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Interview with Sir Ian McKellen



Macbeth (1979)



Gods and Monsters (1998)



X-Men (2000)



Lord of the Rings (2003)

Sir Ian McKellen is one of Britain's greatest actors. He was born in Burnley in the north of England on 25 May 1939. He first became well known as an actor for his roles in Shakespeare's plays, e.g. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. In recent years he has had many important film roles including James Whale in *Gods and Monsters*, Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and Magneto in *X-Men*.



1 Your tastes

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What kind of music do you like?

I hardly ever listen to music at home – I prefer going to concerts. I enjoy classical music and pop, but my favourite kind of music is traditional American jazz.

What book are you reading at the moment?

I'm reading *The Hammersteins*, a biography of the American theatre family written by Oscar Andrew Hammerstein.

Who's your favourite historical character?

Perhaps William Shakespeare.

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What time do you usually get up in the morning?

If I am working, I get up one hour before I have to leave the house. If I am not working, and I went to bed late the night before, I get up at about 10 in the morning.

How much time do you spend a day on the internet?

I can very easily spend three or four hours on the internet, answering emails, reading the news, etc. I think of the internet as a wonderful encyclopaedia of information.

How do you relax?

I enjoy a late night sudoku, but especially being with friends.



What's your favourite room in the house?

Perhaps the living room where I cook and eat, and from where I can see the River Thames in London.

What do you always have on your desk?

I always have too many letters, papers, and books which are waiting for me to read.

Do you have any pets?

I love dogs, but I can't have one because I'm often away from home.

What languages do you speak?

I only speak English, but I can remember a little of the French I learned at school.

Can you play a musical instrument?

No.

Is there something you would like to learn to do?

Yes – many things, e.g. to sing well, to play the piano, and to speak foreign languages.



What's your favourite place in London?

I love the River Thames and the views from its many bridges.

Where are you going to go for your next holiday?

I'm going to go to India for the first time in February.

What's the most beautiful city you've ever visited?

I can't choose between Edinburgh, Prague, and Venice.

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What was your first job?

The first money I earned as a professional actor was when I was a student at Cambridge University in 1959. I played small parts in audio recordings of Shakespeare's plays.

When did you first read *The Lord of the Rings*?

I read it first when I was preparing to play Gandalf in the movie trilogy.

What was the best and worst thing about filming *The Lord of the Rings*?

The best thing about filming was discovering the countryside and people of New Zealand. But the worst thing was living away from home for a year or more.