

# people are talking about

EDITOR: VALERIE STEIKER

up next

## OXFORD Revisited

In Lone Scherfig's latest, Max Irons plays a university student swept up in a secret society.



STAND BY ME THE ACTOR, IN A BURBERRY PRORSUM COAT AND PANTS AND A RAG & BONE T-SHIRT.

**T**he *Riot Club* involves ten good-looking, urbane British boys (Douglas Booth, Sam Claflin, Freddie Fox, among them) dressed up in tails for a story about a despicably behaved Oxford University dining club. Directed by *An Education*'s Lone Scherfig, it almost didn't have **Max Irons** in the lead role. "It is the only thing of which I'm 100

percent proud," Irons says. "But at first, stupidly, I did not want to do it. I didn't want to glamorize it."

It's easy to guess why Irons might have resisted playing a dynastically entitled scion. He's the 29-year-old offspring of Jeremy Irons and Sinéad Cusack, and thus, unavoidably, carries the thespian genes of a great English/Irish family tree. Irons protests it is not a case of natural typecasting, though. He may have grown up in Oxfordshire and attended the Bryanston School (from which he was expelled for being caught in flagrante with a female student), but, he says, "I'm not really a man's man. I'm not good at banter. It's always sort of been my nightmare." Does the man have a diffident English charm? Oh, of course not.

After Bryanston, where Irons struggled with dyslexia and discovered "acting was most fun," he enrolled at the Guildhall School to study the family trade, ignoring his parents' warnings. "The emotional part, the financial part, the jealousy, the being away from loved ones—they explained it all," he says. So far so good, though: A steady stream of film and TV parts (*Red Riding Hood*, *The Host*, *The White Queen*) has kept his career on the upswing.

What ultimately attracted him to *The Riot Club* is the fact that it's the opposite of a dreaming-spires-of-Oxford romance. Adapted by Laura Wade from her 2010 play, *Posh*, the plot fictionalizes the exploits of the real, secretive Oxford University Bullingdon Club, whose former members include British prime minister David Cameron and Boris Johnson, the mayor of London. The cast did its research, Irons says. "We interviewed members of the Bullingdon Club. What you read about is true, and happens." As Miles, a gorgeous first-year who wins a sparky working-class girlfriend (Holliday Grainger), he—like the viewer—is lured into an initially entertaining and then fully shocking display of violent British class hatred. As Irons says, "He's taken in by the glamour and then fails to act." More recently the actor, who lives in New York with his fashion-editor girlfriend, Sophie Pera, just finished filming for Simon Curtis's *Woman in Gold*, with Helen Mirren and Charles Dance. A future member of the great and the good of British drama? Maybe.—SARAH MOWER PATA>270

## design Off the WALL

Best known for its wall coverings with a modern take on classical motifs like toile de Jouy, the Glasgow-based design company **Timorous Beasties** is debuting a collection of lithographed tiles.

Hand-drawn, digitized, and then printed on limestone, the Rorschach line features an almost psychedelic damask pattern of abstract florals in fuchsia and electric orange. It's a pleasing tension between two traditions—one storied and opulent, the other accidental and psychologically revealing. As co-owner and designer Paul Simmons says, "We hope to turn aesthetic assumptions about pattern upside down."—MIEKE TEN HAVE



FAR OUT FROM LEFT: OMNI SPLATT DAMASK AND SPLITTER SPLATTER DAMASK; CLETILE.COM.