

Wool-blend sweater by Victoria Beckham. Makeup colors: Color Design 5 Shadow & Liner Palette in Bronze Amour and Color Design Lipcolor in Love It by Lancôme. These pages: Hair, Serge Normant of Serge Normant Salon; makeup, Genevieve Herr; manicure, Lisa Jachno. Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco. Details, see Shopping Guide.





Behind the Smile

Julia Roberts is the rare star who's also a regular person. How one of the most famous women in the world built a very private life. **By Brooke Hauser**

People act a little funny around Julia Roberts. Waiters helicopter over her, eager to please—absolutely-consider-it-done-my-pleasure. Whole families gawk. Every once in a while, brave fans summon the nerve to approach her. Unsure of what to say to one of the biggest movie stars of all time once they are in her presence, some simply recite one of her most memorable lines. “‘Big mistake. Big. Huge,’” Roberts says, quoting her fans quoting her in the 1990 movie *Pretty Woman*. “That’s probably the most returned line.” OK, and after they quote Julia Roberts to Julia Roberts, then what happens? “It kind of falls apart really quickly,” she says and flashes her Julia Roberts smile. “But it’s sweet.”

Maybe it’s her Southern upbringing (she’s originally from Smyrna, Georgia), but Roberts personifies the gracious movie star. For more than 25 years now, she has been watching us watch her, and she handles the attention with the patience of a preschool teacher. It helps that she doesn’t take any of it too seriously. Fame smiles down on her, and once in a while, she winks back—playing superstar Anna Scott in *Notting Hill* or telling a previous interviewer a funny story about the time her son Phinn told someone that his mom’s name was Julia Robinson. For the most part, though, her celebrity has nothing to do with her day-to-day life.

“I have a huge amount of giggly gratitude for

A woman is sitting on a balcony, looking out at a boat on the water. The background is filled with lush green trees. The woman is wearing a black patterned top and pants. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

what I've accomplished in my work, but I have a pretty clear perspective about it. It's not the defining aspect of my personality," Roberts says over lunch at a Malibu restaurant. As for the public's interest in her family, "Every day isn't exactly how we hope it turns out in that respect of being...viewed, as it were. But we're lucky that our life is relatively quiet."

In the past, Roberts has taken breaks from her film career to focus on her family. And while her cinematographer husband, Danny Moder, and their three children, twins Hazel and Phinnaeus, ten, and Henry, eight, remain her top priorities ("Let me show you my mongrels," she says, scrolling through photos from a recent trip to Paris), it's clear that Roberts is back in business. "I've worked more in this calendar year than I have in the last five," she says. "I'm not necessarily looking for work. I mean, I like to be home." Still, she says, "I feel really excited when I find something that creatively captures my attention."

Easier said than done. Roberts is famously discriminating when it comes to choosing her film roles. Next month, she stars in *Secret in Their Eyes*, costarring Nicole Kidman and

Chiwetel Ejiofor. In the thriller, Roberts plays a rising FBI investigator whose life unravels after the brutal murder of someone she loves—and who, years later, sets off on a quest for justice. The role was an intense emotional workout for Roberts, who felt fortunate to have her husband on the set as the film's cinematographer. "I don't know if I would have succeeded in some of the efforts that I made if he hadn't been in such close physical proximity to me.... There's something about having the safest place in the world for you in the same room," says the actress, who is looking forward to her next role—a woman "like a QVC pitchwoman" in the ensemble comedy *Mother's Day*. "I'm going to start watching QVC," she says. "I'm so excited, I can't even tell you."

Roberts is harder to peg than ever. Once the reigning queen of the romantic comedy, the Oscar winner has proven herself to be so much more than America's Sweetheart, a phrase that she thinks "has just exhausted itself. It's been overserved. I don't even know what it means now." At 47, she is commanding some of the most challenging roles of her career, but don't ask her whether she thinks actresses over 40 are

Polyester top and pants
by Michael Kors Collection.
Scarf by Denis Colomb
Lifestyle. Makeup colors:
Color Design Eye Shadow in
Gold Deluxe and Color
Design Lipcolor in Vintage
Rose by Lancôme. Details,
see Shopping Guide.



getting better roles than before. "It's funny when we try to talk about equality for women," she says. "I think part of it is not having these compartmentalized heroics of 'better parts for women over 40.' Nobody ever talks about better parts for guys over 40."

She makes a good point. In fact, she makes several. Throughout our interview, Roberts sees right through hazy lines of questioning and calls out prompts that "force self-examination." But she also plays along. At home, her clan occasionally engages in a little activity called Family Dinner Game, where they ask each other questions, like: If you could be any member of your family for 24 hours, who would it be and why? "I would want to be my daughter," Roberts says, after giving it some thought, "because she is fascinating and wonderful, and she's less transparent than my boys."

OK, I'll try a few of my own.

If you could be famous in a different way, what would you want to be known for? "I would be a great writer or painter. It's the creating something out of nothing that I find astounding. *The Year of Magical Thinking* [by Joan Didion], I read that not that long ago.... I would put it down and just lie there in bed. My husband was like, 'Are you OK?'"

What's something you've long dreamed of doing? "Knitting a pair of socks. I just haven't figured out how to turn the heel. Socks are hard."

What aspects of the way you were raised are you trying to pass on to your children? "My mom worked really hard outside of the home, and she worked really hard inside of the home. She was a phenomenal cook, made everything from scratch. Our house was always tidy; our clothes were always clean. I take a great joy in homemaking."

If you were 18, would you go into the business now? "No, I don't think I could. Maybe it's because I'm not 18—I don't have the same kind of energy—but it just looks exhausting."

Roberts has excellent manners and will answer almost any polite question, but it is best advised to first ask yourself: Is it worth it? Asking her thoughts on Matt Damon's ponytail, which had been all over the Internet shortly before we met? Not so much. "It's just stupefying to me that people feel compelled to put the time and energy into saying, 'And another thing I think about Matt Damon's hair...'" she says, after glimpsing her former costar's new do on my phone.

Asking her thoughts on Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign? A question that is definitely worth it. "It's a tricky little topic," Roberts says, being careful to show her support without officially declaring it. "For me, as a woman in this world with a family and a job...not that I think she would be 'a president for women,' but I think her point of view is critical in this time when we are 51 percent of the population, and somehow the paradigm shift isn't really happening. I would love to see more of what she has to offer in service to this country."

In Hollywood, Roberts has shattered a ceiling or two herself. She was the first actress to earn \$20 million for a single film, *Erin Brockovich*, in 2000, at a time when only male movie stars commanded that kind of paycheck. And

while she's not exactly a card-carrying member of any boys' club, she's got history with some of the industry's most famous leading men. Just recently, she took her family to visit the Clooneys on Lake Como. What's George like as a friend? "Well, I'm sort of like the tagalong kid sister," she says. "I'm always like, 'Wait, I'm here, too,' you know."

"We were all pals," she says of her *Ocean's Eleven* (and *Twelve*) costars, including Clooney, Damon, and Brad Pitt. "At George's house, I remember walking down this path pregnant with Phinn and Hazel and turning the corner, and all the boys were sitting at the table having lunch. They were like, 'Oh, come sit down.' I wasn't allowed to walk the stairs. It was such a sweet shift in our relationships because originally, it was all pranks and teasing each other. And here I am pregnant, so it's like pulling out my chair and just making sure I have enough water and, 'Are you feeling OK? You look a little peaked.' 'I'm fine.'"

Granted, any woman pregnant with twins should get special treatment, but there's something about Roberts that

inspires basic human decency; she possesses a moral correctness that demands good manners in return. She arrives early to our interview and checks her phone only once. When she sees it's not her children calling, she announces that whoever it is "shall be ignored." She's allergic to displays of vanity. "When I'm watching the Oscars or something on TV at home, I see people twirling, posing, and I just think, 'God, I wish I could do that!'" Roberts says. "[Photographers] go, 'Turn around! Turn around!' It's like, I'm not going to turn around. I mean, I feel like a complete jack-ass. And yet, deep down inside, I wish I could, and I just can't."

Maybe that's why she always looks like she's having more fun than anyone else in the room, or on the red carpet, for that matter: When she smiles, it's genuine, and it has nothing to do with who's watching.

"Every day is really perfect," she says, taking in our ocean view, "if you look at it from the right tilt of your head." ♦

Beauty Call

Pepper her with beauty questions and Roberts's answers show that she's shrewd, sweet, and self-sufficient.

What's your favorite product right now?

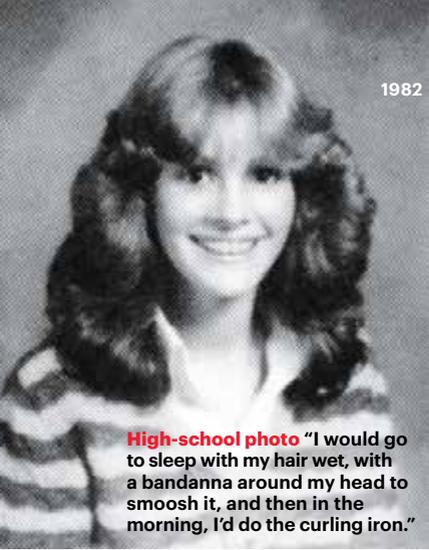
"Serge [Normant] has this volumizing spray. Even if I do nothing with my hair after I wash it, I just put tons of volumizing spray in it. I love Lancôme Absolu L'Extrait. It makes my skin feel so hydrated and has a lovely fresh smell. And everyone loves mascara, but Lancôme Grandiose Mascara is strangely amazing." (Roberts is a Lancôme spokeswoman.)

Who taught you the most about beauty? "My husband. I don't know that you can put it into words, but that's what your person does for you, in ways clear and unclear."

What's one part of your beauty routine that you would never let your husband witness?

"I don't even like him to come in the bathroom when I'm doing my makeup. You don't want them to know exactly what it is that you've done—just that you look nice. Right?"

Do you ever do your own manicure? "I can cut my nails, my kids' nails, and the guinea pig's nails."



1982

High-school photo "I would go to sleep with my hair wet, with a bandanna around my head to smooch it, and then in the morning, I'd do the curling iron."

With Adam Storke in *Mystic Pizza* "Oh, sweet. We all just celebrated a big anniversary, and that was superfun. It was so funny to get back together. Everybody is happy and doing so great. This movie was really nerve-racking for me—just to be the putting-everything-out-there kind of girl was not my speed. You know, to be so brash. It was hard on the nerves."



1988



1989

With Shirley MacLaine, Daryl Hannah, Sally Field, and Dolly Parton at the premiere of *Steel Magnolias in New York City* "Well, how can you look at anybody in this picture but Dolly Parton? Everybody looks so fabulous. A lot of pearls, a lot of teeth. My thought bubble is 'Don't pass out.'"



1990

With Richard Gere in *Pretty Woman* "Look how young we both look. It's funny, I thought Richard's hair was so white then, and now it's, like, *totally* white. I remember fighting to wear this white shirt because I didn't want to be in just that dress for half the movie."

In *Sleeping With the Enemy* "That movie was so scary. I'm not good at scary movies. I'm very vocal. To the point that I've been [at] a scary movie with Danny [Moder, her husband], who has turned to me and said, 'OK, you have got to stop screaming.'"

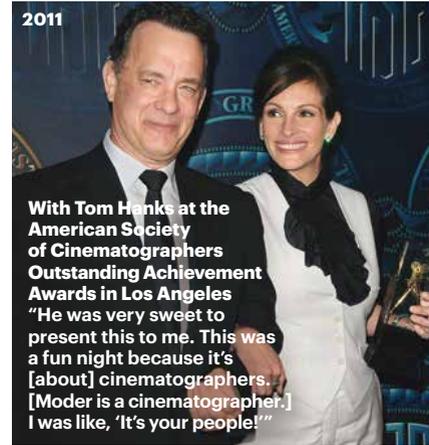


1991



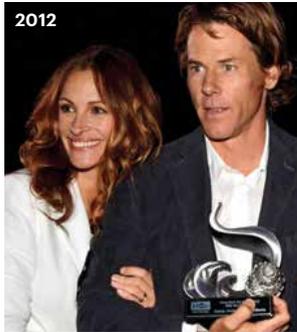
2010

With Emma Roberts at the premiere of *Valentine's Day in Los Angeles* "She's so lovely. We spend a lot of time together. We spend a lot of time together. Emma is a remarkable girl. Sometimes I sort of secretly worry about her, and then I see her and go, 'What am I worried about?' She's a solid human being."



2011

With Tom Hanks at the American Society of Cinematographers Outstanding Achievement Awards in Los Angeles "He was very sweet to present this to me. This was a fun night because it's [about] cinematographers. [Moder is a cinematographer.] I was like, 'It's your people!'"



2012

With Moder at a Heal the Bay event in Santa Monica "Well, don't get me started. Yeah, it's my person. We just had our thirteenth anniversary. So awesome."



2012

With MacLaine at the AFI Life Achievement Award ceremony in Culver City, California "She's always shown me so much love. When we were making *Steel Magnolias*, we spent a lot of really sweet, quiet time together talking. There were times I felt a lot of pressure on that movie, and she was a consistent source of support and maternal grace."

At the premiere of *August: Osage County* in Toronto "I don't think any of us had seen the movie before, and there were some things that people [in the audience] found funny that we were like, 'Canadians have a different sense of humor.'"



2013



2013

With George Clooney at a BAFTA Los Angeles awards show in Beverly Hills "That is the long and the short of it right there. I can't add anything to what this picture is already telling you. He's an awesome human being. I wonder what we're going on about."



2013

With Meryl Streep at the premiere of *August: Osage County* in Los Angeles "Well, she's a goddess, as a person. I mean, as an actress, everybody knows, but...I think we're very like-spirited in our approach to family and work. I truly love her."



2014

At the Golden Globes in Beverly Hills "Are you seeing the theme here of my black and white? I loved my outfit. With the white shirt, I thought it looked fabulous. But it was funny how it turned into 'Oh, how cute. She's wearing her husband's shirt.' I'm like, 'What?'"



2015

With Jennifer Aniston at the Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles "She's so hot. I'm glad I don't have any scenes with her in *Mother's Day* [their upcoming movie]. She's too gorgeous. Look at us holding hands like little lovebirds. She's a lovely girl."