# Ian McKellen discusses experience with 'cruel' gay directors



[Picture: The Critic]

Sir Ian McKellen has revealed in a candid interview with Attitude magazine that some of the "most cruel" directors he has ever worked with were gay. The 85-year-old star attributed their harshness to possible internalised homophobia, stating that he has since "forgiven them".

In the exclusive conversation, prompted by his role in the upcoming film “The Critic,” McKellen shared insights into his experiences with directors whose personal struggles may have influenced their professional demeanour.

“I think the most cruel directors I’ve ever worked with were gay. And therefore, I forgave them,” he commented. He refrained from naming the directors but described one as a highly distinguished figure within the theatrical community. This director, who had worked across prestigious platforms such as the National Theatre, the Royal Court, Broadway, and the Royal Opera, had faced imprisonment due to his sexuality.

Reflecting on this individual's experiences, McKellen suggested that such harsh treatment could foster a bitterness that impacts their interactions with others. “It doesn’t necessarily surprise me that someone comes out of that sort of an experience with a bitterness and an acidity that is visited on other people,” he added.

McKellen's upcoming film, The Critic [pictured] further explores themes of manipulation and cruel behaviour within the context of theatre. Set in the 1930s, McKellen portrays Jimmy, a closeted gay theatre critic known for his scathing reviews. Through a complex narrative, Jimmy befriends and manipulates a stage actress named Nina, played by Gemma Arterton, advancing his career through their troubled relationship.

Beyond the film’s narrative, McKellen also reflected on his own journey of coming out publicly in 1988. Before his public revelation, he lived a semi-private life with his male partner, navigating the societal constraints of the time. “It was true of me that I was out to all my friends,” he recounted. “My boyfriend and I lived as a monogamous, happy couple. But we didn’t hold hands. We didn’t put arms round each other. We certainly didn’t kiss or show any affection in public. That would be asking for trouble.”

"The Critic" is set to premiere in UK cinemas on 13 September 2024.