

## ***Man Up***

Lake Bell ("Nancy")

Interviewed by Harrison Pierce on 6/24/15

**Q: Before signing on to play Nancy in *Man Up*, were you a fan of the romantic comedy genre? And what appealed to you about this particular rom-com script and project?**

A: I'm a lover of the genre but I hadn't read anything that was authentic to [it] in a long time. It's often like: "We're going to do a romantic comedy but we're going to be super-cool about it [or] snarky or...gross or mean-spirited." But there was something so sweet and earnest about this story and the way it's effectively aligns these two [characters]. And yet it's hilarious. And I remember when I first read it, I was envisioning Simon [Pegg] doing it and, being a big fan of his from afar - as well as of Big Talk Productions [*The World's End* (2013), *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (2010)] - I thought, "God, this is such a dream job."

**Q: Was there an audition process for the role and, if so, what was that like?**

A: I guess what had happened was [producer] Nira Park and Simon had seen *In a World...* (2013) and enjoyed it. So when I auditioned, I was walking into a very warm room. And, when I went in, it was immediately apparent that, not only did Simon and I have chemistry but we also had *comedic* chemistry, which is a musicality thing you either have with someone or you don't.

**Q: Can you talk about how you developed the right British accent for Nancy?**

A: The accent I wanted to achieve was something called "Estuary," which is a very acceptable kind of real, city-girl accent. It's not like "received pronunciation," which is the super BBC, aristocratic sound you would take on if you were performing in an Elizabethan play. That's something I learned in drama school [London's Rose Bruford College] but that's not how people speak. So my dialect coach, Jill McCullough, and I really wanted to find something that resonated with what a real London girl would sound like. And [screenwriter] Tess Morris is from Warmsworth [in South Yorkshire, England], so we picked that region and loosely based it around her, too.

**Q: You're so good with the accent in the film. I'm curious, when you were studying in London years ago, did you ever try and pass yourself off as a native Brit?**

A: Not when I was studying there, strangely enough. But while I was living there and doing this movie, I never dropped the accent, except when I spoke to my husband on the phone. Literally, even if I was running down to the shop to buy, like, soy milk for my cereal, I would never drop it because I felt that, in order to improvise within the accent [on set], I needed to do it all the time.

**Q: One of the things both you and Simon excel at in the film is a kind of rapid-fire dialogue exchange, which recalls Hollywood's rat-a-tat romantic comedies**

**of the 1930s. Did you have a rehearsal period to nail that aspect of your performances down?**

A: We were very fortunate that Ben insisted on ample rehearsal and, within that process, [screenwriter] Tess Morris was present, so she would amend the dialogue to fit in our mouths even more. So, the way the words all fit together [in the film] is reflective of the improvisations we did in rehearsal and, on the day of shooting, we would play around, too. But to have that much rehearsal was brilliant. Usually you show up on set and block the scene and that's your rehearsal. So it made a huge difference because Simon and I arrived on set incredibly prepared. And then there was room to play.

**Q: Speaking of play, I love the scene where you and Simon spontaneously start dancing in sync to Duran Duran's "The Reflex." How familiar were you with that song before production? And how'd you go about preparing that dance routine?**

A: It's funny because we played ["The Reflex"] so much [during production] that now I'm totally sick of it. [Laughs] But you can't really get sick of that song. And it's been so long since we shot it that it now feels nostalgic. But yeah, we did a lot of rehearsal for the actual dance, to the point where we got so good at it that the choreographer needed us to take it down a notch because it had to look more organic and a bit shit.

**Q: Is there a song like "The Reflex" that, no matter where you are in life, if you hear it, you have to start dancing?**

A: I was just with my assistant and we were picking up food and the song "Alone" by Heart came on. And even though I was tired - I hardly sleep - I was just giving it my all. And she was like, "How is this happening?" And I'm like, "I haven't heard this song in so long!" I just didn't care at all. I had to dance.

**Q: Finally, *Man Up*'s storyline begins with your character telling Simon's character a little lie that quickly escalates into a whole series of them. In real life, do you think it's ever okay to tell even a little white lie?**

A: I'm not really great at lying. [I mean], I'm a good actor but...I'm not a huge fan of the white lie...or any other-colored lie. [Laughs] But I enjoy the conceit of this film so much because it's based on a fantasy that Tess Morris had. She was at a train station and someone came up to her and said, "Claire?" And it was a cute guy. And she could have walked down that path. And wouldn't it have been an interesting story...