



WITH HIS LEADING LADY SOPHIE BY HIS SIDE
BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
 ANNOUNCES HE IS TO BECOME A DAD AGAIN
 AS HE TELLS OF THE JOYS OF FATHERHOOD



22 Benedict (above, with wife Sophie Hunter) is joined on the red carpet at the Westminster Abbey UK premiere of *Doctor Strange* by co-stars Tilda Swinton and Rachel McAdams

Benedict Cumberbatch and his theatre director wife Sophie Hunter have always kept their life with 16-month-old son Christopher private, but the actor couldn't hide his excitement when he announced he's about to become a dad again.

After he revealed the news at the Hollywood premiere of *Doctor Strange*, in which he plays the title role, Benedict and Sophie were glowing with happiness as they attended the UK premiere last Monday, with Sophie obscuring any baby bump under an elegant fuchsia dress.

Marvel's *Doctor Strange* sees Benedict play a bona fide action hero – a long-held dream, he says – starring alongside his *12 Years A Slave* co-star Chiwetel Ejiofor, as well as Tilda Swinton, Rachel McAdams and Mads Mikkelsen, who all attended the glamorous event at Westminster Abbey.

While Benedict is keeping relatively mum about his expanding brood – last year he said he hoped for a "(Cumber)batch of boys" – the 40-year-old has spoken to **HELLO!** about his experience of fatherhood.

"Anyone who's experienced it knows that it's hugely life-changing," he says.

So does Benedict think becoming a superhero will earn him dad points with Christopher?

"He's a bit young to ask!" laughs the actor, but adds that becoming a first-time father two months before his sold-out run as Hamlet in London's Barbican had a profound effect on his work.

"Lots of people, especially women, get told, 'Oh, parenthood's really going to affect your career' – and it does, but for the better, I think. I know I'm in a very privileged position in my career but I think everyone, even if they're in a challenging time in their life, draws strength from their

children. They are your inspiration. It adds to your work, it never takes away."

Having Christopher has also changed the way he considers his relationship with his own parents, actors Timothy Carlton and Wanda Ventham.

"How you think about your own parents suddenly accelerates," he says. "It's about understanding what they did for you, how they did it and, in my case, being incredibly grateful and really moved."

ROLE MODELS

Benedict says his parents are also the benchmark for how he approaches his career.

"I started out in this profession with two parents to live up to who had successful careers, the respect of their peers and a good time doing a job that can be tough on family life," he says. "I thought, if I do half as good a job as them, then I'm fine. Their standards are the standards I wanted to meet."

"My parents are incredibly supportive now. Not that they weren't in the beginning – they just wanted something different and better for me, something a bit more grown up... for me to be a barrister or doctor or something else."

"Law bit deepest for a while, but as I went down that route, I discovered it was just as precarious – you're only as good as your last case, it's over-subscribed as a profession and there are so many brilliant people not getting jobs. So why not pursue my first dream and roll with the punches?"

The gamble paid off, with Benedict making his name in BBC's *Sherlock* and a slew of top-grossing films including the Oscar-winning *12 Years A Slave* and *The Imitation Game*, which won him an Academy Award nomination

His latest role as the arrogant New York

'Everyone draws strength from their children. They are your inspiration'

neurosurgeon turned Sorcerer Supreme in Marvel's visually spectacular blockbuster is catapulting him to a new level of superstardom – although the approach, he says, is familiar.

"Sherlock Holmes is a bit of a superhero, isn't he?" he says. "This has an appeal because it's so different. It's a huge film, and that obviously has a draw, but it's also the idea of becoming an action hero – learning kung fu and stunt moves, transforming my body and voice and playing an American hero. That was a lot of fun."

Benedict also enjoyed the spiritual aspect of the story, with Dr Strange seeking alternative ways to heal his hands after an accident leaves him unable to work. And the mysterious doctor uses elements of mindfulness and meditation that the actor has practised since spending five months teaching English at a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in India aged 19.

"The thing that resonated in *Doctor Strange* was the power of the mind to shape reality," he says. "I think people in all cultures have always needed beliefs. Wherever we lie on the spiritual spectrum, we'll always wonder."

Benedict was also excited to return to Nepal, which he first visited during that gap year trip.

"It was amazing to go back to Kathmandu, to a place that was familiar but very different. The earthquake happened seven months before we went, and I was adamant that we still had to forge ahead with filming there. It was fantastic."

So what will be the fate of his role in *Sherlock*, soon to hit our screens for its fourth series?

"I will never say never to *Sherlock*," he says. "There may be a longer gap between this series and the next one, but I will never say never."

Does he ever worry that he will be forever associated with the antisocial detective?

"No," he says. "I've played enough iconic characters that although there will always be people who say, 'Oh, that's Sherlock', there are already people saying, 'It's Dr Strange,' and occasionally even my name. I'm fine with that."

Ultimately, Benedict says, he will be defined by his personal life. "It won't be a character name on my gravestone," he says. "It will be my family name, so I'm fine." **H**

INTERVIEW: MICHELLE JOHNSON

Doctor Strange is in cinemas now. To watch red carpet video from the premiere, download the **HELLO!** Ltd iPad edition.

"Being an action hero was a lot of fun," says Benedict of becoming Dr Strange, pictured (below) with Chiwetel Ejiofor as Mordo



PHOTOS: FAMOUS/PA PHOTOS, SILVERHUB



Benedict and Sophie, parents to 16-month-old Christopher, are now expecting their second child – although any baby bump was hidden under Sophie's flowing fuchsia gown