



JEN OPENS UP

Buzz cuts, Botox, bad relationships and finding bliss—no subject is off limits for JENNIFER ANISTON, who's settling in for her best chapter yet.

**BY ELAINE LIPWORTH
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALEXEI HAY**

When Jennifer Aniston stepped out for dinner in West Hollywood one recent evening, it made headlines. A star for some 20 years now, Aniston is surely used to the attention. But this time, the reporting had a certain frenzy to it—the meal was, after all, shared with some fairly significant co-stars. “Inside Jennifer Aniston, Lisa Kudrow & Courteney Cox’s *Friends* Reunion,” wrote one outlet. “Three isn’t a crowd, it’s a reunion!” claimed another.

Aniston understands the keen interest in the show, which wrapped a decade ago—the same number of years the cast spent filming the series. “It was one of the best times of my life,” she says. “Truly fantastic. We were as close as a family could be.” Of course, much has changed since she farewelled her character, Rachel Green—a successful transition from television icon to movie star, a marriage in 2000 to Brad Pitt and a separation five years later that still dominates the tabloids—all of it leading to who she is today and, it seems, another one of her life’s many phases.

This month, Aniston delivers what some critics are calling her best performance yet, in the comedy *Life of Crime*. Based on Elmore Leonard’s 1978 novel *The Switch*, she plays Mickey Dawson, a kidnapped woman whose wealthy and unfaithful husband (played by Tim Robbins) refuses to pay her ransom. “When I read the book, there was so much more to [Mickey] than I anticipated, so many layers of self-awareness. Mickey is what many housewives were in the ’70s; she doesn’t have much of a voice...In some odd way, [the kidnapping] helps her to find her voice and her freedom.”

Then there’s the drama *Cake*, which is headlining the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival, and *Horrible Bosses 2* that lands in cinemas in December. “Jennifer goes effortlessly from great comedy, which is obviously in her wheelhouse, to dark, dramatic moments,” says *Life of Crime* director Daniel Schechter. “She’s lovely,” he adds, “really easy to work with and incredibly kind.”

And she may well know the secret to defying time. Wearing a casual-chic uniform of Generra jeans and an ATM tee, Aniston looks a decade younger than her 45 years, all glowing skin, sculpted arms, perfect posture and balletic elegance. Laughing, she says, “I’m refusing to believe the number.” The face of skincare brand Aveeno and co-owner of haircare range Living Proof, she adds, “I honestly feel that I’m still a young girl. It’s so funny when people say, ‘You look so good for your age.’ I think I’m a bit of a late bloomer—life just gets better. I feel as youthful now, if not more, than I did when I was 25.”

Though she points to exercise, meditation and good friends as the secret to her youthful appearance, perhaps actor and screenwriter Justin Theroux, 43, can take some credit too. Dating since 2011, the two are now engaged. He is, she says, “wonderful, a beautiful human being”. Revealing that she’s “never felt better physically or professionally”, Aniston is candid when she talks about love, life and exactly what it takes to look like she just woke up like this.



You must have some great beauty secrets... “I’ve got to tell you my mum was a little overly concerned with looks, which is probably why I ended up shaving my head when I was a kid, to rebel against that. But one of the things she taught me was to start using facial creams and eye creams at a young age. I’ve always done that. Also, my father [actor John Aniston] gifted me with extremely good genes. I really give credit to the Greek in my blood. He still has that twinkle in his eye and he has amazing skin.”

How do you keep your skin looking so healthy? “I think there are laser treatments that can be good and there are good treatments for rejuvenation of the skin. But I don’t believe in doing what a lot of women do these days: freezing their faces with all sorts of injections and stuff, which I think makes them look older. I’m not a believer in that. The one or two times that I did try Botox a couple of years ago I felt like a freak. I looked like a freak and I hated it.”

And how do you stay in shape? “I do a lot of yoga. I also do interval training, circuit training, weight training and running. Even if I’m really busy, I do at least 20 minutes every day. I like to get my blood pumping with a sprint, a couple of sit-ups, a couple of lunges and some weights. But I had a knee injury a couple of years ago and it was frustrating trying to get back into shape. I couldn’t do yoga for a while after the surgery and then I had a second surgery. Then I had to shoot a movie in which I played a stripper [*We’re the Millers*] so I was getting back in shape and learning how to strip at the same time [laughs]. Oh my God, it was hard work.”

Does diet play a role? “I drink so much water it’s painful, I always have and I think that helps. My diet is simple; I have egg whites and half a grapefruit and a little cup of coffee for breakfast. Then I drink green tea throughout the day. Lunch is usually vegetables with protein of some kind. I always indulge on the weekends: that means a bowl of pasta with cheese, garlic, olive oil and a touch of cream [laughs]. That was specific to last weekend. Or I’ll have Mexican food or pizza. I love Italian food and a glass of wine. I think wine in moderation is fine; a little red wine is actually good for you.”

How do you get ready for red-carpet moments? “I like to keep it casual—almost going against ‘the gown’. I’m not too good with ‘done’ hairstyles or French twists. My mantra is ‘keep it simple’. I just prefer loose, understated, beautiful hair. Actually, if I’m wearing a fancy dress, I like to go against what’s going on with the outfit. So if I’m wearing something very formal, I think, ‘Let’s look as if I’ve just got out of bed.’ That’s so much more interesting.”

Any bad hair habits you can share? “I used to cut my split ends in my twenties. I had a pair of eyebrow scissors in the space between the driver and passenger seat in my car and whenever I was stuck in traffic or if I was driving with a friend, I’d get out the scissors and start cutting. When Chris [McMillan, her hairstylist] started doing my hair he said, ‘No wonder your hair is a pile of Brillo [steel wool].’ I don’t do that anymore!”

I know you and McMillan have become close friends since then. How important is friendship to you? “I’ve had the same friends for 25, 30 years. I’m loyal so I think I bring really loyal people into my life. There are people out there who’ll take advantage—it’s just a sad fact. But I don’t let that make me bitter or suspicious. Actually, I’m

a really good judge of character in the world of business and friendship. Maybe in other areas—relationships—not so much in the past [laughs] but even in that area I’ve hit the jackpot now.”

What have you learned about relationships over the years? “Good communication is so important. People often expect their partner to read their mind and when that doesn’t happen, they get pretty upset, then the other person gets even more upset and at the end of the day it’s all because they didn’t talk it over at the beginning.”

How do you relax? “There’s the yoga and I have an altar. I meditate and I do things that are my own version of spirituality. I don’t have any specific religion I abide by but I always call myself an ‘everythingist’ because there are so many beautiful aspects of different religions and I’d hate to ever have to commit to one and not be able to take part in another. I understand that some people have to be strict in their beliefs—everybody is entitled to his or her own path.”

Have you always had a spiritual approach to life? “Call it New Age-y but when my girlfriends and I were in our twenties we had goddess circles and prayer circles; we were a group of loving and supportive women with compassion towards mankind. I think that has been a big support in my growth and my ability to stay grounded and avoid the absolute ugliness of the media because I could have been driven crazy at this point with the [stories] that were fabricated. It’s got worse and worse. But you just don’t allow that toxicity in.”

How do you stay grounded? “I honestly don’t think there’s been any difference in the way I am now and the way I always have been and I give all the credit to having an extraordinarily wonderful, powerful and grounded group of friends. My best friend has been in my life since I was 14. There are others who’ve known me since I was 20, before I was famous...Friends will never lie and never say yes when they don’t mean it. I think a pothole people can fall into is that they start to believe the fabulousness they’re showered with. It’s not that things aren’t fabulous—I have a blessed and charmed life—but it’s still my real life and it’s important not to lose sight of that. There’s a danger of losing that. I’ve seen it with people I know.”

In what way? “There’s a lot of bad behaviour and entitlement that starts to happen when people think they’re the Queen Bee or the King Bee. Sometimes there’s a disturbance that happens to a lot of celebrities when they get into a bubble and no-one’s there to pop it. I think gratitude is a key quality. It’s important to remember where you come from, what you have and what other people *don’t* have. It’s good to have a constant reminder and awareness of that—that we’re all on this planet together.”

Where does your positive attitude come from? “I grew up in a household where there was not a lot of positivity. I got an example of what I never wanted to be. I thought, ‘I don’t want to be a part of that.’ I don’t begrudge anyone or regret anything, I go, ‘thank you’ because that led me on a much more positive path. I didn’t want to be like that and I found joy. I found laughter.”

You seem very fulfilled right now. “I’m happy—I believe that happiness is a choice. You know, I’m human, we all have days when we don’t feel so great. It’s about understanding that the sadness will pass. You just try to be the best person you can be. Life is wonderful. I’m a very lucky woman, without a doubt.” ■

