

The Last SHOWGIRL

She doesn't avoid the paparazzi, and there's no secret sex tape. Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones would rather discuss what she does have: A movie-star husband, an Oscar, and absolutely nothing to hide. By Brooke Hauser

Before she was a movie star with four homes around the world, an Oscar, a Douglas, and a diamond engagement ring the size of a small glacier, Catherine Zeta-Jones was, believe it or not, a little girl; a little girl from the tiny fishing town of Mumbles, Wales, who dreamed of meeting the most beautiful woman in the world, Elizabeth Taylor. “My mother used to say to me, ‘She has purple eyes and two sets—*two sets*—of eyelashes,’” recalls the actress, now 37, her own amber irises glinting in the sunlight coming through her New York City apartment. “All I wanted was to see them in real life.”

Catherine almost got her wish at

age ten, when she was starring in a production of *Annie* at the Victoria Palace Theatre in London. “The next show was *The Little Foxes*, and Elizabeth Taylor was in it. I knew the stage-door guy, and he said, ‘She’s going to be coming in shortly for the matinee.’ So I ran across the road and got daffodils—the Welsh national flower. Anyway, the car pulled up, and out stepped Elizabeth Taylor. She had these huge black glasses on....”

At this point in the story, Zeta-Jones slips into acting mode, simulating both sides of the conversation with invisible props and bedtime-story exaggeration:

YOUNG CATHERINE:

[Pushing daffodils toward Taylor]

These are from Wales. I’m from where Richard Burton comes from.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR:

Oh, *dabbling*, oh, *dab-ling!*

YOUNG CATHERINE:

Would you take your glasses off? I want to see your purple eyes.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR:

[Flashing a pitying smile]

It’s far too early in the morning to do that, my love.

And...scene. Zeta-Jones crashes backward into the soft velvet of her living room sofa and lets out a bracingly loud laugh: half raspy hiccup, half pterodactyl screech. “Well,” she says dryly, “she took my daffodils, anyway.”

Some people are good at math. Catherine Zeta-Jones just happens to be good at being a movie star. It’s evident in the languorous way that she moves through a room, as if there were a trail of servants behind her, eager to peel her



Black wool tuxedo suit by Yves Saint Laurent. Black polyamide elastane bra by Agent Provocateur. Gold-and-onyx ring by Di Modolo. These pages: Hair, Serge Normant of the Serge Normant at John Frieda Salon; makeup, Dick Page; manicure, Sheril Bailey. Prop stylist: Tom Bell. Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco. Details, see Credits page.

a grape. She is the kind of woman who instantly upgrades a man's apartment—even if that man is Michael Douglas, her husband of seven years, and that apartment features a shiny black grand piano, a mustard-yellow pool table, and a backdrop of the Manhattan skyline. She is still the main attraction, this day wearing a charcoal Dolce & Gabbana pencil skirt to reveal her long, showgirl's legs and leaving the faintest scent of perfume and cigarettes in her wake.

Zeta-Jones has style—and not the kind that can be leased out via the services of the next Rachel Zoe. Zeta-Jones's authenticity stems from her innate understanding that trends are no match for timelessness, and nothing turns heads like a well-crafted persona. If she seems like a perfect study in old-school Hollywood glamour, that's because she is—and she treasures it. Of course, marrying into it hasn't hurt her, either.

"I could sit all day and listen to the stories that Kirk has, and that Michael has as well," she says in her springy Welsh lilt. "You know, the guys: Frank [Sinatra], Kirk, and Burt Lancaster. They always used to go and play bridge or cards. All the kids would go over to Frank's house and swim in the pool.... I used to read about that world in magazines. And, now—" she picks up a framed black-and-white photograph of a young Kirk Douglas, whose famous dimpled chin her own six-year-old son, Dylan, has inherited—"I have it firsthand."

Zeta-Jones isn't big on false modesty, nor does she feign to have much in common with her fans—other than once being one herself. In an era when water-cooler conversation often turns to stars, and how "they're just like us" (*They Dig Inside Their Purses! They Check Their Teeth!*), she is decidedly, refreshingly, not like you or me. She took on the part of a tightly wound chef in the romantic comedy *No Reservations*, due in theaters this July, as a challenge because, as she puts it, "I wanted to play a regular woman. The glam thing—I can do that."

While she enjoyed getting her hands dirty for the role (she worked undercover at Fiamma, an Italian restaurant in SoHo;

her duties included chopping and refilling water glasses), offscreen Zeta-Jones inhabits the rarefied space reserved for the rich and famous, and why not? Being fabulous is just part of the job description, and it's a role that Zeta-Jones—who shares a natural inclination to razzle-dazzle with Velma Kelly, the vamp she played in *Chicago*—seems to relish.

There's a lot to glean from the bottles of Pellegrino, the housekeeper padding silently through the apartment, the shelves dedicated to heavy, leather-bound volumes of the couple's past scripts, not to mention Michael's two little gold men. "My Oscar's in Bermuda"—the Douglasses' main residence—"because Bermuda's never had one," she quips. There's even more to learn when you take a look at the snapshots of Jack, Clint, Sean, and Quincy scattered around—or the Who's Who of World Politics gallery on display. There's Catherine with President Clinton; Michael with Barbara and Condi; the Douglasses with Nelson Mandela, and Kofi Annan, a recent houseguest in Bermuda. (Other properties are in Majorca, Spain; Quebec; and Turks and Caicos.)

You want to glimpse what's inside her refrigerator since, after all, she does play

fridge door, which she throws open, and voilà! Plastic-wrapped plates of crudités, cheeses, and smoked salmon—it looks like the day after a bris in there.

"I've been cooking all morning," she sighs, before peppering you with stories about the time she set a pan on fire, and how she makes three pumpkin pies for Thanksgiving, since it's guaranteed that the first two will flop. Even after her training for *No Reservations*, "I'm still not the best of chefs," she admits. "Michael said if I can pull this one off it's worth an Academy Award."

That would make four for the family.

You might want to avoid her pumpkin pie, but Zeta-Jones has mastered the recipe for success: lots of sauce mixed with a pinch of self-deprecation. There aren't many vestiges of who Catherine Jones was before she added the "Zeta" to her name (it belonged to her grandmother), but one stands out. Behind the sofa, in contrast to the photograph of her daughter Carys, a four-year-old who's been known to take mom's Fendi purse to preschool, is a crinkled portrait of the actress as a toddler.

The picture is a reminder of just how far Zeta-Jones has come since growing

She tortured him. "Nine months without a touch or a kiss," she says with a light snort.

a foodie in her next film? "Well, come and see!" she says gamely, teetering a bit in her stacked, black Fendi platforms.

Click-clack past the bronze statue of Atlas with the world on his back and a package between his legs—really. Today, Atlas is functioning as a makeshift mailbox. "That's funny!" she says, not bothering to lift a manicured finger.

Click-clack past the laundry closet, where she stops to roll her eyes and joke, "I'm constantly in there."

Click-clack across the kitchen to the

up in Wales, with two brothers, as the only daughter of a seamstress and a candy-factory owner. "They had all these big vats full of sugar," remembers the star, who still hankers for the hardboiled suckers called Humbugs that her father used to make. "It was like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*—it was great."

Life was indeed sweet for Catherine early on. "I was in Amateur Dramatics every year, different shows: from *Oliver* to *The Sound of Music*. I was in the world of *Waiting for Guffman*," she

Embellished silk crepe gown
by Gucci. Gold-and-diamond
bracelet by Sevan Bicakci.
Makeup colors: Color Intrigue
Eyeshadow in Gala, Smoky
Eyes Powder Pencil in Smoky
Black, and Ceramide Plump
Perfect Lipstick in Perfect
Brick by Elizabeth Arden.
Details, see Credits page.



says, referencing the Christopher Guest mockumentary about small-town thespians. About a year after landing the lead in *Annie*, she took home the top medal as Britain's tap-dancing champion. Then, at age 16, she got cast as second understudy in *42nd Street* in London. ("I used to be able to throw false eyelashes on," she says. "Now, I'm like, Forget it. Somebody has to put them on for me.") Her big break happened one night when she filled in, and the show's producer happened to be in the audience. He decided to make her the star.

"It's amazing how I just took to it," she says now, smoothing her mink black hair, still damp from a shower. "This was a huge responsibility for me as a teenager. Eight shows a week, out there in front. I think it stood me in good stead for what was going to come in my career. It gave me a strong work ethic."

She hung up her dancing shoes to play a coquettish country girl in Britain's beloved television series *The Darling Buds of May*. Unfortunately, with the success of the show came the paparazzi, who started tracking her every move, not caring if she was more than just a pretty face. "It was just as if my acting, my singing, my dancing—gone," she says, flicking the air. "And that was the impetus for me to come to the States and give it a try."

Her sultry exoticism set Zeta-Jones apart in Hollywood, where she swashbuckled her way into the hearts of men in 1998's *The Mask of Zorro*. "People still think I'm Spanish. That's the thing about my look—I can skim the European countries," says the actress, whose delicately freckled complexion and dark hair are at least partly owing to her black Irish roots. ("We tried to trace back as far as we could on the family tree," she deadpans, "but we were blocked by illegitimacy.")

By the time she met her future husband—who, despite being 25 years older, tirelessly courted her around the world after seeing her in *Zorro*—Zeta-Jones had wised up to the insatiable appetite of the tabloids. Perhaps she had even read a few herself. "I didn't want to be another girlfriend of Michael Douglas," she admits. "I remember feeling this imme-

diately attraction and going, What are you going to do: Invest, like, a night or something? I didn't want to put myself in that situation." So, she did what any self-respecting woman in her situation would do: She tortured him. "Nine months without a touch or a kiss," she says, with a light snort. "I'm sure he thought, Something's not right with this chick. It usually doesn't take me this long."

Indeed, knowing her own worth is one of her best and most enviable assets. Over the years, Zeta-Jones has drawn her fair share of nasty remarks for her forthrightness when it comes to cashing in. Long before pictures of baby Shiloh sold for a reported \$4 million, she handed over photographs of baby Dylan to the celebrity magazine *OK!* for an alleged \$800,000. She struck a similar deal for exclusive shots of her wedding, and when a rival tabloid published unflattering images of her eating cake, she sued (and she won).

Leave it to Zeta-Jones to have her cake and eat it, too. Following accusations that she was a gold digger, she played one in *Intolerable Cruelty*. And then there was that time at the Oscars when she overheard a psychic, who was claiming to channel Joan Crawford, pooh-poohing her decision to endorse T-Mobile—a deal for which Zeta-Jones earned an estimated \$20 million, making her one of the highest-paid celebrity spokespersons ever. "She was saying how I would definitely be up there to win the Oscar if I wasn't flogging phones," Zeta-Jones says and cackles. "Oh, SHUT UP!"

For the most part, Zeta-Jones casts off criticism like some faux-fox stole. She's happily endorsing beauty products for Elizabeth Arden; she even inspired her own fragrance, *Provocative Woman*. Being savvy in such matters is essential for a star's survival. "Our name and likeness, our 'brand,' for lack of a better word, is why we get paid," she says, taking a sip from her bottle of Pellegrino. "Otherwise, get some other Catherine Jones to go out there and do it."

Until then, this Catherine Jones is still very much in demand, thank you. Her to-do list just for the next few weeks rivals most people's for life. Today: Say good-night to her "babies" in Bermuda and make a few calls to Los Angeles. ("Britain, Europe...I've (continued on page 245)



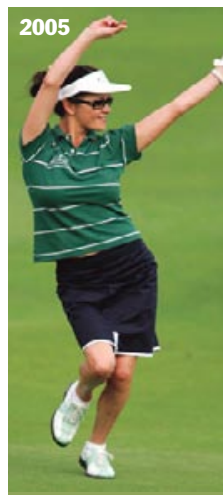
▲WITH HER TUTOR WHILE PERFORMING IN *ANNIE*, LONDON "Where on earth did you find this? This was my chaperone/tutor. Obviously, we're playing Monopoly. We used to do our schooling in the theater, and I did absolutely nothing, I can say. Absolutely nothing."



▲FROM *PHANTOM* "That was one of the great film experiences, because I didn't have much to do, and I was on weather cover forever, which means if it rains you don't have to work. So I was in Thailand for what seemed months and months and months, just playing golf. I spent all my salary in spas, touring around. I pretty much did jack shit."



▲WITH DIRECTOR STEVEN SODERBERGH ON THE SET OF *TRAFFIC* "I love this picture. That was a great movie. Steven was placing where he wants the props, I think, and I'm getting into character there. I would love to work with Steven again."

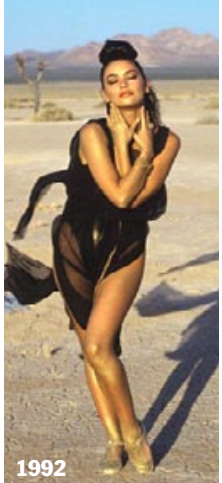


▲AT THE ALL-STAR GOLF TOURNAMENT, SOUTH WALES "Obviously, I look like I've had a good shot. I'm actually quite good, but for somebody whose living is in front of the camera, I freak. I prefer to sing live at the Oscars pregnant than stand on a first tee with people around where the silence is deafening, and you have hit the ball. Terrifying."



◀ **IN LONDON** "Honey, it's the '80s. All is forgiven. The hair's marvelous.... So Farrah. I used to go on the tube like that."

1987



1992

◀ **FILMING A MUSIC VIDEO** "Oh, my God. This was when I said I wanted to be a rock star. It all started when I narrated a musical version for a record, a CD, whatever you call it, of *Spartacus*, with Anthony Hopkins. We recorded some songs, but it didn't really work. It was kind of soft rock."



1993

▲ **WITH RICK MORANIS IN SPLITTING HEIRS** "This was not a very good movie at all, but a lot of fun, with Rick Moranis, John Cleese, Eric Idle, and Barbara Hershey. That's in the South of France. Nice locations."



1995

▲ **FROM A&E'S CATHERINE THE GREAT** "I love the [costume] process, especially on a period piece. You have a corset, and then you have a cradle that sits on your waist, like a birdcage. When you're in dresses like this, the character is halfway there. The way you sit... just beautiful."



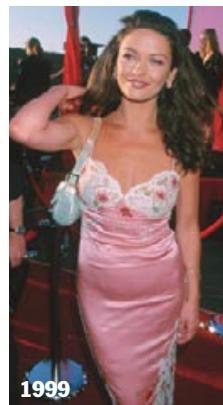
1998

▲ **WITH MICK HUCKNALL, LONDON** "That's Mick Hucknall from Simply Red, who I used to date many years ago. He's still a really good friend of mine.... I always seem to gravitate toward older guys and older girls. I don't know why. But I married one."



1999

FROM ENTRAPMENT "That was a pretty memorable scene. We were going through the lasers with my butt sticking in the air.... Sean Connery was a big mentor. Just his professionalism, the longevity of his career. We were like father-daughter, even though we fell in love onscreen."



1999

◀ **AT THE MTV MOVIE AWARDS, SANTA MONICA** "I love that dress.... Ungaro. I like watching awards shows on TV in my pj's, to be honest."



2002

◀ **FROM CHICAGO** "I fought hard for this wig. Some of the producers wanted my hair down, but women had their hair short or coiffed back then. I love the severity of it, especially when I was dancing.... For months after I did *Chicago*, I'd look in the mirror like, Why do I look tired? Why can't I get my mascara right? And I'd go, Oh, I'm used to myself with big ol' false eyelashes."

▼ **WITH NICOLE KIDMAN AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS, HOLLYWOOD** "I was just about to give birth. Literally full of life. This was a Versace.... I tried this dress on a week before the Oscars, and it fit fine. Then, three days before, couldn't get my boobs in. They had to redo the whole thing."



2003

▲ **FROM INTOLERABLE CRUELTY** "I have a fantastic wigmaker in L.A. Because I had copper streaks in my hair, I had [her] make me a wig exactly the same so it would save me time in the morning. All this in the front is my own hair. And then, back here [she illustrates] is a wig. So, I'd whip it off, she'd blow it out at lunchtime, stick it back on."



2003



2004

▲ **WITH BRAD PITT IN OCEAN'S TWELVE** "I've been very lucky with my leading men.... Probably the best of the bunch. I've gotten to kiss George Clooney, Brad, Antonio. I mean, I've had a good run."

▶ **AT THE PREMIERE OF THE LEGEND OF ZORRO, LOS ANGELES** "On the red carpet, there was this young girl, and she starts crying hysterically. It was like that girl on *American Idol* who was crying for that guy? Sanjaya? So I call [her] over, and she climbs over the railing for the red carpet. She follows me down, and we have photographs taken. I said, 'Don't cry, or you'll make me cry, and my makeup will run.' She was sweet."



2005

▶ **WITH MICHAEL DOUGLAS AT THE OPENING OF THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL FOR WALES, CARDIFF, WALES** "This is my charity, my hospital that I'm patron of. Wales was the only country in Europe that didn't have a designated children's hospital. So we've been raising funds for years, and this was the inauguration."



2006



2007

▲ **WITH ABIGAIL BRESLIN IN NO RESERVATIONS** "She's shaving truffles. I look as if I know what I'm doing. For a few weeks of rehearsal, I would be down at the restaurant during the day, setting up. It's such theater, being in a kitchen—I loved it."

THE GOOD HEIRESS

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she used exactly the same words. I had goose bumps hearing her.”

Aerin says that as a child she was unaware of her grandmother’s world-wide celebrity, though she did, she allows, realize that something was up when she was old enough to visit department stores and discovered a familiar name alongside the products by Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein. “But she didn’t try to force her business views on me,” Aerin says. “She was just a warm, wonderful grandmother. We’d read and have tea parties and chocolate.” (A little chocolate, it seems, never hurt anyone’s complexion.) Nonetheless, Aerin seems to have internalized Estée’s business views along with her tea. “One of her most wonderful quotes was ‘Whatever you do, do it well. Work hard at whatever you do. Whether it’s as a mother, as a scientist, as a business-woman.’ You have to take total pride in what you do, and that’s what makes you happy, what makes you successful, what makes you a good person. So I remember a lot of her wonderful quotes, like ‘Whatever you do, do it well.’ And ‘Take care of your skin.’”

Like her grandmother, Aerin is extremely social: She is a fixture at events such as the Costume Institute Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. “My mother loved to go out in the evening, and she would go out almost every night, and Aerin loves that also,” Ronald Lauder says. “Some people, after a day at the office, want to sit home and rest, but Aerin loves to go out.” (Although Aerin herself says, “I try not to go out that much.”) Even so, Estée’s method for combining work and motherhood was not one that even the most zealous of today’s career women would be likely to adopt: In order to promote her brand, she traveled constantly. (Estée’s commitment to her business was such that she divorced her husband, Joseph: “I did not know how to be Mrs. Joseph Lauder and Estée Lauder at the same time,” she wrote in her autobiography. She and Joseph reconciled three years later.)

“If people could come behind the scenes,” Aerin says, “they would see that I’m walking the dog at 11:30 at night,

taking the kids to school, running to the office—I’m perpetually on the go.” She insists that family comes first, though she makes efforts to ensure that career commitments come a very close second. “I found out that on a day I’m due to have a shoot my little boy is due to have a teddy-bear picnic,” she says. “I’m assuming that the teddy-bear picnic happens early, so hopefully I can do both.”

Aerin’s willingness to embrace the role that Estée occupied has been a boon to the Estée Lauder company. And if her role has more to do with image-building than chemical-mixing, she nonetheless has a genuine love of the tools of her grandmother’s trade. “I love flowers, and I love fragrance, and I’ve grown up with it,” she says. “I don’t know if I’d say I’ve got a good nose, but I’ve got an interest. And I think I can tell what women want. Everyone who smells the new scent really loves it, because it is very floral, and it’s very easy to wear. It’s not polarizing; there’s nothing unusual about it. It’s not spicy and scary, it’s just like a beautiful bouquet of flowers.”

Aerin has an interest in fashion—her friends Tom Ford and Michael Kors both have beauty lines at Estée Lauder—but she says that beauty remains her professional passion. “It’s immediate gratification,” she says. “You put a perfume on, and immediately it smells great. You put on your facial cream, and your face feels better. You put your lipstick on, and you have a bit of color. So it’s luxury that is very attainable, and I think there is something very appealing about that.” She reaches for a bottle of her new scent, samples of which she has ready to hand out on a side table, just as Estée would have done. Some of the bottles come with a golden cap encrusted with semiprecious gems in a pattern inspired by a brooch designed by Josef Hoffman, the turn-of-the-century Viennese architect and designer. (The original is in her father’s museum.) One ounce of the perfume costs \$300.

“If you think of that, it’s \$300 versus a \$30,000 piece of jewelry,” she says with a smile. “That’s a bit more attainable.” It is a measure of Aerin Lauder’s charmed life that, to her, a \$300 bottle of scent is attainable; it is a measure of her charm that when she says so, one finds oneself smiling and nodding in agreement. ♦

THE LAST SHOWGIRL

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already done that side of the world.” Tomorrow: Phone *Chicago* director Rob Marshall to talk about his big-screen adaptation of the musical *Nine* and her possible role in it—“I just have to see what the concept is,” she says. Then, hop on a private jet and head back to the island. Pack up again and fly to Spain to catch a little yacht racing at the America’s Cup in Valencia, before attending the Running of the Horses in Majorca. Oh, and get ready for tonight’s charity event for the Robin Hood Foundation. “Usher’s playing,” she coos. “I’m so excited!”

So much fabulousness. And yet, it makes you wonder: Is it ever difficult, constantly being on the move? Not being able to kiss your kids good-night, every night? Dealing with overzealous fans (“There are crackpots out there. Crackpots!”) and, in one highly publicized case, a stalker? Is it ever too much, being two movie stars in a marriage, under a microscope?

“I don’t think so, I think that um...” she starts to answer, when she is saved by the buzzer. “That’s my husband. Only he rings the bell like that: ‘Brrreeehhhhh!’” She squints one eye and stabs a finger at an invisible button. “There he is!” Gordon Gekko walks in and still looks sharp, with a shock of silver hair. “Hi, how are you?”

“Hi, sweetie!” Zeta-Jones says, tipping her chin up to greet him. Air kisses. He heads to the kitchen, whistling. But back to what she was saying: “I completely get how two actors trying to forge ahead in their careers could be very difficult, but not for us. We don’t talk about acting constantly—we talk about how sad we are that the Miami Heat haven’t made the playoffs.”

And now, it’s time you should be going. “Did you see how pretty the view is?” she says, walking over to her wall of windows. Outside, tiny dot people are rowing on the lake, and if you listen closely, you can hear horses clopping through the park, carriages in tow. “We love paintings. We have quite a nice collection; a lot of them are in Bermuda,” she says, her gold eyes catching the sun. “But we’re big-view people.”

It’s a nice view from the top, all right—and, for a price, it’s one that she is willing to share. ♦