

That's priceless, eh? I'm saving that one.

EMPIRE: Anyone who is a fan of any kind of sport has dreamed of owning the club they supported as a kid. What's it like?

CROWE: It's thoroughly frustrating. (Laughs)

EMPIRE: Because of the elusive nature of sport?

CROWE: Cinema is elusive as well. But I know that there are certain fundamentals, and if you keep clarity of thought you can achieve the things you set out to achieve. But what's frustrating with the team is that I'm not inside the machine. My job is to clear the way for the coach and the players, take all of the stresses out of the way and let them do their best — and they won't if I'm trying to micromanage. I have to let them fulfill their own destiny, but sometimes it is very frustrating.

EMPIRE: But is it possible to have such a high emotional involvement in a business?

CROWE: I've tried to downscale that. You can catch me unawares at a game and I'll get very passionate about it. But there is a business objectivity that applies to it and there are fundamentals you have to cover.

EMPIRE: Yet with acting you can dictate, to a large degree, what you bring to the performance. With the club it's ultimately up to the players on the field.

CROWE: Exactly. I always expect success from myself because I know I'm willing to do the work for it. I have that attitude. But ultimately rugby is not my thing. I'm never going to play a game for South Sydney, I'm never going to run on a field, and let's be truthful here — no matter what period of time it was in my life in terms of my level of fitness or athleticism, I would get *killed* playing that game because that is one hard sport. On TV it looks like it has a certain level of grace and it does — it's a wonderful game — but you don't understand the brutality of it until you have been in a dressing room at half-time and seen the blood. Which is just a normal game; everybody bleeds every game. You have to have a certain mindset to be successful at that.

EMPIRE: You've taken a couple of roles lately — I'm thinking of *Body Of Lies* in particular and to a lesser extent *American Gangster*

— where you've been happy to let the other guy have the glory. In *Body Of Lies*, Leo DiCaprio gets the glamorous stuff and your man is an overweight...

CROWE: (Interrupting) Thanks for pointing that out. (Laughs)

EMPIRE: But my point is that it's a thankless task in some ways...

CROWE: Yeah, and there's a lot of heavy lifting. I kind of started doing that over the last few years, the heavy lifting that can't be seen, where you do the amount of work on *American Gangster* to make that look the way it was and to set the platform so that the bad guy gets the attention. And the thing is, at the end of the day he's going to get arrested and I'm going to take him to court! (Laughs) So there was that, there was *Body Of Lies*, there's been a string of them where the heavy lifting you do is

the opportunity to go for the championship belt will come up again at some time, I'm sure. (Laughs)

EMPIRE: Like with Nottingham...

CROWE: Yes, but the challenge there is to make it a great film. Look, man, there's no point in making the second-best Robin Hood movie. If we are going to do it, we have to do it with the thought in mind that we've got the chance of making the *best* Robin Hood movie ever. Simple as that.

CROWE: Are you confident you'll get there?

EMPIRE: Doing a Robin Hood movie is a childhood dream, but doing a bad Robin Hood movie — that doesn't come into the dream. It's got to be fully realised and really worth the effort and as we sit and talk now it's been 18 months of effort, and that's the

projects that are developed for me as a director and not a performer. But that's also one of those funny sort of things, because I go hot and cold on that concept. I like being a reliable lieutenant, not necessarily the boss. But it has some appeal because it's telling the whole story and not part of it. But on the other side of that, you should always play to your strengths. So we'll see.

EMPIRE: So you wouldn't feel unfulfilled if you don't do it?

CROWE: No, because I've had that experience anyway. I've directed maybe ten video clips and three long-form documentaries, so in a way it's something I've already done. And guys like Ridley and Ron [Howard] I have a really close relationship with. Even though I don't go through the post-production process, I have a certain responsibility on set, which is really quite fulfilling with those particular directors.

EMPIRE: Do you look for that high level of collaboration on every film?

CROWE: You can do as many meetings as you want, but you never know until you are on the set and stuff is happening, and the dude is either going to stand up or he's not. And then you find out.

EMPIRE: In other words, some directors have lived up to expectations and some have exceeded them?

CROWE: And some don't! (Laughs)
EMPIRE: But clearly with Ridley — four films and you're about to make a fifth — that's a professional relationship that works...

CROWE: If you look back on the history of cinema, you see this kind of relationship form quite regularly. It's a natural thing for us. In some ways I regret that we didn't step into it immediately after *Gladiator* and simply acknowledge what it was and go on with it. But in a way it's healthier that we went away and had other experiences, and both felt the same way — that we were looking back to that relationship on *Gladiator* and saying, "I want to do that again." In the end, you make the decision to do things together. It's: "You're my kind of bloke, I'm your kind of bloke, what do you feel like doing now? Let's just do it." He suits me. I like to go to a set and work. I like to crack through a day and I like to finish

"We worked out backstories for *Gladiator's* characters. A canvas that big, you can't just walk up to someone in armour and prattle about!"

not necessarily on the screen; you are not doing the emotional scenes or the big fight sequences or whatever.

EMPIRE: Has that been a conscious, planned decision?

CROWE: Yeah. I'm doing work that I'm really happy with, work that I enjoy, but I'm not carrying the world on my shoulders to do the gig. Sooner or later that will be the case again. But I'm not going to just go out and try and find the thing. You get offered lots of stuff and some of it might be interesting for a second or two — it looks challenging but it's not actually complete or whole. It's just a challenge for the sake of a challenge. And I want to take the challenge when it's necessary.

EMPIRE: But with some of those roles you mentioned, you don't get the obvious glory.

CROWE: That doesn't matter, because I've had the satisfaction of doing the job. And you know,

sort of stuff that people don't see or quantify.

EMPIRE: How's it going with the bow and arrow? Ridley Scott (who's directing) told me you send him videos of you practicing...

CROWE: It's coming along really well. I really enjoy that sort of thing. I like learning a new skill; it's one of the pleasures of the job. You get the chance to do something that you wouldn't otherwise have tried.

EMPIRE: And you're playing two roles — the Sheriff Of Nottingham and Robin Hood — right?

CROWE: Yes. (Deadpans) I'm playing Friar Tuck and Maid Marian.

EMPIRE: You talked about wanting to direct a while back. Is that something you still want to do?

CROWE: Well, that will come along when it comes along. Apart from all the other things we've been talking about in terms of projects that are around, on top of that are