

# A g e n d a

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## TELEVISION

# Misfit, playboy... and now a little man in a leather jacket

Robert Sheehan on his new TV role as a tearaway Borrower, and why he's happy to get racy on screen

Waterloo Shoe Repairs in London cuts keys "while u wait", and while Robert Sheehan waits for his keys to be cut we sit in the nearest pub. The Irish actor has locked himself out of his flat and has had to borrow his landlord's master to make a hurried copy; he's also due on stage at the Old Vic theatre round the corner in about an hour (where he'll perform one of the last nights of his well-received run in *The Playboy of the Western World*), and the conflicting duties have left him a little flustered.

"I tend to get myself in a bit of a flap every once in a while," says the 23-year-old, craning low over a table in the pub, taking off a heavy woollen cardigan and immediately putting it back on again. "A dread, a time-watching dread, about getting to the theatre on time. But once you step out on stage it's pure joy, man. Unblemished joy."

Discounting some amateur theatrics when he was growing up in County Laois, the Old Vic's revival of John Millington Synge's play – in which Sheehan has been playing the titular "playboy" – marks his first professional stage job. He's mostly been in films and TV shows to date, accumulating good notices as a male prostitute in the Channel 4 adaptation of David Peace's *Red Riding* trilogy; a sword-wielding altar boy in the Nicolas Cage blockbuster *Season of the Witch*; an oily superhero in E4's teen sci-fi show *Misfits*. This Christmas he'll appear in a new BBC adaptation of Mary Norton's story



'Fluent and witty': Robert Sheehan, who this Christmas will appear in a new BBC adaptation of *The Borrowers*. Photograph by Karen Robinson

about industrious little people, *The Borrowers*. Sheehan plays "Spiller, a James Dean-style Borrower... or at least a Borrower who's found a tiny leather jacket and decided to adopt the attitude that goes with it."

Yeah, that fits. Key-cutting fluster receded, pitched right back in his pub chair now, Sheehan comes across as a likeable, nonchalant chap – fluent and witty. On theatre work: "It's a strange

commodity that we push as actors on a stage. Essentially, shouting for two hours." On former co-star Cage: "A delightfully curious human being." On the unusually high number of roles he's played that have required him to do racy things on screen (sex worker in *Red Riding*, sexual compulsive both in *Misfits* and 2009 Irish film *Cherrybomb*): "I don't think you can consider yourself an actor if you're

gonna say *no* to stuff like that. Sore subject matter is all part of it. That's why people make movies, isn't it? To explore the darkest and lightest aspects of humanity... Not that I had these thoughts at the time. I was just getting gigs, and not really taking life altogether seriously. I still don't."

Proof: there's a moment in *Playboy* when his character is discovered hiding in a side room. The audience

can't see him, only one of Sheehan's co-stars can, so he has been doing everything he can, night after night, to get this unfortunate co-star to laugh on stage. Showing "half an arse cheek", some nights ago, almost did it. Tonight he's considering a full moonie. **Tom Lamont**

*The Borrowers* is on BBC1 on Boxing Day

## ON MY RADAR

Marian Salzman's cultural highlights

Marian Salzman, 51, is a leading trend forecaster, often credited with coining the terms singleton and metrosexual. Her New York-based public relations business is built on predicting society's ever-changing moods, from local produce to global economics, and turning them into marketing opportunities. In 2003 she also co-authored a book, *Buzz*, which put forward a theory describing how information spreads and brands are established. Her thoughts on next year's trends are published at [mariansalzman.com](http://mariansalzman.com)

Annalies Winny



### Music



**SameSky.com**  
A website that sells bracelets made in Rwanda by women who are HIV positive. Not only am I buying an affordable luxury piece of jewellery, but also giving a hand up to women in the world that need it. I feel like every bead in the bracelet tells a story.

### TV



**The Super Bowl**  
I usually watch the Super Bowl for the commercials, but this year I'm watching for Madonna. She represents to me every evolution of a generation. I saw her perform a million years ago at Madison Square Garden, when she still vlogged. She's a very different performer now.

### Art



**Willem de Kooning**  
The De Kooning show at MoMA is one of those exhibitions that's the place to be. It's something I've scheduled in my mind to do over the holiday period. I spent a couple of years living in the Netherlands so I think I'm partial to anything Dutch. I love the size, the scale, the colour.

### Internet



**Spotify**  
Spotify's just gotten to the US and it's changing the universe. If I look at Facebook, I have 1,000 friends and all they seem to be doing is listening to something new on Spotify. We're eliminating the DJ – going forward, my radio is going to be curated by me and my friends.

### Food



**Michele's Pies**  
A little pie stand in Norwalk, Connecticut. I drive like 18 miles to get these things. If you want a pumpkin pie or a pecan pie or a chicken pot pie, you would never think about an alternative to driving to get one of hers. It's the way she makes the pie crust.

### Books



**Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson**  
I was so perplexed after reading about all Steve Jobs's paradoxes – of living like a normal person but being this millionaire, of being so brutal but being so generous. I couldn't make peace with what I was reading. I pulled an all-nighter to finish it.