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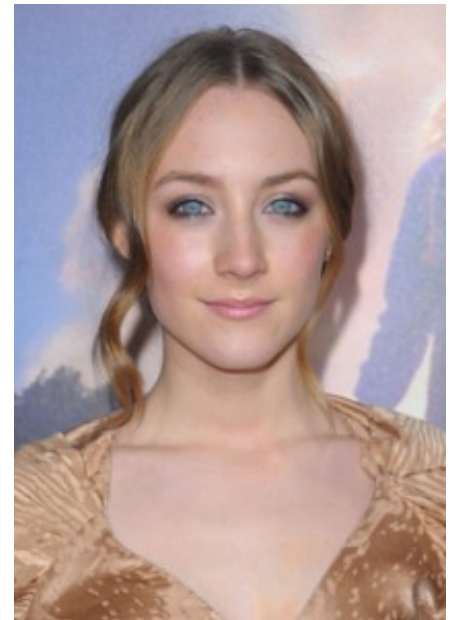
'Twilight Saga' Author Stephenie Meyer's 'The Host' Lands Saoirse Ronan To Star

By MIKE FLEMING Tuesday May 3, 2011 @ 10:45am PDT



EXCLUSIVE: Saoirse Ronan has been set to star in *The Host*, the screen adaptation of the bestselling novel by *Twilight Saga* author Stephenie Meyer. Scripted by Andrew Niccol, the film figures to be one of the hot titles when Inferno launches sales at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival next week. Niccol, who was originally set to direct, might resurface as the filmmaker.

Ronan, the Oscar-nominated star of *Atonement*, *The Lovely Bones* and most recently *Hanna*, will play Melanie Stryder, one of the last humans putting up a fight against an alien species called Souls. These parasites invade human bodies, fuse to each person's consciousness and systematically erase their personalities. Melanie is captured by the aliens and implanted by a Soul called Wanderer, something of a legend because of all of the "hosts" she has attached to on numerous planets. Wanderer's goal is to get Melanie to give up the remaining pockets of humans, but instead the alien finds Melanie to be unique in her unwillingness to surrender her consciousness. Wanderer is so overwhelmed by Melanie's memories and feelings, the alien is driven to reconnect with Melanie's old life.



The concept is more of a visual challenge than Meyer's *Twilight Saga* books, but one thing they plan is for Ronan to play both Melanie and Wanderer. Meyer's book has an enormous fan base, and the author had long resisted offers to sell it. She finally made a deal two years ago with producers Nick Wechsler and Steve and Paula Mae Schwartz, who'd done the adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* together. They deliberately developed the script outside the studio system, and invited the author to be very hands on in the adaptation. Meyer was involved down to choosing Niccol because she was such a fan of his films *Gattaca* and his script for *The Truman Show*. Niccol wrote the script to direct, but left to



direct *Now* with Justin Timberlake, Amanda Seyfried and Cillian Murphy. *Nanny McPhee Returns* director Susanna White was briefly attached, but that isn't happening. Niccol, now done with his film, is once again

in the mix as possible helmer. Inferno's Marc Butan, Jim Seibel and Bill Johnson are exec producing and Roger Schwartz is co-producer. The film's being funded by the producers and Inferno.

Meyer and Wechsler will attend the festival to present the project to buyers with the Inferno team.

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