



{ MOVIES }

## Familiar Face

**MELANIE LYNKEY** has had memorable parts in some of the most beloved films, but the Kiwi actress enjoys a low profile offscreen.

{ BY JULIE JACOBS }

**M**elanie Lynskey isn't a household name, and that's just the way she likes it.

"I met with a director and had sent him my reel beforehand. He told me, 'You're all these different parts in all these films I've loved,'" says the soft-spoken New Zealander, her charming native accent intact. "That's ideal. I don't really see the upside of being famous. You lose your anonymity and people watch you wherever you go. It's scary."

What Lynskey isn't afraid of is tackling diverse roles of any size or stature. A few years after debuting at age 16 opposite Kate Winslet in *Heavenly Creatures*, she moved to Los Angeles and began working steadily, landing parts in a string of movies, including *Ever After*, *Coyote Ugly*

and *Sweet Home Alabama*. She also found success on television as Rose — Charlie Sheen's ditzy, diligent stalker on *Two and a Half Men*. "People grab me and say 'Crazy Rose!'" she says with a laugh. "It's a shock for them when they realize I'm this quiet, shy New Zealander. I did love that character. She was very odd and smart but never meant any harm."

Lynskey dreams of one day working with her husband, actor Jimmi Simpson, and doing theater in New York, but until the opportunities arrive, she's content to explore new characters, creating playlists on her iPod as part of her preparation for each role. First up, she faces danger along with co-stars Steve Carell and Keira Knightley in this month's *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World*,

an interesting, somewhat humorous examination of human behavior as a deadly asteroid approaches Earth. What would Lynskey do if the circumstances were real? "I'd be with my husband and dog and our families," she says. "We would eat delicious food and drink wine!"

And in a rare turn for the often-supporting actress, Lynskey takes the lead in September's indie dramedy *Hello I Must Be Going*, receiving rave reviews at this year's Sundance Film Festival for playing a lost 30-something divorcée romantically entangled with a man many years her junior. Smaller projects like these are — happily — a mainstay of her career. "I think the roles are more challenging [in independent movies]," she says. "People are more willing to take risks."