

## Robert De Niro

NOBODY BELIEVED a teenage Robert De Niro when he told friends after an evening at the movies that he was going to be a film actor. He was only 17 after all. But when he dropped out of senior high school to join Stella Adler's acting school, it was evident that his words were no joke. Today, he is one of the highest-paid actors, known for heavily studying the background of the characters he plays for maximum 'method acting'.

Although commonly referred to as Italian-American, De Niro is only one-quarter Italian in ancestry. His father was half-Irish, half-Italian, and his mother of mixed European origins. Born in 1943, De Niro's childhood resembled a movie in

itself. His mother Virginia Admiral was a painter and his father Robert De Niro Sr. an abstract expressionist.

As a child, De Niro was an avid reader of playwrights, and it didn't take long for his infatuation with acting to manifest into a workaholic lifestyle. In 1974, De Niro spent four months learning to speak the Sicilian dialect in order to play Vito Coreleone in *The Godfather: Part 2*. A year later, De Niro wasn't able to accept his first Oscar for Best Supporting Actor due to filming commitments with Bernardo



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Bertolucci. Willing to go to any length to achieve realistic impersonation of his characters, De Niro gained 30 kilograms for his role in *Raging Bull*, which earned him the former world record for the 'Most Weight Gained for a Movie'.

As he proceeded through his life of fame, the Hollywood superstar first stumbled upon his passion for restaurants while filming *Casino* at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. He quickly noticed that the hotel's restaurants lacked good food, and he decided to solve that

problem by opening his own hotspots. Fifteen years on, De Niro has launched more than 20 restaurants around the world. When asked how many restaurants he has invested in, he told *New York Magazine*, "I don't know, 23, 24, 25". De Niro owns almost 20 Nobus around the world; Ago in LA and Florida; the award-winning Tribeca Grill in New York; and most recently, Locanda Verde in Las Vegas. "I'm not a foodie but I like good food. I have a good appetite. You go to a hotel and all of a sudden they're giving you Western-style stuff, and I say 'I didn't come here for this. Where's the local stuff?'".

Guessing De Niro's whereabouts has

never been easier, because if he's not filming a new movie, or overseeing his co-owned businesses, he would most likely be found savouring the best of Italian or Japanese cuisine at one of his restaurants. As he once said, "Nobody has moved me from my seat yet. But, just in case, I've bought my own restaurants". He also recently opened an 88-room luxury hotel in New York. De Niro can definitely put actor on his resume, but there's also space for 'major player in the hospitality industry'. ■