

## MICHELLE FOX COVER INTERVIEW

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Surprisingly Michelle Fox wasn't an avid viewer of BBC's Casualty when she landed a coveted role in the long running medical drama. Although she does admit to binge watching the present series once she learned she would be playing a gutsy young doctor called Bea. Michelle grew up in Caherdavin, the youngest of three girls. She didn't come from show business stock, her parents own their own business and her sisters are teachers, but that didn't stop her from getting the acting bug.

She loved her upbringing in Limerick and said her family was always supportive of her career, no matter what route she decided to take in life. However she says school was difficult for her. "I went to a couple of different schools and never really found my footing anyway and was quite isolated. Thankfully, Limerick Youth Theatre was there for me when I needed a refuge. They welcomed me with opened arms and I made great friends and was encouraged to be myself and creative, definitely gave me the confidence to pursue acting."

From finding refuge in acting theatres to making her friends attend Speech and Drama with her as a kid to even what she studied in college, acting was always on the cards for Michelle. "My poor parents spent most of their weekends taking me to Drama competitions but they never complained. I owe them a lot! I went to Drama school in Bristol and have been working professionally in the industry since I graduated 18 months ago."

Does Michelle have any advice to impart for any budding actors or actresses? She confesses she owes a lot to drama school. After graduating from Drama and Spanish from the University College Cork, she found herself at odds as how to fully pursue acting as a career. When she came to London on a whim she took a friend's advice and began auditioning for drama schools. "I was lucky enough to get a place at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School when I spent two years training and really threw myself into it."

She credits the school with kick starting her professional career because her graduation show helped her to get an agent. "I would have never had that opportunity otherwise. I was worried about the fees for the school as truthfully, I had no way of paying them. The school took me under their wing, put me up for many bursaries, gave me a discount on my fees and also gave me a job there on reception at the weekends which I am grateful for."

Before starring in Casualty, Michelle played the lead in another BBC programme, BBC3's *Overshadowed*, a role that she is very proud of. *Overshadowed* has another Irish connection as well as its Limerick lead, as it is based on Irish playwright and actress Eva O'Connor's award winning play. It tells the story of a young Irish Vlogger called Imogene whose life spirals out of control when she develops an eating disorder. It won critical acclaim for portraying eating disorders realistically and they used makeup to make Michelle appear thinner rather than having her lose weight for the role. "I was extremely proud of the way the series was handled and the letters I received since the airing have really moved me. We tried not to glamorize the issue and I think people responded to that."

Casualty has been appearing on our screens since 1986 and is the UK's longest running medical show. What keeps the viewers hooked? As well as the drama and changing love interests, what holds Casualty's audience is its goal to be as authentic as possible. Like any medical drama Casualty is very technical and hands on, with medical jargon being thrown about left right and center. Michelle admits it was quite nerve-racking showing up on set at first. What puts the cast at ease though is, to be as realistic as possible, they have real doctors and nurses on set to assist them on anything medical and show them exactly what you would do as real healthcare professionals.

So what is a typical day for Michelle? "At the moment, I have quite a busy filming schedule with Casualty. We film Monday to Friday, usually 7am-7pm. Depending on the episode, it could be a 50+ hour week! Absolutely loving it though, being busy is great especially when you love what you do!" After a typically long day at work Michelle finds it very therapeutic to cook. "I'm a fan of the weird and wonderful and am always trying out new recipes. In the last year, I've been cooking a lot of Korean food and in turn turning all my friends on to Kimchi."

The Limerick native tries to return home as often as she can. Her sister and her husband just welcomed the family's first grandchild so she's smitten with the new baby and thinks her visits home will double. She professed Limerick will always be her home. So is there anything Michelle misses about Limerick, now that she's living abroad? "I love the familiarity of Limerick, people are so friendly and most places are laced with memories for me. London can be overwhelming sometimes, I've been in the UK 5 years but I never feel like a stranger when I'm back in Limerick. Seafood at the Curragower and a pint at Tom Collins, can't beat it!"



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There are a lot of women to admire in the acting world and Michelle is a massive fan of women who take matters into their own hand and write their own pieces. She lists Phoebe Waller Bridge in Fleabag, Michaela Coel in Chewing gum and her Overshadowed colleague Eva O'Connor as just some of the women she admires." Good female roles can be hard to come by and I am loving this new movement of women standing together to change the way the industry views and treats us."

What are Michelle's plans for the future?

"Well you can catch me every Saturday on Casualty but aside from that I'm also in a new TV series 'A Very English Scandal' written by Russell T Davies coming out in May on BBC1. It's about an attempted murder plot in the 1970's and Hugh Grant plays disgraced liberal politician Jeremy Thorpe. I had the pleasure of acting across from Ben Whishaw and learnt so much."

As if all that isn't impressive enough Michelle also has another exciting project set for the summer. She will also be working in the Olivier at the National Theatre from May to August in Ian Rickson's Translations by Brian Friel. She will be performing alongside fellow Irish actors Colin Morgan and Ciaran Hinds.

Life hasn't changed dramatically for the Limerick native since her Casualty debut. Her roles in Casualty or Overshadowed get her recognised from time to time by fans, though it's not all lovely people saying hello or wanting a photo.

Social media lets fans and haters alike contact Michelle but she acknowledges actors need to have a tough skin. "Mine is as thick as cement as this stage." Acting warrants long hours but when it's something you love Michelle says it feels like you're working towards something rather than slogging away at a desk. She has a fantastic attitude when it comes to her work and never takes anything for granted. "I'm very grateful! I'm just happy to be working so I'll ride the wave as it happens!" Since graduating two years ago Michelle has gone from strength to strength and we can't wait to see what this Limerick woman achieves in the next few years.

Article by: Sarah Talty

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