

T H E T A L K O F L O S A N G E L E S

# BUZZ

40 New  
Oscars

They Should  
Give (But  
Never Will)

Who Throws  
Hollywood's  
Hottest  
Oscar Party?

How L.A.'s Kid  
Criminals Beat  
the System

The Best  
Home-Decor  
Shopping  
in L.A.

On Safari in  
the Land of the  
Supermodels

SPRING  
FASHION  
ISSUE!

## Mama Michelle

ON KIDS, CAREERS, AND  
THE TWISTED AMERICAN FAMILY

BY HILLARY JOHNSON

#BXNCGZM\*\*\*\*\* 3-DIGIT 900  
JHN0309H098 08300004  
HILLARY JOHNSON COMPLIMENTARY  
FOR \$5.00  
996  
95 CAN  
03 >  
56  
1



A

re you having more kids?" she asks.

"No," I say, "I think I'm done."

Michelle Pfeiffer nods. "I think I'm done too. I'm 80 to 90 percent sure that I'm done." She's half an hour late for breakfast, as all women with small children always are. I would have been late too were I not scheduled to interview Michelle Pfeiffer. She apologizes unnecessarily, saying that she and her husband, TV writer-producer David Kelley (creator of *Chicago Hope* and *Picket Fences*), and their two kids are playing host to Pfeiffer's sister and family, which includes a seven-week-old infant. "David looked at me this morning and whispered, 'Man, I don't want another of those right now.'" As she explains it, "Because all you can think about is how tired my sister is when you look at her face."

It can be jarring to encounter movie stars in the flesh; there's always some weirdness about their physical person that translates to the screen as star power, even if it's just an oversize head or an unseemly abundance

like the character she plays in the upcoming *Up Close and Personal*, which is based on the tragic life of TV newscaster Jessica Savitch. "It's not the Jessica Savitch story!" Pfeiffer says in total exasperation. "I don't die. It's a romance. You can do me a big favor, too, and say that." Happy to do so: let the record show, *Up Close and Personal* is not the Jessica Savitch story, and Michelle Pfeiffer is not neurotic.

Still, I'm thinking she must necessarily go into any interview feeling prescrewed, having had her personal life pruriently probed by the likes of *People* magazine, which in 1992 gleefully interviewed the 17-year-old with whom her then-boyfriend, Fisher Stevens, may or may not have been conducting a kissing tryst. The indelicacy of such coverage is certainly enough to put you off your satellite feed for good. Indeed, Pfeiffer's been described as Garboesque in her pursuit of privacy, though she prefers to describe herself as a "prude."

When she married Kelley in 1993, the two sprang a surprise wedding on friends who thought they were attending the christening of the

# m a m a MICHELLE

*Now that she's arrived, has Michelle Pfeiffer gotten bored with stardom?*

*By Hillary Johnson*

of energy. Michelle Pfeiffer doesn't jar. She comes across as an exquisitely proportioned human being, inside and out. It creeps me out, usually, when movie stars go off on the bliss of parenthood. So I like the fact that Pfeiffer starts out sounding so frazzled. "But they're very seductive," she sighs, "the little babies."

For our breakfast at the Four Seasons, Pfeiffer is dressed down, as expected, in jeans, a brown corduroy jacket, and black T-shirt. Many people had a hard time buying the notion of her as an inner-city high-school teacher in last summer's *Dangerous Minds*. To me, she looks like she actually could be a high-school teacher, and not just because she's wearing corduroy. She carries herself with easy conviction; you wouldn't want to mess with her, but you'd definitely trust her in a pinch.

Frankly, I'm expecting Pfeiffer to be more neurotic than she is, more

couple's newly adopted daughter, Claudia Rose. Such a stunt seems more romantic than fearful, and there were, reportedly, no other celebrities in attendance. The couple now have two children, Claudia Rose, three, and John, one and a half.

Which may be why Pfeiffer is obsessing about the pros and cons of Los Angeles and thoughts of greener playgrounds and better school districts—something everyone gets around to as soon as they've parked their car, but which is particularly urgent for this movie star right now. "I was just on the East Coast," she starts in, "and we think a lot about moving back there. The thing about L.A. is, you can carve out your own world, which is nice. For better and for worse, Los Angeles is a place where anything goes. I really do like that. Sometimes you feel that it lacks a moral fabric, in the sense of community, and yet what I really like

*"She carries herself with easy conviction;*



# material and tortured characters.”

about it is that it's very nonjudgmental. The East Coast has a lot more integrity, but it also has snobbery.”

Though she hasn't a trace of elitism, Pfeiffer could easily pass for someone from back east: she's the soul of composure; there are no “ums,” “likes,” or “you knows” to edit out of her speech, and not a trace of Hollywood hyperbole. Why, I can easily see her raking leaves in front of a nice house in Connecticut, mittened children cavorting around her.

But back to the relative merits of Los Angeles: she pauses, unfolds her napkin in her lap, and continues in a very *Age of Innocence* tone. “I think, initially, this place is a very enigmatic kind of no-man's-land. It's like a blank canvas; you have to come in and paint your own, and that's hard for a lot of people. But once you do, it's hard to give it up.” Ah, spoken like a true Angeleno, which is a quality that has little to do with surfboards or Coppertone or fame. She gives a little fleeting half-smile before dropping the punchline: “But I don't want to raise my kids here.”

“But you grew up here,” I say.

“I didn't grow up in L.A. I grew up in Orange County,” she corrects. “It's very different, Orange County. It's almost the Midwest—and I wouldn't want to raise my kids there either!” She laughs smartly.

The strange truth is that Pfeiffer grew up in Orange County, daughter of Donna and Dick, a heating contractor. She whiled away her teens as a surfer girl and grocery-store clerk, and got her first acting break—a bit part on an episode of *Fantasy Island*—after winning a beauty pageant. Sounds like a most excellent bimbo biography, but Pfeiffer is the least bimbonic blonde you could ever hope to meet. And make no mistake, she planned it that way.



After *Fantasy Island*, a dubious sitcom called *Delta House*, and one of the more colossally awful movie sequels, *Grease 2*, she fought hard to get herself cast opposite Al Pacino in *Scarface*, in 1983. She had to wait until 1988, though, before she could clock in a really terrific year—starring in *Married to the Mob*, *Tequila Sunrise*, and *Dangerous Liaisons*, which brought Pfeiffer her first Oscar nomination. Since then she's risen, with hardly a hitch, to a point where Hollywood perceives her as one of the only actresses who can open a movie *without a leading man*. Pfeiffer has the box-office success of last summer's *Dangerous Minds* to thank for that.

Now that she's more than arrived, Pfeiffer appears almost—God forbid—bored with stardom. She turned down *Evita* to stay home with her husband and kids. And instead of going for big, commercial roles, she's developing projects on her own, including a bio-pic of Georgia O'Keefe and Alfred Stieglitz, and *A Thousand Acres*, based on Jane Smiley's novel. As for those occasional big, commercial roles, there's her part as a non-Jessica Savitch-like newscaster in *Up Close and Personal* opposite Robert Redford. In her typically understated fashion, Pfeiffer gives me only one real anecdote about the shoot, and that has to do with the first time her children came to visit the set. “I was wearing five different wigs

for this movie,” she recalls, “and my son burst into tears the first time he saw me. You know that kids recognize people by their hairline.”



Even though *Up Close* is about to be released, Pfeiffer seems more interested in talking about other projects, ones further down the pipeline. “You're always looking for a good part, preferably in a movie that won't embarrass you,” she says dryly, without a roll of the eyes. “I think that O'Keefe reminds me of my grandmother, who was kind of a pioneer in her day. She got in her pickup truck fifty years ago and drove out to California from North Dakota with her sewing machine in the back. She was very much like O'Keefe going to Santa Fe.”

Her take is so genuine and personal that I'm ready to risk my one prepared Potentially Annoying Question. “This may drive you nuts,” I begin, “but a lot of people say that Catwoman in *Batman Returns* was your best role.”

“I worked my ass off,” she says, not missing a beat. “Here I thought, I'll just go do this comic-book movie. How hard can it be? But between the training and the whipping and the costuming and the character...” Her voice trails off in exhaustion. “Finally, everything was fitting and nothing was choking me and I could walk in the shoes, then it was over. I felt like I was just getting started, so I'd like to pick up where I left off.” *Batman* director Tim Burton and Pfeiffer are indeed kicking around the notion of a Catwoman movie.

“Tim and I had this kind of simpatico,” she continues. “Tim is a product of the Valley, he's a Valley boy. We're both from this sort of middle-class, whitebread background, lived in the tract homes in the sweet little middle-class neighborhoods, so we had this immediate connection with each other, feeling like we definitely didn't belong.”

“What's interesting,” I say, “is that people like him, and probably Terry Gilliam, too, because of their overt cartooniness, manage to slip in all this complex, real stuff.”

“Yes!” she says with animation. “And he does it in a very nonjudgmental way. Catwoman was a very interesting character, very fun and very difficult. Tim and I approached her as a schizophrenic, somebody who was desperately trying to keep things under wraps, who was always trying to be Debbie Reynolds. She's oppressed, suppressed, and depressed. She implodes, basically.”

“That's why I take people seriously when they say that Catwoman was your best role,” I say.

She gives me a bemused look that says, basically, she'll never admit it in a million years, of course. “Well, I was nominated that year for *Love Field*,” she says instead, “and I was really disappointed that it wasn't for *Batman*, even though I knew it was ridiculous. I mean, nobody gets nominated for *Batman*. It just doesn't happen!” She laughs heartily, and I realize that this is how she sees Hollywood.

When I ask why she's so drawn to such (Continued on page 119)



mate.  
\$35, at Neiman Marcus,  
\$1,500, at Maxfield, L.A.,  
Hills.  
at Diane Merrick, W.

\$380, at Maxfield, L.A.  
\$295 and \$275, all at  
Center, L.A.

\$285, at Neiman Marcus,  
Gown, \$4,820, and shoes,  
Beverly Hills. Earrings,  
Beverly Hills.

Gown, \$875, at Gregory  
4: Pantsuit, \$2,650, at  
neys New York, Beverly  
4 oz., at Giorgio Armani  
rtment stores. **Page 95:**

outiques, Santa Monica,  
Plaza, Costa Mesa. Shirt,  
outiques, L.A. and N.Y.

at Moschino Boutique,  
\$95, Nicole Miller boud  
N.Y. Pearls, \$1,600, at  
Hills. Sandals, \$215, at

L.A. and N.Y. **Page 97:**  
n Marcus, Beverly Hills.  
\$30-7880 for availability.

nolo Blahnik, N.Y., and  
**Page 98:** Jacket, \$325,  
suggers, \$230, all at Fred

a; Acacia, Beverly Hills;  
Hills; and Charles Galloway,  
Pants, \$1,015, and busti-

Goodman, N.Y. Sweater,  
0 for availability. Mules,  
L.A.

oned in William Stadium's  
**Ita-Cho**, 6775 Santa

d), L.A., (213) 871-0236;  
ca Blvd. (at Sepulveda),  
\$31; **Taiko**, 11677 San

nton), Brentwood, (310)  
**met**, 8385 Beverly Blvd.  
(653-0470; and **Katsu**,

between Los Feliz and  
(665-1891.

on restaurant was listed  
s F.Y.L. Fusion is located  
er, at 8687 Melrose Ave.,

z (ISSN 1053-3605) is published  
issues dated December/January  
835 West Olympic Blvd., Suite  
Telephone: (310) 473-2721. Buzz  
demarks of Buzz Inc. Contents  
All rights reserved. Reproduction  
without written permission is prohibi-  
at Los Angeles, CA 90052; and  
subscription rate: \$15 a year. In  
year, prepaid in U.S. currency  
ada and elsewhere: \$3.95). For  
Buzz, P. O. Box 56797, Boulder,  
76-7884. New subscriptions and  
ght weeks. Not responsible for  
scripts, photographs, or other  
rinting Co. Pre-press by Tri  
dress changes to Buzz, P. O. Box

United States

(Continued from page 77) schizophrenic material as *A Thousand Acres*, which is *King Lear* set on a midwestern farm as told from the point of view of the three sisters, Pfeiffer first says something about being one of three sisters herself. Then she says how universal the story is. Finally, owning up, she blurts out, "It's a very American story. You know, there's really nothing more perverted than the American family. It's like the best-kept secret, but it's very twisted. We still have this *Father Knows Best* notion that that's the norm, when in fact it's not, and it never has been."

Given Pfeiffer's dry, dyspeptic view of the all-American nuclear unit, her having a happy family must really be a subversive act. I like that her view of suburban domestic bliss is all about schizophrenic kittens and *King Lear*.

"I think for a long time I was more attracted to dark material and tortured characters," she says. Pfeiffer is only now shooting her first romantic comedy, *One Fine Day*, written by Ellen Simon (daughter of Neil). "You have to suspend reality a tiny bit when it's a romantic comedy. When I read scripts, I always looked for everything to be based in reality. And when it veered off, I'd lose interest. With comedy, you have to be willing to go there, and I'm more willing to go there now." Becoming a mom may be one reason why. "*One Fine Day* is based in a kind of reality, for me," she says. "It's about what it's like being a single parent who has a career, and how having kids is hysterical. They're funny in what they do and the predicaments they get you into."

For a moment we get back to trading our parental war stories, the way people with small children are wont to do. "My daughter used to think any woman in a black dress and black stockings was me," Pfeiffer recalls. "She would go up to strangers in the store, women who had black stockings on, and go, 'Oooh!' and start petting them. I had to teach her that it wasn't exactly appropriate to go up to strange women and rub their legs."

"But who wouldn't want Carwoman for Mom?" I ask.

Pfeiffer gives a wry, maternal frown. "I'm doing *The Muppets*," she offers. "But my daughter doesn't seem to like Muppets." What kid of Michelle Pfeiffer's would? Z



*Tonya Anderson*

*Crownpoint Institute of Technology*

*SPA 3.15*

*Goal: Pediatric Medicine*

*Immediate Goal: Scholarships*



*American Indian College Fund*

*Educating the mind and spirit*

*If you can help,*

*please call 1-800-776-FUND*

*AICF, 1111 Osage St.,*

*Building D, Ste. 205-AP,*

*Denver, CO 80204*

E L E

W L.A.'s Kid  
nals Beat  
he System

The Best  
me-Decor  
Shopping  
in L.A.

Safari in  
and of the  
rmodels

SPRING  
FASHION  
ISSUE!