

How to succeed in a

ELISABETH WEARS
DRESS, Sportmax



Mad Man's world

Much like her *Mad Men* character Peggy Olson, ELISABETH MOSS has risen through the ranks, from jobbing actress to award-winning lead. She talks to *Elaine Lipworth* about smashing glass ceilings, and why we *can* have it all ►

PHOTOGRAPHS *Matthew Welch*

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, interviews with A-list actresses are abstemious affairs: lunches consisting of salad and fizzy water. Elisabeth Moss, thankfully, is more laid back. She orders a glass of rosé when we meet in Los Angeles, which seems fitting given the booze-infused TV show in which she stars. Set in the swinging 60s, life in the world of *Mad Men* is punctuated by bourbon and cocktails – although, to be fair, it's Jon Hamm's Don Draper and his male colleagues in the Manhattan ad agency who do most of the drinking, often while they are seducing the female staff.

'They are smoking and drinking all the time on *Mad Men*,' smiles Elisabeth. 'Whenever we do a scene on a plane where people are smoking, it still tickles us because everything is politically correct nowadays. Office life seemed like a lot more fun back then. But those guys were drinking at ten in the morning, which is taking it to extremes. I don't think I would be able to roll with that,' she says, bright blue eyes twinkling.

Elisabeth and I are sipping wine on the poolside patio of the trendy Sunset Tower Hotel. Heads turn in our direction. There is no mistaking the actress, known around the globe as Peggy Olson, the ambitious and super-smart former secretary who has risen through the ranks of Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, and is now a high-powered copywriter. *Mad Men*, which has won four Emmys, three Golden Globes and two BAFTAs, is beginning its seventh and final season. 'I will miss it desperately,' says Elisabeth.

On screen, Peggy is pretty but rather conservative and businesslike. In person, Elisabeth is beautiful. She takes off her Burberry coat to reveal a peach silk dress that complements her petite figure and creamy skin. The actress is 31, but I tell her she could pass for a teenager: 'I am just old enough to appreciate that,' she laughs.

It's a man's world on the show, but there are as many if not more women in prominent roles: Peggy's colleague, the beautiful and highly capable Joan, played by Christina Hendricks; Don's ex-wife Betty (January Jones) and his current wife Megan (Jessica Paré). Over the years, Peggy has experienced pregnancy, promotion and heartbreak. Elisabeth has been sworn to secrecy and won't give away a thing about the new season: whether Peggy's relationship with her married boss is over now that he has decided to move to L.A., or whether

the series will jump ahead to the 70s. What she does say is, 'Some seasons were optimistic and some were depressing and it feels like we've taken all of that and combined it into one.'

Does everyone fancy the charismatic lead of the show? 'We don't all go around thinking Jon Hamm is a heart-throb. No,' grins his co-star. 'We've all seen him with his hair messed up at five in the morning, so it's not like that for us. Sometimes Jon will be wearing his suit on set and I'll be, like, "Oh wow, you look like Don Draper, really handsome." But I've known him for nine years so I don't see him that way. The fact that women do is as it should be, though. It is well deserved, for sure.'

Show business is in Elisabeth's DNA. Born and raised in L.A.'s Laurel Canyon, she and her brother Derek, a musician, had a bohemian upbringing. They were home-schooled. Their father Ron, a jazz musician from Birmingham, and American mother Linda, who plays harmonica, encouraged their children to be creative.

At five, Elisabeth played Greta in *The Sound Of Music*. She appeared in various TV shows before landing her first film role in *Imaginary Crimes*, aged ten. There was a role in *Girl, Interrupted* (1999), and by 17 she was a regular on *The West Wing*, playing the president's daughter alongside Martin Sheen.

Mad Men has dominated her 20s, but she also starred in the 2010 hit comedy *Get Him to the Greek* with Russell Brand and a West End production of Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* in 2011, with Keira Knightley. Her next film, *The One I Love*, directed by British actor Charlie McDowell, will be out later this year.

The actress's biggest accomplishment so far has been her Golden Globe win this year for her role as a sex crime detective in the series *Top of the Lake*, directed by New Zealander Jane Campion. 'It was incredible, the hardest thing I've ever done and the first time I've been the lead in something that big. I worked 50-something days in a row.'

She holds out her hand to show me an exquisite vintage diamond ring she bought to celebrate her win. 'It sparkles,' she says sweetly. 'I learned many years ago that a lady should buy her own jewellery. I like jewellery to have a meaning, so it's nice to remember exactly why I bought it.'

Content for now to continue treating herself to luxuries like her ring, the actress, who was briefly married to American comedian Fred Armisen, says she is currently single. 'I'm definitely a girl

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There isn't a woman on this earth who hasn't experienced sexism
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who doesn't want to live her life alone. But at the same time, I do understand that if you're going to have a partnership, it should be with the right person or it's not worth it.' Here she reveals what she is looking for in a relationship, how things are finally changing for women in Hollywood, her British roots – and her guilty pleasures.

At the start of *Mad Men* Peggy was naive and a little bit stupid. I forget that she was a young secretary. I reminded the boys on the show of that the other day. Peggy has changed so much. She's still flawed and vulnerable and she's had a lot of problems – thank God, because otherwise she'd be very boring. She's more of a grown-up now.

In the 60s men were in charge and women were secretaries. Or, like Joan, they were in



MOSS'S MUST-HAVES

WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD?

This is so awful, but I've been watching a reality show called *Vanderpump Rules*. It is unmissable – she's sleeping with her ex, this person is trying to get together with that person, who's cheating on someone else. It's such a mess and I can't get enough of it.

FAVOURITE KIND OF SUNDAY MORNING?

I check my emails and play with my ginger kittens Lucy and Ethel. I'm not a big breakfast eater, just a glass of juice.

WHO MAKES YOU STARSTRUCK?

Julia Roberts. I met her at the Golden Globes. She introduced herself and said she was a big fan of *Top of the Lake* and I almost couldn't speak. I introduced her to my friend Goldie, and then Julia walked away and Goldie and I hugged each other and giggled.

DEFINE YOUR STYLE

I don't want to put on my 60s dresses when I get out of work. I'm a girly girl, but sometimes I'll wear jeans and T-shirts with biker boots. I love Rag & Bone and Orla Kiely, who I discovered when I was in London because her shop was near where I was staying.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

I'm a huge J D Salinger dork. I love *The Catcher in the Rye* but my favourite book of his is *Nine Stories*. He's one of those authors that I can read over and over again.

SIGNATURE DISH?

I'm learning to cook. One of my best friends taught me how to make a spinach dish. But I go out for dinner all the time.

LIFE MOTTO?

It's so cheesy – just smile.

DRESS, Louis Vuitton.
SHOES, Prada

charge of the secretaries. Peggy probably didn't know anything about sexism, but it was during that period that women began to fight for their rights. Peggy represents the start of the movement that enabled us to have careers.

Sexism still happens today. There isn't a woman on this earth who hasn't experienced it. But I didn't want Peggy's story to be preachy. Her ideas are as good or better than those of the men she works with, and she wants to be heard.

Women in the 60s were grappling with the question of whether you can have it all: kids and career. People felt that it was either/or. Then this concept started to emerge: what if you could have a job and a baby and a marriage and make it all work? I think women today are still grappling

with that. I see close friends of mine who have babies and are working every day – some are single. I imagine it's incredibly complicated.

I am still learning about relationships. I've learnt that the number-one thing is being able to communicate and speak your mind. If you can't be brave and say what you need to say, then there's something wrong. Anyone can get married, but finding somebody to spend your life with is the real accomplishment. I'm interested in finding a partnership. If that brings marriage, then wonderful, but I feel like that's the cherry on top. I would like children but I still have a couple of steps to take before I get there...

Things have changed a lot for women on television. So many females now are leading

their shows in this golden age of TV: Julianna Margulies in *The Good Wife*, Kerry Washington in *Scandal*, Claire Danes in *Homeland*. There's just been incredible progress in the past ten to 15 years. That said, of course a 60-year-old man is still going to have an easier time getting the leading role in a film than a 60-year-old woman.

We all feel out-curved by Christina Hendricks. I think she would out-curve anyone! That girl's body is incredible and she looks amazing in the colourful dresses that she wears on the show. Sometimes she'll walk on set and I will look at her and just be like, 'Oh my God, you look so beautiful.' Her figure is amazing. Her skin is so pale and then, oh, that red hair... She is one of the most gorgeous women I know. ➤



From left: Elisabeth in *Top of the Lake* with Tom Wright, and in the new series of *Mad Men* with, from left, Jay R Ferguson, Ben Feldman, Rich Sommer and Aaron Staton

I was raised to look after myself. My mum's a very strong woman and she taught me from when I was a teenager to be financially independent. I've been fortunate enough to be able to support myself and make money. That said, the idea of being supported by a man and living in a mansion eating bonbons all day sounds fantastic!

Everyone was up till five in the morning and slept till four in the afternoon in our house. I grew up in a very artistic environment. One of my first memories is being at the Blue Note [jazz club] in New York, sitting on the steps backstage when I was four or five. We used to hang out in recording studios, play all the instruments and run around playing hide and seek. Every Christmas and Thanksgiving and birthday party there were jam sessions with everybody on instruments. It was awesome. My mum would cook french toast and waffles for breakfast, but there was a lot of eating out. I remember going to restaurants and falling asleep in the booths. To me it was normal, but I guess it was different.

I was home-schooled and there was no illusion that my brother and I were going to become doctors or lawyers. My brother was a musician and I was a ballet dancer and actor. Everyone knew that we were going to be artists in some way. I did not go to college. God, no. I don't think it would be for me, going to classes. I always knew what I wanted to do and I liked doing it. But, in my family, everybody took things seriously – you were not a dilettante. If you wanted to be a pianist you practised every day, so I was very serious about acting.

Winning the Golden Globe [for *Top of the Lake*] was so crazy. After 20 acting nominations over the years, I'd managed to 100 per cent convince myself that I was not going to win. So it was one of the most shocking, surprising moments of my life to hear them call my name. It was weird and surreal; I was soppy and excited. When I got backstage I was shaking, and sweet

Mark Ruffalo [the actor] was so nice and gave me a hug.

I was inspired by Jodie Foster for my character in *Top of the Lake*. I was struggling with the idea of how I could be threatening and believable as a detective when I'm small and I don't look tough. And I thought, she did it in *The Silence of The Lambs*. She's petite but she had a strength that had nothing to do with her size; her strength was in her mind and her sixth sense.

I haven't experienced the casting couch, which maybe I should be insulted by... But I am not going to be naive and say that that doesn't happen. Maybe it's because I've been in this business for so long that by the time I was old enough to be on a casting couch, I was too experienced to put myself in that situation. I think it's your job in this business as a woman to keep your integrity so that younger people coming up don't have to get ahead that way.

I am half British. I have a British passport, which is super cool. I do feel a kind of connection to the UK and I love London. I am not a big tea drinker, which is probably going to lose me half of your readership in one go, but I can hold my booze, so I'm British in that way.

I am fascinated by Kate Middleton and I love looking at photos of her. She's so pretty and her hair is so perfect. The royal family are like movie stars to Americans – we find them fascinating. Some younger people I spoke to in London had a jaded attitude towards them, the idea that maybe royalty is a bit old-fashioned. But it's not my place to get involved with that argument.

Keira Knightley is one of the loveliest people ever. When I first met her, I was like, 'Oh my God, she is a movie star.' But we spent ten hours a day together for months. We would go out and have drinks and she was very normal. She doesn't wear make-up and she dresses cool, but

not in designer gowns all the time. She is really funny, you know, a girl's girl.

I want to be Helen Mirren. I love her! I think she is so herself. Obviously she's an incredible actress but she's just really cool. I've had the opportunity to meet her a couple of times recently and she's ballsy and badass.

I don't think I've got my head in the clouds. I'm a realistic and practical person, but I am also spiritual. I do think it's important to have an awareness of yourself and the fact that maybe there is something bigger than you. People need something to believe in, to ground themselves amid the chaos in this world, whether it's Buddhism or going to church on Sundays or doing yoga. It's just a sense of morality, of why you should do right instead of wrong.

I hate those people who say they don't have a television. I don't understand what they do with their lives. What do you do when you go home? I love TV. I've seen almost everything but lately I've been really into *The Good Wife*, which I think is fantastic.

I love *Girls*. I know [series creator and actress] Lena Dunham a little bit and I think she's brilliant. It is awesome to have a young woman spearheading a show like that. She's smart and funny. I lived in New York in my 20s and I'm part of the generation who watched *Sex and the City*, which was all about empowerment and glamour and heartbreak. That was how I learned about relationships. *Girls* is a bit more realistic and more pessimistic, with a lot of humour.

I am a sucker for romantic comedies. I loved *Amélie* with Audrey Tautou and I was watching *The Proposal* with Sandra Bullock the other day. *Love Actually* is my favourite movie of all time. I have seen it nine million times. I would *kill* to work with Richard Curtis. ■

■ *Mad Men* returns this Wednesday at 10pm on Sky Atlantic – watch live and on demand on Sky or NOW TV