

MULTI-TALENTED FUNNYMAN JAMES CORDEN

ON MOVING TO AMERICA, MERYL STREEP AND WHY FATHERHOOD COMES FIRST



When comic and actor James starts his new job—hosting US chatshow *The Late Late Show* in California—his wife Julia and three-year-old son Max (with his parents, right), plus two-month-old daughter Carey, will be with him. “What an adventure. What a ride to go on,” says the former *Gavin & Stacey* star

Singing his way into his dream role in the musical film *In the Woods* and planning a big move across the Pond to host *The Late Late Show*—not to mention embracing fatherhood for the second time—James Corden is on top of the world as his phenomenal year draws to a close.

Speaking of slipping into Carey Ferguson’s shoes on CBS’s late-night chausson, which will involve moving his family Stateside, the Buffaloes actor and writer wits himself: “The thing I love is acting and writing, but when I looked at this, the pros far outweighed the cons. The truth is I’d rather regret doing something than not doing something. I have to have a shot at it. More than that, from the perspective of my family and me, what an adventure. What a ride to go on.”

From a purely selfish point of view, to be in a position where I can be present for my family... There are times where, because of the nature of this job, I haven’t been able to be there,” says James, who has a three-year-old son Max and two-month-old daughter Carey with wife Julia.

“I don’t know much about being a parent, but I know that very few children sit in therapy going, ‘My parents were awesome too much. They loved me too much and what really hurt me was that I had too many cottles from my dad.’”

His new job was announced in September, but James is still in a state of disbelief. “I wish I had an idea of how it landed in my lap,” he laughs. “I was a little reticent because it isn’t something I’ve done. It feels a bit like if someone tapped you on the shoulder and said, ‘Wow, congratulations, you’ve joined the Sky Tour de France team,’ and before you know it, you’re in Lycra on a bike again. ‘Gee, you know I don’t do this, right?’”

“I’ll be doing my show in California, where I have a couple of friends, but I won’t have time for friends—I hope my wife makes some for us. It’s going to be a real adventure. And if it doesn’t work... I’m 16 stone from High Wycombe. What bit of you thought it was ever going to work?”

STREEP SHOW
Despite his nerves, the 36-year-old self-deprecating charm is sure to come across on screen—and if he’s at a loss he could perhaps call on his *In the Woods* co-star Meryl Streep.

“I don’t know if we’re on that level,” he laughs. “I don’t even know what the show will be like or if it will be any good so I’m loath to ask her onto it.”

“When talking about someone like Meryl, there’s nothing I can say about her as an actress that hasn’t been said. I’m as bowled over by her



as the rest of the world, but you can times that by a hundred in my admiration for her as a person and a complete leader on this film. She’s so meticulous but doesn’t take herself seriously in any way. She loves having fun and being silly. Oh my God, this time of year Meryl’s Bunter Claus!”

In *In the Woods*, James plays a baker who desperate for a child he strikes a deal with a witch—Meryl—that leads him on a journey through fairytales such as *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

“It’s a fantastic show of mine. I’ve loved it for years,” he says. “I never thought in my wildest dreams that I’d ever be in contention for such an incredible film with such an incredible cast.”

JOLLY JAMES

Despite their respect for the project, the cast had plenty of fun between takes—and James is particularly proud of a prank he pulled on co-star Anna Kendrick, who plays Cinderella.

“My greatest moment—possibly in my life—was managing to convince Anna and a section of the crew that Meryl had been fired, which is a pretty big lie. Anna said I was on the set and on the other side of the woods two department heads were having what looked like a fairly heated conversation. Anna wondered what it was about and I said, ‘Haven’t you heard? Meryl’s been fired.’”

“Christine Baranski [Cinderella’s stepmother], who is brilliant fun, said over and I gave her a shy wink and said, ‘Have you seen Meryl? I can’t believe this has happened. Why have they fired her?’”

“Quick as a flash, she went, ‘She’s in his. I’ve never seen her like this. Who fires Meryl Streep?’”

“One of the crew asks what’s going on and Christine and I go on a tangent. ‘Meryl’s been fired.’”

“Then Christine topped it off with a line I’ll never forget. ‘Glen Close is on a private jet.’”

“It just spread. People were checking online when Meryl walks on in full costume and make-up and you can see people in disbelief that they fell for it. Meryl laughed so much that she lost it.”

James found the film a joy to make, not least because his pal Emily Blunt plays his wife.

“Emily and I met in possibly the most British environment ever—a polo match hosted by Prince William and Harry,” James says. “We got an immediately and ended up singing *Something Stupid*. Our chemistry just happened. She’s great to work with and this is her best performance.”

Coincidentally, while Emily’s character struggles to get pregnant, Emily had recently discovered she was pregnant with her first child, daughter Hazel, who was born in February.

Being a father is something James found useful for the role. “There are moments in the film where [the baker] strives to have a child and moments where he doesn’t know if he’s cut out to be a father,” he says. “I don’t think there’s anyone who doesn’t question if it’s something they’re capable of. But the best thing about film is its magic. There’s a song at the end called *No One Is Alone*, which I’ve always taken to be the only thing you can say to children.

“Whether you like it or not, there are screen-ups coming your way and there’s nothing you can do about it. That’s life. In these moments it would be easy to feel like you’re on your own in the world, but the truth is you’re not and never will be.”

“That’s a good thing for children to hear, as opposed to the sugarcane idea that life is great and if it isn’t there’s something wrong with you.” James concludes cheerfully. “So happy to be ever after... doesn’t exist.”

INTERVIEW MICHELLE JOHNSON

In the Woods is in cinemas from 9 February



James’s leading ladies—wife Julia (top left, above), whom he married in Ballington Mass in 2012, and Emily Blunt, his screen wife from *In the Woods* (inset, top left). Between takes, the cast and crew had fun, with prankster James telling them that co-star Meryl Streep had been fired

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