



Frazer Hadfield.

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Credits.

Talent. **Frazer Hadfield**
Interview. **Vanesa Miraglia**
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On the cover



Frazer Hadfield.

As I sit down with Frazer Hadfield, his genuine passion for acting and storytelling immediately comes to the forefront, particularly of his portrayal of Nate in the Robbie Williams biopic BETTER MAN directed by Michael Gracey (The Greatest Showman). The conversation is lively and insightful, filled with reflections on the intricate balance of friendship and the challenges of navigating fame. Frazer discusses his distinctive way of portraying a character that combines different influences instead of focusing on just one person, allowing him to incorporate his own experiences into the role. He highlights the valuable lessons he's learned from working with experienced actors and the importance of authenticity in his performances. Through our discussion of his journey and aspirations in the industry, it's clear that Frazer is not only a talented actor but also a thoughtful and insightful artist, deeply committed to his craft and eager to connect with audiences through compelling storytelling.



V: Thank you, Frazer, for sitting down with us today! I'm interested in understanding how you relate to Nate. What aspects of Nate's personality resonate with you personally? How did you navigate the emotional landscape of portraying someone who is so intimately connected to a high-profile figure like Robbie Williams?

F: Great to speak with you! So, Nate is Robbie's best friend. He grew up with him and is by his side through thick and thin, but he's about as far away from a performer as you can get! He's a normal, salt of the earth guy, and he says what he sees. He doesn't see Robbie's rapid ascent as something that should get in the way of this great bond that they have.

I loved playing that honesty. He's an uncomplicated guy, and is completely nonplussed by Robbie's fame. He's happy for him, but in no world is that something that Nate would ever want. So, in some ways, it's a gift of a role as once I worked out who he was it was just a case of reacting to the mad things happening around him!

V: Given the film's exploration of Robbie's tumultuous life, I'd love to discuss the themes of friendship, loyalty, and the impact of fame. How did you perceive the balance between personal relationships and the pressures of the public eye, especially from a character's perspective?

F: The story, like a lot of biopics, is quite episodic - you have Robbie's childhood, and then the Take That years, and then when he goes solo, and people are constantly coming in and out of his life. Nate is there all the way through. He's the counterpoint to Rob's journey. Here are these two normal lads that grew up side by side in Stoke, both talented in their own ways, and Rob gets catapulted to stardom and Nate doesn't. Nate gives you a pretty good idea of what Rob's life would've looked like if he'd not chased that star.

Robbie treats him pretty dreadfully I think it's fair to say, and yet he still shows up. But it's a world that Nate doesn't understand, and so he gives Rob a lot of grace. He's always showing up and being the supportive best friend that Rob needs - even if he doesn't necessarily acknowledge that. Rob has this unimaginable pressure on his shoulders at the height of his fame, but Nate has pressures and struggles too. Sure, they're not remotely similar, but they are every bit as real to him.

It was interesting to play with that - Two guys who know each other inside out, but that just can't communicate anymore. It's like they're speaking different languages almost, and there's a great sadness in that.

V: Every actor has a unique approach to their craft. I'd like to ask you about your preparation for this role. What methods did you employ to get into the mindset of Nate? Were there specific experiences or influences that shaped your performance?

F: Most of the characters in the film are real people, whereas Nate isn't - He's an amalgamation of a bunch of Robbie's friends. So I didn't have someone to sit down and have coffee with or hours of video footage to trawl through, but that was incredibly freeing. Of course, that meant I was starting from the ground up, but here was a character on the page, beautifully written, and I got to bring that to life - and bring bits of myself to Nate as well. I didn't have that little annoying voice at the back of my head saying "you're not quite matching his real voice" or "he doesn't do that with his hands!" I was able to fully immerse myself in the world and this complex, knotty relationship, and Michael let me run with that!

V: I would love to explore how working on BETTER MAN has affected you personally. What insights have you gained about yourself and your craft through this process?

F: The scale of this film was like nothing I've ever worked on before. The sheer number of people involved in the process could feel quite overwhelming, and I definitely felt a lot of pressure. But the way Michael approaches the work is to afford his actors time and space. In rehearsals we immediately had the scenes on their feet, and the shape of those scenes was dictated by the actors. He runs his rehearsals like theatre rehearsals, and when we got on set that didn't change. I had so much agency. I didn't feel like just a little cog in this big technical machine - Michael encouraged us to take up that space and play around with things. I mean, that was such a privilege. But it was also just so much fun! It gave me the confidence to really push the boundaries performance wise, and try things I might not normally - and that's where the really good stuff is. I'm still quite early in my career, and so that was a great lesson and has definitely informed the way I have approached roles since.

I was also lucky to be sharing my story with Jonno Davies - when we first met in rehearsals there was a real spark. Part of that, I'm sure, was the shared experience of being two lads in Melbourne, a long way from home, working on this massive movie with this incredible team and both feeling so excited and grateful. But it translated to how we played that story too. Jonno gave me so much to bounce off, and I watched him really 'become' Rob. When you work with some-

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one else who is firing on all cylinders, it makes you raise your own game. Those scenes felt electric when we were filming them - something I'll never forget.

V: I understand you're in the running for something exciting, which you can't discuss yet. I'm curious about how you view this period of your career. How do you envision your evolution as an actor in the coming years, especially after this significant debut?

F: It's a very exciting time for sure! I wish I could share, but I can't say anything just at the moment. I don't usually yet get much say in what comes next - I just want good stories and interesting characters. And I really believe in this film - I've never really played a character like Nate before, and so I'm very grateful for being given that opportunity. The diversity in the type of stories I get to tell is something that I hope continues.

V: Building on our conversation about future aspirations, I'm curious about the moment an actor truly feels like one. Is it a gradual evolution marked by professional milestones and accolades, or is it more of an intrinsic realization that emerges during the creative process? When did you first feel that sense of identity as an actor, and how has that perception shifted as you navigate your career?

F: This is a question that I've been asked before and struggled to answer - when do I really feel like an actor? Being an actor is multifaceted, right? There is the artistry, the craft, whatever you want to call it, but then there is also the other less ephemeral stuff like awards, and auditions, and all the practical business side of things - which can also be fun in its own way, but that really is what you're doing the majority of the time! I was lucky that on this film I actually got to do a lot of the pure craft stuff, and when all the preparation pays off, the days of character work and costume fittings and makeup tests and the audition process to get to that point and the line learning, when that all falls away and you just get to let rip, yeh. I really do feel like an actor! And that's sometimes easier to access in theatre work I think? When there's less technical stuff to focus on, and you just get to play for a few hours a night. And I did a lot of theatre right after I graduated from Drama school, so I've always felt it, in fits and starts. But I don't think it's linear, at least not for me. I'm still feeling it all out, and working out what kind of actor I am right now and will be going forward.

V: I'm particularly fascinated by the concept of creative failure and how it shapes an artist's journey. Can you share a moment from your career where you faced a setback—whether it was a harsh critique, a missed opportunity, or a challenging experience—that left you feeling momentarily shut down? How did that experience influence your creative process moving forward? Have there been lingering echoes of that perceived failure that you still grapple with today?

F: I have an ever-changing relationship with creative failure! Or more specifically, with missed opportunities. The reality is that missing out on projects is very much part and parcel of being an actor. When those auditions weren't coming through as regularly, I'm thinking specifically during the pandemic when the industry pretty much completely shut down, when I did get an audition through there was suddenly a lot of pressure to make it count. Like, this could be the project that turns it all around! That isn't the best energy to take into those meetings, and when it didn't go my way I always took it really hard. I've definitely shaken myself out of that and I now approach auditions with less weight and expectation, which I think yields better results. Shifting that mindset is a process, but I'm getting there! But here I am talking about auditions when the question is about creative failure! It's that knotty mesh of business and craft again - When I've been on jobs I've largely had really positive and creatively fulfilling experiences. Yes, of course, there are times when you make a big choice or try something a bit different and it doesn't quite stick, but that's necessary and expected. That's the only way to find the really good stuff.

V: Respect is a fundamental aspect of artistry, both for oneself and for the craft. How do you define respect in your work, particularly when collaborating with other artists? Are there specific moments or experiences in your career that have shaped your understanding of mutual respect within the creative process? How do you navigate the balance between respecting the vision of a project while also bringing your unique perspective to the role?

F: I'm very lucky to have consistently worked with brilliant actors who have been doing this a lot longer than I have, so every day for me is school - I turn up and get to watch and learn from them. One of my first jobs was at The National Theatre, and it had this incredibly accomplished



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cast - people like Kate Fleetwood, Charles Edwards, Danny Webb - actors who I really look up to. And that's gold dust, seeing how they operated. That helped me build those big, foundational principles like respect, relating to my own practice. And that's still the case for every job I work on. There are always people that I get to just watch and think 'wow'. It's the nature of getting a bunch of artists together in a room to make a film or do a play that there are going to be people with contrasting approaches. Trust is essential then to maintain that balance you mention. I have to trust that I've been cast in this role for a reason, so I can then inhabit that role instinctively. Of course, I then work in collaboration with the team's vision, and you need to trust in that too - that they know what they're doing. In this film I was always acting with a guy in skin tight grey pyjamas and dots on his face. So obviously I just have to trust in the people putting that all together and that it will work conceptually! When you're in the thick of it, sometimes you're not the best judge of what works and what doesn't, so not just respecting the creative choices, but trusting in them is essential.

V: As we approach the conclusion of our conversation, I find myself drawn to the idea of courage—a quality that is often both revered and elusive. How does courage reveal itself in your life and work, especially when faced with challenges? Do you see it as a natural extension of your passion for acting, or is it a distinct virtue that you cultivate through your experiences? I'd love for you to share any personal moments that have shaped your understanding of courage and its role in your artistic journey.

F: This job definitely has its tough moments - on a basic level then I guess it takes courage to weather the storm. I'd like to think there is something courageous about the choices I make in my performances too - at least, that's something I'm always striving for. But that aside, I see courage most in the people around me, my friends and my family. They drive me forward, watching them facing challenging situations head on, advocating, standing up for what they believe in.

The Robbie Williams biopic *Better Man* releases in the UK on December 26, 2024

Interview by Vanesa Miraglia for **VIEWTIES**. For more information, visit viewties.co.uk



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