



UNDER HER SPELL

With famous parents, some may say Zoë Kravitz was destined for stardom but as **Jane Cornwell** discovers, she's built her own success.

Zoë Kravitz has that thing – a touch of magic, a certain *je ne sais quoi* – that distinguishes a star. There's her astounding beauty: almond eyes, a dusting of freckles, cheekbones you could dine off. There's her effortless style, which sees her rocking a peroxide blonde buzz cut and septum piercing one moment, and a sleek dark crop and feathered Dior gown the next. There are her roles in blockbusters including *X-Men: First Class* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*, indie dramas such as *Yelling to the Sky* and the hit series *Big Little Lies*, in which her character, the peacenik Bonnie, was last seen shoving Alexander Skarsgård's Perry down stairs to his death, and in which she will soon be seen again.

But the New York-based actress, musician and muse, 29, has something else, something just out of reach; a

sense of mystery that gives her an extra shimmer of charisma. Today, in an upmarket hotel in Holborn, central London, where we meet to discuss her role as Leta Lestrange in the *Harry Potter* spin-off sequel *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, Zoë radiates an otherworldly serenity as PRs and minders – and outside the door, a passing Eddie Redmayne (who plays the quietly heroic Newt Scamander) – bustle around her.

"The whole experience was amazing, the sets, the costumes, just being part of this epic world," she says once we're alone, sitting on a couch in a black top, brown palazzo trousers and leopard print stilettos, one of which she's shaken off to tuck a bare foot underneath her.

Her multiple ear piercings, like the monochrome ink tattoos – a feather, an anchor, an eye – along her arms, enhance this feeling of hidden depths. Which makes sense: as the genetically blessed daughter of film actor Lisa

Bonet, dreadlocked goddess and former star in *The Cosby Show* (Bonet has recently commented on Cosby's "sinister energy"), and Grammy Award-winning musician and *Hunger Games* actor Lenny Kravitz – not to mention having Jason Momoa, the hulking, hunky Khal Drogo from *Game of Thrones*, for a stepdad – she was never going to be conventional.

Zoë made a brief but enigmatic cameo in 2016's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, appearing in a

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framed photo in Newt's enchanted office and setting the internet aflame with rumours of how, exactly, Leta Lestrange fitted in, given that she shares a surname with Bellatrix (Helena Bonham Carter), right-hand madwoman of the evil Voldemort. In *Crimes of Grindelwald* Leta looms large, her engagement to Newt's older brother Theseus (Callum Turner) complicating matters from the start.

"Leta is an outcast like Newt, who she knows from Hogwarts" – that's Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry – "and feels compassionate towards since he doesn't always speak up for himself. She's also powerful, a force, which could become a problem between them."

Much more than that, Zoë isn't saying. "I'd love to but I can't," she says, her kohl-rimmed eyes twinkling. We move on to talking about England, where *Fantastic Beasts* was filmed, and London, a city she visits sporadically and whose nightlife she

loves. Indeed, the new video campaign for the YSL Beauté range positions Zoë, a Saint Laurent brand ambassador, in an edgy, fashion-forward London, applying make-up (“I love mixing colours”) and doing shadow rabbits on a wall with the fingers of one hand (“I was born doing shadow rabbits”) before going dancing (“I love dancing”) in a tiny subterranean club with her mates.

In demand as a model, the diminutive Zoë – 157 centimetres – is cool with portraying an image as long as it feels authentic: “I’m not a ‘model model’; I don’t morph into what the photographer wants. I try and bring myself into every photo shoot so they’re a little bit different.”

Having previously graced covers of magazines including US *ELLE* and British *Vogue*, she appears in a shoot for this month’s US *Harper’s Bazaar*: completely unretouched, wearing a floaty white dress, sprinting across sand dunes with a wolf. “I grew up with wolves; my mom loves them,” she tells her interviewer and *Big Little Lies* co-star, Reese Witherspoon.

It’s no wonder, really, why Zoë fascinates. Her family always has. Her parents, who are both African-American and Ashkenazi Jewish, eloped to Las Vegas on Lisa’s 20th birthday and Zoë was born a year later; they split when she was five and get along famously, as do Lenny Kravitz and Jason Mamoia.

Her paternal grandparents were CNN news reporter Sy Kravitz and black actress Roxie Roker, who portrayed one-half of TV’s first interracial couple in a long-running, unassuming sitcom called *The Jeffersons*. “My parents were mixed so I didn’t think much of it until I was educated about what the world was like. Then I realised this was a really big deal,” Zoë has said of an awareness that, over the years, has deepened.

“It’s important to play characters that aren’t written specifically for African-Americans, where this isn’t part of the plot. Ninety per cent of the time I read scripts where the character description says ‘Sara, 22, perky’ then after a few more pages it’s ‘Charlotte, 23, African-American’. So I’m therefore supposed to know that everyone else is white, and there’s a reason this person is black.”

She pauses, frowns. “If it’s part of the story, fine. Race is a real thing.

Otherwise it hurts me each time I see this. I really hope people are trying to break the habit.”

Considered too “urban” to audition for Christopher Nolan’s Batman film, *The Dark Knight Rises*, Zoë appreciates that her ethnicity was irrelevant to *Big Little Lies* director Jean-Marc Vallée, who cast her as Bonnie, the free-spirited second wife of Nathan (James Tupper), without an audition.

While a parallel narrative argues that such colour-blindness is also a form of silencing racial awareness, Zoë insists that *Big Little Lies* gave her career the boost it needed.

“Obviously I’m in amazing company,” she says, turning up her palms as if to summon her four female co-stars: Witherspoon, Laura Dern, Shailene Woodley and Nicole Kidman, who Zoë first met 16 years ago when Kidman was briefly engaged to her dad. “I was 13; Nicole took me to the movies and was nice to me.”

As a teenager she attended the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan, where she was a “theatre kid”, never hanging with the cool crowd.

“I was a musicals geek,” she says with a laugh. “I grew up watching [musical actors] Bette Midler and Bernadette Peters. I played Rizzo in *Grease*, who I thought was so badass, and was always staying behind after school to practise the songs. Musical theatre got me into acting.”

She was still in high school when she landed her first role as a babysitter employed by Catherine Zeta-Jones’ character in the 2007 comedy *No Reservations*, helmed by Australian director Scott Hicks (“I have a lot of friends from Australia; they are the nicest, rowdiest people”).

Enrolled at the acting conservatory at the State University of New York she dropped out after a year and moved to Brooklyn to work in film and TV. There was the 2009 drama *The Greatest*, in which she played a woman addicted to grief counselling groups; in 2011 she appeared in eight episodes of *Californication* as the singer in an all-female band called Queens of Dogtown.

But behind the scenes Zoe was grappling with anorexia and bulimia – eating disorders she eventually conquered aged 24, and which feels a responsibility to speak out about.

“I talk about it publicly because I think it’s really important for young



Zoë as her *Fantastic Beasts* character, Leta Lesrange.

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women and men to know you’re not the only one going through this. It’s still a journey for me,” she admits.

“My body is something I’m conscious of. I have to make sure I keep myself in line by having a healthy perspective on life.”

Along with eating well, this involves spending time at home in Brooklyn with her actor boyfriend of two years, Karl Glusman, in between hanging with her friends (who include Carla Delevingne and Janelle Monáe) and family, particularly her half-siblings, Lola Lolani Mamoia, 11, and Nakoa-Wolf Manakauapo Namakaeha, 9, who live with their parents and a menagerie of animals (including wolves) on two hectares outside Los Angeles. “I see them less and less at the moment so I try and value every moment.”

Zoë is vocalist in a Brooklyn electro-trio named Lolawolf, who have supported acts including Lily Allen and Miley Cyrus on tour. “I

don’t have time right now to pursue music but it’s a constant in my life; right now I’m listening to a lot of Aretha [Franklin] and people like Nina Simone and Bob Marley.”

Does she ever play records by her father (whose tribute song *Flowers for Zoë* featured on 1991’s *Mama Said*)? “Sometimes! I love his music. I’ve heard it so much. I used to go on tour with him when I was younger.”

Her current focus is on her acting; this year also sees her in *Kin*, a sci-fi action film about “a young black boy who finds an extra terrestrial gun”. Zoë is also to star in (and executive produce) a TV adaptation of *High Fidelity*, the 2000 film based on Nick Hornby’s novel about an obsessive record shop owner, taking on the role played by John Cusack in the original (as it happens, opposite her mum Lisa Bonet). “It was a role written for a man but they didn’t feel the need to change it, which is cool.”

Then, of course, there is *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, the second film in a series of five. With the relationship between Leta and Newt set to grow and develop, might Leta become a long-term fixture of the magic-making franchise?

“I have no idea,” says Zoë, charmingly. “But when I first went on set and they handed me my wand I thought, ‘It’s happening. Now anything is possible.’” •

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald is out November 15.

