



# Act of God

Having gone from starring in an Australian soap opera to playing a Norse God in one of cinema's biggest ever franchises, it's safe to say that Chris Hemsworth has come a long way. Here, the Aussie actor chats to **Harold von Kursk** about making films and raising a family

If there were ever a prototype for the ideal Hollywood leading man, Chris Hemsworth would certainly match most of the prerequisites. Tall, blonde, broad-shouldered, ruggedly handsome and talented, the Australian actor has gained a massive following for his multiple turns as Thor, the Norse God, a key player in one of the biggest franchises in film history.

Beyond the comic book universe, Hemsworth has also shown that he is capable of taking on serious dramatic roles with his charismatic portrayal of Formula One pilot James Hunt in *Rush*, and later as the determined first mate in *In The Heart Of The Sea*, based on the ill-fated 1820 whaling expedition that inspired Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The brawny 6'3" Aussie has even show his flair for comedy as the somewhat thick-headed male hunk in this summer's female reboot of *Ghostbusters*.

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Currently filming *Thor: Ragnarok*, the third instalment in his stand-alone *Thor* series, he readily acknowledges his debt to the heroic figure who has established Hemsworth as a movie star and sex symbol.

"I don't think that playing Thor limits me except for the actual time commitment to those films," Hemsworth says. "I love doing those movies and I think they open up so many possibilities for me to do other kinds of work. I'm very lucky to have been chosen for such an amazing character and to be part of a very successful franchise."

"It was because Ron Howard saw me in *Thor* that he decided to call me and meet with me for *Rush*, which was a very important film for me. Being part of the Marvel universe has been a blessing. It's given me financial security and the opportunity to achieve much, much more than I ever thought possible."

Good-natured and easy-going, the 33-year-old actor conducts himself with the kind of earnest zeal that would put Clark Kent to shame. Polite, jovial and direct, he could just as easily be a spokesman for a charitable foundation as he could be a brand ambassador for Australia.

There's an unmistakable sense of quiet ambition and strength of purpose to Hemsworth. He never flaunts his fame or shows any signs of vanity that are often the side effects of celebrity.

Married to the Spanish actress Elsa Patacky (*Fast Five*, *Furious 6*), 40, for the past five years, he disliked the artificial LA lifestyle so much that he convinced his wife over a year ago that they should relocate from LA to Australia's Byron Bay so that their children – four-year-old daughter India Rose and twin sons Tristan and Sasha, age two – can be raised more in the spirit of their father's down-to-earth Aussie upbringing.

Explains Hemsworth: "Getting to be back in Australia has been very meaningful to me. My wife and I both feel that it's been the right decision especially for the children who can grow up normally and not have to suffer from the kind of intrusion and attention that comes with living in LA. In Australia, no one makes a big deal if you're a celebrity."

He adds: "I want our children to discover something of the beauty and vastness of nature while they grow up in Australia, because it gives you a different perspective on life. I wanted them to get to know

their father's culture and expose them to the kind of life I enjoyed so much during my childhood and Elsa was very happy and supportive of that. Australia is an amazing place to live."

Growing up in Australia's rugged Northern Territory, a place where lizards and crocodiles could qualify as house pets, Chris Hemsworth grew up with few luxuries. He spent most of his time riding motorcycles and enjoying the wild outdoors along with his brothers Luke (the first of the three brothers to get into acting) and Liam, a star in his own right with appearances in *The Hunger Games* films and the recent *Independence Day: Resurgence*.

Living in the wild – his father was a social worker and his mother worked as an English teacher in an Aboriginal community – also stoked Hemsworth's imagination, as he often engaged in games of make-believe to pass the time.

"My brothers and I grew up on various cattle and buffalo stations and then we moved back to Melbourne and then again down the coast. It was a very different kind of life that most kids would experience in a big city. It teaches you to be on your own a lot, and you learn to develop and feed your imagination when you don't have other kids to play with. Growing up in beautiful places out in the wild gives you a lot of occasions to daydream. I'm pretty sure that that's a big reason we all became actors. We were always the stars of our own adventures out in the bush." ►

**Left: Hemsworth's role as Thor helped catapult him to stardom**



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After his older brother Luke enrolled in a drama class, Chris followed suit and immediately discovered that it “was the only thing” he liked to study in school. Soon the family was living in Sydney and that was when he won a major part in the long-running Australian soap opera, *Home and Away*. He spent three years on the series until he decided that the only way he was going to have a serious acting career was to move to Los Angeles.

His first Hollywood part came in *Star Trek* (2009) but it wasn’t until he landed the title role in *Thor* (2011) that his career took off, and Hemsworth has never looked back since. Looking like he’s been chiselled out of stone himself, playing a Norse God was probably a case of divine casting intervention for Hemsworth.

“Thor was never just a wooden kind of action guy. There was always an underlying sensitivity and nobility to his personality and I was able to bring a lot to the character. The *Thor* films have never been just all-out action films – there were so

many interesting elements to the story and to the role itself. From the very beginning I saw a lot of ways that I would be able to invest myself in the role and add more and more layers to him as we’ve evolved the character.”

The toughest aspect of playing Thor is the extreme weightlifting and bulking up required to play the man with the hammer, and then having to lose the added muscle to play other roles, such as the starving first mate

marooned at sea with his fellow sailors in *In The Heart Of The Sea*.

“To prepare for *Thor*, I’m eating 4,000 calories a day and doing several hours lifting weights every day. Then I had to shoot *In The Heart Of The Sea* and I had to drop 40 pounds and live on a 500-calorie per day diet. I still have moments even now where I cannot look at a plate of chicken breast or broccoli. Me and the other actors felt like we were a bunch of supermodels getting ready for a show and constantly talking about who was the skinniest of the bunch!” ▶



**Above: Chris with brothers Liam (left) and Luke (right)  
Right: With his wife Elsa, who he married in 2010**



Despite being one of the most handsome young actors in Hollywood, Hemsworth never indulged in serial dating and nightclubbing. He had only known Elsa Patacky for three months before deciding that she was 'the one'.

"It wasn't something that either of us planned – it was just something that made sense to both of us," Hemsworth explains. "We were on holiday with both our families and it was just a wonderful family atmosphere that we decided that it would be good timing and that we should get married, too."

Chris and Elsa both shared a desire to start a family, although raising children has turned out to be a much greater challenge than Hemsworth expected.

"[Laughs] It's much more difficult than you think it's going to be. You have to change your thinking and be completely there for them. But having children has also taught

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me what real love is and what true responsibility means."

"I have always loved my work, but being a good father and a good husband is my absolute priority now. The best thing that happened to me in my life has been meeting my wife, Elsa, and being able to raise our children. My dream was really to have the kind of life I am enjoying now."

Moving to Australia late in 2014 was also a function of Hemsworth's desire to spare his family the kind of collateral damage that often comes with being a celebrity. There are fewer paparazzi roaming the territory in Oz and the stoic, straightforward attitude of the people ensure that he and his family can go about their daily lives in relative obscurity. Chris is such a dedicated family man that he intends to have Elsa and the kids accompany him whenever a long film shoot takes him away from Australia's Gold Coast.

Says Hemsworth: "We have a rule where I'm never away from home or from them for more than two weeks. I'll take my family with me if it's a long shoot. Otherwise if it's less than two weeks, it's too difficult for the kids to get used to a new environment and then have to go back."

He adds: "My daughter India starts to miss me badly if I'm away from her for more than a few days. One time after I had left to work on a movie we were speaking on the phone a few days later and she asked me, "Dad, when are you coming home?" I couldn't hold back my tears...."

"I've always wanted to give my children the same kind of love and attention that my parents gave me. It's important that children grow with a sense of security and support and I take that responsibility very seriously. Being a father has also been more fun than I could have imagined and it kind of reconnects you with your own child-like sensibility. I love playing with my kids and being part of their world."

It's a pleasure to report that in an era where one is almost reflexively cynical about celebrities, the quality that best defines Chris Hemsworth is his deep sense of purpose and integrity. He genuinely believes in being a good man and a good father and embraces the Aussie ethos that eschews glamour,

**Top: Hemsworth is currently filming the next instalment of *Thor* on the Gold Coast in his native Australia**

artifice, and self-importance. He admits to being guided by his parents' sense of social engagement and the many life lessons and principles that were impressed upon him.

"My parents gave me and my brothers confidence in our abilities and a feeling of security. We were encouraged to work hard and be committed to whatever we decided to do with our lives...I want to impart those same values to my children.

"My mother, in particular, doesn't like to hear us groaning or feeling sorry for ourselves or complaining, especially in recent years if she would hear us (the brothers) moaning about being stressed (because of the film business). She reminds us of some of the jobs we did while we were still living in Australia, which were a lot less stimulating than what we do today!" ■

