

# Hudson Talk

Kate Hudson, who plays the female lead in "The Four Feathers," always knew she wanted to be an actor. The 21-year-old daughter of actors Goldie Hawn and Bill Hudson obviously has the pedigree, but her family wanted her to pursue an education before settling on a career.

After graduating from Crossroads, a performing arts school in Santa Monica, Calif., Hudson was accepted into New York University's Tisch School of Drama – but the budding thesp never got around to enrolling. Not content to spend four years performing in student plays, she made her feature debut – essaying, appropriately, an aspiring actor – in "Blue Desert" (1998), and went on to play a newly deflowered hipster in "200 Cigarettes" (1999) and a wealthy university coed in "Gossip" (2000).

But it wasn't until she snagged the role of "band aide" Penny Lane in "Almost Famous" – writer-director Cameron Crowe's acclaimed 2000 remembrance of the 1970s rock scene – that Hudson became a household name. Her bespectacled visage singled out for the movie's one-sheet, she found herself nominated for "supporting actress" trophies by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (and its British counterpart), the Screen Actors Guild, and countless critics' organizations.

Considering how large she looms on the "Almost Famous" poster, it's ironic that Hudson nearly didn't get the part of Penny. Crowe had initially cast Canadian Sarah Polley ("Go") in the role. When Polley opted out, Crowe debated whether he should even move forward with the project. Hudson, who

had already been cast as the lead character's frustrated sister, begged Crowe to let her audition for the juicy groupie role.

Hudson took 2001 off, but has since kept plenty busy. Last spring, she shot another 1970s-set comedy-drama, "Le Divorce." Based on the novel by Diane Johnson, it's the most "contemporary" film directed by James Ivory since 1989's "Slaves of New York." Over the summer she costarred with Matthew McConaughey in "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days," which deals with a single who bets his best friend he can stay in a romantic relationship more than 10 days – only to hook up with a woman dead set on dumping him. Next she teams with director Rob Reiner for "Alex and Emma," about a vice-riddled writer who falls for his stenographer.

As befits someone whose breakthrough project deals with the nature of fame, Hudson is surrounded by the famous. On Dec. 31, 2000, the actor wed a rock star, Black Crowes frontman Chris Robinson. Older brother Oliver Hudson just starred in the WB sitcom "The Young Person's Guide to Becoming a Rock Star." Her mom is an Oscar-winning actor. And actor Kurt Russell, whom Hudson thinks of as her real "Pa," helped raise her from the age of three. (She is estranged from her biological father.)

How does her family now feel about her career choice? "I think my parents are just happy that I have a job," laughs Hudson. "I've got such great parents. They're proud of all the kids. I think it's a parent's dream just to see their kids happy and doing what they want to do."

**What drew you to the role of Ethne in "The Four Feathers"?**

Working with [director] Shekhar [Kapur] was the big draw for me. Also, I wanted to play something period, a small character, not necessarily in size but as person. That was appealing. The role of Ethne was very different for me.

**Shekhar Kapur said you brought much more to the role than what was on the page. How did you accomplish this?**

When I read the script I was conscious of the fact that [a fully-dimensional character] wasn't necessarily on the page. It was something that Shekhar and I talked a lot about, how to give the character more of a presence, because she ties things together, at least in terms of the two boys' stories. Shekhar and I talked about it over and over again – we really did it together.

**Was Ethne easy to relate to?**

Not really. Not for me. It was difficult trying to play a character that goes from one guy to another. It was hard for me to rationalize how a woman could make the choice to go from being in love with one man to being engaged to her love's best friend.

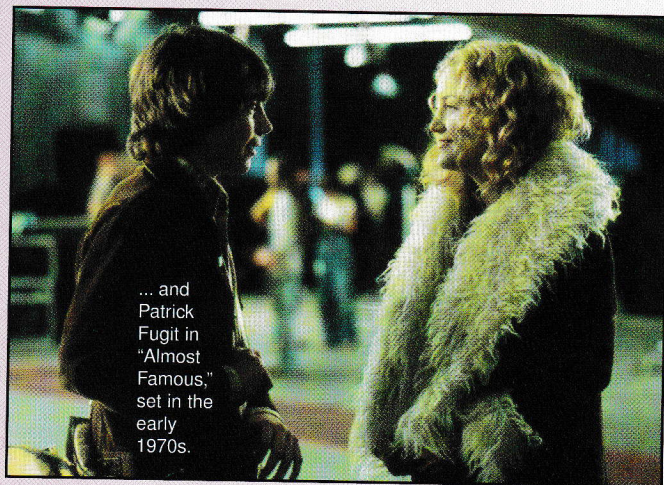
**How did you make that transition?**

I put myself in the time period. The only reason she would make that choice is, one, she cares about Jack [played by Wes Bentley]. Two, she believes Harry [Ledger] is dead and that she should move on. And three, as a woman in 1884 you had to keep your life moving and, you know, be married. She's the daughter of a general, somebody who carries on the family legacy as her mother did. So all those things we subtextually threw in to make it clear she was

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Period pieces: Kate Hudson opposite Wes Bentley in "Feathers," set in the late 1890s...



... and Patrick Fugit in "Almost Famous," set in the early 1970s.

to agree with me or find a director who's willing to do it, maybe quite successfully, but I'm a little insecure about doing that.

**You were also involved with "Steinbeck's Point of View."**

I was, but we never came to a script all of us could agree on so I backed out of that one. I did like it. I like anything that has some spiritual content.

**How about "Long Walk to Freedom," the film about Nelson Mandela, is that still happening?**

Yes, I'm working on Mandela. I'm also working on "Foundation" for Fox, "Foundation" being the Isaac Asimov science fiction series [of novels]. They're probably the most widely read science fiction books ever. And I'm going back to my "Elizabeth" producers to work on a film called "Hippy-Hippy-Shake," based in the wild days of the '60s. The base theme is: In the context of free love how do you find true love?

**Finally, the publication *India Times* voted you one of the "100 Most Handsome Indian Men of the Century." How did you feel about that honor?**

[big laugh] I saw that, too. The truth is it's down to the 100 most well-known faces, but it got girls looking at me, so I guess that's good. 🌐

## Kate Hudson

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making a difficult decision. It wasn't something malicious – it could have been somewhat malicious. Or it could have been very passive, but Shekhar and I wanted it to be a difficult decision for her.

**Since you had to choose between two men, it couldn't have hurt that those two men were Heath Ledger and Wes Bentley.**

(Laughs.) No, those boys aren't too bad to look at. That was the easy part.

**Were they fun to work with?**

They were. I really enjoyed it, but it was a very serious movie. We were all working so hard and it was a very emotional piece. We had our fun in the most professional way. It was a good

experience; a hard experience but a good one.

**The shoot was plagued with disastrous weather. How did you survive the storms?**

Oh, man. Oh, my God, the weather was terrible! Actually I was fine, but I felt bad for everybody who had to shoot around it. And I felt bad for the people in wardrobe who had to figure out how – we used a lot of original shoes and [the wardrobe people] didn't want them to get muddy, so they put garbage bags on my feet, under my dress, to try to protect the shoes. They had to lengthen the dresses and let them get dirty instead. That kind of stuff was a real pain.

**Did you enjoy wearing the period costumes?**

Yeah, it was fun. The costumes definitely helped me with the character. About a month before the movie started shooting my dialogue coach came from London and brought a corset with her. I had to put it on every time we worked together, so I got used to working in a corset. She would make me go out in public with it on, which was kind of embarrassing. We had tea at Tea and Sympathy in New York. It was fun. I think it was the corset that put me into the character's mindset. It made me immediately understand the constraints of being a female living in that time period. Also I wore very high-necked outfits, so when I wore anything that was somewhat revealing of the chest it felt almost risqué. I loved it.

**You're currently shooting "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days," a romantic comedy with Matthew McConaughey, correct?**

Yeah, and we're having tons and tons of fun. There's lots of laughter on this set.

**What else do you have coming up?**

I did "Le Divorce" a Merchant/Ivory film, with Naomi Watts and Glenn Close. That was an unbelievable experience.

**Why is that?**

Because I got to live in Paris for three months and it was one of the greatest experiences I've had so far in my short life. I worked with some wonderful actors. I got to work with Stephen Fry. I just love him. And working with Glenn, I really enjoyed that. Naomi and I had

the best time. We truly became sisters. I got to work with some wonderful French actors and experience the French film scene. It was just great.

**When does "Le Divorce" come out?**

I'm not sure. I believe sometime next year.

**Do you have anything lined up after "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days"?**

After this I do Rob Reiner's picture. It's called "Alex and Emma," with Luke Wilson. That'll be fun. Luke's a friend of mine and we've always wanted to work together.

**Is that a comedy also?**

Well, it's a love story with some comedy. It's smart and different. There's a lot happening right now. I took a year off and now I'm just working a lot until I can take another year off.

**What did you do during that year?**

I decided I wanted to be a wife for the first year that Chris and I were married. After all that stuff with "Almost Famous" I was really tired and I thought it was a good time to reevaluate and just be with Chris and have fun. I think it's important to rejuvenate once in a while. I'm so young. I don't want to feel like I'm in a rush. I don't ever want to feel like I'm in a rush.

**Speaking of "Almost Famous," was it overwhelming to receive an Oscar nomination so early in your career?**

Yeah, it was overwhelming, but at the same time it was an incredible experience. I felt really blessed and lucky, but also I think a good way to start off a career is to get nominated and lose. You get an interesting perspective on what's important.

**So you weren't at all disappointed that you didn't win?**

I wouldn't say I was disappointed because there's a part of me that is kind of ... I believe there's a reason for everything, but I'd lie if I didn't say that when you're sitting in that seat you're thinking "I wanna win this damn thing!" That's the soccer player in me, but that's what I mean by it's great to get that perspective so young. It doesn't mean anything. What means something is that people enjoy your work, and hopefully they'll continue to enjoy it. – Deborah Baxtrom 🌐