

# Finding a quiet place

Amidst the glitz and glamour of Hollywood life, Emily Blunt is a very grounded person writes **Harold von Kursk**. So perhaps it's fitting that her family have moved away from L.A. and set up a very handsome life thanks to – among other smash hits – *A Quiet Place*, a movie in which she co-stars with the Director – her husband John Krasinski

Emily Blunt is one of the wittiest and most insouciant women in Hollywood. She's the polar opposite of the notoriously snobby character (also named Emily) she played in *The Devil Wears Prada*, the hit comedy that turned her into an instant star.

We've seen her play an FBI agent taking on the Mexican drug cartel in the action thriller *Sicario*, an alcoholic divorcée caught up in a murder investigation the dark drama *The Girl on the Train*, as well as the role first made famous by Julie Andrews in the family comedy *Mary Poppins Returns*. But perhaps her most striking performance came in *A Quiet Place*, the sci-fi horror film that was one of the most profitable films of all time, earning \$350 million worldwide on a tiny, by major studio standards, budget of \$17 million.

The film marked the first time that Blunt had worked with her actor husband John Krasinski, who wrote, directed, and co-starred in what turned out to be a massive sleeper hit. Blunt believes that the public was drawn to the film's underlying sense of dread, which is very different from traditional dystopian horror flicks.

"What I loved about *A Quiet Place*, and I think what people have gravitated towards, is that it's not gory and horrifying. It's tense, and it's an intense experience watching

it, but it has deeper themes of how far you'd go to protect your family, and it's a big metaphor for parenthood. [It's] that idea of releasing your children out into the big bad world and not being able to protect them and what all parents feel..."

Now 38-year-old Blunt stars in the May 2021 release *A Quiet Place II*, a highly anticipated sequel that sees her character Evelyn return to the eerie apocalyptic world overrun by nasty aliens who hunt down their human prey by listening for the smallest sound. (Originally slated to hit the theatres last summer, the pandemic pushed back the U.S. release date to May, while UK audiences will be able to catch the film in September.)

Even though the married couple have been together for 12 years, they had scrupulously shied away from the idea of appearing in the same film together as much for the optics (most star couple vehicles tank badly at the box office) as for the risk of personal friction.

"We were worried about working together and wondering whether we would want to kill each other on the set. I remember being terrified the night before my first scene and whether we would be arguing the whole time and drive each other crazy. As it turned out that we were both pleasantly surprised how well we worked together."

"In the end we couldn't prevent the film from completely determining our life for two years. We drove to work together in the morning and then back home together in the evening, and after that we drank whiskey together in order to process this really dark story.

"But above all, the film was not just John's baby, but also mine. Because he involved me so much in artistic decisions that I also became his creative partner, apart from being his lead actress."

*A Quiet Place II* sees Irish actor Cillian Murphy (Peakay Blinders) thrust into the proceedings as Emmett, another human on the run, who helps Evelyn and her children continue their struggle for survival from the aliens with the super-sensitive hearing. Blunt believes that the new story takes audiences on a different kind of journey, rather than simply exploiting the plot device which keeps audiences and the characters constantly on edge where the slightest sound could trigger an alien onslaught.

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**EMILY BLUNT**

"John found a way to make this film just as emotional as the first one," Blunt says.

"The first movie was more centred around the notion of parenthood and what lengths parents go to in order to protect their children. This one is more about the idea of a fractured sense of society and how human beings deal with crisis. It explores our notion of what it is to live with one another and whether our feeling of being part of a community is strong enough to want us still extend your hand to your neighbour."

And as far as Krasinski is concerned, he was more than happy to be able to work with his wife again. "She is the most incredible partner in writing and directing and set designs. She just has such good ideas. So I actually felt like I had my partner in all things on set, not just the best actress in the world. Anything I can think of, she makes ten times better, so that's a pretty good weapon to have on set."

Blunt and Krasinski have long been admired by even the most cynical Hollywood observers for their seemingly blissful marriage. Parents to Hazel, 7, and Violet, 4, they crave their privacy and have managed to stay out of the spotlight and evade the prying eyes of the paparazzi as much as possible.

In 2019, they decided to leave Los Angeles for good, >





vacating their elevated, post-modern Hollywood Hills home, and relocating to a stunning post-war residence in Brooklyn, New York. They paid \$15.3 million for two units in The Standish – a co-op building where actor Matt Damon also lives – which they have reportedly converted into one 500 sqm home.

“We chose not to live in LA because it can be suffocating to always talk about work and the business,” Blunt said of their move to New York City.

“My greatest concern is to ensure I leave enough time between

**Above: Emily Blunt in *The Girl on the Train* for which she was nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award Previous: Blunt arrives for the 2012 *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* premiere in London**

projects to enjoy being with my husband and children.”

Family is of paramount importance to Blunt. She grew up in the London suburb of Roehampton where she was raised by her father, Oliver Blunt, QC, a prominent criminal defence barrister, and her mother, Joanna, formerly an actress and teacher. The second of four children, Blunt is best friends with her eldest sister Felicity, a literary agent who married actor Stanley Tucci after being introduced to him by Emily. It was during the latter part of her childhood that Blunt developed a prominent stutter that ironically was the beginning of her journey to Hollywood.

“I once had a really bad speech impediment that began when I was seven, and it was very difficult for me to speak fluently in front of others which was massively

frustrating because I had so much to say but had such a hard time being able to express myself...”

“So I used to do impressions all the time, mimicking family members or teachers. I found whenever I did a silly voice, I could speak more fluently. I had a teacher who saw that and encouraged me to take acting lessons and that helped even more. There was something quite liberating about being able to throw yourself into another character, not having to worry about whatever was going to come out of your mouth

next... Acting was what helped me to speak freely.”

Emily credits her family and the lively atmosphere at home for having fostered her own distinctively sassy, gregarious nature. “I suppose I get that from my family, I grew up in a house where we were always entertaining each other,” Blunt says.

“But at the same time I came to develop this very practical, rational side which enables me to take stock of things and make good decisions without letting emotions get the better of you. I find it’s a good quality to have, especially when you’re making your way in a very unpredictable kind of business.

“I have a very hopeful and optimistic way of looking at the world. I like to dream big – as an actor you need to have a vivid imagination and throw yourself into your characters with abandon.” ➤

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Blunt's marriage to Krasinski has been one of the brightest passages in her life. They have also enjoyed the kind of easy rapport and ability to communicate that she believes has been one of the

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**Above: Blunt with husband John Krasinski in 2018 Right: Blunt at the 2015 Critics' Choice Movie Awards in Hollywood**

key elements in the success of their marriage.

"We've always been able to talk to each other and discuss everything together. Being very open and talking, and not hiding any worries or concerns is so important I think. I also think it's an advantage having someone in your life who understands the kind of things you go through in our profession.

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"We also try to be very supportive of each other and we know that we always have each other to rely on and make each other feel very loved and appreciated.

It's a beautiful feeling.

"But beyond simply being best friends, we also have a very easy way of being together and having a lot of fun.

"We trust each other and care for each other very deeply, and that means we can enjoy our lives together and believe in building a future together with our children."

It is hardly surprising then that Blunt found herself experiencing the same deep sense of responsibility

she feels as a parent in real life while playing the mother desperately trying to keep her children safe in *A Quiet Place*.

"I see [the setting of the films] as a metaphor, or as a series of metaphors. The story is an allegory about the fears that mothers and fathers have regarding our children.

"Even though I know that there will be no extra-terrestrial invasion, I still have this irrational fear that something bad could happen to my children.

"Every parent carries that worry around with them.

"My children are my refuge, they are my really quiet place." ■

