



## Daniela Melchior Is the New Action Star To Watch

The Portuguese actress can be seen in both the new "Fast X" and "Guardians of the Galaxy" movies.

BY LEIGH NORDSTROM

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL DOPERALSKI

**Daniela Melchior** has known she wanted to be an actor ever since she experienced that first rush in drama class, the one where the quiet kid is suddenly the center of attention and discovers they like making people laugh.

"I had the chance to be funny, to improvise a lot," the Portuguese actress says, over Zoom from her home in Lisbon. "I always took risks and I would be like, 'OK, so on stage people find me funny.'"

She chose to concentrate on acting as her professional course in high school in Portugal and booked her first role by the time she was a senior.

After beginning her career in her home country, Melchior has made her crossover into American blockbusters. In 2021 she was seen in "Suicide Squad," and this spring is in both the new "Fast and Furious" movie "Fast X" and the new "Guardians of the Galaxy" film.

"It's been overwhelming, actually," she says of the attention she's now getting.

"When I was in Mexico City, I wasn't expecting at all for so many people to recognize me from the Suicide Squad. They were there asking for autographs with my Funko pop from the Suicide Squad. They had posters and everything. In Rome, they were recognizing Jordana [Brewster] and Michelle [Rodriguez], everyone that was already in the movie, so I really thought that it would be the same in Mexico."

Melchior's agent had been following the open role in the "Fast" film, but told her not to get her hopes up about anything coming together. Next came a Zoom with director Justin Lin, but again it was kept open ended.

"Then he told me that he had a role for me, and I was like, 'What?' I read the script and I knew that if I had a character that I could play, it would be Isabel," Melchior says.

She'd long been a fan of the franchise, watching the movies in Portugal at such



Daniela Melchior

a young age she couldn't even read the subtitles. "Fast Five" was the first one she remembers seeing and really grasping.

"I started to be like, 'OK, this is deeper,'" she says.

With her American breakout in "Suicide Squad," followed now by "Fast" and "Guardians," Melchior is making a name for herself in the action franchise space.

"When I started self taping from Portugal before I started working internationally, those would be the kinds of movies that I would tell my agent back in Portugal, 'Oh my God, that's so difficult to do. I don't think I would ever make a movie [like that]," she says. "In

Portugal, we don't have special effects, we have smaller budgets, so it's all about the acting and the things that we can see and more about the connections between the characters than external things. Then after I booked 'Suicide Squad,' I was like, 'OK, this fun.'"

Up next she'll be seen alongside Jake Gyllenhaal in a remake of the 1989 movie "Road House."

"I watched the original one, the older movie, and I was like, 'This is funny,' because a few things were just fun to watch, but it was cool to watch. I had fun. Then I read the script, the Doug Liman version, and I was like, 'OK, this version is deeper.'

My character got to be cooler as well, rather than just a love interest and very delicate."

As the franchise films roll out, she's heeding Portuguese lore and taking her time before committing to her next project.

"I have a few offers on the table, but at the same time, I don't want to be too feisty accepting, just because, so we're waiting right now for...in Portuguese we would say, 'for the dust to settle after,'" she says. "Also, we've been having the writer's strike and everything, so I don't want to be desperate for anything. We really need to be thoughtful, because I didn't know that the fans would be paying so much attention to what's next."