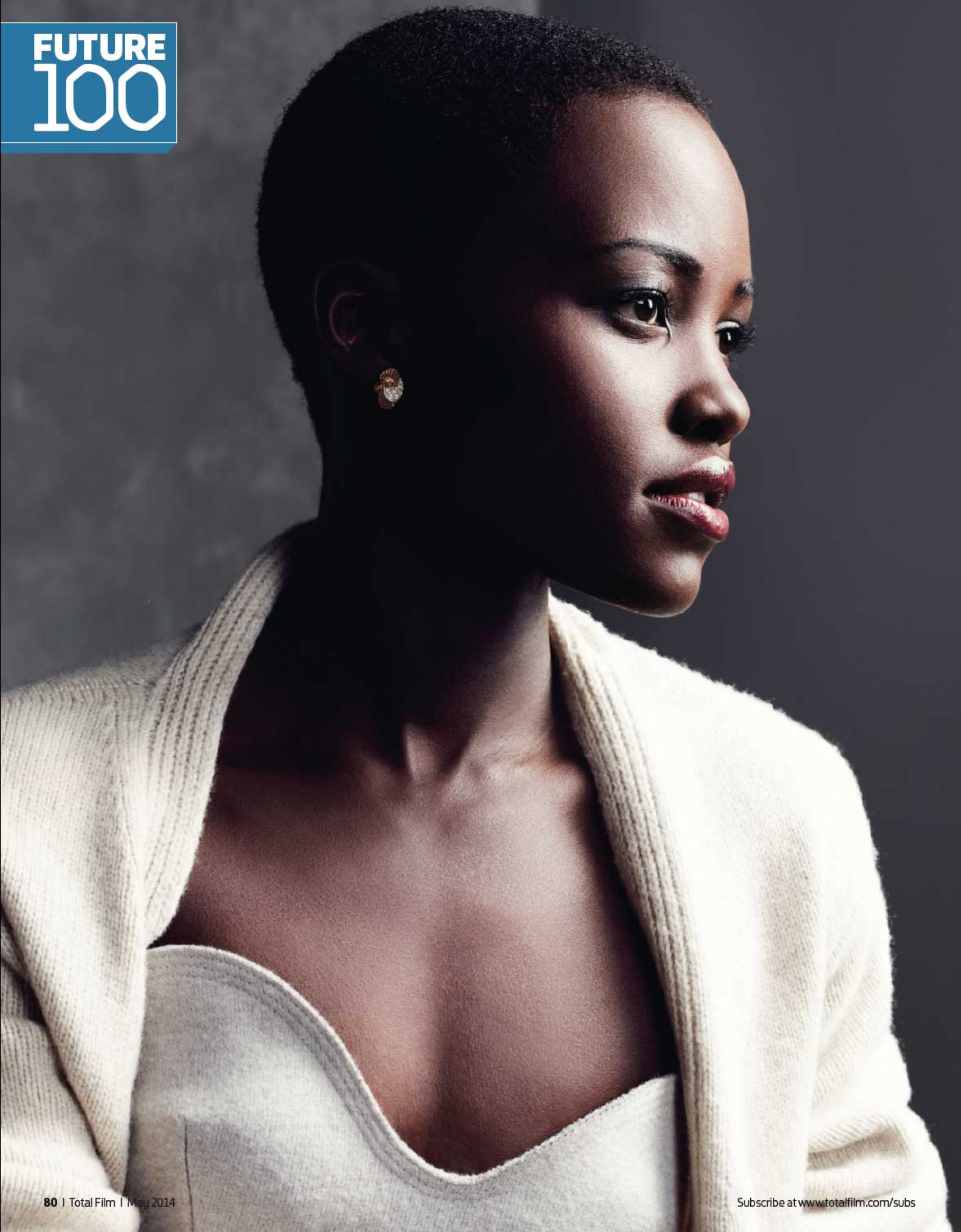


**FUTURE  
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Style and substance: Nyong'o made her film debut in *12 Years A Slave* (below) – and wowed the critics.

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## LUPITA NYONG'O

The breakout star of *12 Years A Slave* who has Bond girl written all over her...

WORDS MATT MUELLER PORTRAIT JOE PUGLIESE

Steve McQueen repeated the phrase until he was blue in the face over recent months, but the British filmmaker is bang on the money with his simple assessment of *12 Years A Slave*'s breakout actress: "A star is born." After bursting forth with incandescent might from the Toronto Film Festival, where McQueen's film had its world premiere, Nyong'o endured ups and downs during the awards-season rat race: winning the Screen Actors Guild award; losing the Golden Globe and Bafta to Jennifer Lawrence\*. She led her *American Hustle* rival in the red-carpet stakes, though, and has been anointed a 2014 fashion icon (yes, these things *do* matter in LA power corridors).

But never mind the style, Nyong'o is a performer of stunning substance too, as she demonstrated so impressively in *12 Years A Slave*. As persecuted slave girl Patsey, the unlucky object of plantation owner Edwin Epps' (Michael Fassbender) lust and fury, Nyong'o brought rawness and vibrancy to one of the roles of the year. Having auditioned around 1,000 actresses, from established names to screen virgins, McQueen was feeling desperate by the time he stumbled upon the audition tape sent in by the Mexico City-born, Kenyan-raised Nyong'o, then still in her final year at Yale's School of Drama.

"I felt honoured to have the opportunity to tell Patsey's story," she says. "When I read the book, I was mesmerised by this woman who is described as genial and pleasant-tempered and yet at the same time she wants to die. That complexity intrigued and terrified me; I had to do her justice."

While *12 Years A Slave* was her film acting debut, this 31-year-old daughter of a Kenyan parliamentarian is no stranger to film sets. She

was a runner during the Kenyan leg of Fernando Meirelles' shoot for *The Constant Gardener*, tasked with ferrying Ralph Fiennes to and from set and peppering him with questions about becoming an actress. ("Don't do it unless you absolutely have to," he told her.) Nyong'o has even directed; a self-produced video documentary about the treatment of Kenya's albino population, called *In My Genes*.

Suffice to say that on the strength of her performance in *12 Years A Slave*, which she followed with the somewhat less anguishing role of a flight attendant in *Non-Stop*, Nyong'o has the film industry banging on her door. A young star swiftly on the rise, with jaw-dropping good looks – could the James Bond franchise be her next stop? We wouldn't be in the least surprised. Either way, the future looks bright.

We'll let McQueen have the final word on her prospects: "She's a fucking natural," he told *Total Film*. "She's real, she's amazing, she scared the pyjamas out of me. There's no stopping her."

\**Total Film* went to press before the Oscar winners were revealed.

'I FELT HONOURED TO TELL PATSEY'S STORY... I HAD TO DO HER JUSTICE'



## 25 JAMES GUNN

*Guardians Of The Galaxy* is a tougher sell than *Avengers Assemble*, with no lead-in films to bolster character recognition, but horror/comedy director James Gunn's anarchic, adrenalised style should make for an equally thrilling spectacle from the outer reaches of the 'Marvelverse'.



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## FAST &amp; FURIOUS 7

Paul Walker's accidental death mid-filming has seen frantic re-writes to 'retire' his character, Brian O'Conner, while keeping the \$2.3bn franchise intact. The release date has moved back nine months to accommodate the changes, thus delaying the Hollywood debut of *Ong Bak* star Tony Jaa.



## 27 MILES TELLER

Having followed-up his award-winning performance in *The Spectacular Now* with another eye-catching Sundance hit, *Whiplash*, the 27-year-old could see 2014 as his breakthrough year; he's also in *Divergent* and is rumoured to be cast as Mr. Fantastic in Fox's *Fantastic Four* reboot.

## 28 STARS IN SPACE

The first Virgin Galactic flight was scheduled for Christmas 2013 but SpaceShipTwo has yet to taking guests into space. When (if) it does, the manifest will be strictly A-list, with Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad'n'Ange and Russell Brand and Katy Perry (awkward...) all aboard.



## 29 MACBETH

Taking on Shakespeare is a rite of passage for every actor, and fearless Michael Fassbender is going in at the deep end, tackling the Scottish play opposite Marion Cotillard as Lady M, for *Snowtown* director Justin Kurzel; Sean Harris, David Thewlis and Paddy Considine co-star.