

LILIA BUCKINGHAM

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MAKING MAGIC: ACTOR LILIA BUCKINGHAM DISCUSSES WRITING AND HER ROLE AS CASSIE IN *HOCUS POCUS 2*.

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"Of course I believe in magic!" confirms actor Lilia Buckingham over Zoom, which is appropriate as she debuts as Cassie in the highly-anticipated Disney movie sequel, *Hocus Pocus 2*. "It is very *Hocus Pocus* of me, but I am proud to say that my best friend and I would spend evenings writing in our manifestation journals about me getting this role." Whether it was up to magic, manifestation or both, Buckingham has put a spell on us. At only 19 years old, she is truly living larger-than-life as a writer, actor, dancer, producer and also a college student.

Buckingham is a ray of sunshine with her enthusiasm beaming over Zoom as the conversation shifts into how she began writing. "I loved reading and I started writing short stories. Eventually, I wrote my first novel when I was 14," she continues, bashfully, "I can't say it was any good at all, but it felt nice to complete it and from there, I kind of started dabbling." Dabbling successfully led to her book called *Influence*, co-written with *Pretty Little Liars* author, Sara Shepard. Timely, the book is a thrilling account of the pitfalls of being a teen celebrity influencer in the public eye. Of course, Buckingham's own experiences on social media inform her writing. "I don't even remember a time in my life that I wasn't getting perceived on social media," she notes. And much like any teen on socials, Buckingham reminisces about a time she tried to control people's perceptions of her on social media. "I think especially in the past year, I just kind of stopped caring because there's no way that you're ever going to convince everyone exactly of who you are - and I think that's fine." Coupling this sentiment with the best advice she's received so far, Buckingham thoughtfully says, "If the people that you're close to love you, then it doesn't really matter what people who think that they know you think."

And speaking of percep-

tions, the young actor was on her way to gain "new perspective" as a "normal" college student majoring in Film and Television when she found out she got an audition for *Hocus Pocus 2*. "I even had all my dorm stuff and everything picked out," laughs Buckingham. After the callback, she shares that she spent three months auditioning for the role of Cassie. "I filmed and I ended up being two weeks late to my second semester," clarifies Buckingham. "When I came home for summer, I slept for two weeks straight because I just didn't really give myself a break." Safe to say among the magic and new perspectives, Buckingham also chronicles this year as "the craziest" of her life so far.

Interestingly enough, Buckingham reveals she initially reduced Cassie down to "the mean, popular girl". However, during the audition process, the producers kept reminding Buckingham that Cassie is a nuanced character. "Cassie has heart and that is when I felt connected to her because she reminded me a little bit of myself." In recounting her time as Cassie, the young actor admits being nervous on set. "I couldn't hit the first mark for some reason and was already dramatically thinking I might get fired. There is so much more that goes into getting the right shot than you nailing it," highlights Buckingham. Thankfully, she dishes out gratitude towards her fellow cast and crew for their unwavering support. "It felt very familiar and I was surrounded by incredible people, so that really made the whole experience."

Overall, Buckingham shares she is 80-something-pages into writing her next work when we agree that people truly and generally underestimate just how hard writing is. "My friends recently came to visit me in the Hamptons and I sat them down and told them they were going to read my 80 pages because I was stuck and couldn't write anything until I got notes," Buckingham says as she laughs sincerely. "They were great," she adds. As far as acting, she has an idea about who she wants to collaborate with next. "Someone tweeted that I should play a younger Sydney Sweeney because we look alike, and I broke into tears," she explains while giggling. "I was like, hello are you kidding? And now the idea is in my head and I would love to work with her." We can see Buckingham already manifesting this via her journals. One thing we know for certain? There is a lot more magic coming for the 19-year-old.

