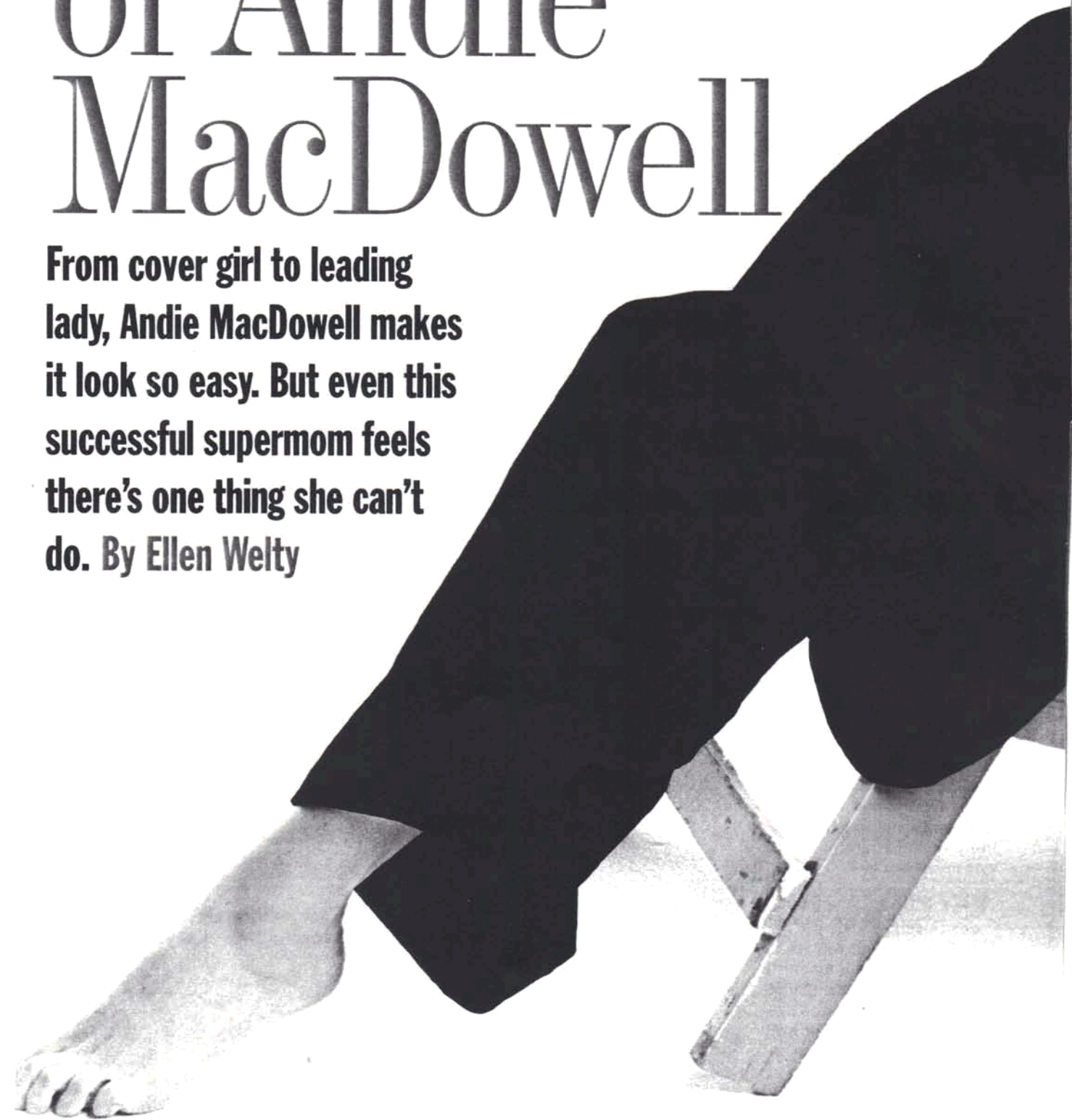


The Two Lives of Andie MacDowell

From cover girl to leading lady, Andie MacDowell makes it look so easy. But even this successful supermom feels there's one thing she can't do. By Ellen Welty





THE SILK PANTS ARE SHOCKING PINK. TIGHT, the way Capri pants are supposed to be. The Manolo Blahnik sandals are black, as is the sleeveless top. Her lips and nails—yes, even the toes—are painted red. Her voluminous dark hair, gelled and straightened, cascades onto her shoulders the way Veronica Lake's did in those 1940s films. She is stretched out on a mint green chaise lounge by her bungalow's pool at the very posh (and very pink) Beverly Hills Hotel. Milling about the bungalow are the stylists and publicists and photographer who have been with her all day on a shoot for an Italian fashion magazine's homage to Hollywood. The woman is most obviously a movie star.

"Oh, I don't want to be called a movie star," Andie MacDowell groans. Nice line. But who's going to buy it? Sensing doubt, she shakes back the Veronica Lake waves and adds with a sigh, "I guess I need to accept the fact that I am one. I don't want to be put on a pedestal. I don't want the responsibility of being something more than anybody else."

Today, after a decade-long struggle to gain credibility as an actress, Andie MacDowell is up on that pedestal. At 37, she holds the title of number one female box office draw worldwide—ahead of Demi Moore and Julia Roberts—thanks largely to last year's *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. And this month she takes to the screen in her most challenging, moving, and rewarding role to date, that of a gravely ill mother, in *Unstrung Heroes*, a bittersweet drama directed by Diane Keaton that was a hit at the Cannes Film Festival last spring.

Keaton struggled to cast someone who could bring the warmth and loveliness the mother in the movie needed to project. "I looked at a lot of actresses," says Keaton. "But when I looked at Andie's work, I thought, She's it. She made me cry at the end of *Green Card*. She really holds her own. There are a lot of really beautiful actresses who exude none of what she has. You feel safe with Andie—that's probably why she makes such a lovely mother."

A Movie Star Is Born

The climb to that mint green chaise lounge at the top hasn't been an easy one. Her first starring role, as Lady Jane Porter in 1984's *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, turned out to be an actress's worst nightmare. Without telling his star, the director dubbed Glenn Close's voice over Andie's southern-accented one. "I was in a very weak position at that point," says Andie. "Embarrassed beyond

Model life: Andie MacDowell enjoys snuggling with two of the most important men in her life. **Right:** Andie and husband Paul Qualley attend a black-tie fashion industry gala in 1993. **Below:** She and newborn son Justin are picture-perfect, in 1986.



belief, and hurt, I was good for laughs for a lot of people, I'm sure. But the thing that's so great is that it didn't stop me."

A lot of perseverance, a little luck, but somehow Andie MacDowell has realized all her dreams by her mid-thirties. Growing up in tiny Gaffney, South Carolina, Andie had two big dreams: to become an actress and to own a farm. In her twenties she added a third: to get married and begin a family by age 27. Today she's got the career (in spite of *Greystoke*) and the farm—a

THE FIVE-POUND ADVANTAGE

To say that women today are hard on themselves about their weight is understating it. Most of us get downright demented about our figures: If only I could lose those last 5/10/15 pounds, I'd be a knockout, I'd like myself for once...We could all take a lesson from Andie MacDowell, who is an extremely sane—and extremely unusual—woman when it comes to the topic of weight.

• "My first few years modeling, I starved myself, I played the whole game. Finally, I decided I'd had enough. I was going to eat. I got to the point where I could eat and exercise and weigh 132 pounds at five feet eight and look good."

• "Once I was at dinner with a producer and his girlfriend. I had had a salad. When the waiter asked what I wanted for dessert, the girlfriend answered for me: 'She won't have any.' Thank goodness I didn't want any."

• "After my daughter was born last year, people kept sending me messages about different kinds of work that would require me to be thin. I told them to leave me alone. I wanted to relax for just one minute and enjoy myself and my baby. After four months, I went on a diet. Then I lost my ability to nurse full-time, because my milk supply diminished, which made me angry. I didn't go to the Golden Globe Awards last January—I was afraid the press would go, 'Oh, look how fat she is.'"

• "When I was round, after having each of my babies, I thought I looked really beautiful and felt very sexy. *Extremely sexy.* My husband was always attracted to me, and always said loving things to me. I wished that right after I had my babies, when I was 20 pounds heavier, I could have kept that weight on longer. I had dimply legs—it's not the type of beauty Americans are used to, but there was a softness to me you see in old paintings. I feel sexy in bed making love with my husband when I look that way."

3,000-acre working ranch in Montana, which she shares with husband Paul Qualley ("the only man I ever loved") and their three children, the first of whom, Justin, 9, was born when Andie was exactly 27. He was followed by Rainey, 6, and Sarah Margaret, 11 months.

Can this woman honestly feel uncomfortable on a pedestal? Yes—because along the way to achieving her dreams, Andie discovered something a lot of women learn: You can get everything that you work so hard for, and then realize it does not fit together into the neat little package you thought it would. And you worry that you are not only shortchanging those close to you but that you're cheating yourself out of something you couldn't have predicted you would want so badly.

A Movie Star Is Torn

"I'm envious of my sister," says Andie, stretched out poolside. "She's a full-time mother." She turns to her visitor. "You got to breast-feed full-time for a year? What luxury!" Her voice wavers with emotion as she talks about "the hard pull" between motherhood and movie stardom. "I want to be a great mother, but sometimes I feel incompetent at it because I don't do it all the time. I never feel like I do it as well as I could if I had all the time in the world."

It's 7 P.M. Little Sarah Margaret is indoors eating dinner with her nanny, but Andie can't go to her right now, though she's dying to. If she caught sight of her mother, Sarah Margaret would demand her full attention, and there are others here who need it first. So Andie MacDowell, who Diane Keaton says plays a mother like no one else, has to sit with a wall between her and her daughter. And she talks with honest yearning about wanting to

yelling at them. "But as I said to them the next morning," she relates, "'That *did* get you boys into bed, didn't it?'" She lights up when she talks about her kids, especially how they responded to being asked if they wanted to watch their mother on TV on Oscar night. "Yeah, okay," said Justin, "as long as she doesn't do something *stupid*." As she says all this, you suddenly see beyond the movie-star looks. You see the little tummy she still has from giving birth to Sarah Margaret. You see the first gray hair and the hint of creases

spend all her time with her children.

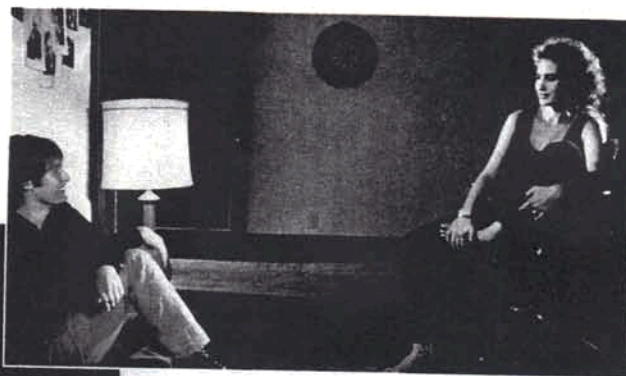
She goes on to tell a story about "losing it" with Justin and two friends when they wouldn't go to bed one night. Now she's ashamed of

across her forehead. For a moment, you can wipe out of your mind all the razzle-dazzle of being famous, and imagine what it would be like to leave your children for weeks and see them only on weekends. It would be tough.

So why doesn't she simply retire and be the full-time mother her heart is urging her to be? The answer isn't just a business decision: that you have to be active to be successful, that decent parts for aging actresses are scarce. You get a feeling for the answer when you ask Andie where she gets her glow, that radiance and openness people so often comment on. It's a luminous quality only a handful of actresses have on-screen.

"I wasn't really aware that I *glowed*," Andie answers with a slightly incredulous laugh. "Maybe it's just that I like being up there so much." The woman loves her work, you see. The mother, however

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Making a scene, clockwise from top: Andie, with James Spader, in *sex, lies, and videotape*; with Nathan Watt in *Unstrung Heroes*; with *Heroes* director Diane Keaton last June at Cannes; with Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.





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MacDowell

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guilty she feels about her time away from her kids, just cannot turn her back on the thing she needs to do for herself.

A Movie Star Is Driven

Andie was several months pregnant when she made *Unstrung Heroes*. ("Anytime I held Andie, her baby would kick me," recalls costar John Turturro.) For most of us, the mind reels at the idea of being on a 20-foot-high movie screen at any time, let alone when bloated in that first trimester. And the mind completely boggles at the notion of playing a gravely ill mother when pregnant, since we spend the entire hormonally charged nine months weeping at every story about mothers and children—even happy ones. Yet for Andie, it wasn't a problem.

"There is a side of me that is enormously powerful," she says. "Everyone who knows her offers the opinion that besides being 'lovely' and 'warm,' Andie MacDowell is a strong person. Mike Newell, who directed Andie in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, can

attest to this. When he hired her, he was "a bit perturbed" when his star announced she would not do nudity because of her children. "I told him, 'I promise I will be sexy.' And it was pretty sensual and sexy. What difference did it make if you saw a nipple?"

This was not an isolated case of Andie flexing her assertiveness muscle. During her last few years of modeling, people told her she was overweight. But she had decided that she would no longer take diet pills and starve herself. "So I said, 'Tell them they don't have to use me.'" And she never lacked for work.

For many fans, Andie's appeal is her likability, her "availability," as she puts it, which comes through especially well in romantic comedies like *Green Card* and *Groundhog Day*. But because there is this other, very determined side to her, she resents being seen as only likable and—this next word really kills her—sweet. "Look at what I've done and what I've achieved," she says. "I cannot be just sweet.

"I have a lot of strength that I haven't had an opportunity to show," she says, adding that one day she'd love to play "somebody who's felt pain, who's had to use their intuition and raw guts to get through life. It would be

more interesting if it were an uneducated person." (Andie herself lasted about 15 minutes in college.) She's struggling to find this role. She'll find it. As her oldest sister, Babs, says, "When she was little, we all used to say to her, 'You're always taking in all these orphaned animals, you're just going to grow up to be in the circus.' I guess she showed us." She pauses. "Actually," she adds, "once Andie started in on this career, I had no doubts."

A Movie Star Is Adored

Rosalie Anderson MacDowell and her three older sisters grew up with their divorced mother in their small South Carolina town. The mother Andie plays in *Unstrung Heroes* is strong, grounded, dignified, sexy, loving. All things Andie happens to be, and some of which, she says, she learned from her mother, who died in 1981 at 53, when Andie was 23. Throughout her life, the woman struggled with alcoholism, a fact Andie regrets ever having told interviewers. "People have painted this picture of 'poor little girl, alcoholic mother,' which is never how I meant it," she says hotly. "She had an illness, yes. But she was the one who gave me any confidence that I have, any ability to persevere. If I didn't