

## PETER MULLAN PLAYS THE GREAT WIZARD MICHAEL SCOT



Peter Mullan plays The Great Scottish Wizard Michael Scot and according to the award-winning actor and director, he has the easiest job of all the actors in the series.

“I just come in every so often, wave a wand, zap people and proclaim doom and gloom unless Marnie finds this damn book!”

Mullan, 44, who co-starred with Kevin Spacey in the 2002 film *Ordinary Decent Criminal*, is one of Scotland’s most prolific actors and directors.

He has written and directed two award-winning films, *Orphans*, and *The Magdalene Sisters*, and, in 1998, won the best leading actor gong at the Cannes Film Festival for *My Name Is Joe*.

With an extensive career in both acting and directing, Peter can’t help but notice the potential he sees in young Vivien who plays Marnie McBride.

“It’s Vivien who is holding the whole project together. She reminds me of Ewan MacGregor in the film *Young Adam* on which we both worked. He was in almost every scene and had to really work to keep his stamina up. It’s incredible a 13-year-old can manage to do the same thing.” Peter continues: “She’s a stunning young actress, a young Jodie Foster.”

According to Peter, playing Michael Scot has been a lot more fun than directing his own work, which, he claims is a ‘24/7 headache’. “This has been great fun because I travel through from Glasgow on the train, turn up for work and let someone else worry. If the production falls behind it’s not my problem, if it rains then I get the afternoon off and they have a nervous breakdown!”

Peter’s character, Michael Scot, is based on a real-life scholar, scientist, astrologer and alchemist who lived in the Scottish Borders from around 1175 to 1230 and was known as the Wizard of the North.

In the story, we meet him disguised as the proprietor of a dusty old antiquarian bookshop into which Marnie McBride and her dad stumble at 11am on the day of her 11th birthday.

It is 11 centuries on from Scot’s time as an Alchemist in his prime, and, with his great powers on the wane, he is desperate to find his successor and recover his Lost Book of Forbidden Knowledge.

The story of *Shoebox Zoo* appealed to Peter, he says, because there is no clear division between hero and villain. “From an adult and a kid’s point of view, the villains have their good points and the goodies are flawed,” he says. “This makes it interesting dramatically; I think it is important to show kids the shades of grey between what constitutes good and evil.”

Father-of-three Peter admits he is looking forward to appearing in something his children can appreciate.

“My youngest Katrin is just two but my eldest Mairi will be 14 when it comes out and Paddy, my son will be seven. The fact their dad is in it might curtail their enjoyment and shatter the illusion though, because they know their old man ain’t no wizard... that’s for sure.”