

Cruise control

Adored and admired in equal measure, Rosamund Pike seems taken aback about the fuss over her famous co-star's casting as Jack Reacher, writes **Jane Cornwell**.

There's a moment in the film *Jack Reacher* when Tom Cruise and Rosamund Pike, who plays savvy attorney Helen Rodin, are alone in a motel room and Cruise is naked from the waist up.

"Please," says Pike's character, who is, of course, distracted by Cruise's six-pack and overall hunkiness, "could you just put your shirt on."

Casting the 33-year-old British actor opposite the Hollywood megastar was a smart move on the part of the film's producers - Cruise, um, being one of them. Effortlessly beautiful, shimmering with cool intelligence, Pike-as-Rodin makes us believe in Cruise as a bad mo-fo with a mighty sense of justice. "We wanted that scene to have the vibe of classic pictures like *His Girl Friday* with Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant," Pike says in her low, cut-glass voice. "Films where the dialogue goes along at a real lick" - she clicks her fingers - "but you still get all the information you need."

Jack Reacher is a thriller based on *One Shot*, the ninth book in the Jack Reacher series written by Lee Child. The story has his anti-hero, a former military cop, searching for the truth behind some shootings in Pennsylvania; the guy being held is a former



the film, as Tom clearly pulls off every aspect of the character.

"Apart," she adds soothingly, "from his physical appearance as it is in the book."

Everything about Pike seems perfect: her teeth, her life, her career. It's tempting to imagine her wafting elegantly around the west London house she shares with Solo and her 16-years-older businessman and socialite partner, Robie Uniacke, playing Faure's *Elegy* on her cello here, picking through A-list scripts there; speaking French, reading poetry, baking cakes ("I do love to bake"); just generally being clever and gorgeous.

From the moment Pike burst onto cinema screens at 23 as the devious Miranda Frost in the James Bond film *Die Another Day*, her combination of fragile beauty and self-contained poise has inspired adoration.

Not for nothing was she cast as the ideal woman opposite Paul Giamatti in the 2010 film *Barney's Version*, a part to which Giamatti has said she "brought many dimensions and colours".

"I have to own everything my characters say and it has to come from a place of truth," she offers when I ask how 'Method' she gets. "I do a lot of research. With this Reacher film, since I don't live in a place that has the death penalty, I went to Pennsylvania and got people to talk passionately about their views. I needed to make this character's belief in justice real."

The only child of concert musicians and opera singers, Rosamund Mary Elizabeth Pike was a "backstage baby" who won an "enormous" scholarship at 11 to Badminton, a posh boarding school in Bristol.

At 17, between leaving school and heading off to study English at Oxford University, Pike was cast as Juliet in the National Youth Theatre's production of *Romeo and Juliet* and promptly snapped up by an agent. She later dropped out of university and auditioned for every decent drama school in Britain.

Weirdly, not one of them saw her appeal: "I had to crawl back and ask to be allowed to finish my degree, which was mortifying."

She'd just returned from backpacking in Vietnam when she landed the part of Miranda Frost, having never seen a Bond film. Then instead of sticking around in Hollywood, she went back into theatre, starring in Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke* in London's West End before being

cast as Jane Bennet in the film *Pride & Prejudice* in 2005.

She met Uniacke in December 2009 and much was made in the British tabloids about him being a twice-divorced father of four and reformed drug addict, but Pike couldn't care less.

"Robie's a maverick," she says, animatedly. "He doesn't do what the papers say. He's more of what I'd call an imaginative mathematician. He uses his imagination in a different way from mine, which is great." A smile. "We're very compatible."

When I mention that the fan-sites dedicated to her border on the worshipful, she holds up her palms in mock horror. "Well, I think there's an image and a person and the two don't necessarily sit together," she says. "I mean, I still travel on the Tube. I like going to dirty raves in warehouses in east London as much as I like going to quartet recitals at Wigmore Hall, though people always think of me wafting around playing my cello."

So why the name Solo? "It's because the notion of independence is so close to me. Flying solo ... There's this wonderful idea of strength and it's a beautiful word."

Has having a baby changed her? "Not dramatically," she says. "I always knew I had it in me to be a mother. What is interesting is the emotional access it provides; there are these tremendous feelings of protectiveness and fierce feelings of love that will be hugely useful for my work."

She returns to Cruise: how protective he was of her, how hardworking he is, the imposing presence he gives Jack Reacher.

"I quite like the fact that there's a bit of prejudice around the film, that people are getting worked up and angry. It plays in its favour; it means more people will see it."

"And then," she says with a grin, "they will see."

Jack Reacher is in cinemas now.



Perfect match ... Rosamund Pike made a name for herself in *Die Another Day* with Pierce Brosnan and Halle Berry, top; with Tom Cruise in *Jack Reacher*, left. Photo: Getty Images

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army sniper who will say only two things: "You got the wrong guy," and, "Get Jack Reacher."

The Jack Reacher of the hugely popular books is a 195-centimetre, 113-kilogram man-mountain. This Jack Reacher isn't.

Ever since Tom Cruise - neat, short Tom Cruise - was confirmed as the lead in the series' first movie adaptation, fans of the books have been hurling virtual rotten tomatoes and calling for a boycott.

"Have they really?" Pike blinks her large, green eyes. "I haven't been keeping up. What are they saying?"

How about "Lee Child has sold out his fans"? "Hugh Jackman/Chris Hemsworth/Liam Neeson/anyone but Tom Cruise was born to play Jack Reacher"? "Even Cruise's voice sounds little"?

Pike might be busy with her first child, a boy named Solo, but it's hard to believe she's oblivious to the online fuss.

"I haven't bought into it," she says. "Like, I don't buy into stuff around anything that I do. But I certainly think people's fears will be abandoned once they see