

PICTURE PERFECT

When we think of stars who exude grace, **Nicole Kidman** is one of the first names on our list. **Rhea Dhanbhoora** talks to her about balancing the personal and professional and her upcoming film, *Paddington*

She may stand out in part because of her alabaster skin, perfectly styled hair and the grace and poise with which she conducts herself, but this Australian stunner is in the spotlight this month because of the bevy of films in her kitty in 2015. One of them, *Paddington*, which is a British comedy about the lovable *Paddington Bear* book by Michael Bond, has been directed by Paul King, produced by David Heyman and also stars Hugh Bonneville, Sally Hawkins, Julie Walters, Jim Broadbent and Peter Capaldi, with Ben Wishaw voicing the lead character. In anticipation of its January 15 release, we caught up with Nicole to talk about her character and what her children are going to think of it!

- **The character you play in *Paddington* is really interesting. Tell us about her...**
I play Millicent Clyde, a museum director who wants Paddington bear to be stuffed and mounted. She is an evil taxidermist, with a burning grudge against talking bears. She is awful, vicious, and cold-hearted, but also elegant and seductive. She's been this way ever since the reputation and fortune of her father was tarnished. No doubt she has a beady eye on Paddington and is also extremely revengeful!
- **That sounds interesting! Were you familiar with the character and the books when you took on the role?**
Yes, *Paddington* has not only been a part of my growing years, my kids love him as well. He is such a cute, adorable character.
- **So, it must have been tough to play such a vicious role, especially when countering such a well-loved character...**
It was quite difficult, especially mentally, because *Paddington* is so loveable. So, to play a negative character against him is terrible. Though it was a challenging role, at the end of the day, I hope I have done it justice. David (Heyman) and Paul (King) have really gotten the best out of me for it.
- **Have your children seen the film? If not, what do you think they're going to think of your character?**
Mrs. Clyde is a very evil person. My kids were so excited that I was a part of the film and they asked me whether I was playing the character of the mother! I didn't have the heart to tell them that I play the character of this evil, awful taxidermist. So, I don't want my kids to watch the film, simply because they love *Paddington* so much that they will start hating me after they see me play the role!
- **But, this isn't the first negative role you've played. You were the antagonist in *The***



>> This Balenciaga dress is one of Nicole's favourite red carpet looks

Golden Compass — a film also targeted at young adults/children. So you're obviously not afraid to play the bad guy. How difficult is it to get into character for roles such as this one?

Yes, I have played the antagonist earlier. But, for me, playing *this* evil character was quite different. I have grown up with *Paddington* stories. I simply love him. Then, I'm suddenly asked to play this character who



>> Catch Nicole in *Paddington*, which will hit theatres on January 15

wants to kill him! The emotional connect made it much harder for me.

- **This isn't your first film with talking animals. You worked on an animated film (*Happy Feet*) as the voice of a penguin — but what was it like working with an animated character? What was it like to shoot the scenes?**
Paul and David are such wonderful people to be around and seeing *Paddington* go from the book to the big screen was enthralling. But, I often found myself performing opposite a ball on a stick, because live-action technology added the bear into the scenes afterwards. Somehow, the connect was still always present.
- **Moving away from the big screen, you also support a lot of charities. What causes are the closest to your heart, and what would you love to get involved with in the future?**
Yes, I have been associated with several foundations, including the Sydney Children Hospital, UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Pink Ribbon and a few others. UNIFEM has been the best one. I truly believe in and support women empowerment. There is nothing that I would not love to get involved in! I think it's the willingness to do something for mankind that drives me.
- **You've had some Indian connections with some shoots in the past — Are you familiar with Bollywood films?**
Yes, I have been to Rajasthan and Goa. They are beautiful places. I've heard about Bollywood... there is a lot of talent in there. I would love to do a musical number!
- **I'm sure all the women reading this are dying to know how you seem like you haven't aged at all...**
Thank you for the compliment. I am very concerned about my diet and exercises. I do have cheat days though. The most important thing, is that I stay happy. I think that it shows on my face.
- **You've got two young children and your husband [country music star Keith Urban] is away a lot on tour — is it hard to balance your personal and professional life?**
Being a mother the second time around, more than 20 years after my first diaper change, does require extra maintenance. I had more energy when I was younger, but I

have more patience now that I'm older. It's exhausting, but there's also a selflessness to parenting that I love. I love taking care of a little person — watching their personality form and listening to the funny things that they say. And we enjoy being around Keith. Whenever we are travelling together the kids and I hog on burgers and fries and Keith encourages us with more hot dogs.

- **Do you still give auditions?**
I try and audition myself. I need to understand the character well before portraying it. I think I am too restless. I want to achieve everything all at one go. But, over time, I have realised that it's about going slow and doing good work. I think whatever I do is for myself and for my fans. They love me for what I do. So, I try to give my best every time the camera rolls.
- **What's the hardest part for you about being in the spotlight?**
Being a normal mother I guess. My children are so young and even they know that their mother is an actor. Sometimes, I have a tough time when I'm shooting abroad. I miss them the most then.
- **What would you say if your children wanted to be actors — would you let them act at a young age?**
My children are loving and happy. That's what matters. I think Sunday and Faith and are too young to choose their career paths. But, I am sure that they will be worthy of whatever path they choose in the future.
- **What's in the pipeline for you now?**
2015 is a very busy year for me. I have *The Family Fang*, *Queen of The Desert*, *Genius*, *The Silent Wife* and *Stanger Land*, all of which are lined up for release. Two are from my production company, Blossom Films. So, there is lot of work lined up, or I should say — good work lined up.

IN A FLASH

- **On your playlist right now** *All of Me*, John Legend
- **Person you want to work with** Keith [Urban]
- **Your favourite red carpet look** My fire engine red gown with perfect Christmas bow pops, by Balenciaga, during the Oscars in 2007
- **If you weren't an actress you would be** A teacher
- **A trait you love in people** Kindness and honesty
- **Your inspiration** Steven Spielberg