

TIFFANY ROSE



Journalist Tiffany Rose has spent 10 years living in Los Angeles, where she interviews celebrities for British publications and TV.

She is a regular contributor to Grazia, The Independent, You Magazine, Hotdog, New Woman and Red.

Tiffany's interviews have ranged from the legendary greats – Michael Caine, Robert Redford and Michael Douglas – to today's stars – John Travolta, Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Britney Spears, Jennifer Aniston, Will Smith, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Robbie Williams. Oh, and Jennifer Lopez...



From Hollywood heart throb to down-to-earth daddy, Johnny Depp charms Tiffany Rose with tales of his new life and loves.

HIDDEN DEPTHS

THINK JOHNNY DEPP AND YOU think serial engagements, hotel trashings, drug taking and other Hollywood-bad-boy antics, right? Think again. The actor I'm here to interview has mellowed. No longer based in the US, he reflects about his relocation to the most romantic city in the world.

"I always felt very drawn to Paris - and to France and its culture," he explains. "But it was never clear why. Now I'm convinced it was some sort of grand plan that was drawing me there. That it was a kind of a strange and beautiful destiny." Yes, the good news is, Johnny Depp has turned hopelessly romantic. The bad news, for any of you still holding out hope of a place in his affections, is the destiny which took him to France was his girlfriend and mother of his child, Vanessa Paradis.

Barely controlling his grin, he beams, "I'm happy, I live life. I live, you know. I've been blessed with an amazing relationship with an amazing girl. We were blessed with a daughter. I mean, those two people have brought me real life. Real life. Good life. That's my miracle." These and other musings take place at the ultra-trendy Standard Hotel on LA's Sunset Strip, situated just blocks away from the 37-year-old actor's infamous Viper Room. Depp still owns the club and occasionally drops by whenever he's in town. The actor also co-owns chic, Paris restaurant Man Ray, off the Champs Élysées, with friends Sean Penn and Bono.

However, today, he's in LA to promote his latest real-life epic, *Blow*. It's a cliché, but the first thing you notice about the elusive star

is just how gorgeous he is. It's evident his cinematic charm transposes into real life. His raven hair, which sports a solo blond streak down the left side, rests on his shoulders. The trademark high cheekbones would make a supermodel jealous. Surely vanity will accompany his blueprint looks?

I tell him the story my neighbour blurted out when she found out I was to interview Johnny Depp. Overcome with excitement, she recounted a time when she lived behind his house, high up in the Hollywood hills. Every so often she would open her gate to let out her Siberian husky, who would always head straight for the star's backyard. Seeing as Depp is such a nice chap, he would kindly return her pet pooch and my friend would get her 'Johnny fix'.

Depp, of course, had no idea this calculated act was taking place and gives a light-hearted chuckle. Sure, he looks flattered, if not a little perplexed at the lengths to which a fan would go to meet him. Ironically, this obliviousness is his very appeal.

A modest man

Depp's 'coolness' has always presided over his fashion trends, which is the case today. Casually decked out in loose-fitting, faded jeans, a navy blue T-shirt with an unbuttoned baggy grey shirt over the top, he is looking his usual, ruffled self. He wears a shark-tooth necklace which, he comments, is a gift from a special someone.

Flashing his penetrating, chocolate-brown eyes, which complement his olive complexion (Depp is part Cherokee Indian),

his voice is a gentle whisper when he politely asks me if I mind him lighting up. For what turns out to be the first of many cigarettes, he masterfully hand-rolls the liquorice Rizlas and tobacco into a perfect, skinny smoke. Remarking on the sweet taste of the paper, he lights up.

After years, he says, of spiritual searching and endless emotional journeys, he radiates an assured calm. Depp is open about his relationship with 29-year-old French singer and actress Vanessa Paradis, (who previously dated rocker Lenny Kravitz), and credits her for his happiness.

Depp met Paradis in a Paris bar, where he and director Roman Polanski were dining during the shooting of the thriller *The Ninth Gate*. (Ironically, Paradis had unsuccessfully auditioned for a part in the film.) He spotted her across the bar and had a friend ask her to join them. The attraction was mutual. Despite the language barrier, the couple had no trouble communicating - Paradis fell pregnant less than three months after their introduction. They've been inseparable ever since.

And it was their daughter, now two years old, who changed his life forever. Depp once said, "Anything I've done up until 27 May 1999 was an illusion. The birth of my daughter gave me my life." Since Lily-Rose Melody was born, Hollywood's most reluctant movie star has also enjoyed a kind of rebirth. Depp no longer chases after paparazzi, and the one-time wild man who regularly trashed hotel rooms now treats them like his home. But as a new parent, Depp admits he's less >

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< self-obsessed. "It was the first moment in my life where I was totally selfless. It was no longer about me. And anything I had ever gone through in terms of life experiences just became insignificant."

Indeed, the very mention of Lily-Rose offers a similar eulogy. "The arrival of my daughter has influenced my life to the utmost level. It's put me in a place where I can handle anything. Any fears that I had before have been washed away." The enthusiastic father-to-be witnessed the birth of his daughter, and cut the umbilical cord, at the American Hospital in Paris. Joining the ranks of fatherhood has evidently transformed his volatile persona into a more relaxed person. While just a few years ago marriage was a dirty word in Depp's vocabulary, now he readily admits he's considering tying the knot. But, "It's up to the kid. The kid rules the roost," he chirps.

Depp's new family has accompanied him to all of his film locations. "I'm very lucky that they come with me every time. I was in England for *Chocolat* (with Juliette Binoche), I just shot *From Hell* (with Heather Graham) in Prague, and they were there. And we stayed together in Los Angeles for *Blow*.

"Having them around doesn't interfere with my job at all. The only way it interferes is when I'm physically on the set. That is the hardest, because I'm away from my loved ones. I've been trying for as long as possible to keep my distance from Hollywood and the game, and the competitive nature of this beast. All I want is for the opportunity to do my work as best as I can and hang around with my family, drink wine and smoke cigarettes. That's all it's really about for me."

The couple spend the majority of their time at their Paris apartment, in the fashionable Montmartre district, or at their house in St-Tropez. Sometimes they visit Depp's luxury LA hideaway, which was once owned by legendary actor Bela Lugosi, the original Dracula. But Depp clearly loves his life in Europe. Still struggling with the French language, he admits he can understand it more than he can speak it, and that they're teaching Lily-Rose to be bilingual.

"I would like to say I moved to France so I could smoke in peace - it's a crime to light up in LA - but it's more than that. I find Europe more civilised. More sophisticated - although I'm not a particularly sophisticated guy. It has older culture, a stronger foundation. I'm still living the dream. You hear of the horrors that happen in America, like kids going into their high schools with guns, shooting at their friends and teachers, and Europe is better than that. It's madness here in the US. There's random violence,

rampant ignorance, gluttony, greed - people can become millionaires on TV shows in 15 minutes, you know - what's that all about? Is that the American Dream? I love America, but I'm ashamed to be an American," he states, agitatedly. "I think of LA like Disneyland. It's OK in little spurts, but you wouldn't want to live there." He lets out a cloud of smoke and stubs out his cigarette.

(Another) fine romance

Depp's passion for music has enabled him to collaborate with Paradis on her new album. "I didn't do too much, really," he offers. "All I did was show her a few chords here and there. She got stuck in a place and I did what I could. It's not really work, because it's what we do every other day, sitting at home playing the guitar. What she did with her record was all hers. I'm really proud of her." Although the Paradis-Depp bond is superglue strong, Depp is no stranger to falling in love with beautiful women in showbiz. His private life sounds like a steamy soap opera. There were engagements to actresses Sherilyn Fenn, Jennifer Grey and Winona Ryder. And, at 20, he had a short-lived marriage to musician Lori Allison. But his most famous romance was with Kate Moss, which lasted for five years. They still remain good friends.

Born in Kentucky, Depp moved around a lot as a kid. He spent much of his early childhood in Florida, with his two sisters, Christi and Debbie, and an older brother, Danny, who introduced him to Jack Kerouac's novels and Van Morrison's music. His father (and namesake), John Christopher Depp, was a civil engineer and he and his mother, Betty Sue, divorced when he was 15. Depp left home five years later and headed for Hollywood, where he gained his heart-throb label after landing the lead in the popular TV show *21 Jump Street*.

Patting his pockets for his liquorice Rizla papers, he explains, "My parents have been

very supportive of my career. I've seen my mum in the past get very excited about me having met Marlon Brando, Martin Landau, and all the people I've worked with. But when I hang out with her back home, it's never brought up - not Hollywood, movies or money or anything. We sit around and do the same things we did when I was a teenager." He prides himself on being just an ordinary guy. Film offers came pouring in and, instead of going the commercial route, he opted for the quirky roles, such as *Edward Scissorhands*, *Ed Wood*, *Don Juan DeMarco* and, more recently, *Sleepy Hollow* and *Chocolat*. "I've made a career out of commercial failures," he jokes. Depp has enjoyed rave reviews for his performance in his latest film, *Blow*, in which he plays drugs baron George Jung, who decides to pursue the American Dream his own way. In the 70s and 80s, Jung became the first American to import cocaine to the US on a multi-billion-dollar scale. Penelope Cruz plays Jung's girlfriend Mirtha.

For his research, Depp spent two days with the real George Jung, who's serving a life sentence at the Federal Penitentiary in upstate New York. Depp recounts, "I tried to sponge up as much of George as I could. He was very open with me, and he was very generous with his life story. We didn't really have all the time for like, 'how's the weather, how's life in prison treating you?', kinda thing. It was more like, 'OK, we have two days, let's go!'"

He stops and ponders for a second or two. "He's been rotting away in prison for a number of years now, and he realises his mistakes. I believe he's paid his debt to society. It would be nice to get him out of prison, so he could try and pay his debt to his family, but he can't do it when he's bound and gagged. He's a heart-breaking guy."

Of course, Depp's own dabble with drugs is no newsworthy, although he states it's a thing of the past. "I did all kinds of drugs when I was drunk," he admits. "It's a miracle I'm out of that environment. He continues, shaking his head in disgust. "It had nothing to do with recreation for me, it had more to do with numbing my brain. It had to do more with self-medicating. Trying to escape the realities I was living and postponing the inevitable. At some point, you have to look the demon in the eyes and say, 'Fuck You!'"

A knock on the door from his publicist interrupts these sombre thoughts. And with that he picks up his tobacco and heads for the door. But, cheering up, he turns around before he exits and smirks, "If it's not drugs, it's Mad Cow! Well, if all the things I've done to my body over the years haven't affected me, I doubt some poor cow disease will!" □

■ *Blow* is released nationwide on 25 May

"I'VE BEEN TRYING TO KEEP MY DISTANCE FROM HOLLYWOOD. ALL I WANT IS TO DO MY WORK AS BEST I CAN AND HANG AROUND WITH MY FAMILY, DRINK WINE AND SMOKE"