



DUSTIN HOFFMAN... as Tootsie

# MY DREADFUL DAY AS A REAL TOOTSIE

## Sunman Stuart Higgins plucks up courage to find out what it's like to go out dressed up as a woman...

SO THAT'S what being a woman is all about. And if that's it then, to be frank, you can keep it.

I know because, for just six hours, I became a female.

OK, Dustin Hoffman, you were paid £2½million for portraying a woman in the hit film Tootsie which opens on Thursday.

Now I can tell you and your fans, right from the bottom of my fluttering heart, that you were worth every penny. And some.

Why? Because the whole experience reduced me to a mumbling, fumbling, flushing, blushing nervous wreck.

● How can make-up be practical? It flakes, it runs, it needs constant attention and it's horrible.

● Where is the joy of high heels? They're unnatural, they're dangerous, they're not made for walking. And they hurt.

● What's so good about a dress? It catches the wind, it's draughty, it's revealing when you sit down. And it makes you feel undressed.

### Strange

I felt strange from the first moments of my transformation by make-up and fashion experts.

I felt stranger still as I stepped on to the streets of London.

In my normal role as a male, I suppose I do my fair share of ogling. But when the tables were

turned it was a different matter.

*First of all, I didn't really know why a man was looking at me. Did he have evil intentions?*

I caught one middle-aged man giving my legs a glance.

Should I be flattered? I simply felt like a piece of meat.

Then there were the women. Everyone I saw increased my sense of insecurity. None of them was as ugly as I felt.

*Throughout my ordeal I was paranoid about my appearance. Was my make-up trickling down my chubby cheeks?*

Was my wig skew-wiff?

Was my bottom sticking out?

Had those bath sponges, which filled my 40B bra, let me down?

I was heartened by the knowledge that I was really a man. But I didn't let on.

### Smile

I visited a supermarket and tried to remember my coach's encouraging words: "They'll never know the difference." But I knew I was a fraud and wondered who else did.

I managed to avoid speaking as I collected a trolley full of shopping, bothered and bewildered I came close to disaster. In my mad rush to run

away, with my nerves at breaking point, I nearly blew the whole thing.

I unconsciously started loading tins of cat food into a carrier bag before the cashier had even rung up the till.

*"What are you doing?" she asked aggressively.*

Taken aback, I replied: "What do you mean?"

Her stare was penetrating and a burly security guard stood menacingly in the doorway.

The cashier told me to empty the bags, checked the till roll and let me off, unpunished but more edgy than ever.

Back in the street a

and then headed for the check-out.

By now I was so funny little man lurked dangerously close. I tried to ignore him but he came and sat next to me.

Again, I was tormented by the conflict of my sex.

Was he a genuine admirer? Was he a madman? What was going to happen next?

He plucked up courage to speak. "Good afternoon, miss." I was choked. Did this mean I had pulled it off?

I managed an awkward smile out of the corner of my mouth, acknowledging his greeting without talking, and slipped quickly away.

*Being a woman seems*

*to be an unfortunate affair dominated by trivia. By little things like fingernails and lips.*

Men and women are still worlds apart. I felt I couldn't scratch my nose or give it a good blow.

I couldn't kick an empty Coke can in the gutter. I couldn't chew gum comfortably and I couldn't be in a hurry.

With my three-inch ankle boot heel my agility was limited. Crossing the road, I was sure I would twist an ankle or worse.

### Stare

I reached the other side breathless but thankful I was still on two heels.

It sounds a bit basic but my major sensation of womanhood was a fierce draught whipping up under my dress.

As I made my way back to the "safety" of the hotel room to return to my male self I was troubled again by passing glances.

I thought I stood out like a sore thumb. I couldn't return a stare from a man or a woman.

But I survived this nightmare grateful to be a man and probably more sympathetic to the fairer sex because I would say their deal is just unfair.

Dustin says his role as Tootsie was the greatest acting challenge for an actor.

Well, Dustin, it was a hard act to follow.

*For me it was toot, toot, Tootsie, goodbye and GOOD RIDDANCE!*



Sunman Higgins... before his ordeal



### Looking the part

● Higgins in his Tootsie role, complete with make-up.

● He couldn't stand the draught up his dress.



Higgins... being checked over at the check-out...



... And mingling with shoppers