitude of approaching a character is, instead of trying to mimic something or work out technically how you do that, it's more why does someone speak like that. What's in your personality or nature, or your past that has moulded you into sounding like this? That then raises a whole lot of questions about the character – which is great. You do that all the way through the film, even afterwards it's hard to switch off sometimes.

How did you settle on that very proper "English" accent for the Norse god, Thor?

For whatever reason, it just seems to fit that world. Probably for no other reason than that it's the way it's been done in history. We associate Shakespearean speak [with god-like beings] because so many British actors have done it over the years. It resonates with the audience. Also, we had Anthony Hopkins, who is Welsh but has similar tones. I certainly couldn't play him as Australian because people would think, "That's Crocodile Dundee!"

The top two Google searches that follow your name are "Chris Hemsworth workout" and "Chris Hemsworth Thor workout." Do you ever feel that the impression people have of you as a big buff guy hinders your choice of roles?

It was nice to do the James Hunt movie because it wasn't about that. It's funny, you have one scene in the movie [*Thor*] where you have your shirt off, then you do a press tour and it's like,

"So you spend the whole time in the film with your shirt off." It was all of 10 seconds. So it can overshadow things. It is what it is, and that was what that character called for. But no, there's no complaint about it. It becomes a challenge because you then have to be smart about what you pick after that; you want to show range. I don't just want to do action films. Doing *Rush*, I think, was the best experience I ever had, because it was far more intimate and character based. It wasn't about special effects. That was why I got into acting, because I'm interested in people's personalities.

You seem to steer clear of all the tech outlets that other celebrities use, such as Instagram and Twitter. Why is that?

I think there's a danger of being overexposed with that stuff. The mystery of who you are is what keeps people interested in wanting to see you on the screen. Also, it's easier for them to believe you as that character if they don't know too much about you. It's hard not to be overexposed these days with the Internet, and especially when you do a tour for something like *The Avengers* or *Snow White*, where you're contracted to do an incredible amount of press. Besides, I'd rather be hanging out with my family than updating to people I don't know about what I had for lunch. Also, there are so many fake ones out there, which is pretty frustrating.

What do you do to relax?

At the moment, hang out with my little baby. It's fascinating watching her; every day there's something different. Now she's becoming more and more aware of the world and that's incredible. Also I surf, train and see movies: regular stuff. My wife and I are pretty outdoorsy and adventurous; we like to keep moving.

Lastly, of all the characters you've played, which do you most relate to?

I think I relate to – and make sure you put this down – James Hunt, but not his philandering ways. Not in that way, be very careful that you say that [laughs]! What I admire and hope I have is that passion; that need to live life and make the most of things. ■