



AWARDS

How filming naked in a glass sphere for weeks was good for 'Sandman's' Tom Sturridge



"I figured out various yogic positions that would allow everyone else to not feel ridiculous," Tom Sturridge says of filming "The Sandman" scenes in which he's trapped naked inside a glass sphere. (LIAM DANIEL/NETFLIX)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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Tom Sturridge is a dream. As the star of [Netflix's "The Sandman,"](#) an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's beloved comic book series, Sturridge stepped into seemingly

unstable shoes as the lean, angst-ridden (and rightly so after being imprisoned in a glass sphere for over a century) embodiment of dreams, Lord Morpheus (a.k.a. Dream). Now Sturridge, 36, best known for Tony-nominated stage performances in “Orphans” and “Sea Wall/A Life,” is a serious player in a different awards season. He spoke with The Envelope about his endless time in that sphere, his acting family and passing on the acting bug to the next generation.

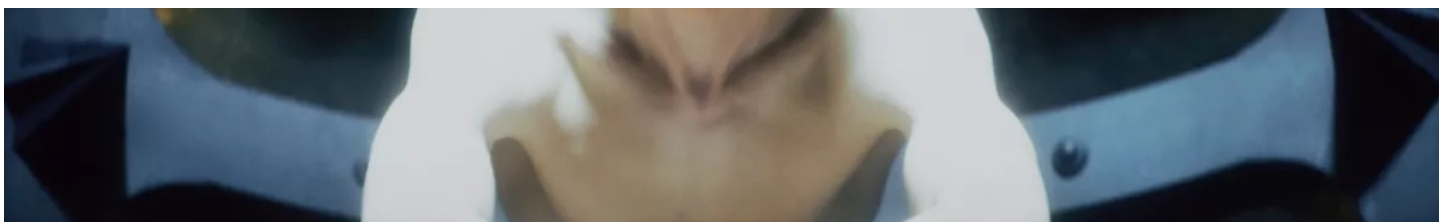
You’re about to dive into your first New York Comic Con. Is this the kind of event you might have gone to before being the star of “The Sandman”?

It’s possible. I’m someone who’s relatively overwhelmed with large groups of people, so I would’ve liked to have an ally who talked me through it and introduced me to the rules of the game. But the thing I love so much about “Sandman” is the way it connects with people. It’s unlike anything I’ve ever done before: The level of exchange of communication with fans is so rigorously interesting and deep, and I’m excited to continue that dialogue.

What was it about the character of Dream that drew you to him?

He’s not a Homeric classical heroic — by which, I mean someone whose intention is always to do good. His intention is to do right by his responsibilities, which are very specific to the subconscious of the universe. What’s beautiful about the story of “Sandman” is also the family he’s a part of, the Endless. They battle against each other in ways that a normal family does, which makes it relatable.





Tom Sturridge as Dream in “The Sandman.” (Netflix)

In the first parts of “Sandman,” you had to spend much of your time imprisoned in a glass sphere. Did that help you get into the character?

As a human being, if you are actually put in a glass box and kept there — for me, let’s say, the 4½ weeks that we shot that sequence — you can begin to feel exactly how the character feels in a way that’s much more specific.

Were you fully physically enclosed during those sequences?

Yeah, because to break up the sphere took about a half-hour. So I would sit there, and for long stretches of the day it was certainly a meditative contemplative time. Especially since you’re naked as well, which on the opening days of a shoot is a lovely welcome to the crew.

Indeed!

I figured out various yogic positions that would allow everyone else to not feel ridiculous. But from a performance point of view, the physicality of that — it offered me an opportunity, which you don’t often get, to find a way to communicate with an audience about a character without speaking.



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In the show, you look incredibly like the drawings of Dream in the original graphic novel/comics of “Sandman.” Is that a strange concept to you?

From my perspective, that gives me confidence. But beyond that, it’s dangerous for us to always take comfort in any sort of physical connection between the images in a comic book and the actors who play them, because I think we know it’s not about the way you look — it’s about the soul that you bring to it.

Show business runs in the Sturridge family — your father, Charles, is a director, your mother, Phoebe Nicholls, and your sister Matilda are actors. And so was your grandfather, Anthony Nicholls. Did you ever entertain the idea of not going into show business?

My mother stopped working as an actress when she had her children and only started again when I was in my early 20s. It wasn’t a big part of my childhood. But I think whenever our parents do any job, you think that job is possible [for you], as opposed to — like, for me, the idea of being an appellate lawyer in the Supreme Court. I have no connection to that world, but it’s something I would supremely want to do.

So have you not decided you’re sticking with this acting business? That lawyering could still happen?

I think figuring out what to do with your life is rarely connected to your vocation. But I really do care about acting. It has brought some extraordinary experiences, and it continually offers the opportunity to be in spaces with people who are cleverer than you are. I want to always learn from people.

You have a daughter with Sienna Miller who’s about 10 now. What would be your reaction if she came to you and said she wanted to get into acting?

The world I care about is theater, and it's the most exciting and thrilling way to explore the job. I have no idea what I would say to her, if I'm honest. The one thing I'm constantly surprised by with parenting is how I constantly assume or behave in a certain way, and I have an idea of what I'm going to say — and the moment I'm confronted with the reality of this person and the way they react to the world, I'm confounded. Maybe I'm not the best person to give advice.

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