

Master of the proverbial trashy novel, Jackie Collins has parlayed a penchant for the prurient into a career that has spanned some 25 years.

And with 180 million copies sold in more than 40 countries—and 32 languages—she has become one of the world's top-selling writers. What's her secret?

She has what it takes to soothe the savage libido within, and isn't afraid to talk about it.

Jackie, Oh!

BY JUDY DIEDUARDO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN ARIS

Does writing discipline come easy to you?

Yes and no. I sometimes fall prey to that syndrome of not getting to the desk in time. You know, procrastinating? I love to get up early and roll right over to my desk and start writing. The answering machine goes on, the hair goes up, and the music goes on (Aretha Franklin, Al Green, anything soul). I put on some sweats, lay back and write.

Literally?

Yes, I write everything longhand. I prefer using a yellow legal pad and Pilot felt-tipped pen over a computer. It's a lot of work. Sometimes I wish there was another method, but writing is writing. I love the finished product which, once completed, is bound in leather and placed on my book shelf.

How's your penmanship?

Pretty damn good.

Your recent book signing at Liberties was part of a six city tour promoting your latest book, *Hollywood Kids*—your first tour in a decade. Why now?

It was time for a break. I'm a workaholic. I sleep about five hours a night and when I'm on a roll I write for seven or eight hours in a day. Book tours are great fun but finding the time isn't easy. I have kept some irons in the fire, by doing signings in New York, L.A. and Chicago if I'm doing Oprah. But, I decided it was time for a real tour.

And some new material.

Oh, yes. I am always in the market for interesting people, places and things. I stayed at the Fountainbleau, but wished I had been booked into that wonderful racquet club (Boca Hotel) where I had tea. I raided the shop there and bought some great sweatshirts and tee-shirts and things.



...in your favorite color, black, of course.

And white! I wear black all winter and white all summer. Occasionally I throw in some red and leopard prints.

I heard that you were location-scouting in South Beach.

Is Hollywood heading for the tropics?

No, actually. About six years ago I wrote a short story for *Rolling Stone Magazine* called *The Rock Star and the Lifeguard* which was set in Miami. I was looking at possible locations because I would like to make it into a movie. South Beach was fabulous. Very hot.

Have you ever considered Palm Beach?

Yes, but I haven't yet used it as a backdrop. It's a very interesting area. And considering that I haven't had a vacation in seven years, it might be the perfect time for me to come to Palm Beach.

Do you have your eye on any local prospects for future characters?

Well, George Hamilton's mother would be interesting.

She looks like a wonderful character. I've got to talk to George about her, I've decided. To have a son like George she must be a fabulous character. Attractive, lively. Of course, Ivana, Donald and Marla is the classic story waiting to be written. And then of course we have the trumpet lady (Roxanne Pulitzer)—they would all make great characters.

Are you throwing your hat in the ring?

Maybe. Or I might write characters who are inspired by them. I would like to come for a few weeks and just hang out and absorb.

What is the Jackie Collins story?

At age 15 I was kicked out of school for smoking and being truant—and waving at the resident flasher. My parents gave me a choice: Juvenile Hall or Hollywood to live with my big sister Joan. I chose the latter. She was living at Chateau Marmont and having an affair with Warren Beatty and I thought we were all going to have a great time. Instead, I was sent to live in the attic and Joan

left for town to go on location. I was left to my own devices.

Was that around the time when you had your affair with Marlon Brando?

It wasn't an affair. It was more of a fling.

What's the difference?

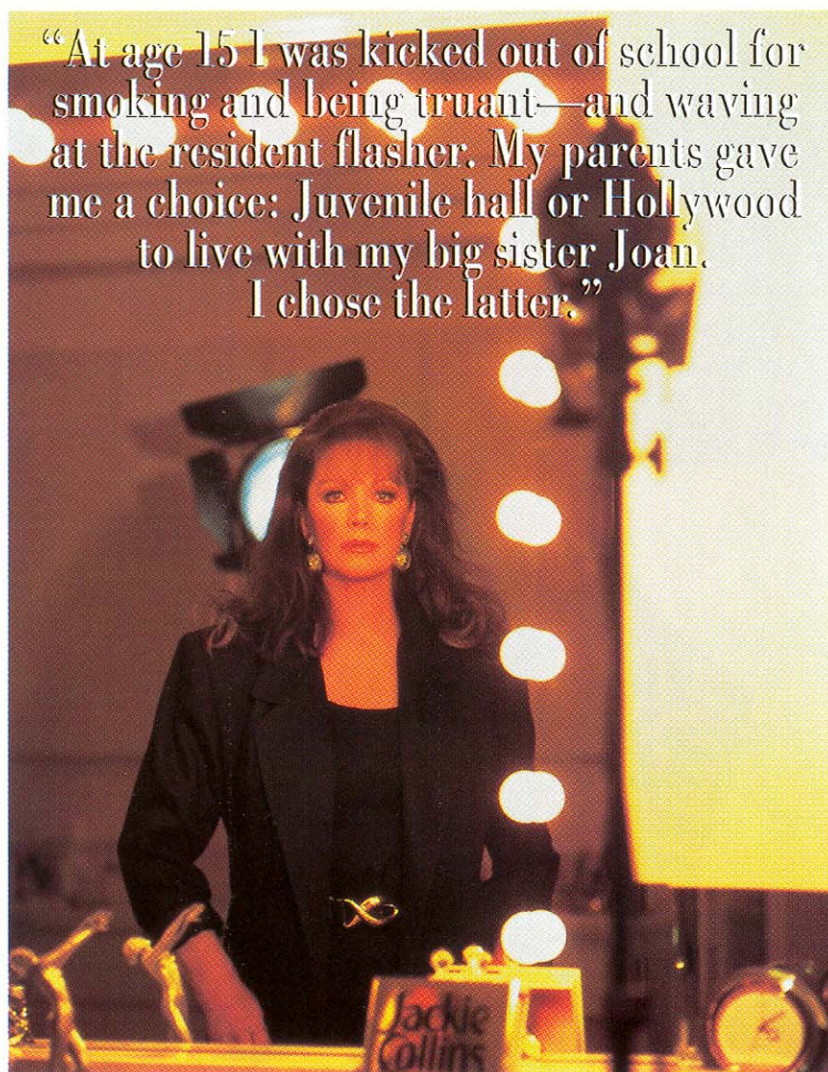
Well, it was brief—brief, but memorable. He was my favorite movie star, for God's sake. He was 30 and I was 15. It was incredible.

I'm surprised that you don't talk about your own sex life.

I never have. I just write about other people's—and, of course I can't help but include some of my own experience.

Let me guess who some of your favorite writers are: Harold Robbins, Henry Miller...

Yes, and Mickey Spillane, Norman Mailer, F. Scott Fitzgerald. I especially love Spillane's ability to get to the point. I get some technical criticism for being blunt but I get people



into the bookstores and reading. After that, they can go on to something more literary.

How does your sister, Joan, fit into your life?

She's delighted with my success. We're not joined at the hip, though. She lives in London and I live in L.A. So whenever either one of us is in town we get together. I even cast her in one of my movies, *The Stud*.

Wasn't it the same character that she later played on *Dynasty*?

Yes. I think they just lifted the character and changed the name. So I feel responsible for her resurgence.

So what's the rest of the Jackie C. story?

I moved back to England and at age 18 married my first husband Richard Austin. He was a gambler and his weakness was drugs. I had my first child, Tracy, and the marriage fell apart. We divorced and Austin later died of a drug overdose. My second husband, Oscar Lerman, was an American 25 years my senior, whom I had met in England. He died two years ago of prostate cancer. We met

in London after he had seen my picture in a magazine and came looking for me. Friends fixed us up and on the second date he asked me to marry him. We moved to L.A., which he thought was the best place to do research on my second book. We have two daughters, Tiffany and Rory.

You have had a lot to deal with.

Yes. They were very traumatic, very traumatic times. When I write about people who have drug problems and other adversities, I know what I'm talking about.

Wasn't it acting, not writing, that first caught your fancy?

I was a born storyteller. But, yes. I had a brief acting career that included roles on *The Saint* and *The Avengers*, but I followed my inspiration to write. I was particularly fed up with the double standard that I saw among married men, and that became the subject. They would come on to me and then claim that their wives were happily sitting home. What two-faced bullshit! I had to write about it.

And that motivated you to write your first book in 1969, *The World is Full of Married Men*, which became an instant best seller.

Yes. I think it was so successful because it exposed the double standard and it was shocking reading—even then.

Speaking of shocking reading, your stuff is pretty graphic. Do you ever get embarrassed when you are writing or worried about what your family or friends will think?

Absolutely not. I never think about what my maiden aunt or my children or anyone else would think. I just write what I want. It's very exciting creating something that will be around forever. Creating the characters is exciting too. I become them.

What about the men?

I understand men—the way they think. I like writing flawed men and then having the right women come along and save them.

Is this from your own experience?

Bits and pieces of all of my characters resemble me. Montana in *Hollywood Wives* had my sense of humor. Lucky Santangelo, from the Santangelo saga series, is my alter ego. And Jordanna in *Hollywood Kids* was probably me when I was her age.

Really? She's pretty wild.

And I was one wild child!

Did you have a white porsche like her?

No, but I had a white Thunderbird! I write honest

women. They're not perfect but they all have tremendous style—and none of them apologize for who they are. I don't think any of us should.

I understand that car collecting is a hobby of yours.

Not really. I just don't give them away. I get attached very easily. I have a '65 Mustang in mint condition, an old Caddy, a jeep—it's a small collection.

Do you have a sense of the success that you've achieved?

I get it most when I'm on tour—it's in the way people react to me. As a woman, though, you never get the credit that a man gets. I write, produce and cast all of my

mini-series. In the last three years I've written 10 hours of prime time mini-series with huge ratings. I am the only writer doing that. The *only* writer. And, my books have never been out of print in 20 years. If I were a man I think people would say, 'Oh what a fantastic achievement.' But since I'm a woman and not bad looking they say, 'Hmm. Look at her.' You know the attitude? When Barbra Streisand directs a movie and she wants control like Steven Spielberg, it's 'Barbra's a real bitch' and 'Spielberg's a genius.' Well, I

happen to think that Barbra's a genius. She's fantastic. But she does not get the credit *because* she's a woman. It makes people uptight when a women is very, very successful.

Is that why many of your female characters are all so...brazen?

I write strong women characters, which I hope raise the consciousness of my readers. Women walk away feeling very much empowered by my books. I get letters from women all the time, especially about the character Lucky Santangelo. Some want to be just like her, others use her for inspiration. I had one woman write that she had just left her boyfriend and normally she would be on the bathroom floor. Instead, she thought of Lucky and pulled herself together. She decided to get out there, find a new guy, a new job and have a great time.

What's in it for the men?

They like strong women—no matter what they say!

The big question that everyone's asking is who's who? Your characters bear uncanny resemblances to the real thing.

I like to write the real truth. When people read my books I think they know that what they're reading is real—not the front page of a tabloid. It is not my intention to write

“If I were a man people would say, ‘Oh what a fantastic achievement.’ But since I’m a woman and not bad looking they say, ‘Hmm. Look at her’...”

—Jackie Collins

continued on page 146



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about particular people. Rather, I try to capture the essence of that person.

In *Hollywood Kids*, Charlie Dollar—a middle aged big box office hit who is even bigger with the ladies—is a dead ringer for Jack Nicholson.

He was my inspiration.

How about Jordanna Levitt, the 24-year-old uninhibited daughter of a beautiful movie star mother and hard-living producer father?

I looked at a lot of girls in Hollywood with rich, successful fathers and I made her a combination of all of them: A young Angelica Houston or Jane Fonda, Bridget Fonda, Sophia Coppola. Again, she's a compilation.

Perhaps the most curious of the *Hollywood Kids* characters is Cheryl Landers—24-year-old daughter of a studio owner who parlays someone's misplaced little black book into a career as a Hollywood madam.

I wrote her long before the Heidi Fleiss scandal. I actually based her on another young woman in Hollywood who was into that whole hooker business.

Have you ever been approached by celebrities who felt they were being portrayed?

All the time. In fact, with *Hollywood Kids* one of the *real* kids was offended by the character of Grant Lennon, Jr.—the only son of a male superstar struggling to prove himself as a talent agent while falling prey to drugs and sordid pleasures—who he felt depicted him. I said to him, 'Well, you *do* take drugs and you *do* hang out and do nothing all day and you *do* 'test' out a lot of girls. So what's your problem?' He slinked away.

So, who was he?

I can't reveal names. But I can say that he is the son of an *extremely* successful movie star.

I imagine you must make people a little nervous when you're around

with your little notepad?

No. Just the opposite. Actually, people have asked to be a character in my books. People like to be immortalized, even if it's not flattering.

So, if these characters are not accurate, do you use your imagination for the rest?

Never. I don't have to. I live in L.A. It's such a weird and wonderful place and there's so much happening that I just follow what's going on and tone it down.

Tone it down?

A lot. Otherwise it wouldn't be believable. The truth is too outrageous.

What about your own kids. How have they escaped the evils of Hollywood, or have they?

They have all managed to keep their lives private. They are not Hollywood kids—children on the fast track, children who use their parents' name, go to all the celeb parties, get caught up in one scene or another. No. My kids are all grown women in their 20s now and have their own lives.

Like so many of your characters, you have found love once again.

Who is he?

An L.A. businessman and longtime friend who stays out of the lime-light. I respect him for that. We've been friends for a long time and now we're more than friends.

Now it's time for the health, beauty and fitness question. How do you stay in shape and looking great?

I never gain weight (yes, I'm one of those) and I can't be bothered with pampering treatments. I play ping pong and occasionally I lift weights because it's fun.

Any unrequited fantasies?

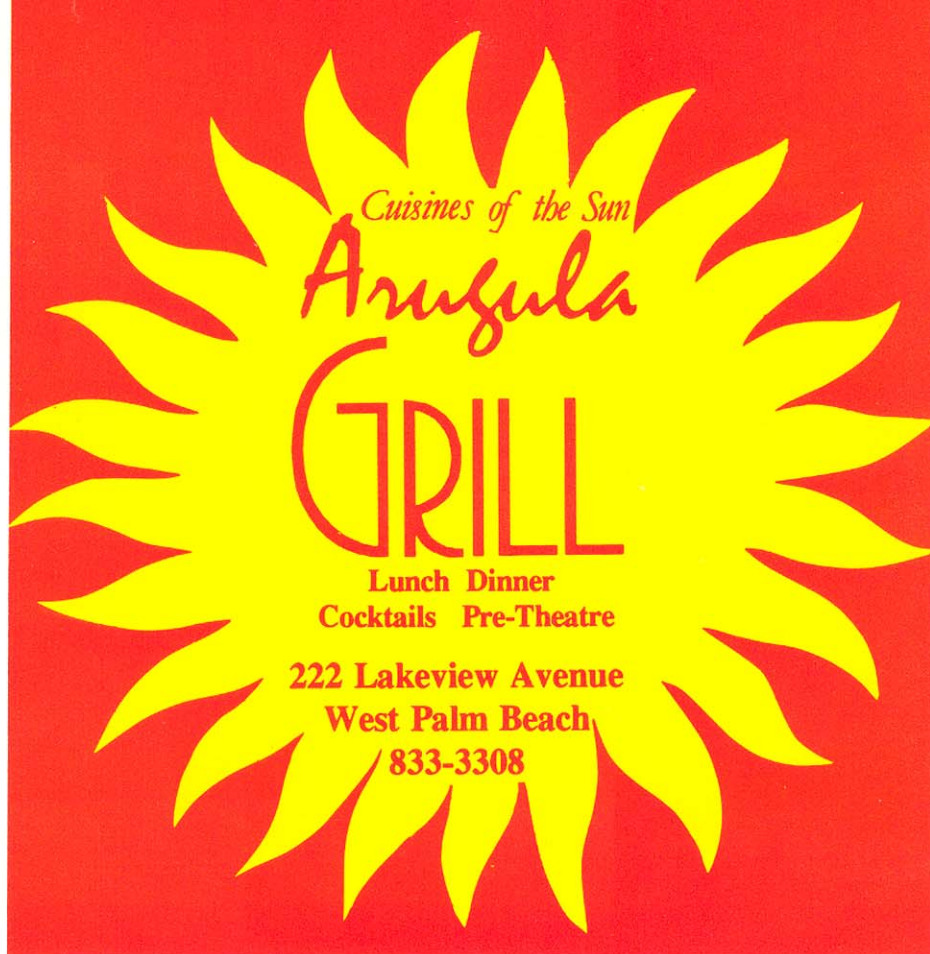
No. I think I've lived them all.

Yours and everyone else's!

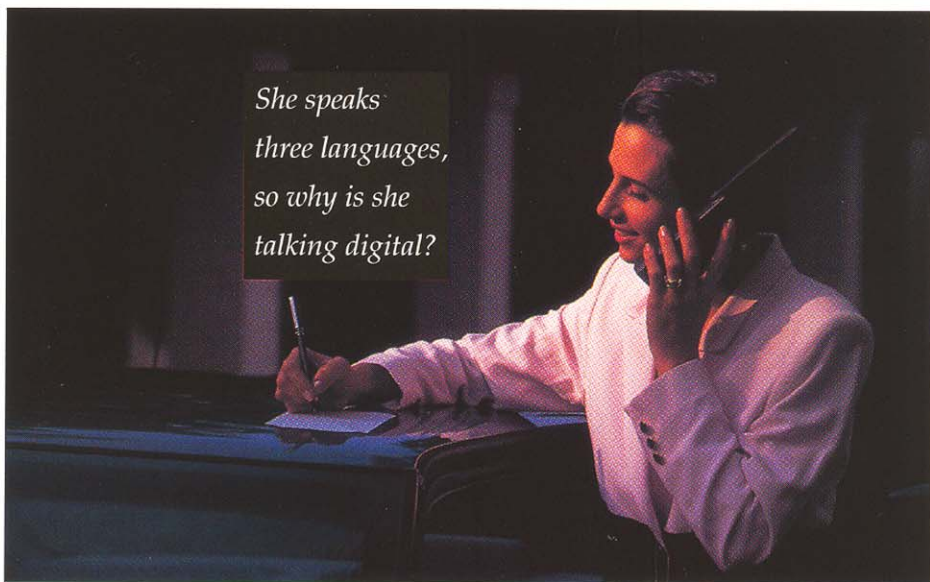
Probably.

You're now into the Home Shopping

continued on page 148



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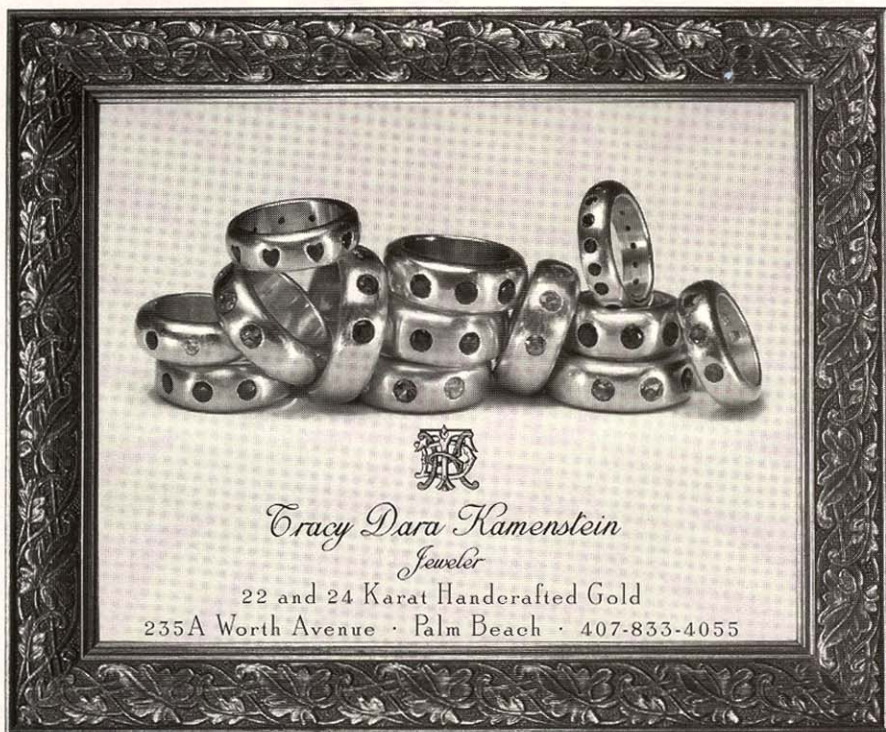
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Club business. Isn't it just a little too trendy for you?

No. A friend convinced me to design some costume jewelry (panther and leopard pins, clips, necklaces and earrings) and the response was so fantastic that I designed a second collection, this time with Egyptian designs. I've also recently introduced my fragrance called 'Wild' which is packaged in a black bottle shaped like a panther.

Is clothing next?

Might be. People say they like my style of dressing, which is very individual.

In addition to Jean Claude Gaultier (I'm guessing), who are your favorite designers?

Oh, yes! Did you catch his new fragrance? I love the bottle. So sexy. Yes, I love his clothes. I also love Claude Montana and Valentino.

What's next?

In addition to the Hollywood-based series—*Hollywood Wives*, *Hollywood Husbands* and now *Hollywood Kids*—my most popular books feature the Santangelo family, the Italian gangster family in *Lucky*, *Chances* and *Lady Boss*. My next book, *Vendetta: Lucky's Revenge*, will be out next year and will continue the Santangelo family saga.

Does she get revenge?

Oh yes! Most certainly.

What about *Hollywood Kids*? Is a mini-series being created?

Yes, and it will also be out next year.

Have any casting decisions been made?

I can't say. If I do, prices will zoom!

What do you want for Christmas this year?

A red Ferrari. But I think I'm the only person who is going to buy it for me. I work extremely hard and believe in rewarding myself.

Have you been a good girl this year?

Very good!♦



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