

ageless style

Cameron wears
sequined minidress,
£325, Pinko. Hair:
Oribe for Oribe
Salon Miami
Beach. Make-up:
Gucci Westman.
Nails: Debbie
Leavitt. Location:
Legendlocations.com.
Production: Northsix.
Digital artwork: Urban
Studio. Fashion
editor: Kate Phelan

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

No wonder Cameron Diaz has the widest smile in Hollywood – her tomboyish charm and golden looks mean she's still at the top after 15 years. But, discovers Christa D'Souza, her carefree humour masks an inner toughness. Photographs by Regan Cameron

Cameron Diaz has just invited me to check out her skin under a lamp in the lobby of LA's Chateau Marmont Hotel. "Better, huh?" she giggles. I have to agree, it definitely is, compared to the last time I got this close. That was 15 years ago, when she was 22, fresh out of modelling for *Elite* in Paris and being hailed for her screen performance in *The Mask*. What was she like then? Well, her skin wasn't great, I won't lie about that (she did suffer from acne at one time), but otherwise she was just the goofball-slash-sex-bomb you'd expect her to be, all gurgly giggles and legs. And nice, nice, nice...

A decade and a half later, Diaz is one of Hollywood's richest stars – just under Sandra Bullock and just over Gisele Bündchen, with a personal fortune in the region of \$75 million, according to *Forbes* – so if she'd turned into a monster, I wouldn't be surprised. But, no she's still nice, if a little more skittish, a little more guarded than memory recalls, her tone though unerringly polite and cordial, a touch breathy – or perhaps urgent is a better way of putting it.

One partly expects to see her in a plaid shirt and denim shorts – the Daisy Duke look she's perfected down to a tee for the paparazzi – but today she looks rather grown-up, conservative even, in Louboutins, skinny jeans, and a long

cardi from The Row (the Olsen twins' label, which she adores at the moment; that and Rag & Bone and, for the red carpet, Victoria Beckham). Forget the bare-faced natural sun-kissed glow thing for today, too. Her lips are bright coral, her eyes rimmed in kohl. Her hair (just coloured a few days ago, she volunteers) is a shimmering, old-style ash-blonde. She looks, as it were, very "put together" for our cocktail date.

At three years shy of 40, she's still the surfer chick who can burp on demand and talk dirty to talk-show hosts. The rubbery grin and the pugilist's nose (broken six times – the last, after being hit by her own surfboard) are still intact, too. But there are now little lines round those slanty ice-blue eyes, a lived-in feel about her features, which give her an elegance, a realness, which frankly is rare in this cosmetically enhanced town. But then as Diaz herself recently said, although it was an "effort" to age naturally in this town, it was an effort she was definitely going to make.

"Yeah, well, hey, I'm not doing anything right now," she says, snuggling into her cardi and plonking her red pouffy bag from Chanel beside her (she uses it as a cushion on the aeroplane). "But we'll see. So far, so good. But I'll never say never to anything."

Diaz has just finished filming the big comedy action blockbuster *Knight and Day*. In it Diaz plays a singleton who gets unwittingly caught up with a fugitive super-spy, played by Tom Cruise. Directed by James Mangold (*3.10 to Yuma*, *Walk the Line*), it's

got everything: magnificent car chases; Cruise going psycho in a coffee shop; Peter Sarsgaard; Cameron in a bikini.

Meanwhile, after six months of shooting in Austria, Spain, Massachusetts and Jamaica – "Yeah, we had *sooo* much fun making that movie" – Diaz is now straight into her next film. In this one, *Bad Teacher*, a deliciously inappropriate-sounding comedy directed by Jake Kasdan, she plays the role of Elizabeth, "a very, very bad gold-digger" in search of someone to fork out for, among other things, a breast-enlargement operation. "Yeah, and I'm having the best, best time playing her," says Diaz gleefully. "The women I play, you know, I usually like to take care of them. I want to make sure they're moral people, even if they're not doing their best. I like them to come across as human beings. But this one? I don't feel any responsibility for her. She doesn't give a shit about anyone but herself. I'm sure we'll offend everyone with it, which is great – because if you offend everyone, you don't have to apologise to anyone, right?"

Meanwhile, the fact that her co-star is her ex-boyfriend Justin Timberlake has got tongues wagging. "Mm-hmm," agrees Diaz brightly, "that's right. He plays the substitute teacher I, er, set my sights on." Here one feels we are treading on ground that Diaz might not want to linger on for too long. (The bloggers are having a field day with tales of Timberlake and his girlfriend Jessica Biel splitting over the love scenes between him and Diaz in the film.) >



Cameron, although so skinny she was nicknamed Skeletor, was a phenomenal scrapper as a child

Over the years there has been quite a line-up of dashing suitors – Matt Dillon, Jared Leto, Timberlake (who is eight years her junior), and the ex-builder-turned-model from Peckham she dated in 2008, Paul Sculfor, who used to go out with Jennifer Aniston. They made a beautiful pair. “And he’s beautiful on the inside, too,” says Diaz helpfully, though disappointingly ending it there (except to mention later that of all accents, English is the one she could probably pull off). So she’s not in love with anyone else at the moment, then? “Oh y’know,” she sighs, “these are the questions I can either play yes or no, and you know what? Yes I am, I’m in love with *life*. I mean, I get to make movies... I get to play all day long... Are you kidding me?”

Diaz sounds *so* all-American... But of course she is not, at least not in the traditional sense. Her late father Emilio, an oil foreman, was of Cuban descent. Her mother Billie is part Cherokee (“Blackfoot, actually,” Diaz corrects me). None of her friends were all-American. The block she and her elder sister were brought up on in Long Beach was full of culturally diverse kids like themselves. Diaz describes her upbringing as pretty blue-collar. Contrary to popular belief, she only started surfing five years ago, being too poor to buy a surfboard as a kid. Great tracts of her childhood, she says, were spent swarming the neighbourhood in packs looking for adventure. (One summer, she recounts, she saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark* 35 times to escape the heat.)

But she describes it as being a pretty forward-thinking childhood too, with Emilio hell-bent on teaching his girls to think independently. “He was an atheist himself,” as Diaz explains, “but every Sunday he’d drop us off at all these different denominational churches so we could make up our minds about it ourselves.” He taught them how to protect themselves too. Cameron, in particular, although so skinny she was nicknamed Skeletor, was a phenomenal scrapper. (And still is. Remember the, er, tussle she had with the photographer trying to take pictures of her and Timberlake outside a club? Or how she and Leonardo DiCaprio nearly beat each other unconscious while rehearsing on the set of *Gangs of New York*?) “Well, where I came from you had to fight it out,” she says, reaching into the large bowl of french fries in front of her. “You got picked on if you didn’t stand up for yourself or take what was coming at you. And as my dad always said, your bite needs to be as good as your bark.”

Meanwhile, after she was recruited at a party by an Elite modelling agent, she had no problems persuading her father to let her go to Tokyo and then Paris to model. It is the >

mark of a good upbringing, I say to her, when a parent can let a child go like that, and the child can feel secure about being let go... “Oh, I didn’t get homesick at all,” says Diaz, who was only 16 at the time. “I always had a good sense of adventure, I’ve always talked to everybody, and my parents did their research. They chose Tokyo over Milan or London, for example. But my dad was a really special man. He was definitely a one-of-a-kind, unique person. Men like him don’t come round every day, you know?”

Emilio Diaz died in 2008, at the age of 58, of pneumonia-related complications, while Cameron was filming *My Sister’s Keeper* with Abigail Breslin. The suddenness of his death, the untimeliness of it, sent the whole family reeling.

Diaz used to call herself her Dad’s favourite son, a reference to the fact he’d wanted a boy and his joy that she turned out to be such a tomboy. Deep as their bond obviously was, and much as she admired him as a person, the theory that this is what has kept her single thus far – no man ever matching up and so forth – she dismisses. Sort of... “I wouldn’t go,” she starts, and then stops, and then carries on, “I mean yes, I definitely feel... but no, I don’t believe in that kind of thing.”

“There was this period of terrible numbness,” she goes on to say, “and it’s impossible for anyone to know what’s it like until it happens to you. It had happened to friends of mine and I’d go, ‘Oh, I’m sorry,’ but in reality? How could I be truly sorry when I didn’t know what it meant? No one can ever underestimate how devastating it is. But at the same time what I’ve learnt about losing someone so close is that my life is full of his presence. I’m not kidding, I really *am* in love with life at the moment.”

So there we have it: single, childless, technically middle-aged (in this town, anyway), and – unlike Jennifer Aniston, who seems stuck, poor girl, with the victim label – apparently *lovin’* it.

Particularly the *not* having children bit. As she said on the Bill Maher show recently, when he brought the topic up, “No fuckin’ way.” Well not just yet, anyway. “Look, here’s what it is,” she says, taking a big gulp from her glass of sauvignon blanc. “You know how you have those moments of feeling dissatisfied and you think, ‘What would make my life better?’ Well, I’ve yet to go, ‘Aha, that’s it: a child!’ I’m not

saying I don’t want them, but right now I see how torn up parents get when they’re away from their kids, how guilty they feel, and I don’t want that! I don’t want to feel like I ought to be missing someone, I don’t want to not do a film at a moment’s notice...”

“But don’t get me wrong,” she adds, in that slightly intense way of hers, “I’m 100 per cent committed when I commit to somebody or something. I’m a full-on nurturer – that’s all I do.”



Leather jacket, £1,150, Mulberry. Pencil skirt, £495, Burberry Prorsum, at Burberry

“With Cameron it’s all about the other person,” says Diaz’s best friend, Gucci Westman, who is also the make-up artist for her *Vogue* shoot. “It’s weird, because she could get away with being such a selfish brat. If ever she and I are having a conversation, she always wants to talk about me, not her,” she says on the phone from New York.

Diaz and Westman go back “like a thousand years, when I was doing covers for *Movieline* magazine,” giggles Diaz. (It was Westman who so brilliantly turned her friend into a frump in *Being John Malkovich*.) Indeed Westman’s son Dashiell, by Rag & Bone co-founder David Neville, is Diaz’s godson. “I remember she was filming the day he was born,” says Westman, “but she got on a plane

to come and see him that day. Just for that. She has her priorities right. She would do anything for me. And that’s more than you can say for a lot of close friends. A boy’s girl, but a total girl’s girl too. And don’t you think she looks great older? I’ve always thought that. She’s like grand cru, or something, she gets better with age.”

“You’ve got to be realistic,” is Diaz’s own sanguine assessment. “I mean, I don’t want to look 25 again. I might as well enjoy it while I’ve still got something.” OK, all fair and good. We want some tips though, some proper concrete tips. Apart from having sturdy hybrid stock and lots and lots of money and not going through the rigours of childbirth, what else does one do to stay in such fabulous shape as her? Is she one of those actresses who only eats and drinks in front of journalists, for example, a secret lightweight among her friends? And has she, ever in her life, been plump? “Well, I’ve been my version of it,” she says, “Look, when your frame is small [it’s true, her wrists and ankles, just visible under the hem of her skinny jeans, are actually tiny], every little bit of extra weight shows. There’s a smaller margin for error.


“No, but the fountain of youth, let’s see,” she continues. “I guess it’s exercise, healthy diet, lots of water, lots of laughter, lots of sex – yes, sex, we need that as human beings. It’s healthy, it’s natural, it’s what we are here to do!”

OK, so lots of sex. But no heavy-duty, cougar-style partying, right? “I’m 37; I don’t need to go out and party any more. Those years are over for me. There are nights, sure, when you order more bottles of wine than you realise and then the bill comes and you go whoa! But I don’t like waking up feeling gross. I don’t like to lose my day. I mean, I work my ass off, I do. Anyone who knows me will tell you that...”

They do. “Cameron is very much a worker and dedicated to what she’s doing,” Tom Cruise volunteers, and he should know. Like Cruise, she gets paid well, too. After the massive success of her roles in *There’s Something About Mary* and *My Best Friend’s Wedding* (not to mention the Golden Globe nomination she got for her role in *Gangs of New York*, and of course Fiona’s voice in *Shrek*) nobody balked when she commanded \$20 million for her role in *Charlie’s Angels*: >

Tomboy Cameron was known as her father's "favourite son" – and her nose has been broken six times. Men's cotton shirt, £250, Burberry. Metallic leather shorts, £1,030, Blumarine, at A La Mode and Harrods






*“You know how
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Well, I’ve yet
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“I work my ass off,
I do,” says Diaz.
“Anyone who knows
me will tell you that.”
Lace minidress,
£495, Joseph

REGAN CAMERON

A close-up photograph of a woman's legs and feet resting on a white wooden beach bench. She is wearing red high-heeled sandals. The background shows a sandy beach, a tree trunk, and the ocean under a bright sky.

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– exercise, healthy diet, lots of water,
lots of laughter, lots of sex. Yes, sex!
It’s what we’re here to do”*



"I'm 37; I don't need to go out and party any more," says Cameron. "Those years are over for me."
Ribbed-wool cardigan, £405, Prada. Silk and ostrich-feather shirtdress, £1,930, Givenchy by Riccardo Tisci, at Selfridges

Full Throttle. In 2008, *Forbes* magazine rated her as the highest-paid actress, banking \$50 million in that year alone.

Having money, she says, allows her her freedom. Her freedom to go snowboarding or surfing in Hawaii. Her freedom to indulge her mother Billie, her sister Chimene and her nieces and nephews. In other words, she won't lie – it's no curse being rich. "I love being able to make a living and being able to be successful," she says, "because I love to share! But let me tell you," she adds (not defensive exactly, just not ditzzy or goofy either. *At all*), "I don't get paid a lot of money because people just want to give me money. It's a contract. They're paying me that amount because they want to make that amount! It's like any other business."

And she's smart, too, according to director James Mangold. "I was at this dinner and she was sitting opposite me, next to a multi-billionaire who was trying to dazzle her with his knowledge about something," he recalls. "I watched her very politely remind him of the actual facts. She's unbelievably well-informed and well-read."

But then what of that goofball persona? That latter-day Carole Lombard act she does so well? Is that what it is, an act? "Hey, I love to make people laugh," shrugs Diaz unapologetically. "That's the way I've always made myself comfortable around other people and how I make people feel comfortable about me. Because the truth is I am famous, and some people are intimidated by that. I've honed this skill very well over the years. I make fun of myself first. So people don't have to worry about being scared of me. I don't want to say I dumb down, because I don't think I'm an idiot: it's about keeping it simple. And it's about manners. Because it's hard to go deep with people straight away."

Diaz is a good actress. It wouldn't surprise me at all if this self-effacement, this humility, these basic manners were a bit of an act. It's her job, after all, to masquerade as something she is not. Besides, aren't all Californians nice on the outside? I keep thinking about this one on the plane, how journalists must never be taken in, and keep thinking about it right up until the point a few days later when I get my trusty little tape recorder out to transcribe our two-hour conversation. And discover that one hour and 50 minutes of it was somehow wiped off. This will be telling, won't it – whether she'll bother to do the entire interview again? Why should she? Stupid, *stupid* me.

And guess what? She does, with as much grace and enthusiasm as the first time round. Whether that's being professional or nice, who knows. But I like this woman a lot. ■

"She's like grand cru, or something," says Diaz's friend Gucci Westman. "She gets better with age."

Velour jacket, £995.

Velour miniskirt,

£415. Both Prada.


Jersey T-shirt, £36,

American Vintage.

For stockists,

all pages, see

Vogue Information



"The truth is, I am famous, and some people are intimidated by that. I make fun of myself first, so people aren't scared of me"



REGAN CAMERON