

Gary Oldman, Human Chameleon

by Alexandra Lander

Since making his film debut as Sid Vicious in 1986, Gary Oldman has portrayed the vastly diverse characters of Beethoven, Lee Harvey Oswald, Dracula, Pontius Pilate, and the saintly Reverend Dimsdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. There are several roles, such as the old southern Congressman in *The Contender* in which he is virtually unrecognizable. In the DVD *Tiptoes*, he even plays a dwarf. That's right—a *dwarf*. Thanks to modern digital technology.

Hailing from a working-class family in London, Oldman attended the city's Rose Bruford Drama College where he actually earned a BA in Theatre Arts. Perhaps it was this formal training in addition to his own ingenuity that gave him the ability to morph into any type of person, and to master any accent.

"I don't think Hollywood knows what to do with me. I would imagine that when it comes to romantic comedies, my name would be pretty low down on the list."

- Gary Oldman

Admittedly, the majority of his roles have been seditious villains. The most loathsome by far was the disfigured freak who cut off chunks of his own face and fed them to his dog in *Hannibal*. He nearly out-creeped Hannibal Lector himself, without even making one slurping sound. If not villains, then his characters simply fall on the darker side of the scale. I think Oldman was wrong, however, when he said he couldn't play a good romantic. The stirring "Moonlight Sonata" scene in *Immortal Beloved* can stand alone as proof that Oldman can express passion. He captures perfectly the rapture a deaf Beethoven feels as he presses his ear to the top of the piano while he plays, soaking in the beauty of his own composition. The way he *looks* at his lovers in the film could easily send female viewers running for a cold shower. Yes, he can definitely do love and romance.

The most striking aspect of Gary Oldman's roles is that he becomes the character to such an extent, that you either don't realize or you forget it's him. My sister and I were halfway through *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* before she whispered, "Oh my God, look who that is!" It wasn't just the phenomenal makeup job, either. This is how all his films are. Whenever I watch trailers to new movies in which he will be starring, I'm always intrigued to see what shape and form he takes next. Gary Oldman's name in the credits is a good litmus test to determine whether or not a movie will be *really* good.

Some little known facts about Oldman are that he was once married to Uma Thurman, and dated Isabella Rosselini. He actually considered a career in music, but thought better of it. He has used a different accent in nearly every film he's ever done.

Oldman is currently filming *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Batman Begins*, both scheduled for release in 2005. I'm sure there are many more scripts on his coffee

table, waiting for his acceptance. I know I'm not alone when I say that I look forward to many more years of his outstanding chameleon brilliance.