



AWARDS

## Phoebe Dynevor on 'Bridgerton's' female gaze and women's sexuality



Phoebe Dynevor (Liam Daniel/Netflix)

By RANDEE DAWN

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Last year was a wild ride for everyone, but Phoebe Dynevor’s unique highs may have been more extreme than most: The show she’d just finished shooting pre-lockdown — [Regency England-era “Bridgerton,”](#) in which she stars as ambivalent, highly eligible Daphne — became a phenomenon as fans parsed it endlessly on social media, and some even created a musical.

Dynevor, 26, has been a pro performer since she was a teen (“The Village,” “Younger,” the upcoming feature “The Colour Room”) and comes from a showbiz family (Mom’s a vet of “Coronation Street,” Dad’s a screenwriter), but she says this level of fame takes some getting used to. She spoke with The Envelope via Zoom to discuss the start of Season 2, the importance of corsets to acting, and *that scene* that had so many viewers up in virtual arms.

**“Bridgerton’s” first season shot in something of a vacuum and then it took off. How is shooting Season 2 different?**

Seeing everyone on set was amazing and overwhelming; we cried and hugged. We hadn’t been all together since before the pandemic, because we finished filming and then a week later the pandemic blew up. It was such a quick transition from shooting to pandemic to then it being a huge hit.

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### **Did you ever wonder why audiences embraced it so thoroughly?**

I watched it before it came out and I did think, “Wow, this has something I haven’t seen before. A lot of people could enjoy this. My grandparents, my friends, my little sister would love it.” But you never know what it’s going to mean to the world, because as soon as you do a piece of art and let it out, people claim it and it becomes something else.

### **The show was intentionally diverse in its casting and storytelling. As a white performer, do you feel you have any responsibility to seek out jobs that actively reflect diversity?**

I do, I really do. When Black Lives Matter happened last year — it was just after we finished filming — it brought up a lot of conversations and cemented those things for me, especially working with people like Adjoa [Andoh] and Golda [Rosheuvel] on the show, seeing how people like that had not been represented in these stories before. We all have to contribute in any way we can to telling stories that include everyone; that’s our jobs, to speak out and make sure we’re representing people. Because in the past we haven’t.

Phoebe Dynevor as Daphne Bridgerton in “Bridgerton.” (Liam Daniel/Netflix)

**Another aspect of what made “Bridgerton” fresh was the way in which it portrayed sex and romance through a generally female gaze.**

It was a really conscious decision for us to have Daphne lying in bed and seeing Simon, instead of it being a male gaze — it was her gaze and her sexuality. That thing where some people pretend women don’t have a sexual drive or whatever — we need to see it. Because we do. We have orgasms and we have all those feelings. Being able

to portray that was new for me.

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**That said, there was the one scene some found controversial, in which Daphne figures out what Simon's ([Regé-Jean Page](#)) been doing to prevent having children and has sex with him despite his telling her "no." Did you find that troublesome either during the shoot or after?**

I mean, I didn't. At the end of the day, we're telling a story, and in the book [by Julia Quinn] that's what happened, so we played that. It's brilliant that as artists we can spark that conversation and have people say, "Hold on, that wasn't OK." Just because I played a part in that, I don't condone that behavior. I agree with people who were outraged by it in a way, but also — what a great conversation to spark, you know?

**You had experience with period dress before this show, but what's it like to try to play a character while being bound in corsets or specific period**

## outfits?

I was lucky because I only had a half-corset, so it wasn't bad. You do get used to them, but I was very relieved to take it off at the end of the day. Daphne had about 104 dresses in the end that were all completely handmade. To me, the costume does half the job for you, or even more than half of the job. You have to pull your shoulders back and then your chin comes up because of the way the straps pull you. The same for the men — they had a really high neck and couldn't move their neck properly.

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**You've been acting since you were a teenager in one form or other. But if the whole thing hadn't worked out, what would you have wanted to make your career?**

Some sort of psychologist. I'm really interested in how people's minds work — what makes them sad or happy. I'm intrigued by and care about people. But I get to do that with acting. So I'm not missing anything!

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