

[Emmys 2024](#)[Emmys BuzzMeter](#)[Emmys defy classification](#)[Emmy Roundtables](#)[The Envel](#)

## AWARDS

## Gillian Anderson brings back the tension of BBC's Prince Andrew interview in 'Scoop'



"Being reminded in a film about the importance of independent journalism is warranted at any time," says Gillian Anderson, who plays a journalist in the television movie "Scoop." (Evelyn Freja / For The Times)

**By Randee Dawn**

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Gillian Anderson glides between worlds. Or, more accurately, glides between

countries. The star of Netflix's based-on-a-true-story "Scoop" is American-born, in part British-raised, and now lives in Britain full-time. And she moves between cultures, accents and perspectives like a chameleon.

Perfect training for an actor with two Emmy Awards who is still often identified by one of her earliest roles: Dana Scully on "The X-Files."

But it's as if she senses where her true identity lies and she has an answer: a very particular North London vegetation.



#### TELEVISION

**'Scoop' depicts Prince Andrew's infamous interview. These were the women behind it**

April 5, 2024

"Hedgerows are the smell of my childhood," says Anderson, who was born in Chicago, lived in the U.K. as a child in the 1970s, then relocated with her family to Michigan for her adolescence. "We would walk past them and the height of my head was always the height of the hedgerows. It's such a quintessentially English smell. If my soul had a smell, it would be a hedgerow."

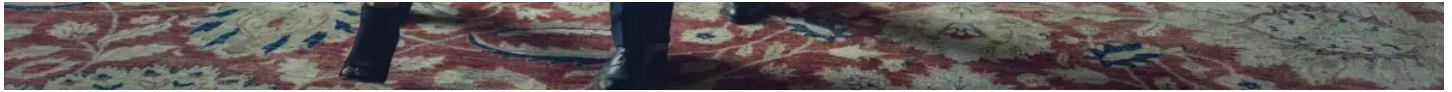
Anderson, 55, is spending this April afternoon at New York's Lowell Hotel being interviewed and photographed for her role as British TV journalist Emily Maitlis in "Scoop," the TV movie about the bombshell BBC interview with Prince Andrew. Despite her stiletto heels, she's smaller than you might expect — until you remember she's the inspiration for the portable, resizable "Scully Box," created during her "X-Files" days so she could better approach her 6-foot-tall co-star David Duchovny. But the real reason her smallness comes as a surprise is the way Anderson fills a room when she's in it. With or without heels, she dominates her roles with a contained stillness that simultaneously crackles with hyper-aware presence.

“There’s such a cool, calm sophistication to Gillian as a human,” says Sam McAlister, an executive producer on “Scoop” and also the real-life journalist who secured the all-important interview. “It was wonderful to see her throw herself into imbuing Emily, because of the actress she is. When I heard Gillian was looking at the script, I held my breath for days. When she said ‘yes,’ I was yelping on the streets of West London.”

Casting Anderson is a canny decision for a number of reasons. Aside from her ability to embody the broadcaster who interviewed the prince, Anderson’s name makes the film more accessible outside the U.K. bubble. American audiences aren’t likely to know what a big deal Maitlis is, or understand on a gut level how big a deal it was to get a royal speaking on the BBC’s “Newsnight” about his relationship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and denying allegations he’d had sex with a minor. But Anderson’s casting makes things both relatable and more interesting.

“Brits know the cast of characters so much better,” Anderson says. “We won’t know until people see it whether they care [about the story].”





Gillian Anderson stars as the journalist who interviews Prince Andrew, played by Rufus Sewell, in “Scoop.” (Peter Mountain / Netflix)

Making the interview with Andrew the focal part of the film was critical to see if it could even fly, says director Philip Martin. So he made two “cunning, intentional” moves: One, the day they shot the interview was the first time Anderson (as Maitlis) and Rufus Sewell (as Prince Andrew) interacted on set. Second, they shot the interview multiple times — but in 20-minute takes.

“We all sort of knew that if the interview didn’t work, we didn’t really have a film,” says Martin.

The interview had to work on a technical level with both actors, but as Anderson notes, the underlying point of the story was to emphasize the importance of professionals shining a light in dark corners. Fans of “The Crown” (Anderson won her second Emmy in 2021 for playing Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the Netflix series) likely get the insularity and protectiveness of the royals, so to persuade one of them to sink himself before the masses is an enormous victory for journalists. (Shortly after Maitlis’ interview, the prince stepped back from public duties as a royal.)

“Truth seems to be more malleable than ever, and the importance of independent journalism and a platform to hold people to account is, perhaps, a dying art,” Anderson says. “Being reminded in a film about the importance of independent journalism is warranted at any time.”

Despite playing a journalist, Anderson still doesn’t much care for having the microphones turned on her, but “I mind it less than I used to,” she says. “A mixture of getting famous very young, and having a child young [Anderson has three children now] and being followed by the paparazzi [made it hard]. I was fearful during

interviews, so I was quite closed off and came across as quite serious and dark. Perhaps it's gotten easier, perhaps I've gotten better — or maybe I'm just less serious.”



#### AWARDS

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June 1, 2024

Getting older and wiser also has helped Anderson to make peace with Scully, the character for which she earned her first Emmy, in 1997. Over the decades, she's been followed by the groundbreaking nature of her rational FBI agent — studies have shown “the Scully effect” inspired a generation of young women to study in STEM fields — but Anderson says she's more comfortable now including that iconic character in the discussion.

“It took me a while after the series ended to be able to hear about it again, talk about it again,” she says. “Maybe it took even longer to properly appreciate it. I needed a bit of a break and a bit of distance to take ownership of it and embrace it.”

As she does, Anderson continues to look outside of film and TV for projects she can also embrace. In 2023 she launched a beverage (G-Spot) that she calls a “functional drink,” and her latest book (she's a novelist three times over) is a collection of anonymous letters from women talking about sex called “Want,” due out in September.

“We put out a call to women around the world to write in anonymously. It's a look to the degree to which things have changed or not changed since Nancy Friday's book, ‘My Secret Garden,’ in the ‘70s,” she explains.

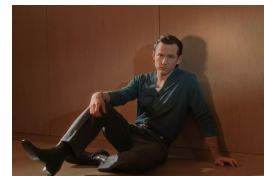
Sitting calm and collected in her chair, Anderson occasionally turns her face to the

American sun streaming through the French doors on her left. She closes her eyes, drinks it all in, then returns to the interview. “It’s about what goes on with women, inside their minds. Their deepest thoughts.” She pauses. “I get up to a lot of stuff when I’m not acting.”

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