

THE COMFORT ZONE

Jennifer Aniston is laid-back—and fired up. She speaks out about her risky upcoming movie, the hurtful motherhood comments, and why, exactly, she calls herself a feminist.

By Brooke Hauser

Jennifer Aniston has a way of connecting with women. On the *Today* show this summer, she addressed some of the questions that people have been asking her for years: When will she get married? When will she have a baby? In a friendly, candid tone, Aniston told Carson Daly, “I don’t have this sort of checklist of things that have to be done...and if they’re not checked, then I’ve failed some part of my feminism...or my value as a woman.” Within minutes, fans took to the Internet to tweet their support: “Amen, Sista!”; “That’s feminism, go girl!”; “Thank you, Jennifer Aniston.”

Every once in a while, when she decides to comment on a relationship or quash a persistent rumor, Aniston says something that really sticks. And “I don’t have a checklist” is as good an answer as any, not that Aniston is worrying about hitting any marks. She and her fiancé, actor-director-writer Justin Theroux, celebrated Theroux’s forty-third birthday and their two-year engagement in Bora Bora, where she went paddleboarding.

Life is pretty good for Aniston, 45, who, along with Theroux, just completed renovations on their home in Los Angeles. The house is much like Aniston herself: guarded on the outside, but open and welcoming to those she invites in. A few minutes into our interview, it becomes clear that her living room—with its minimalist decor, stocked bar, and enormous windows—is first and foremost about living. And sometimes life gets messy. “Watch out—incoming!” Aniston shouts, seconds before her pit bull mix, Sophie, charges the couch and licks my chin. Maybe it’s all those years of reading about her and watching her on TV (hard to believe

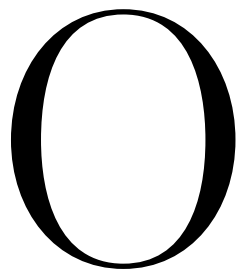
that *Friends* first aired two decades ago), but there’s something about Aniston that inspires kinship. At times, you just want to high-five her or give her a hug. Aniston doesn’t court a following; she simply attracts it. Lately, she has been embracing that in a new way—and now she’s taken seriously as both a businesswoman and an actress.

You want to obsess over her hair? Be her guest, and join the good-hair club. Aniston is a co-owner of and spokeswoman for Living Proof, a beauty company founded by biotech scientists who, as she puts it, “decided while curing cancer and heart disease, ‘Let’s figure out women’s bad-hair days.’” She’s not kidding. With roots at MIT, the company includes scientists from backgrounds in cancer research. New this month: Living Proof Curl, a line of products promising to help curly hair hold its shape without frizz.

Aniston’s hair is naturally curly, though in the past she usually wore it straight because controlling the texture was so arduous. “I mean, the amount of crap that I’d have to load up, layering different products and going down to the ocean and getting some water bottles filled with beach water [to spray on it]. That would work. But how often are you near a beach?... It’s nice to let it go raw and animal. You just have to have the right product,” says Aniston, who mentions some of Living Proof’s lab tests for the line. For one, the scientists used water bottles to simulate a rainstorm by spritzing two locks of curly hair that had been treated with two different products: Living Proof Curl Defining Styling Cream and a competitor. “Ours stayed bouncy and curly,” she says, clearly proud of it. “It’s nice when something works and does what it says it’s going to do. A bad-hair day really can set you off on the wrong foot, as can many other things, but it’s nice when you get the good hair down, because that way you can focus on all the other things that are going wrong.”

Beaded silk dress by Altuzarra. Makeup colors: Crease Proof Eye Shadow in Stay-Put Plum and MoistureSmooth Color Stick in Warm Caramel by Neutrogena. These pages: Hair, Chris McMillan of Chris McMillan, The Salon; makeup, Charlotte Tilbury; manicure, Tom Bachik. Set designer: Ali Gallagher. Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco. Details, see Shopping Guide.





Or the other things that are going right. For instance, her relationship with Theroux, who, by the way, loved her hair when it was short. (“He thought it was sexy,” says Aniston, who has stepped out in a sharp bob occasionally over the years.) She’s not the type to flaunt her happiness by posting lovey-dovey pics on Instagram, but that doesn’t mean that they’re not lovey-dovey. When Theroux comes home, she brightens. He hangs out for a few minutes, just long enough to play with Sophie and answer an impromptu question. I’d read that they do facial masks together on Sunday nights. True?

Aniston: Yes, we do. We switch around. We do Cellcosmet.
Theroux: It’s adorable.

Aniston: It’s adorable. But he’s honestly so comfortable in his masculinity. As opposed to some guys, who would never—
Theroux: Ride that line.

Aniston: You do. You ride the line, babe.

Theroux: “Babe, we gotta do our masks.” I never do that.

Aniston: [Smiling] No, you don’t.

Aniston isn’t so much an interview subject as she is an improv partner, playful and on point. And although she is known for that great, snap-crackle-pop comedic timing, not everyone knows that she’s capable of being more serious onscreen. Even though Rachel is “a few stoplights behind” her, she still has to prove that she can play dramatic roles. “I will say, it is not always easy to get certain people to believe that you can do that,” Aniston says. “Sometimes you have to work a little bit harder to get through.”

In her upcoming film *Cake*, a low-budget drama that she also helped produce, Aniston practically disappears into the role of Claire, a woman trapped in chronic physical and emotional pain after being in a car crash. “It was unlike anything I’d ever done before,” says the actress. “So much of the exercise was just letting yourself fall apart.”

During filming, Aniston stopped wearing makeup, shaving, and looking in mirrors; she also had a large prosthetic scar on her face. After the film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, critics speculated that the role could get her an Oscar nomination. Audiences love when a beautiful actress downplays her looks—Halle Berry in *Monster’s Ball* and Charlize Theron in *Monster*—but Aniston, for one, doesn’t believe this aspect should be remarkable.

“It’s so interesting: A woman going physically unattractive is where you get recognition and some sort of respect. You read things like, ‘Oh, finally, she’s acting!’” Aniston scoffs. What does she make of the fact that so much attention is paid to the physical appearances of actresses, especially when they go without makeup for a role? “Quite sexist, to be honest, because men don’t get that.”

Aniston isn’t one to preach, but when an issue is important to her, she’ll speak up. She was unaware of the recent buzz around the word “feminism.” When I ask what she makes of the fact that certain young actresses have rejected the label while others, including Emma Watson, have embraced it, Aniston just looks confused. “How can you say you’re not a feminist? They don’t believe in equal rights?” she asks. “Right, Sophie?” Aniston coos to her dog. “You’re a feminist, aren’t you?”

Aniston has supported the cause both publicly and pri-

BEAUTY CALL

Aniston’s hair is awfully famous. The Living Proof co-owner and Aveeno spokeswoman reveals more about her beauty routine.

Have you ever made a beauty mistake?

“Mini Mohawk, when I was 14. And the worst makeup mistake was the ‘80s. That was all a mistake.”

Have you learned any great hair tricks from a stylist?

“For those who have curly, unmanageable hair, braid your hair at night while wet and sleep in it.”

What part of your beauty routine would you never let your fiancé witness?

“There’s nothing I wouldn’t let him see.”

Allure: “And vice versa?”

Aniston: “Totally. Oy.”

What’s a typical day’s diet?

“Morning shake with a piece of toast. A salad with protein and vegetables. An afternoon snack of a soup, green juice, and a handful of nuts. And then I have some form of protein and vegetables for dinner.”

What’s your biggest food craving?

“Nachos.”

What are your favorite and least favorite workouts?

“I love them all. I love working out. The only time I don’t like it is when I’m tired.”

What’s the best beauty advice you got from your mother?

“Start using eye cream in your 20s. I was using eye cream when I was, like, 18.”

vately. She invested in *Ms.* magazine—“It was at a time when [cofounder Gloria Steinem] was trying to bring *Ms.* back, and a group of us put in money”—and she is still friendly with Steinem. When they first met 15 years ago, “She’d just gotten married after a long time saying, ‘I’m not going to be married,’” Aniston recalls. “It was just so interesting to hear her say, ‘Well, you change your mind; things change.’ It’s not like you’re making this huge statement, like, ‘I will never.’ It just hadn’t happened.” A beat. “She didn’t have a checklist.”

A year ago, Aniston interviewed Steinem at the Makers Conference in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, a three-day program that brought together leaders and trailblazers to talk about women’s rights and gender equality. It would be an understatement to say that Aniston was anxious about interviewing one of her idols at the conference, where Sheryl Sandberg and Gabrielle Giffords were among the speakers. The ques-

tions she asked Steinem were so thought-provoking, I took the opportunity to ask Aniston to answer a couple of them herself.

Why is “feminism” such a complicated word?

“Because people overcomplicate it. It’s simply believing in equality between men and women. Pretty basic.”

What was the most hurtful thing you found yourself continually coming up against as you were fighting this fight over the years?

“Oh, God, so many painful things. The accusation that I’ve put my career before the want, the desire to be a mother. This continually is said about me: that I was so career-driven and focused on myself; that I don’t want to be a mother, and how selfish that is.”

Ticking off these accusations now, she seems matter-of-fact, unfazed. But when I suggest to Aniston that maybe she just lets the insinuations roll off her back after so many years of hearing them, she corrects me. “No,” she says quietly. “Even saying it gets me a little tight in my throat.” Of course, she isn’t the only woman who has felt judged for

"Believe it or not, she has naturally curly hair," says Aniston's longtime hairstylist, Chris McMillan, who used products from Living Proof's new Curl line for styling. (He's the company's celebrity hairstylist; Aniston is a co-owner.)



not being married or having children, and while she might have bowed out of this sort of discussion a few years ago, she seems ready to talk now.

"I think I've been guarded for so long because [I've] been burned so many times. You really do become gun-shy," she says. "But then at a certain point, who gives a shit?"

The personal is political, as the saying goes, and when you're as famous as Aniston, talking about your beliefs can have real ramifications. At the very least, it can help change the conversation, or so she hopes. Among the words she'd like to see retired: "'Spinster,' 'barren,' 'geriatric pregnancies,'" she says. "We need to revisit the language!"

"It does feel like an unfair pressure [on] women, not just myself," Aniston continues. "I have a lot of friends who decided not to have children, who can't have children, or are trying but are having a difficult time. There's all sorts of reasons why children aren't in people's lives, and no one has the right to assume. It's quite rude, insulting, and ignorant," she says. "I don't like [the pressure] that people put on me, on women—that you've failed yourself as a female because you haven't procreated. I don't think it's fair. You may not have a child come out of your vagina, but that doesn't mean that you aren't mothering—dogs, friends, friends' children."

In Aniston's library, everywhere you turn, there are pictures of family, friends, and children. And then there are the dogs. Aniston and Theroux currently have three, not counting...well, let her explain. "These are all of our dead dogs," she says, gesturing toward three urns stored in the bookcase. A bit quirky, perhaps, but Aniston has always done things a little differently, and in Theroux, she seems to have met her match. "We're equals," she says. "He's a nurturer. He is so fiercely loyal. Beyond protective. I mean, the way he takes care of our dogs, he takes care of me, he takes care of friends."

When I ask about a comment she once made—that Theroux has good "parental" instincts (I meant "paternal")—she goes into improv mode again. "Oh, he does.... He feeds me; he puts my bib on," she says, then turns sincere. "He's got extraordinarily beautiful fatherly instincts."

As for her engagement, the impending nuptials feel impending enough that the couple's close friends have taken to showing up at their house in formalwear.

"It's adorable. If we throw a little pizza party, we have this couple...every time, they would come over in black tie, or at least a proper suit; she was in a gorgeous dress. It happened at a Fourth of July party. We're all in jean shorts, and they came in going, 'Is it happening?!'" Aniston squeals and laughs. "There was a time when people thought we were going to throw a party and surprise everybody."

No, she's not about to reveal her wedding plans. But, she says, "we *do* talk about it all the time." Before wandering out onto the deck overlooking a serene pool and a private, winding path, Aniston says, "I don't feel that if I don't achieve the perfect picture of the white picket fence, the little house with the family and the dogs, I have failed."

It's getting late. The sky is turning dusky, and Theroux waves to us from his office, warmly lit. Taking in the views of the glittering city and the Pacific Ocean shrouded in fog, I float the idea that this might be better than the house with the white picket fence.

"It is a little bit," Aniston says, and smiles. "Must be a little bit better." ♦



Circa 1972

Baby picture
"Well, who doesn't want to be a clown? I don't know what that [outfit] was, but that was a clown or just a terrible child's outfit that my mother put me in."



2006

With Catherine Keener and John Srednicki in *Friends With Money*

"I love Keener. And I loved that character. I like broken—I like a human experience, you know? Great cast. Nicole Holofcener is one of those fabulous women directors who I can't wait to work with again. I'll just wait by the phone patiently."



2008

Filming *30 Rock*

"Tina Fey, funny. Alec Baldwin, I worship, genius. Sweet Jane Krakowski. That whole cast was so fun. I love shooting in New York City more than I can explain. I just love it so much. The energy, the city itself, the people."



2011

With Charlie Day in *Horrible Bosses* "Well, what's more fun than making Charlie feel as uncomfortable as you possibly can? I love it."



2011

In New York City "Oh, that was Elder Statesman. Tunic, tights, Lanvin boots. We'd just come from doing *Good Morning America*. I saw a puppy walking down the street, and I fell in love with it and had to take a picture. I love dogs. How can you not?"



2014

With Justin Theroux at the premiere of *The Leftovers* in New York City

"I'm so proud of him. We have so much fun together.... It was nice to learn how to sort of relinquish control and let someone really care deeply for you. It's quite wonderful."



1998

With Paul Rudd in *The Object of My Affection* "I'm dancing—where are we? I'm pregnant with his child. Right? I'm actually drawing a blank on what happened [in the movie]. We have fun. He lives in New York. Whenever we can [get together], we do."



2002

With Liv Tyler at the filming of *MTV Icons: Aerosmith in Culver City, California* "That's Liv, who I absolutely love and adore. You couldn't find a kinder human being. And I'm introducing Aerosmith. I auditioned for an Aerosmith video when I'd just moved out here. [Steven Tyler] is so sweet. We just sort of became chatty fans of each other's. And now, since Liv and Justin [Theroux] are on *The Leftovers*, they hang out all the time.... I don't even know what [I'm wearing], except that it's like a doily around my chest. I just love how young and whimsical it is. Couldn't really do that today. Well, I mean, I could. I just don't know if I would."



2004

On *Saturday Night Live* "That was the second time I hosted *SNL*. I think this was an ad for an album that these country girls were coming out with. That's some serious curly hair. And look at that outfit. That's fabulously tragic."



2009

With Ben Affleck in *He's Just Not That Into You* "Ben. He's so sweet. I love ensemble pieces. Just because someone doesn't necessarily believe in the institution of marriage, which was his [character]...and what that translated back to her was, 'I don't love you.' She had to leave to realize that it's not the institution that you're striving for; it's the love and the person that you're striving for."



2010

With Courtney Cox at the 2010 Crystal + Lucy Awards in Century City, California "This is my uniform, right there. I'd gotten back from shooting *Just Go With It*. I don't think she knew I was even coming. That was a Roland Mouret dress. I love it, worship it. As I do that woman I'm standing next to."



2011

At an event for her fragrance *Jennifer Aniston in New York City* "That's Vivienne Westwood. Love that dress. Bright color, I know. More color than I'm used to wearing. I'm holding my first perfume that came out."



2012

With her father, receiving a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame "Ah, Papa. Handsome Greek man. Always has a kerchief if he's out to a fancy event. So handsome."



2012

With Paul Rudd and Justin Theroux in *Wanderlust* "There's all of our gang. [Justin and I] got to know each other in this, but we met when he was writing *Tropic Thunder*. But this is where we all became really good friends. We got together way after we shot this movie, so whenever we come upon it, it's so weird; we weren't even, like, thinking of each other in those terms back then. This is so funny when I look back."



2013

With Chelsea Handler at the *Vanity Fair Oscar party in West Hollywood* "That's my girl. Not only funny but kind, caring, loyal. That's a big red dress. Felt like *The King and I*."



2013

With Chris McMillan at a *Living Proof* launch in New York City "Chris is so adorably awkward. He makes me happy. Very good friends. I love that dress. It's loose and comfortable. I've had that shoe for way longer than I should admit. It's over ten years old. Yep. I keep shoes for a very long time."



2014

With Gwyneth Paltrow at a *Stand Up to Cancer* event in Hollywood "I've known her a long time. That woman has got style to the moon and back. Chic, effortless, gorgeous. This sums us up. Look, I'm in a T-shirt, jeans, and 400-year-old shoes, and this one is just, like, to a T. She's always been sweet to me."



2014

In *Cake* "Oh, pretty girl. That's... pain. Loss, trauma, chronic pain, addiction. There is a good person in there, but it is so buried under pain, grief, drugs, booze, and everything. I loved her. I had such empathy for the pain that she was in."



2014

With Lisa Kudrow, Courtney Cox, and Jimmy Kimmel on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* "This was so much more exciting and moving than we anticipated. We did not expect this set to be as accurate as it was, and it was very surreal. All the girls were game."