

There are Nollywood actresses - flirty, flighty and, pardon me if I am a little blunt here, flimsy - then there are

Nollywood actresses, and not many of them (In fact think Nollywood, their names are the first four or five that come to mind) who have reached the top of their game. No prizes for guessing which category our cover star falls into. So excuse her, if at first look she may come across a tad distant and intimidating. The real Rita, however, can't be further from the image.

"Rita is an absolute sweetheart," says make up artist and our contributing beauty editor Lola Maja-Okojevoh who art directed our cover shoot - an appraisal seconded by Mildred Okwo, the actress's manager and co-producer on *The Meeting*, who describes Rita as "intelligent, intuitive, kind" and someone who "has a kind heart, is a beautiful human being and a joy to work with."

Glowing testimonials aside, who really is Rita Uchenna Nkem Dominic Waturuocha? "Ah, you start off with my favourite question to hate," Rita protests, "I've answered that question so many times before and I guess it changes depending on what is going on at that time in my life. Right now I think I am a restless actor/woman ready to get to the next level of my life both professionally and personally. I am confident at times and mostly unsure a majority of the time."

Mildred also speaks of this lack of confidence during their work together on the pair's joint co-production *The Meeting*, "Initially she didn't want to be in the movie as she had never done that kind of role before, but once I saw her getting into character, I knew she could pull it off. In fact the first time Femi Jacobs, the male lead, saw her, he couldn't believe it was Rita."

The kind of acting prowess to completely assume a character with their persona, mannerisms and



back story - a rarity for most in Nollywood - not surprisingly comes naturally to Rita who has been in the game for 12 years, and unlike most, she has studied the craft of acting as opposed to stumbling taking it up out of sheer boredom or lack of other lucrative career options.

Born on 12 July 1975 in Mbaise in Imo State (Nigeria), as the youngest of four siblings to medical practitioners, after completing her primary and secondary education in Abia State, Dominic attended University of Port Harcourt and graduated with a BA (Honours) in - wait for it - Theatre Arts.

"Thank God for my late mother who encouraged me greatly," Rita says, "Even my two sisters indirectly encouraged me by having me perform for their friends when I was young. I have never wanted to be anything but what I am today."

While the actress, unlike most in the industry, was fortunate enough to have her acting credentials

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Despite limited budgets, resources and time ("Sometimes you would shoot in the hot sun for hours, change costumes, get your make up done, eat and rest in the car just to get the work done. You had very little time to rehearse or memorise your lines but you had to deliver once the director yelled action.") Rita is keen to stress "those of us who had passion for the arts didn't really see things as challenges. We were happy to work 24 hours just to make a career out of it"

And a career was built in the 12 years (out of which she only had two off) following Rita's first

certified with a diploma, it wasn't a walk in the park to success and stardom. "I had to make my own way in this industry when I first started. Then, we had no mobile phones so we depended on word of mouth to get information about jobs and auditions," she reminisces, "I remember I would spend my last Naira to get to an audition or meet with a producer only to find out that the job was gone because I did not get the message in time. When