

Sense and sensibility

Having trained with the UK National Youth Theatre before landing her first professional job at 17, Daisy Edgar-Jones has since built a fine screen and stage career, and is now recognised as a global superstar, as Harold von Kursk discovers

Daisy Edgar-Jones is fearless when it comes to testing her limits. In 2026, she took on the formidable challenge of portraying one of the most iconic figures in English literature – Elinor Dashwood – in a daring new screen adaptation of Jane Austen’s 1811 novel, *Sense and Sensibility*.

Previously, Emma Thompson delivered the definitive performance of Elinor in Ang Lee’s acclaimed 1995 version that netted Thompson an Oscar for penning the screenplay as well as a Best Actress nomination.

Today the 28-year-old Edgar-Jones is hoping to put her own stamp on the character that would represent a major stepping stone in her career. Although there will inevitably be comparisons to Thompson’s performance, younger generations of filmgoers will likely be unfamiliar with the previous version and may only have formed impressions of Austen’s heroine from having read the book.

None of this matters to Edgar-Jones, however. *Sense and Sensibility* marks her third appearance in a film based on a novel. She made her breakthrough performance in 2020’s hit BBC mini-series *Normal People*, an adaptation of Sally Rooney’s eponymous best-seller.

Right: Daisy Edgar Jones stars in *Sense and Sensibility*, directed by Georgia Oakley

Two years later, Edgar-Jones would star in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, based on the novel by Delia Owens.

So when she signed onto *Sense and Sensibility*, Edgar-Jones was fully aware of the impossibility of catering to any preconceived notions of her character: rather, she understood that the best way to play Elinor would be by relying on her own instincts and allowing her performance to evolve during the shooting process. “What I learned from my experience on *Normal People* was not putting too much pressure on yourself to get it exactly right, and exactly how it should be. Because ultimately, your interpretation is always going to be different and take a different angle on your character. Trying to capture the right tone is the most important thing,” said Edgar-Jones.

“The thing that I try and focus on is being a part of a group and collaborating, and then hoping that audiences will love it, but accepting that it’s going to be out of your hands and that it’s going to be a different thing when it comes out. For me, it’s all about just enjoying the process.”

Directed by British filmmaker Georgia Oakley (*Blue Jean*), *Sense and Sensibility* follows the journey of two elder sisters, Elinor (Edgar-Jones), and Marianne

(Esmé Creed-Miles) Dashwood, as they struggle with love, loss, and financial peril while navigating the often forbidding social strictures of late 18th-century British society.

Unlike the Ang Lee version, and apart from Edgar-Jones, this production relies on a less heralded cast that includes Caitríona Balfe as Mrs. Dashwood, Frank Dillane as John Willoughby, Herbert Nordrum as Colonel Brandon, Bodhi Rae Breathnach as Margaret Dashwood, Stacy Martin as Fanny Dashwood, George MacKay as Edward Ferrars, and Fiona Shaw as Mrs. Jennings. “It was fun to see how we could remake [the AngLee] classic for another generation,” said Edgar-Jones earlier this year.

“[Our film] feels modern and distinctive. There are moments that are rageful. Georgia (Oakley) really wanted to bring out the wildness of these girls. Elinor is more composed and contained than Marianne but she still feels things deeply. She just knows how to tame it.”

Edgar-Jones was also eager

to follow in the footsteps of several acclaimed actresses who have inscribed themselves into the cultural imagination as Austen heroines – most notably Keira Knightley and Gwyneth Paltrow – whose appearances in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, respectively, represented major turning points in their careers.

As a result, Edgar-Jones will have to satisfy the high expectations of critics and audiences alike who will be looking for a similarly charismatic performance. But despite the complexities of playing Elinor, Edgar-Jones is in the habit of taking a laissez-faire approach to her craft. “The way I tend to work is, I like the saying ‘Take it seriously but wear it lightly,’ which is the advice my father gave me when I was starting out. I try and do that with all my roles where I do a huge amount of prep and I work really hard and they take it seriously in between action and cut, but also try to enjoy the process and have fun. I find it easier to jump in and out and to be open and playful [on the set], if that makes sense.”

Sense and Sensibility is produced by the elite team of Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner whose London-based Working Title Films has garnered 16 Oscars to date and was previously responsible for *Pride and Prejudice* starring Knightley ➤

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and 2020's *Emma* with Anya Taylor-Joy. This augurs well for Edgar-Jones who for the first time is being featured in a prestige film that could also deliver at the box-office. Interestingly, she is a fervent admirer of classic literature and she regards the role of Elinor as a logical extension of her professional evolution.

Said Edgar-Jones: "I'm a huge fan of Jane Austen's heroines and I have a great appreciation for stories that feature independent women who young women can truly admire and see aspects of themselves in those characters. It's a gift to be able to play women who are able to draw on their inner strength to overcome obstacles

and stay true to their ambitions. And one of my favourite books is *Little Women* (by American author Louisa May Alcott who is often compared to Jane Austen – ED) which has some beautifully written female characters that draw you to that family and the struggles they face... I really admire women who display the kind of toughness and sense of determination that women are often not given credit for having."

Daisy Edgar-Jones is the daughter of Wendy Edgar, a

former film editor, and Philip Jones, the co-creator and former executive producer of *Big Brother*, which during its heyday was the most popular show on British TV. He is currently serving as one of the top executives at Sky TV.

Her father helped pave her way into acting, as much through osmosis as through the many discussions they would have about the entertainment industry. One such chat still lingers vividly in her memory – "he gave me the 'talk of doom'" – that he would

regularly deliver to contestants on *Big Brother* as a way of preparing them for the challenges of fame.

"My dad had a really good insight into how [to handle] the spotlight... He said: 'Keep your head screwed on, keep your feet on the floor, and don't get too swept up in something. You're still you, you haven't changed, even if people around you might,'" recalled Edgar-Jones.

Furthermore, both her parents fostered a home environment that embraced culture and the arts.

Oddly, her mother encouraged her to audition for the National Youth Theatre at age 14, hoping that she would be rejected and thus lead her to rethink her acting ambitions. ➤

"I'M VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES I'VE HAD TO WORK IN AMERICA BUT I DEFINITELY WANT TO KEEP MAKING INDEPENDENT FILMS IN THE UK"



Above: Harris Dickinson, Reese Witherspoon, Daisy Edgar-Jones, Taylor John-Smith and Olivia Newman attend the *Where The Crawdads Sing* premiere at Museum of Modern Art **Left:** Sebastian Stan and Daisy Edgar-Jones (*Fresh*)



Left and below: Daisy Edgar-Jones and Glen Powell at the *Twisters* European premiere at Cineworld, Leicester Square London in 2024 – the pair built a strong on-screen chemistry as meteorologist Kate Cooper and YouTube-famous storm chaser Tyler Owens, which ensured the film's popularity worldwide

Instead, not only was Daisy accepted into the prestigious school, but a year later she signed with an agent who helped her land her first professional roles at age 17 when she played in two sitcoms, the BBC's "Outnumbered" and ITV's *Cold Feet*.

Fame came early when at the age of 21 she landed the role of Marianne in *Normal People*. Edgar-Jones was immediately hailed as a sensational new British star with a bright future.

Since then, she has done nothing but fulfill that promise with striking turns in a series of notable projects: *Fresh* (2022), a psychological horror film in which she played opposite Sebastian Stan; *Under the Banner of Heaven* (2023), the acclaimed American limited series about murders within a Mormon community that starred Andrew Garfield; and the Hollywood blockbuster *Twisters* (2024)

that saw her work alongside the highly popular Glen Powell. The latter film earned \$372 million worldwide and brought Edgar-Jones to the attention of both American studio executives and international audiences.

The success of *Twisters* gave her the kind of bankability that may well have led veteran producers Bevan and Fellner to give her the lead in *Sense and Sensibility*.

"I'm very grateful for the opportunities I've had to work in America but I definitely want to keep making independent films in the UK," says Edgar-Jones.

"I think we do indies [independent films and series] brilliantly and I'd love to continue finding those quiet stories that are really special."

Above all, Edgar-Jones prides herself on finding the kinds of roles that allow her to grow as an actress and push her into uncomfortable places.

Today, she has five more projects in the pipeline, including *Here Comes the Flood*, a crime drama with Denzel Washington and Robert Pattinson, and

A Place in Hell, a legal thriller in which she and Michelle Williams play bitter rivals in a major law firm. The latter film is set to be released this Christmas. "I love films where you can explore the inner journey of a character because that's what resonates so deeply within me personally," she revealed.

"My main reason for getting into acting was wanting to be able to push my limits, push my own psychological boundaries and plunge into difficult emotional spaces. That's part of the thrill and excitement of performing, and I'll always look for that." ■

