

KAYA SCODELARIO HAS brought one of her old schoolfriends along to our photo shoot – partly because Leah wants to be a make-up artist and partly for company. The exotically beautiful half-Brazilian Kaya, who played the ice-cool Effy Stonem in the cult teen TV hit *Skins*, may look at home ordering room service amid the elegance of Claridge's penthouse suite, but she's actually an unaffected Londoner who admits she's happier having a drink at her local in Camden. 'My friends still see me as the girl they went to school with. We're very much home bunnies,' she says.

Firmly in touch with her working-class roots, 22-year-old Kaya grew up in a North London council flat; her parents Katia Scodelario and Roger Humphrey split up when she was a toddler. An only child, Kaya was raised by her Brazilian mother: 'I still live five minutes from her – I go round for dinner all the time.' Her father died three years ago.

Kaya was cast in *Skins* when she was 14, auditioning on the suggestion of a drama teacher at school. 'We were just a group of kids doing a job we loved in this beautiful city, Bristol. Every moment was life-changing.' She went on to win excellent reviews as Cathy in director Andrea Arnold's 2011 adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, and her latest project is the dystopian sci-fi action movie *The Maze Runner*. This thrilling young-adult drama is predicted to connect with teenagers in the same way that *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* captured their collective imagination, propelling Kaya into a hit franchise (sequels are already in the pipeline) and an exciting Hollywood career.

Also starring Dylan O'Brien (*Teen Wolf*) and British actor Will Poulter (*The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*), *The Maze Runner* is based on the bestselling novel by James Dashner about a group of teenagers who find themselves trapped in a mysterious walled colony known as The Glade. They have no memory, and their young leaders, including Kaya's character Teresa, have to navigate a treacherous maze in search of an escape route.

Kaya has been compared to both *The Hunger Games*'s Jennifer Lawrence and Shailene Woodley, star of this year's hits *Divergent* and *The Fault in Our Stars*. 'I don't mind at all,' she smiles. 'They're both great.' Are the A-list expectations causing any pressure? 'No, I just try to do the job. It's important to enjoy the moment.' Kaya (who has previously dated her *Skins* co-star Jack O'Connell and *Shameless* actor Elliott Tittensor) has a new boyfriend – US actor and comedian Benjamin Walker. They met on the Melbourne set of her upcoming film *The Moon and the Sun*, in which she plays the daughter of Louis XIV ➤

'I WANT TO KILL JAMES BOND!'

She has ambitions to play a super-villain and stars in a scary new sci-fi movie: *Skins* graduate KAYA SCODELARIO has morphed from cool teen to action heroine. She tells *Elaine Lipworth* about best friends, celeb crushes – and getting young people back into cinemas

PHOTOGRAPHS *David Standish*

KAYA WEARS JUMPER and TROUSERS, Chanel. EARRINGS, Susan Caplan Vintage



CUTE FOR KAYA

DEFINE YOUR STYLE...

I take my inspiration from being in London. I grew up near Camden Town, so I like the markets and finding old beaten-up things and putting them together. As I've got older, my mum has defined my style; she wears very bright colours and patterns. I used to shy away from colour, but now I'm embracing it.

FAVOURITE DESIGNER?

I feel very comfortable in Chanel. It's classic and makes you feel feminine. I enjoy wearing Louis Vuitton because it's edgy and cool and you feel a bit tougher.

STYLE ICONS? I really love Kate Moss – I think she defines London. I like Cara Delevingne, too, because she's got that whole sexy-tomboy look going on.

ON YOUR BEDSIDE TABLE?

I'm reading *Room* by Emma Donoghue – it's heartbreaking. I also have loose change, and sage: I burn sage leaves around the house [to clear negative energy]. I've been away for two months, so there's probably a lot of dust as well.

PERFECT SUNDAY?

Walking my french bulldog Arnie on Hampstead Heath, which is my favourite place in London. It's where I go to clear my mind and I find it beautiful.

FAVOURITE TV SHOW?

I'm obsessed with *Game of Thrones* and loads of my friends are in it – such as Joe Dempsie and Hannah Murray who were also in *Skins*.

WHO MAKES YOU LAUGH?

My boyfriend Ben is hilarious. He's a stand-up comedian and he makes me laugh uncontrollably. My dog is a little clown – he has just learnt how to do roly-polies. And I love the comedian Micky Flanagan. He's brilliant.

MOTTO FOR LIFE?

Be comfortable and confident with yourself.



From left: Kaya with her mother Katia; starring in *Skins* with Lisa Backwell; as Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*, and with Dylan O'Brien in *The Maze Runner*

◀ (Pierce Brosnan). 'Ben lives in New York and I live in London, so we have to work hard to see each other,' she says. 'You have to go for it, which I like.'

I jumped out of my seat watching *The Maze Runner*.

I actually screamed at one point. It's about a group of young people trying to understand the world they've woken up in. It looks at how some people accept their fate while others question things and inspire the rest.

Teresa is tough and mysterious. She's very much one of the leaders. Like everyone else, she has woken up with no memory, but she's willing to fight and to risk her life.

Working with Dylan has given me a lot of street cred with my little cousins; they all love *Teen Wolf*. Dylan is a proper sweetheart. And Will [Poulter] is lovely. It was great to have a fellow Londoner there, and we have a similar friendship group; we know people in common.

A lovely ex-army guy called Gio taught us how to hold a machete.

We learned how to chop wood and start fires. There were poisonous snakes where we were filming, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, so a snake wrangler would clear the set for us – they'd catch five or six every day. All the dirt and exhaustion you see on the screen is natural. But I'm outdoorsy, so I was comfortable with it all.

It would be incredibly boring to just play the pretty girl.

My mum wants me to play strong roles, and she has told me that I'm not allowed to do nudity yet, and I agree with her: I would never do it unless it was an integral part of the story. I wouldn't do a film like *Fifty Shades Of Grey* – not in a million years!

***The Hunger Games* films show that females can carry movies and make money.** They set the bar

really high for Hollywood. I still love the experience of watching a movie in a theatre, and I think these franchises are getting young people in cinemas again.

Growing up, I was obsessed with Arnold Schwarzenegger, which is why my dog is called Arnie. His films were pure Hollywood to me and I've seen all of them more than 50 times. *The Terminator* is my favourite. I haven't met him – it would be too freaky, I think I'd faint, I love him too much.

My mum was a great dad. She still is; she plays both roles perfectly. She can be stern, but she is also giving and kind. She's my biggest inspiration. When she first moved to England, she made food for Brazilian restaurants, then she worked in the accounting department of a hospital; now she's studying art therapy. It was difficult when my dad died, but it's something a lot of people go through and I have found a way to push on from it. I feel inspired to make him as proud as I can. He's always with me.

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Skins was like our university. We grew up together
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The first school play I did was *Oliver Twist*, and I beat the boys to the part of Oliver. The hardest, scariest girl in the school came up to me and said, 'You're a good little actress, intcha?' And I was, like, 'Oh my God, she said something nice to me.' It felt incredible. As soon as I discovered drama, I had something to love that was mine.

Skins was like our university; we had the time of our lives. We grew up together; we all fell in love for the first time together. None of us took *Skins* for granted. We knew this was an incredible opportunity and didn't want to mess it up. That's part of the reason I think we're not all messed up now: we did the things every teenager does, but when it came to work, we were very focused.

Skins reflected teenage life. It was special because there had been a lot of teen shows which followed the



FAUX-FUR COAT, Clio Peppiatt.
SUNGLASSES, Wildfox

same format – a teenager does something bad and gets punished and is sorry. *Skins* threw that out of the window and was, like, ‘No, sometimes kids will go out and experiment and make bad decisions, but it’s a part of life.’

Effy knew her own mind. She was a bit strange but she wasn’t afraid to be different, and I think that’s what people liked about her. In the fourth season we explored Effy’s depression. It climaxed with her attempting to kill herself; we worked very closely with Mind, the mental-health charity.

I was not a cool teenager like Effy. She had a certain look and I always keep a cool leather jacket because of her. But it can be quite intimidating being a style role model to girls. I spend a lot of my time in tracksuit bottoms and baggy jumpers.

I didn’t tell anyone in school that I was going to be in *Skins*. I was terrified of them putting me down. Kids will pick up on weakness, and I was very shy growing up. I was skinny and flat-chested; I didn’t have the latest clothes. For me it was about being left out and not having any friends and being laughed at. I was very lonely, but that happens to so many people.

I don’t think there’s one right body shape or perfect look. My mother’s very curvy. Growing up,

I spent a lot of time thinking, ‘There’s something wrong with me,’ but I’ve learnt to accept my body. I know I’m healthy. I know I should exercise, but I need to find the thing that works for me. I walk my dog a lot, if that counts!

When you’re away filming, coming back to an empty home is horrible. It’s difficult to adjust, but I go and see my friends and suddenly I feel at home again. As well as Leah, there’s Paige, who is a florist, and Hannah who works in a nursery and is also a youth adviser. We were best friends in school and it’s still just the four of us [and their children]. Friends are incredibly important. Every week we’ll go to someone’s house and have dinner.

Having kids young was a part of life where we grew up. Being young mothers makes my friends incredible women and they inspire me much more than any celebrity ever could. When I’m stressed out, I think, ‘Right, if they can get through what they are doing, then I can get through whatever tiny thing I’m worried about.’ I love kids and being a mum would be a beautiful thing.

Pierce Brosnan is this wonderful person you want to hug all the time. He was my James Bond. I was so nervous before we started filming [*The Moon and the Sun*], but he’s unbelievable. He is polite and courteous whether he’s talking to the

caterer or the sound guy, and he can flip your mood instantly. We nicknamed him Piercey Baby!

I’d like to be a Bond villain. I don’t want to be the Bond girl. I want to kill someone... Kill Bond!

I met David Beckham at the *Vanity Fair* Oscars party. I was overwhelmed by how many famous people were there and I went to sit down. I looked up and found I was next to David Beckham, and then I freaked out and started babbling about England and fry-ups. He was lovely, but I think he thought I was a crazy girl who had snuck in.

I chased Ronnie Wood through a hotel in Paris because I love the Stones so much. He turned around, I burst into tears and he hugged me. I was like, ‘Thank you for the music,’ and then I ran off!

There are some amazing British actors of my age. We have a passion for the art. Shakespeare is part of our culture. We’re reluctant to take any job just to get famous. We like the journey.

I really love London and I don’t want to move to Los Angeles. I don’t drive, so LA is difficult for me to get around. It is always sunny and perfect there and I find that a little bit scary coming from rainy, grey London. **■**

■ The Maze Runner will be in cinemas from Friday