



discover

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BENELUX

**ROBERT
DE HOOG**

THE VOICE OF A NEW GENERATION

PLUS

TOP PLACES TO VISIT IN THE NETHERLANDS
CREATING BRAND EXPERIENCES
ARCHITECTURE SPECIAL
BUSINESS, DESIGN AND CULTURE

PROMOTING BELGIUM, THE NETHERLANDS AND LUXEMBOURG



Robert de Hoog (left) starred alongside Jude Law in *Obsession*. Photo © Jan Versweyveld

the show's titular character. "When you do something so heavy, like *Mocro Mafia*, it's in your body and in your mind the whole time. *Soof* came along and I was really relieved because it's so sweet. It's a different view on life, and I really love the combination of doing something very difficult and then something sweet and all about love. I love that balance," smiles the actor.

De Hoog also enjoys the variety of switching between screen and stage, and will tread the boards this June in Simon McBurney's production of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in Amsterdam. "What I love about theatre is the fact that the actor has to do something for his audience in one evening. With film, it's a little bit like cheating - you do your part as an actor, but then the editor does his part and he can create a completely different character to what you intended."

De Hoog's other theatre credits include Ivo van Hove's *Obsession*, which he starred in opposite Jude Law in London. "That was such an amazing experience," smiles De Hoog. "I've been working with Ivo for over five years now and just living in another city, working with an English actor doing his play, it was a very special experience for me. Jude is such a fantastic performer."

De Hoog spent three months living in the English capital during his time starring in

Obsession, and got to know the city's various neighbourhoods. "I love multiple areas of London," he enthuses. "I love Camden for the music and the vibe. I also loved where we lived, near London Bridge. The area around Bermondsey Street is wonderful." Some of the actor's earliest theatrical memories are in London, as he recalls his parents taking him there to see *Billy Elliot the Musical* as a child. "I was raised in a family where there was so much love for culture - everything from books, and classical music to opera - even musicals."

Giving something back

Having had such a culturally rich upbringing is something De Hoog is extremely

grateful for, and he is now using his status to help today's youngsters engage more with the arts.

"I'm trying to create a company that gives the opportunity to younger people to create for films or write for films and television," he reveals. "When you start out in acting you might make a film and have some success, and then four years later you make a second film, and in between those four years you aren't doing anything. So I'm trying to create a company where talented young people can just sit there and write stuff - just to keep them working and developing their talent."

De Hoog is particularly keen for this project to help upcoming talent from varied sectors of society. "It's very important, in my view, that it's very diverse. I want to find people who wouldn't normally have such an opportunity because they aren't in the 'right scene' or they don't have a big network.

"I really hope it succeeds because so many talented young people are sitting on the couch doing nothing instead of making films. I don't know if I have the power to really change things, but I can do my best," he concludes. "I want to give something back, and create an environment where stories can be told from all corners of society."



A scene from the Videoland RTL series *Soof*. Photo © Martijn van Gelder

ROBERT DE HOOG

The voice of a new generation

Having already worked with the likes of Steven Spielberg and Jude Law, not to mention numerous collaborations with theatre genius Ivo van Hove, Dutch actor Robert de Hoog has been known on the international acting scene for some time now. Revered on both stage and screen, he was even nominated for an International Emmy Award when he was just 20 years old. Now aged 30, De Hoog's star is continuing to rise, with the hugely successful television crime drama series *Mocro Mafia* and an upcoming performance in acclaimed director Simon McBurney's production of *The Cherry Orchard* this spring. We caught up with the Leiderdorp-born actor, who passionately explained why he plans to use his success to nurture a new generation of acting talent.

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER | PHOTOS: JANEY VAN IERLAND

"When I was six I wanted to be James Bond," recalls De Hoog, who was raised in South Holland in a family home that was brimming with culture. The actor remembers sneaking into the library as a child and watching *You Only Live Twice* on the video player, despite his father telling him he was too young to watch it. "I was amazed," grins De Hoog, whose acting ambitions were consolidated when he was cast in the hard-hitting Dutch film *Skin*, about a teenager who gets involved with a group of neo-Nazi skinheads. The film was critically acclaimed, and even saw De Hoog receive an International Emmy Award nomination for his role as the troubled Frankie. The actor also scooped a prestigious Golden Calf for best actor at the 2008 Netherlands Film Festival, placing him among some of the awards' youngest ever recipients. "I thought, 'well now it's becoming serious, and I really love this: I think I should do this for the rest of my life'."

Mocro Mafia

Now aged 30, De Hoog has not lost any of his love for the arts. One of his most

recent passion projects is the phenomenally successful drama series *Mocro Mafia*, about a group of friends - Romano, Potlood and De Paus - who transition from petty crime to harder crime, and eventually run Amsterdam's entire cocaine trade. Jealousy grows and their friendship falls apart, with De Paus, together with his old school friend Tatta (played by De Hoog), going to war with Romano and Potlood, and turning the Dutch capital upside down in the process.

"I love that show because I created it with friends. We started it all from nothing," he explains. "Mocro Mafia is not a title we made up, it's the name for a group of people who are selling drugs on the streets of Amsterdam. They are really well known in the Netherlands because they are on the news all day long - ruthlessly shooting each other in the streets in broad daylight, killing the wrong people by mistake..."

"We wanted to make a show about it. There are young people who have the choice between a life seemingly without

prospects, or a life with money. Unfortunately lots of kids are choosing the latter option - with fast money and quick death."

Mocro Mafia is one of the latest Dutch crime series to make waves, following on from the internationally successful *Penzoa (Black Widow)*, about the wife of a drug-smuggler taking charge of the family business. However, the shows could not be any more different. "Penzoa is like a romantic version of crime, whereas *Mocro Mafia* is almost like a documentary," explains De Hoog, pointing out that many of the show's stars had no formal acting training.

"For many of them, it's the first time they've ever acted. They represent a new generation, and I think that's why people love the show so much. It's a new way of creating drama."

A balancing act

From the grittiness of *Mocro Mafia*, De Hoog was happy to get some comic relief with his role in the Dutch comedy series *Soof*, playing Victor - love interest to



