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Neeson takes accolade of America's darling

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Liam Neeson's success in the Taken series made him America's favourite Irish star

As he says in his much-quoted *Taken* speech, Liam Neeson has acquired a particular set of skills over a very long career, and those skills have now made him America's favourite Irish celebrity.

The 65-year-old Hollywood leading man was closely followed by the former Bond star Pierce Brosnan, 64, in a survey gauging appeal to US audiences.

Bono, 57, was the third highest-ranking Irish celebrity in America in the poll conducted by **E-Poll Market Research**, which collects data on more than 9,000 celebrities and measures whether Americans know and like them.

Male actors made up nine of the top ten Irish stars who appeal to Americans. In the **E-Score**, which is a celebrity appeal ranking comprising 46 separate personality attributes, only Liam Neeson scored a perfect 100.

Respondents described him as a man of quiet intensity and one of the best actors in Hollywood history.

Brosnan, who had an **E-Score** of 99, was considered a devoted husband by those surveyed. They also approved of his "gorgeous" looks and Irish accent, while others said he was ageing well and was surprisingly funny, which is thought to be in reference to his performances in classic films such as *Mamma Mia* and *Mrs Doubtfire*.

Randy Parker, a spokesman for **E-Poll**, said Neeson and Brosnan were among the most popular stars working in America today.

"Neeson is noted by fans for his versatility, confidence, distinctive voice and 'quiet intensity'," he said. "He is a reassuring, authoritative presence in most roles, whether his signature action roles such as *Taken*, or in dramas such as *Silence* and *A Monster Calls*.

"Brosnan is known for being charming, classy, handsome and stylish. He was a favourite in the role of James Bond, and many fans note the 'surprisingly funny' elements he brought to the character."

Fionnula Flanagan, the 75-year-old star of *The Others*, is the highest rated Irish woman on the list, being described as a "very glamorous woman" and the "life of the party".

Saoirse Ronan, 23, is the next most well-known female Irish star among American audiences thanks to her Oscar nominations for *Brooklyn* last year and 2008's *Atonement* at the tender age of 14. Caitriona Balfe, 37, took joint 15th place with Ronan for her role in the TV smash, *Outlander*.

U2's frontman Bono was America's top-rated Irish singer, with those surveyed assigning him various accolades such as charitable, a great singer, passionate, cool and a good person who is always giving.

The former One Direction star Niall Horan, 23, was the only other singer to be named in the poll aside from Bono.

Colin Farrell, 41, who is going through a golden period in his film career, was the fourth most popular Irish celebrity across the Atlantic. He keeps American fans on their toes, with respondents describing him as an unpredictable bad boy who made unusual, versatile film choices.

Oscar-nominated Michael Fassbender's blend of blockbuster roles such as *X-Men* and *Alien* with the arthouse cult hits *Shame* and *Frank* earned the 40-year-old actor fifth place on the list.

Liam Cunningham, 56, has appeared in both the highest grossing Irish independent film, 2011's *The Guard*, and the second highest grossing Irish independent film, 2006's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* but it is the global success of *Game of Thrones* that has made him a favourite among American audiences and sixth in the top ten.

TV triumphs also helped Jonathan Rhys Meyers, 40, score highly, thanks to his roles in *Tudors* and *Vikings*, which were both filmed in Ireland.

Chris O'Dowd, 37, rose to fame in America with his breakthrough 2011 film, *Bridesmaids*, and he has continued to climb the ladder with his latest role in a reboot of *Get Shorty*. *Fifty Shades of Grey* is thought to have fast-forwarded Jamie Dornan, 35, to number nine on the list, after he scored critical acclaim with the noir TV series *The Fall*.

And although Cillian Murphy, 41, tends to shy away from the spotlight, his performance in *Peaky Blinders* along with huge roles in *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* have made him a favourite of American film fans.

Ireland's highest-ranking exports

1. Liam Neeson
2. Pierce Brosnan
3. Bono
4. Colin Farrell
5. Michael Fassbender
6. Liam Cunningham
7. Jonathan Rhys Meyers
8. Chris O'Dowd
9. Jamie Dornan
10. Cillian Murphy
11. Gabriel Byrne
12. Fionnula Flanagan
13. Aidan Gillen
15. Saoirse Ronan
15. Caitriona Balfe

Source: E-Score Celebrity, 2017 survey

More info:

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