



Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip during the Royal Tour to New Zealand in 1953.

Following in the footsteps of Keisha Castle-Hughes and Anna Paquin, Sally Andrews is the latest young New Zealand talent to rock the international film world

Sally Andrews already has a growing reputation in America as the next rising star after her stunning debut in the film *Her Majesty*.

The beautiful young actress plays the lead role in the movie and has already won a string of awards for her efforts. Most recently she was awarded Best Actress at the San Diego Film Festival and the Rising Star Award at the Marco Island Film Festival. She also chalked up a Special Jury Prize for Debut performance from the Palm Beach International Film Festival. And there is more to come.

In the story, which is based on the Queen's visit to New Zealand in 1953, Sally plays Elizabeth Wakefield, a young girl who is desperate to meet the Queen and lures her to her small town. She befriends an elderly Maori woman, Hira



HER MAJESTY'S DARLING

Sally was only 11 when she played Elizabeth.



Elizabeth with Hira, an elderly lady she befriends.



Mata (played by legendary New Zealand actress Vicky Haughton), who is ostracised by the town and is deemed an embarrassment to them on the eve of a possible visit from royalty.

Sally remains indifferent to the royals herself, unlike many girls her own age who would love a glimpse of Princess Diana's dashing sons Prince William and Prince Harry.

Sally was chosen for the lead role in the film after an extensive nationwide talent search in both the North and South Islands of New Zealand.

Then only 11 years old, she was a total newcomer to film and only had a talent agent by default.

When staying with her auntie she accompanied her cousin to an open agent's call and was immediately signed up. Not long after, she found herself auditioning for the role of Elizabeth.

'I didn't even plan on going,' laughs the vivacious teenager. 'It was all an accident!'

Sally was born and raised in Wainuiomata, a suburb of Wellington. She has been performing in local stage productions ever since the age of six, when she made her theatrical debut as one of the orphans in the musical *Oliver*.

Her Majesty was only her second-ever audition, her first was an unsuccessful bid for a role in TV series *The Tribe*.

Now 15 years old, the sweet-faced starlet says she was surprised by the huge success of the film in the US.

'It was amazing!' she grins.

'I suddenly was walking down streets in America where little girls stopped me and recognised me, saying, "there's Sally Andrews!"'

She says even her best friends don't really believe how successful she is, but will soon have some idea as the film opened nationwide last week. The opening was celebrated with a parade through the streets of Te Awamutu, where much of the film was made.

Sally has travelled to the US several times to collect awards, going to San Diego alone recently for a whirlwind press trip.

'Suddenly little girls stopped me and recognised me'

'I loved it there – it was brilliant,' she says.

'And I went at the end of their summer and my friends were so jealous when they saw my tan!'

Sally lives with her parents in the Hutt Valley and had travelled before, but promoting *Her Majesty* was the first time she had been overseas alone.

She admits it was a scary experience at first, especially transferring between planes and flying into the maze-like LA airport, but she was well looked after once she arrived and settled in.

Sally says her one regret was seeing no big Hollywood stars, adding, 'and I

was so busy I didn't even have any time to go shopping!'

Her hectic schedule meant she had virtually no sleep.

'I really had no idea what I was talking about, so I'm glad the foreign press were so nice!'

Sally, whose somewhat surprising role model is Julie Andrews, was thrilled with her first experience in a feature film. She sounds very assured when she says she would like to continue with acting.

'It's what I've always wanted to do,' she says. 'And having success early on has definitely made the whole idea a bit easier.'

After travelling to the US and seeing the way things are done overseas, Sally says she appreciates what a great place New Zealand is for a young person wanting to carve out a career in the arts.

'There are girls there who are really talented yet are struggling to even get an agent,' she says, 'whereas I just turned up at an open call!'

Sally is positive about her career in acting. When asked what the hardest thing about it is, she struggles to come up with an answer.

'The hardest? I can't think of anything,' she laughs.

'What's so hard about getting flown overseas, staying in a lovely apartment and eating catered meals every day on set?'

'I totally loved it!'

By Helene Ravlich
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