

TAKING THE THRONE

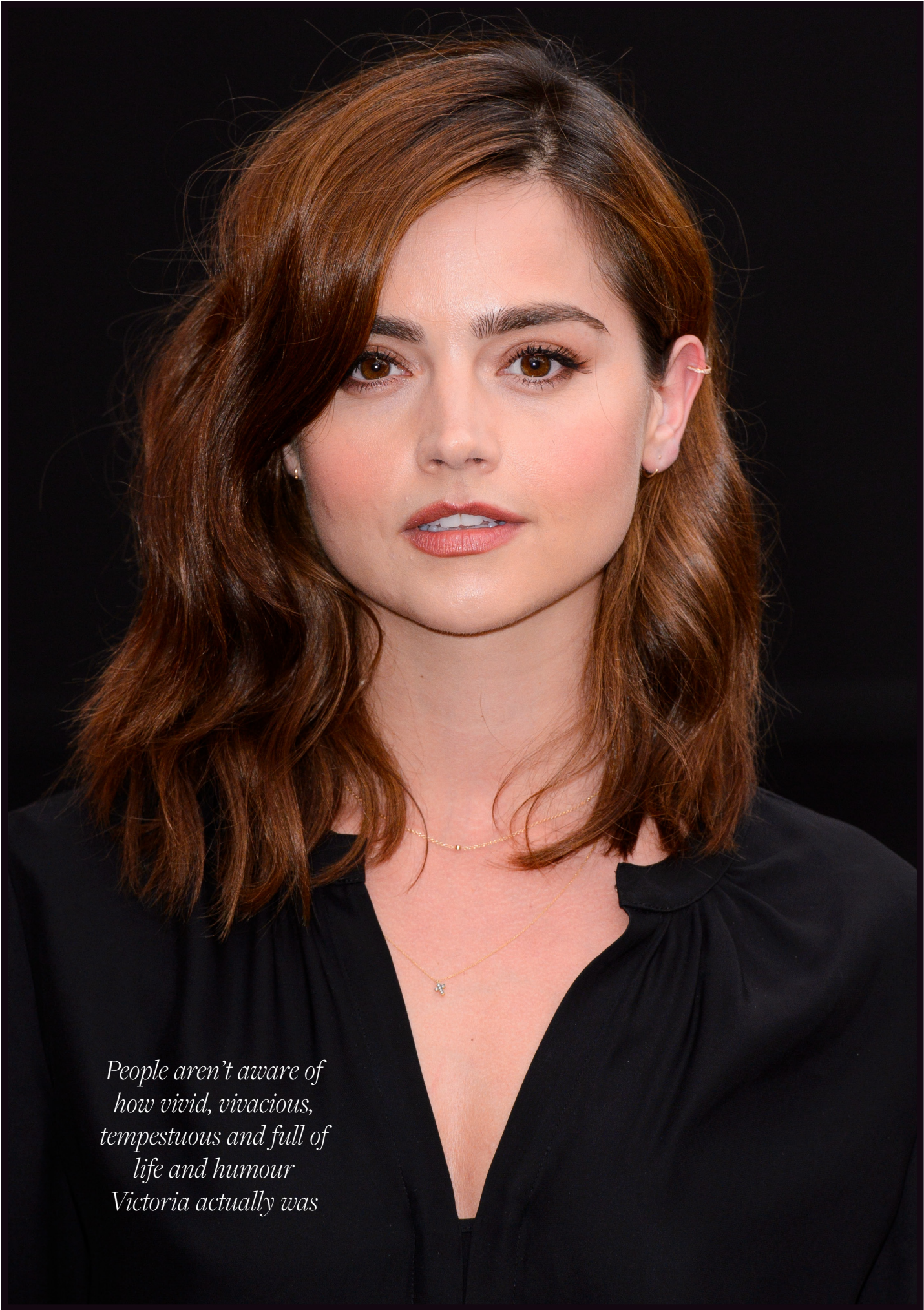
*After a successful year,
Jenna Coleman lets us in on
how she settled into her
captivating role as ITV's
vibrant Queen Victoria*

Interview LUCY ALLEN |
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Taking the lead role in Daisy Goodwin's period drama, *Victoria*, starring alongside Tom Hughes as Prince Albert, officially marked the end of Jenna Coleman as *Doctor Who*'s much loved Clara Oswald in many TV viewers' minds as she wholly embodied a new, powerful and vigorous character of the highest order. Fans became emotionally invested watching the compelling dynamic between Queen Victoria and Prime Minister of the time, Lord Melbourne [played by Rufus Sewell], unfold. Later, the sultry and heated relationship between Victoria and Prince Albert kept viewers hooked, and even spilled off screen when Coleman and Hughes began dating in real life.

The series – out this month on DVD – follows Victoria's ascension to the throne at the tender age of 18 and journeys through her courtship, marriage and first child with Prince Albert. ITV's *Victoria* broke down the widow image of the 18th century Queen, throwing viewers back to a time when she was young, naïve and full of life. Of this, north Londoner Coleman says: 'People aren't aware of how vivid, vivacious, tempestuous and full of life and humour Victoria actually was. I think that took viewers by surprise. It was great to be able to uncover that for people, to break the stereotype and let people see her as something else.'

While the show is driven by Victoria's personal life, it is also full of political intrigue. Her grasp on the throne was not secure at all times and



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Coleman with Tom Hughes as Victoria and Albert (right) and with Peter Capaldi as Clara Oswald and The Doctor (below)



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words in her diaries. Her vivacious nature just comes out on the page, she writes in capitals when she is excited and just underlines, underlines, underlines. Her passion leaps off the page. I found her watercolour sketch work the most

fans watched intently as she defied the masses and asserted her royal authority in the name of sovereignty, even when she was advised to do the opposite. When asked if the show was a love story or a political drama, Coleman explains: 'The show was a result of striking a balance between both of those things, as well as the historical, the humorous and the human.'

The actor admits she didn't have a great amount of former knowledge on the iconic Queen and describes her research journey as a revelation, explaining that she felt as if she uncovered Victoria's true voice.

'Her vivacity and sheer will is what surprised me,' she says. 'I think as a young inexperienced girl, it would have been fascinating. She had such power; it's amazing to think of anyone taking that on at 18 years of age. I love how unapologetically forward she was, she's been very fun to play.'

Getting into the head of an 18-year-old girl who had just come to reign over the most powerful empire in the world can't have been easy. Thinking back to how she pulled off the character of Victoria so genuinely, Coleman explains: 'Before she came to rule, Victoria led a very sheltered life and had never spent a night without her mother before. It was about getting into the head of that girl, the girl that had never been alone in a room with a man before, the girl whose life changed overnight, the girl that had veins of iron and a unique spark that remained with her throughout her life.'

Of diving into the world of Queen Victoria for research before filming began, she says: 'She was one of the most prolific journal writers in history, there is around 62 million

interesting and the fact that when she was younger, she loved emotionally driven theatre, such as plays full of romance.'

Interestingly, both Victoria and Albert had come from dysfunctional families that often cracked under the pressure of immense responsibility and mishandled their powerful influence. With Victoria having grown up without a father and Albert having grown up without a mother, they were intrinsically linked in this sense, with a deep understanding of each other's loss. It's this understanding that sewed them together, 'uniting them in a vision of what having a complete family would be like'.

Prepping to play Queen Victoria is a cultured business and waltz training, as well as horse riding lessons, were both part of Coleman's preparation process. One of the most wondrous aspects of the show was Victoria's glorious wardrobe. Coleman felt transformed stepping into the role of the famous monarch visually. She says: 'I would pop my blue eyes in every morning and just transform into a different world, there was so much to play with and it was fantastic. Victoria admired beauty from afar, on other people, on her ladies in waiting, but she herself was very simplistic and unpretentious, which is really quite nice.'

Catapulted into the limelight as Clara Oswald and picking up speed as she joined the cast of Thea Sharrock's *Me Before You* alongside Emilia Clarke and Sam Claflin, before going on to land the role of a lifetime as the illustrious Queen Victoria, Coleman has been taking the throne in more ways than one.

Victoria is out now on DVD