

*Last month we did
blue jackets, blue
bags and blue shoes.
This month we said,
what the hell. Let's
do blue all over*.
Next month: more
blue, probably.
You're a man.
You like blue, right?*

* Our thanks here to the brilliant Hugh Dancy, star of stage and screen, who didn't once complain about the lack of, say, green, or express a preference for brown, or red. Or orange. He didn't mention orange at all. The guy's a pro

Photography by *Finlay MacKay*
Styling by *Catherine Hayward*

Blue check raincoat, £1,530;
blue cotton shirt with
white collar detail, £310;
blue cotton trousers, £360,
all by Gucci



Blue suede bomber **jacket**, £1,330; blue cotton polo **shirt**, £160; blue cotton **trousers**, £205, all by Etro. Beige leather desert **boots**, £510, by Mr. Hore



Blue silk **shirt** with brown sleeves, £1,080; grey skinny silk **tie**, £230; blue cotton **trousers**, £720, all by Lanvin

At one of Hugh Dancy's early auditions, a US producer hurled an ashtray at him. The executive was looking to cast "a group of really toned actors running along a beach", remembers Dancy, and believed that Americans would be better suited to the roles because "they go to the gym". Lobbing the ashtray was supposed to test the British actor's physical reactions.

"The ashtray split in two in mid-air," Dancy says. "By instinct, I caught both halves, which damaged the producer's argument but also meant I was covered in ash as he hadn't thought to empty it first. I think the conversation ended shortly afterwards."

The split-ashtray episode could serve as a neat metaphor for the

36-year-old actor's career. In one respect, with his Oxford education and chiselled good looks, Dancy is perfect fodder for romantic comedies and period dramas. Yet, in recent months, he has graduated from TV adaptations of *Daniel Deronda*, *David Copperfield* and *Madame Bovary* to a spate of edgy, alternative projects: appearing on Broadway in *Venus in Fur*, David Ives's critically adored play about an erotically charged audition. He also lent his cut-glass vowels to *Hysteria*, about the invention of the first female vibrator, which set the Toronto Film Festival abuzz last September. Two paths, and somehow he's taken both.

In the edgy-projects category, this month Dancy appears in *Martha Marcy May Marlene*, a handsomely

Blue linen suit,
£995, by
Burberry London.
Blue linen
oversized coat,
£1,895; white
cotton shirt,
£195, both
by Burberry
Prorsum. Black
leather belt,
£215, by Lanvin.
Beige leather
brogues, £195,
by Grenson

shot psychological thriller from debut writer-director Sean Durkin about a young woman living with an abusive cult in upstate New York. When Martha, played by Elizabeth Olsen, escapes to stay with her estranged sister Lucy (Sarah Paulson) and her husband Ted (Dancy), she is dealt a fresh hand of problems as the couple struggle to cope with her erratic behaviour.

"The film worked because of that growing sense of threat," says Dancy. "You're not sure what any character is up to. Even with this couple who she seeks shelter from, who appear to be on the level, it's never quite clear how benevolent they are. It's a clever kind of entertainment."

"Clever entertainment" is a description which could be applied to many of Dancy's previous roles, whether it is 2005's *Shooting Dogs*, in which he played a fresh-faced English teacher caught up in the Rwandan genocide, or 2007's heart-wrenching drama *Evening*, where he met his celebrity wife Claire Danes.

He would also be the first to admit he's appeared in the odd turkey; one critic said that after watching 2007's *The Jane Austen Book Club*, he felt like ringing up bookshops around the country and demanding everyone involved was barred from reading Austen forever.

"I've taken a gamble a couple of times and it's worked out well, and I've also had it work out not so well," he says. "But Sean [Durkin] had written this himself, and you don't write something that smart by accident. So I was already inclined to put my faith in him."

Those hoping to see the actor's daring side should also look out for *Hysteria*, in which Victorian medics "cure" psychologically troubled women by bringing them to orgasm. Dancy approached the task with typical bravery.

"It's a professional challenge to stand between the legs of a series of esteemed actresses and put your hand down beneath their dress and make rhythmical movements," he laughs. "Nothing can prepare you for that. There's no drama school which offers a course." **Rob Sharp**
Martha Marcy May Marlene is out on 3 February



Blue leather bomber jacket, £7,630; cream wool roll-neck jumper, £580; blue cotton trousers, £430, all by Hermès



Blue cotton blazer with white stitched detail, £1,080; blue cotton shirt, £199; brown cotton trousers, £205, all by Paul Smith. Blue canvas lace-ups, £165, by Grenson

PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANTS: JUSTIN STEFANSIC, BOWEN RODNEY | DIGITAL TECH: ALEX VERRON | FASHION ASSISTANT: STEPHANIE GRAY | GROOMING: RHEANNE WHITE | PROP STYLIST: SHAWN PATRICK ANDERSON | LOCATION: BECKMAN PALACE, NEW YORK | SEE STOCKISTS PAGE FOR DETAILS

Blue denim-look
blazer with
white top-
stitching, £895;
white cotton
shirt, £195;
blue cotton
trousers, £295,
all by Z Zegna