

hot air

virgin atlantic's high flying magazine **april/may 1991**

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glamour queen
speaks out
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Pacific: the
ultimate
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Cher issues

CHER does not look happy. Sitting on a podium at a press conference to talk about her latest movie, *Mermaids*, in Aspen, Colorado, she slumps low in her chair. Her face is artfully made up. Cher is staggeringly attractive, except when she scowls. Which is often.

'You people lie,' she says in her characteristically husky voice, shaking her long black hair and aiming a disdainful glance in our direction. 'All these questions about do I have all my ribs, or who's my latest toyboy — I mean, it's sound-bite journalism. My job is to entertain. I don't think my job is to talk about entertaining. But unfortunately, somehow it got to be our job to do this other stuff and be written about. And Orion [the studio] would be on me big-time if I wasn't here doing all this. It's not enough to make a movie — you've got to go out and sell it. You have to be visible. Being visible for me is just hanging a big target on my ass and letting anybody who feels that they want to say whatever they want, to just go ahead and do it.'

Whew. It is a bit peculiar, though, that Cher, who chose *Mermaids* as her first post-Oscar film, who fought at her expense for the right to have the final film resemble her original conception of it, and who went through three directors in the process, would be pulling such a sob-sister routine about spending two days of her life promoting it. Perhaps she's just tired; she suffers from the Epstein-Barr virus, which causes debilitating exhaustion. Perhaps she's just having a bad day. Or perhaps she's just a perfectionist who bristles at the thought of all those journalists out there, writing all those horrible stories about her alleged plastic surgery and toy boys and there's nothing she can do about any of it except sit up on a podium and scowl.

Before we succumb to Cher's righteous indignation — and she is without question justified when talking about some of the more hurtful stories that have appeared in the tabloids (one entitled 'Cher leaves Sonny for Another Woman' sported a picture of Cher kissing a woman who, as

it turned out, was her sister) — let us remember that this 44-year-old has not exactly been press-shy in her 25-year career. In fact, many of her escapades and more outrageous statements have seemed dramatically orchestrated to provide her with the kind of maximum exposure that her outfits have never done. Let us not forget that any lady who makes a rock video atop a battleship while wearing basically nothing on her aforementioned ass can expect a little media attention. Or one who calls press conferences to talk about the latest incident with her young lover. Or one who wears a

bejewelled loincloth and not much else save an absurdly feathered headdress to present an Oscar. Or one who hires a plastic surgeon to announce that, indeed, she has had a nose job, a skin peel, and a breast lift — but has *not* had her cheeks, chin, and face done, two lower ribs removed, her navel diminished, and her bottom and thighs sculpted as media reports have claimed.

The point is, Cher has fashioned an amazing career out of a determined decision to flaunt her assets. And more power to her for doing so in her own inimitably flamboyant way. She has succeeded far beyond expectation, making the herculean transformation from the bubble-headed half of the '60s pop duo Sonny & Cher, to a

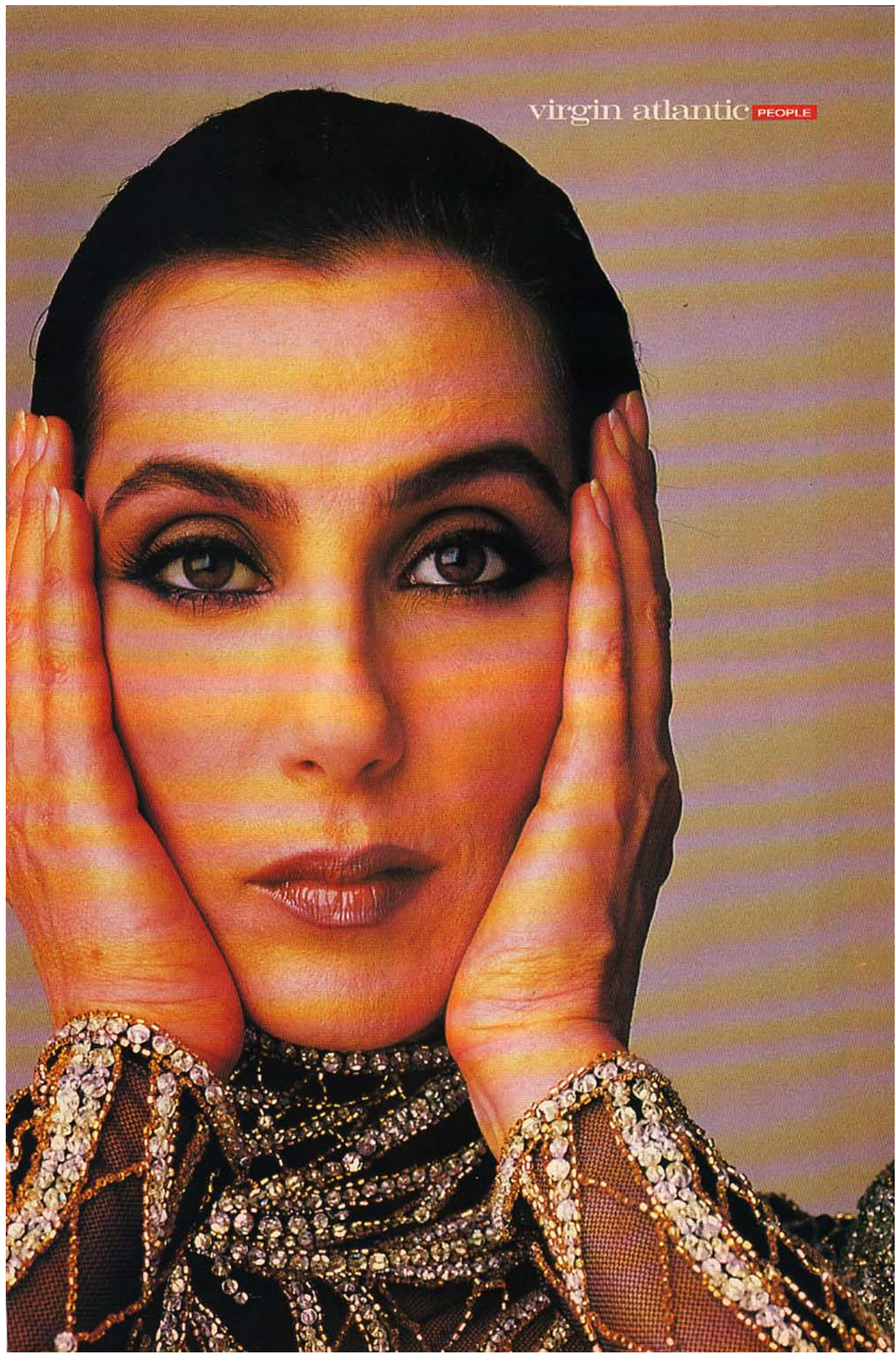
\$350,000-a-week Las Vegas headliner with a whole lotta style and no substance, to a world-famous and much-respected actress with an Oscar for her performance in *Moonstruck*.

Yet such critical and financial success always comes with a high price tag, so if Cher flaunts what she's got, then she's got to be prepared to take what she's flaunted. Ironically, the press has more often than not been on her side to champion her acting abilities. She made her film debut at 36 when fabled director Robert Altman took a chance on Cher's unknown acting talent and cast her in the 1982 movie of *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*, based on the Broadway production in which she made her nerve-racking debut. Her next role in *Silkwood*▷

**Renowned
for flaunting
her assets,
America's
glamour
queen is, she
protests, a
very private
person.
KAREN
MOLINE
listens
sceptically.
Photography
by Annie
Leibovitz**

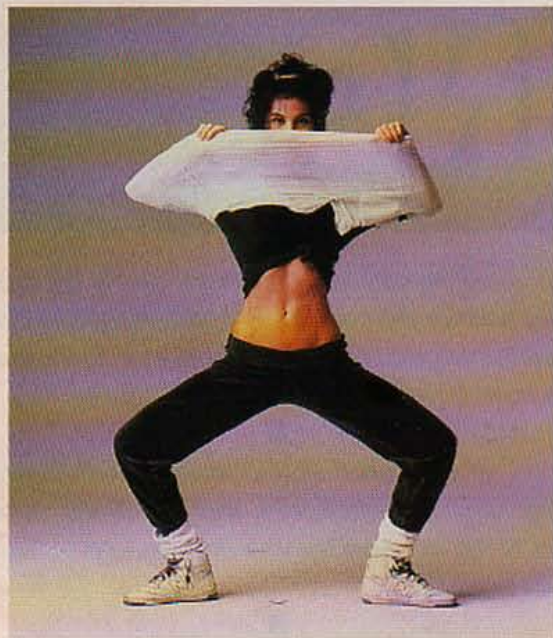


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as Meryl Streep's best, and very gay, friend earned her a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar nomination. And her performance as the biker mom in 1985's *Mask* garnered a Best Actress Award at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival. Two years later she appeared back-to-back in *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Suspect*, and the fairy tale of *Moonstruck*. Her latest album, *Heart of Stone*, sold over four million copies worldwide; her 1990 concert tour spanned eight months and the globe; she has just co-authored a workout/diet book called 'Forever Fit'; and she's working on developing a line of skin care products as well as a new album. And in a frenzy of real estate transactions, she sold her Manhattan apartment for \$1.6 million and her Hollywood Hills home to Eddie Murphy for \$6.5 million, exchanging them for a \$2.5 million Aspen hideaway and a Malibu beach house, a steal at only \$4 million.

'I am looking for some kind of recognition,' Cher admits, 'but it's not really to be recognised on



the cover of more magazines than anybody else.' She scowls again. 'Some people are more fun to talk about than others, I guess. I make a really good target because some of the things I do are a little outrageous. You can pin anything on me, and people will say, "Yeah, it sounds like she'd do that."'

Cherilyn Sarkisian (her real dad's name, who abandoned his family when Cher was a few months old) La Piere (the name of her mom's fifth husband out of eight — although she married and divorced Cher's dad three times) ran into Salvatore Bono in a Los Angeles coffee shop, and they married in 1964. A year later, 'I Got You Babe' sold three million copies. Their daughter Chastity was born in 1969, and two years later they made their

television debut in 'The Sonny & Cher Comedy Hour.' A bitter divorce came in 1975. Cher then married the drug-addicted rock musician Gregg Allman, filed for divorce nine days later, got back together, filed for divorce again, got back together, had a son (Elijah Blue), then split for good. She has never remarried, but has had numerous liaisons with men like record honcho David Geffen, film producer Josh Donen, Kiss singer Gene Simmons, musician Les Dudek, actor Val Kilmer, bagel maker Rob Camilletti, and Bon Jovi guitarist Richie Sambora.

Far more important to her are her kids. 'Chastity is like some sort of freak of nature,' Cher says of her eldest, who has just signed a recording deal with Geffen. 'She is the nicest person who ever lived. We've only had about 45 minutes of dissent once when she refused to come out of her room. I had gotten her acting lessons for her birthday, and she said, "How could you do that?" Right now, she's finding out who she is. She was always so good, and we always just got along. She's much more understanding than I am.'

Elijah Blue, by all accounts, is a bit more temperamental, but he's only 14, and spends most of the year at boarding school.

'In my movies I think I've been lucky enough to play mothers who are not exactly bake-the-cookies kind, but who are having a hard time with their own lives, yet really love their children,' Cher says. 'I know from being a single mother myself that you want to do the best, and you try to do it, but sometimes you're not equipped. In *Mermaids* I say, "You guys didn't come with instructions" — that's my line. It's one of the many things you need to learn how to do, but it's not something you learn in school. It shows how people can love each other, yet miscommunicate and not understand how to show it.'

Cher, on the contrary, has no problems with miscommunication. She speaks her mind, all right.

'Being outspoken might be a hindrance in my career, but it's definitely not a hindrance

in my personal life,' she says. 'I have to be honest to myself, even if it causes problems in my career. If I'm not, I won't respect myself as a person.'

Besides, who'd want her to change? How could we live with a Cher who toned down her fabulous flamboyance, fantastically fit figure, and flagrant facetiousness? Who else would act out our fantasies and win Oscars for it, to boot?

'My job is really trying to do the best work I can,' she says finally. 'It never occurred to me that the better my work got, the worse I'd be written about. I don't expect the truth from journalism,' she says, giving us one last defiant glare. 'The truth about me is in my work. I'm really a very private person in the strangest sort of way.'

Okay, Cher... whatever you say.

The intimate details of Cher's famously athletic figure have been commented on more often than she cares to remember, and



the pressure to be 'visible' rankles badly: 'I'm really a very private person...'