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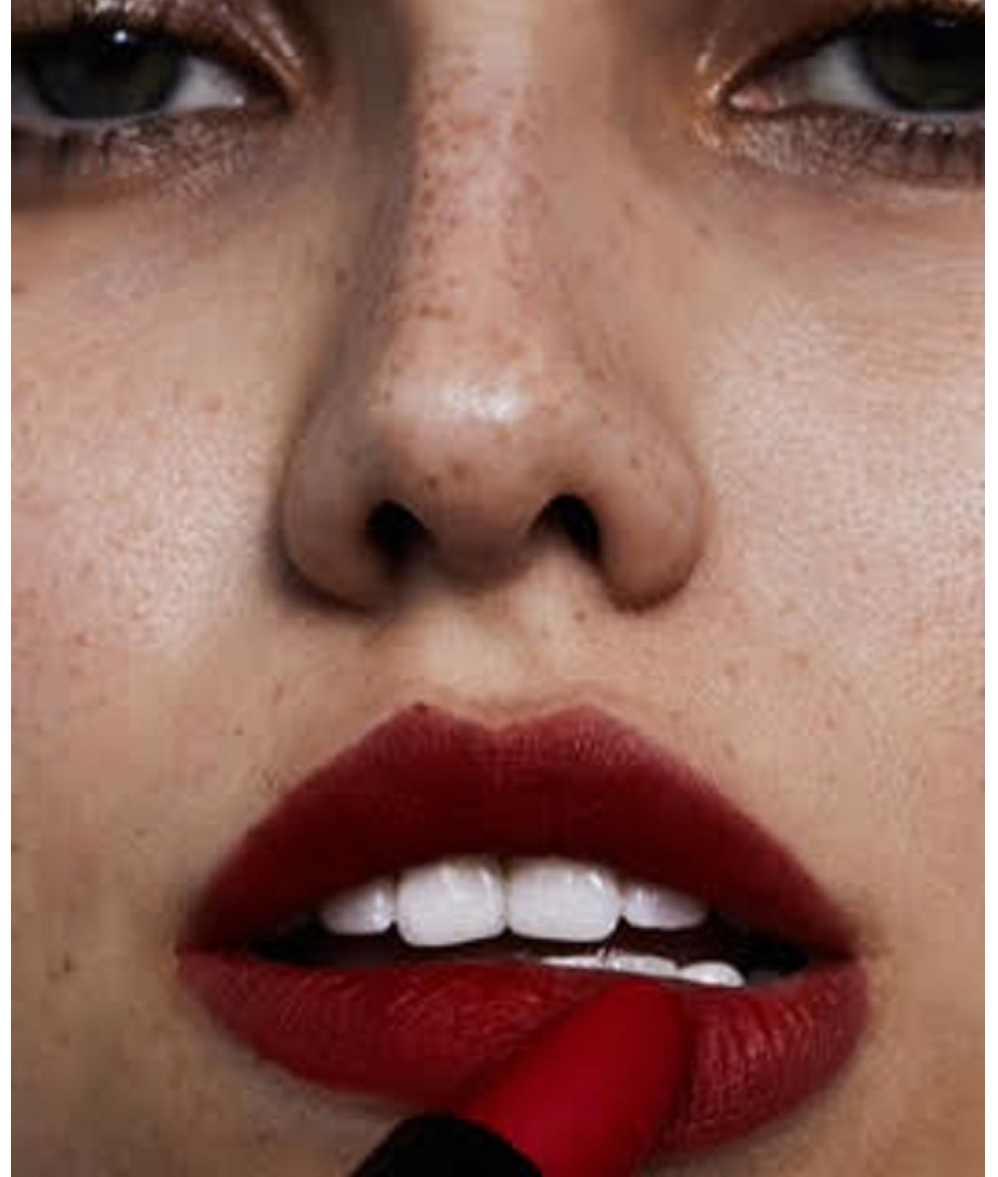
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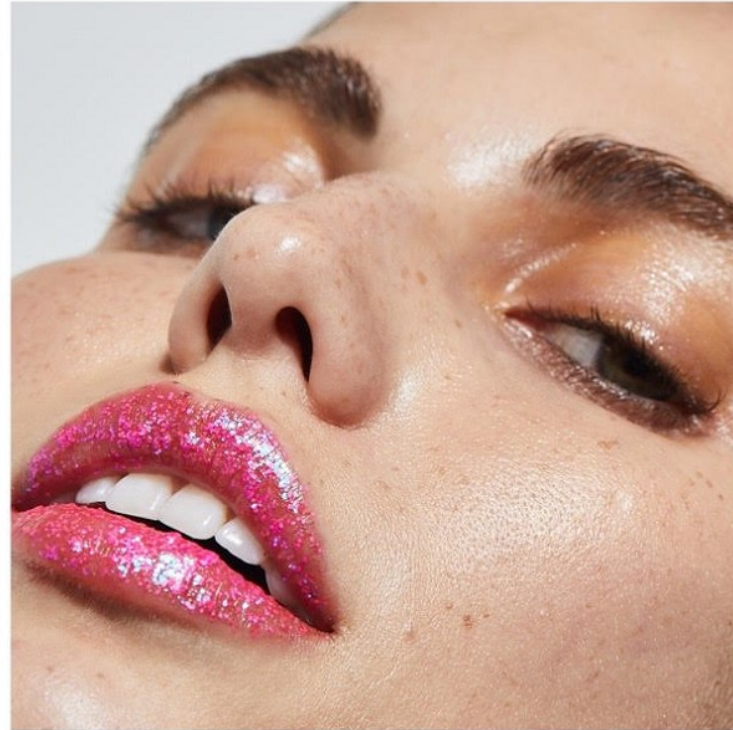
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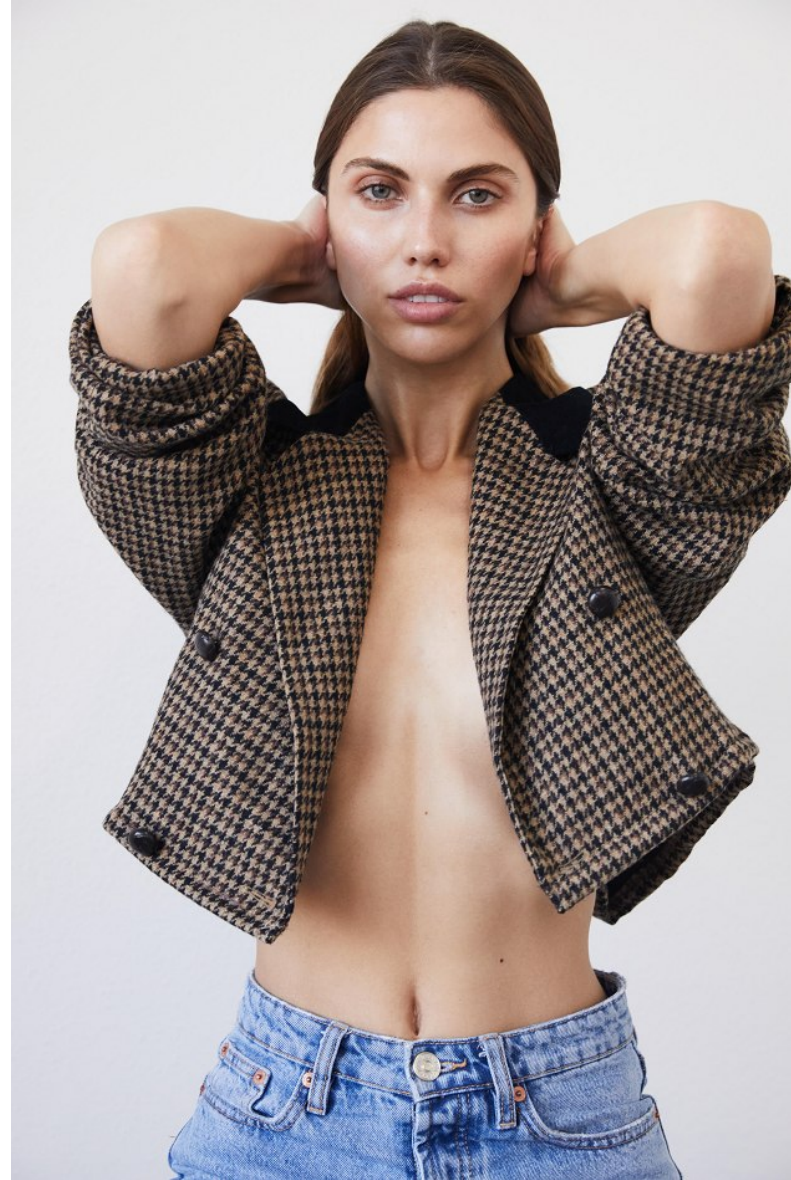
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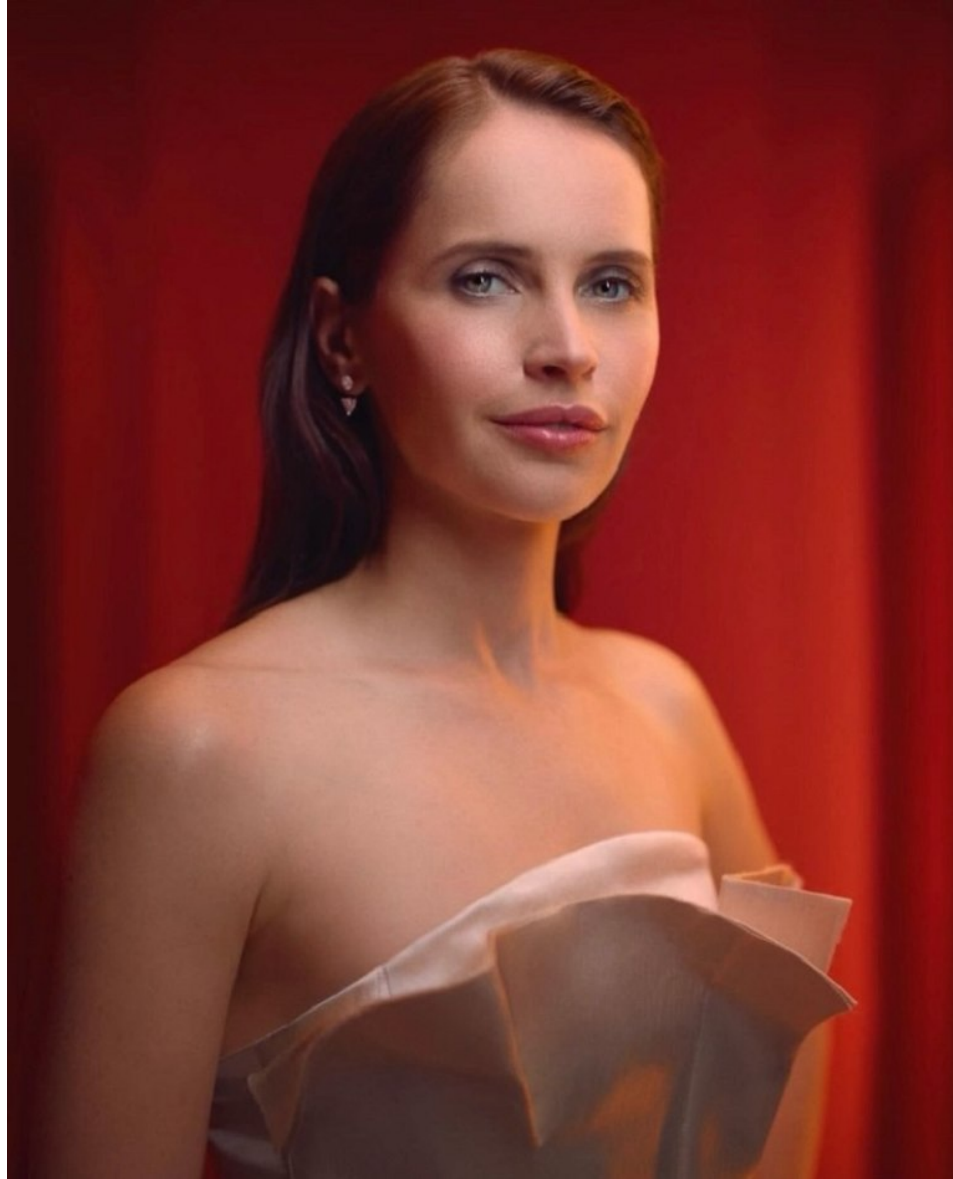
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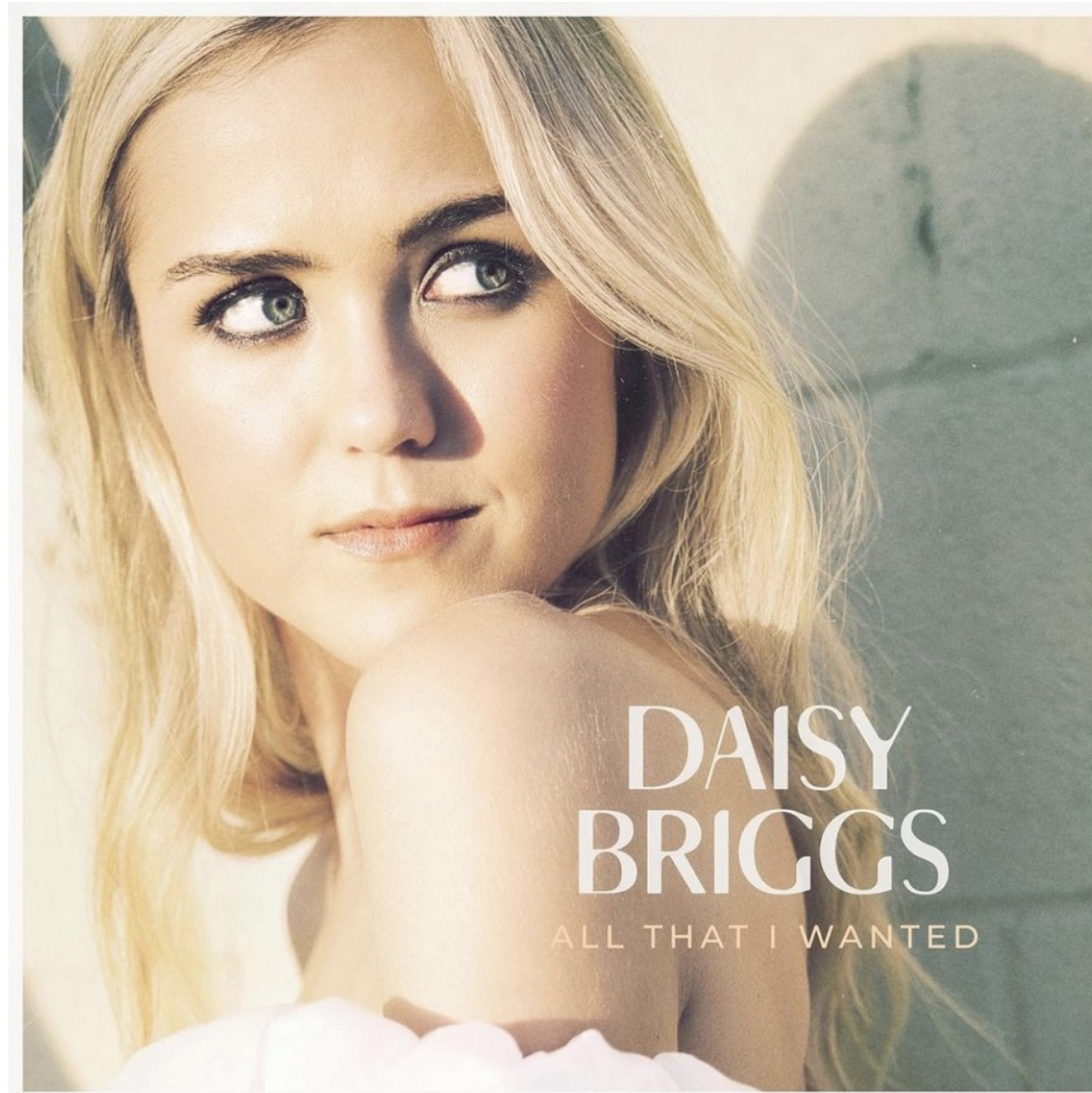
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ART & CULTURE

star

HAUNTING BEAUTY

Actress Rachel Brosnahan dips into the dark side with the second season of *Manhattan*.

By Carina Rizzo
Portrait by Wes Klein

THE RIGHT STUFF
Actress Rachel Brosnahan stars in the TV series *Manhattan*, which premieres its second season Oct. 3 on WGN America.

THOUGH OFTEN troubled on screen, Rachel Brosnahan could not be lighter in person. Spend some time with the ebullient 25-year-old and her enthusiasm for life becomes contagious. Yet it's Brosnahan's ability to channel darker roles that has gotten her noticed. Case in point: Her Emmy nomination for playing Rachel Posner, the call girl who aided Frank Underwood's (Kevin Spacey) cause by taking down Rep. Peter Russo (Corey Stoll) in *House of Cards*.

For the Milwaukee native who landed the role straight out of drama school, the one-episode stint that turned into a three-season arc was a dream come true. "It has been the most difficult thing I've ever done, and the most rewarding," says Brosnahan. "I was working with actors and directors that I've admired my entire life and couldn't believe that I was breathing air with them."

There have been plenty of mentors during Brosnahan's brief but prolific career. While shooting *Oliver Kitteridge*, Frances McDormand advised her to never alter her face. Her *Beautiful Creatures* co-star Jeremy Irons taught her to embrace her uniqueness and not view other actors as competition. But her most valuable lesson—to assemble a great body of work—is something *The Blacklist* and *The Dovekeepers* star admits almost took her on a different path. When approached about *Manhattan*, the faux-history dramatic series chronicling the Manhattan Project during World War II, Brosnahan initially pursued the role of a female physicist helping develop the atom bomb. "It was very judgmental on my part, but I thought playing a 1940s housewife would automatically make me an appendage to a more interesting and dynamic male character," she says. But as her character, Abby Isaacs, struggles with the secrecy that surrounds her, she has turned out to be much more than a sidekick. It's Isaacs—and Posner's—resilience that Brosnahan carries with her into real life. "I've learned an incredible amount through exploring their suffering, about taking the experiences that are traumatic and letting them make you stronger," she smiles. "I'm very aware of how lucky I am."



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