

Edinburgh's own TikTok star Andrew is looking forward to next year

Andrew Thomson from Longstone says 2023 is going to be a bumper year for film and TV, which means that as an internet star (with almost two million followers on TikTok and around a billion views on social media) he will be very busy indeed.

The 23-year-old was heading for a career in landscape photography in the days before his social media career built up and after his school years at Longstone Primary School and Firrhill High School.

Andrew explained: "I travelled a lot but didn't think to document it with images. I was working for companies creating adverts and used to take outdoor photos for their websites – while at the same time working in a regular pretty low paid job. I saved all my money from that to spend on buying gear and going on trips to improve my photography.

"Then I started posting videos about movies (Star Wars, Marvel etc). I recorded it all on my phone, explaining things that happen in movies, offering reviews, and making jokes. Eventually I expanded it to talking about pop culture and anything else that came to mind. I speak a lot about geography, history, mythology and now also sport."

The rest as they say is history, and yes, over the last few months the World Cup made it a busy time for Andrew.

He said: "I posted about the World Cup – but not England, I don't care about England at all. I followed Argentina and Messi as he's kind of my hero as a sports fan. Normally I don't post too much about football. It's mainly movie news and TV show stuff mixed with ancient history."



Cast and Creators of The Rig pictured at a screening event for The Rig, at the Everyman, Edinburgh ahead of its launch on Friday 6th January. Attending cast and creators included Martin Compston, Iain Glen, Emily Hampshire, Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar, Molly Ververs and Director John Strickland (wearing cap). Extreme left is Derek Wax of Wild Mercury Productions. Writer David Macpherson is in front wearing a kilt.

GETTING STARTED

So how did Andrew get started? Well in common with most things

it took quite a bit of work – and it still does.

He explained: “I used to research subjects on my laptop or in books, take notes on what I learned to translate into short video format for online content. Eventually I racked up to 150 million views a week at one point. Right now I’m on the brink of having two million followers on TikTok and 150 million likes overall – and well over a billion views in total.

“Everything I have achieved online I taught myself. I research how to streamline making videos, how to speed up the process, studied what went down well and what didn’t. After doing it for a long time you start to understand the algorithms that social media firms use. You can make your content suit what the algorithm will like, and what will do well for your account.

“I had a very inspirational geography teacher, Mr Boyd, who sparked my interest in the subject at school. I was on a trip to Iceland when we spoke a lot together, and he inspired me to go for what I want in life. He gave me a postcard before I left school that said I would achieve big things that I have had hanging on my wall ever since.”



Andrew Thomson with his grandparents Andrew and Faye Thomson

BUMPER YEAR FOR MOVIES IN 2023

He is looking forward to 2023 which he says is going to be a “huge year for big movies and TV shows”. He continued: “Some of the most anticipated films and shows are coming out next year, and also some big games. 2023 is going to be a big year for pop culture, and I’m really look forward to jumping into all of it and being involved in the pop culture world for another year.”

With a jet set lifestyle Andrew is hardly ever home but if he is, then his routine is: “Wake up, check social media to see how everything went from the day before, reply to all my relevant emails I need to, write down any video ideas I have, take notes on what I want to say in each video before I start to record. I write notes of everything I need to do to prepare the videos (images, lighting and music). Then I set to and record videos for as long as it takes and then finalise the videos with text and music.

“Finally I repurpose the videos for Youtube shorts, and Instagram Reels, then schedule these posts across all my social media feeds.

“In the evening and at nights I like to catch up on all relevant movies and shows, so that means I go to the cinema or binge watch a new show so I can make content about them. Mostly when I am watching anything I have a notepad and note down points I would like to talk about online, or things I would like to remember.

“Then before I get to bed I will again brainstorm some ideas roughly for what I want to do the next day. My notepad and pens are my best friend.”

But Andrew is often on the road and his days then are slightly different. He spends a lot of his time in London.

He said: “Normally I take the train down to London, get ready with my suit and head to a premiere for a new movie or a show normally in Leicester Square. There is usually a drinks reception at night and I get to meet my friends at these events.

“But I have been in L.A. three times so far for premieres in Hollywood this year, and in New York once, often flown out by the companies so that I can attend. I work a lot and I give up most of my social life at home so that I can enjoy the benefits when I travel.

“I guess this is similar to what I did before with photography, but also a bit different.”

HIS BEST ADVICE?

So how does a young entrepreneur get started on social media? What is the magic ingredient that anyone wanting to do the same thing needs? Well Andrew is quite down to earth about that.

He said: “There’s no definitive way to grow on social media in my opinion, however there are some things that definitely help. I just tried to find what a lot of people did but then think of a new way of presenting it.

“For example a lot of people report on news, so I just did that (about casting news, movie trailers and so on) but I did it in a different format. So instead of making people read it just showing subtitles and so on, I would think of something people wanted and find a new way to get it across.

“Consistency helps a lot, even if you’re not growing or getting eyes on you just keep going and going, and eventually things will build traction. That is my biggest tip for anyone – consistency. Just keep going, there is literally nothing to lose. You could always be one video away from one that goes

viral and boosts you, it's like gambling without the money, you're just gambling your time and effort.

“A lot of people do the same stuff about similar stories to me, but it's worth the investment of hard work. I had a job i didn't like, so with an amount of perseverance and resilience, I made a career that suits me – all by myself.”



Andrew's grandparents on the red carpet

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Andrew's grandfather was on the red carpet at the world premiere of *The Rig* at Everyman Edinburgh. (*The Rig* will stream on Amazon Prime to 240 countries from 6 January). It was Mr Thomson Senior who told me how proud he was that it was his grandson got him the invitation to the star-studded event with Martin Compston, Emily Hampshire, Iain Glen and Mark Bonnar among the cast at the premiere. It did not take much to realise who his grandson was – they are so alike.

And even though they are both pretty tall Andrew junior really looks up to his grandfather. He said: "My grandad has always been my biggest role model throughout every stage of my life. My father was extremely abusive, and left my mum, sister and me when I was very young. I can't even remember him. I grew up without a father and my grandad was the person that filled this gap.

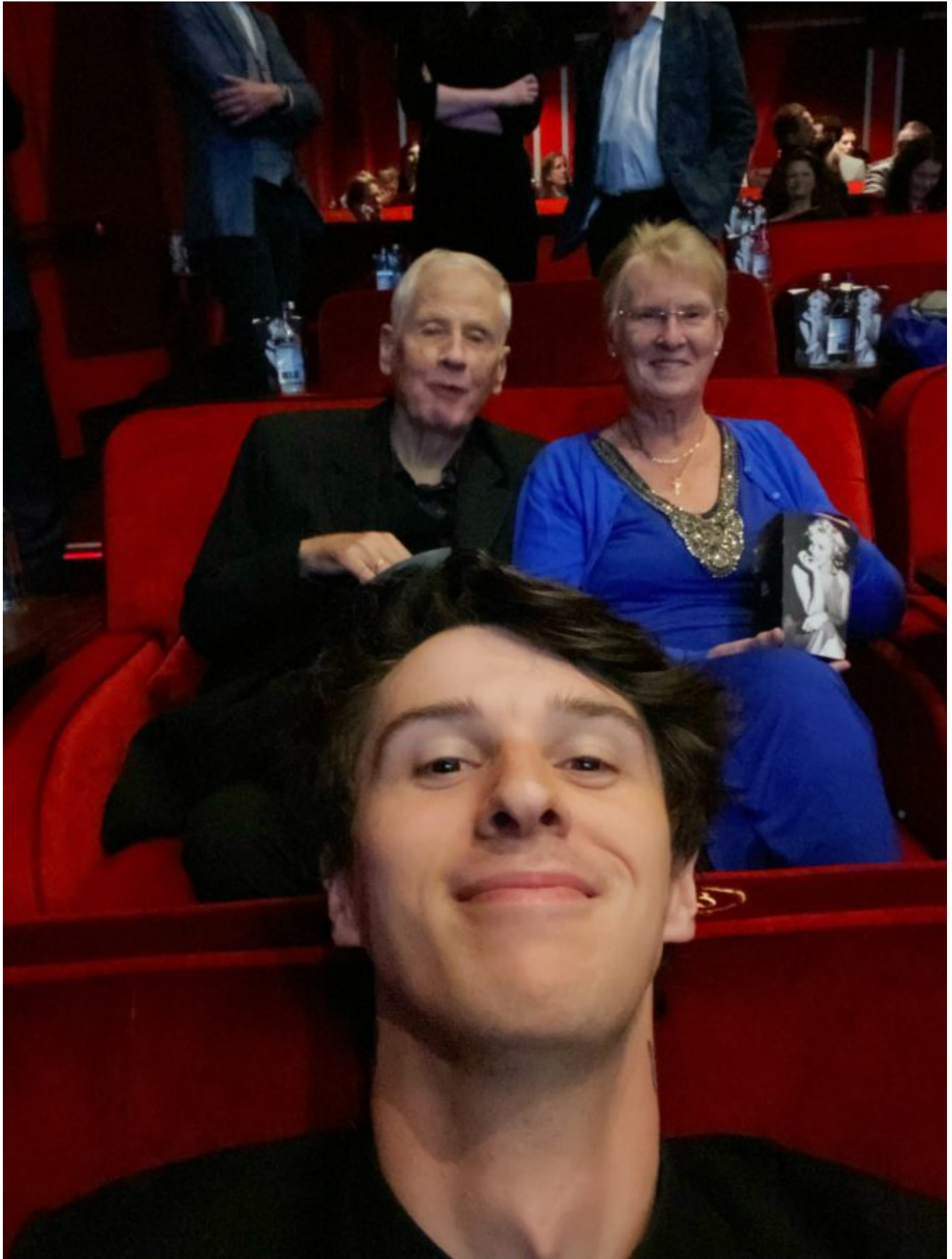
"When I was 16 I took his surname. My whole life I've regarded him as my dad as far as I'm concerned. He is the most stand up, generous, excellent man I've ever known. He taught me how to be disciplined, how to carry myself and how to treat people. Every decision I've made in my adult life has been based round thinking what would he do or what would he think of me.

"All I've ever wanted to do whether socially, in my career or in any other aspect of my life is to make my grandad proud. He is my role model, my idol and has been since I was a little boy, I would beg my mum to let me stay the night at my Gran and Grandad's house, he's been my best friend since day one. Not to discredit everything my Mum and Gran have done for me, my mum gave me the best childhood ever. I would not trade it for the world, she sacrificed everything as a single parent to give me and my sister the best when we were growing up. She sometimes didn't eat lunch at work so she could afford things

for us or she would give up going out with friends to spend time with us after work.

“My mum is the reason I know so much about movies because we would stay in most nights as we didn’t have much money, and she would explain films to me and I loved it. It’s now what I do for my audience online, and this interest all came from my mum.

“Her aim was to give us a childhood where we would never look back with the thought that we missed out by only having one parent. My gran helped a lot by looking after us while Mum was at work, and she also helped with school work. I’m very thankful and close to my family because without those three people I’d never ever be the person I am without their support and the moral code I’ve been brought up to follow. Everything I’ve achieved I owe to my Mum, Gran and Grandad. I could go on forever telling you about how I’ve fashioned my live around my grandad and the type of man he is.”



Andrew with his grandparents

ON THE RED CARPET

On the red carpet for the world premiere of *The Rig* Andrew had his whole family with him (and his girlfriend Hollie)

He explained why it was so important to him to let them see a bit of his starry lifestyle.

He said: "I'm always away in London going to events like these. When I come home I'll visit my grandparents and show them photos and try to describe what it's like and what I do for work. It was amazing to have an event in Edinburgh on our doorstep so that I could finally show them what it's really like, not only them but my mum and girlfriend too. I wanted to give them an insight as to what I've been doing the past year or so and let them see what I've achieved – just from making videos for the internet in my bedroom.

"They all absolutely loved it. My grandparents went around talking to everyone telling them they were here because of their grandson because they were proud of me – which felt amazing to be honest. They laughed, they chatted, they had a brilliant night. They got to talk to the actors (which they were over the moon with), got to meet some Scottish TV personalities, came away with big smiles on their faces thanking me for bringing them.

"My mum loved seeing me get photos taken at the event with my gran and grandad and watching their reactions to being brought into the film and TV world that I have been a part of this year. I really hope i get to take them to more things in the future."

Andrew Thomson Senior was formerly a prison guard at Saughton for 23 years and also worked at other prisons round the country including Low Moss and in Greenock. He followed that career with about ten years of collecting grandchildren including Andrew from school and then went back to work at the

Merchants Hall on Hanover Street. And Mrs Thomson followed bringing up the children by working in a chemist's shop and then as a home help.

Mr Thomson said he really did not know what to expect at the premiere – and was ready to go home when the first episode of The Rig was shown to an invited audience including some of the stars.

He said: “I didn't know what to expect but when I got there it was a very interesting night. I think Andrew is doing well, but I can't really explain what he does. He has been to America, Italy and is often away to London. He has told me about meeting stars like Pierce Brosnan, but I didn't really know how these things worked.

“After the film I was ready to go home but Andrew told me it was time to party. My wife and I sat down in the bar area but I saw everybody was on their feet so I just got up and mingled. It is strange to do something for the first time in your life at my age – but that is what this was. A first. I still can't really explain what Andrew does, but he used to be a quiet boy – now he is so confident.”



Andrew with girlfriend Hollie Dow



Andrew front with girlfriend Hollie and mum Gillian Stanton and his grandparents behind.



Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar and Martin Compston pictured at a screening event for *The Rig*, at the Everyman, Edinburgh ahead of its launch on Friday 6th January worldwide



Martin Compston and Iain Glen pictured at a screening event for The Rig, at the Everyman, Edinburgh ahead of its launch on Friday 6th January.

Attending cast and creators included Martin Compston, Iain Glen, Emily Hampshire, Rochenda Sandall, Mark Bonnar, John Strickland and more.