

# Jane Fonda: 'Plastic surgery bought me a decade'

The 77-year-old Youth star on her Hollywood comeback, bionic body, sex and casting

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"I like helping younger women be less afraid of getting closer to death," beams Jane Fonda. "I'm 77 but I'm very youthful. I have passion. I have curiosity. I've always had a lot of energy." She waggles a hand heavy with statement jewellery. "I have a fake hip, knee, thumb; more metal in me than a bionic woman, but I can still do Pilates."

Fonda leans forward, channelling gran as styled by Cartier. "Looking at age from the outside is so scary. But when you're inside age - and I'm very much inside age - it isn't scary at all. You need maturity to learn this, but it's important to figure out what you need to do for yourself every day to decompress. I meditate. And I *always* get eight hours' sleep."

That means last night she was sure to leave the yacht party on the dot of 10pm; her other daily must-have, a vodka martini, denied her by a waiter who brought a bottle of vermouth, not a cocktail. Her face nearly creases with laughter. "The French are about *wine*. I can't wait to get home though."

Fonda perches, graceful as a mantis, on a Cannes hotel roof terrace overlooking the ocean. The wind whips so hard the awnings creak like the galley of a slave ship and I can barely see her for my hair. Fonda's immaculate caramel waves barely move.

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"I'm two years older than my dad was when he died," she says calmly. Five months before, she'd picked up Henry's best actor Oscar for *On Golden Pond* (he was too ill to attend). "Katharine Hepburn was three years younger than I am now when she made that movie. People looked older back then. I wish I were brave enough to not do plastic surgery but I think I bought myself a decade."

Her eyes gleam from dewy skin (she's brand ambassador for L'Oréal). There are some bags beneath; others were disposed of a while back, along with neck and chin wrinkles. "The danger with surgery is you say: 'Oh this is good, let me do more. It can be an addiction. Thirty percent of women were sexually abused when they were young. And a woman who has been sexually abused will have a tendency to go too far. When you're young it can be this' - she mimes self-harm - "and when you're older it can be plastic surgery. When I see a woman who's made her face a mask I say: 'I bet, I bet.'"

A quick pause for breath. "People don't realise sexual abuse is an epidemic. And it has a lot to do with why women are distorting their faces with plastic surgery. It's shocking to me that more than 30 people in the US have said Bill Cosby drugged them and raped them and there are still people who don't believe it." Cosby has denied the allegations. "It's hard for people to understand why you could have been raped years ago and not said anything. People don't understand the sense of guilt and shame. A lot has to do with how the media report it and how the police handle it. We have to change that and introduce real punishment for the perpetrators."

Despite Oscars, an honorary Palme d'Or, Fonda has long been more activist than actor. In the 1970s she dismissed any role that wasn't "issue-driven". She believes in living her politics through life, topped up with active campaigning, whatever retractions this may later entail.

She speaks like she writes - in her memoirs, on her excitedly typo-filled blog - keen on the empowering nugget, often stressing what's important by saying: "This is important." She seems sound and rational and only occasionally prone to babble.

This is the third or fourth age of Fonda. She quit acting in the early 1990s after 30 years, then returned with Jennifer Lopez comedy *Monster-in-Law* in 2005 ("big hit in the US, but the French were too intellectual"). Ten years on and she has hit

Harvey Keitel's director is courting for a part. Before the festival, Tomlin gave an interview suggesting Fonda was unhappy with the way she'd been shot ("She says: 'I really look terrible ... the lighting, everything, is just awful'"). And it's true that the film makes her look like Barbara Cartland on a raddled day. Today, she says acting is "a very challenging career, where there's so much emphasis, especially for a woman, on how you look. You're not in control."

Still, it's her meatiest part in years - just a couple of scenes, but a total show-stealer. She tells Keitel's character his last three films were "really shit", he's "old and tired" and "death is round the corner". That back in the day, the likes of Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe "shit in their pants to see me coming". That rather than sleeping her way to the top, she was "just fine being in all those producers' underpants. I wanted to be there."

Does Fonda think that present-day tutting at that casting-couch culture is overdone? She pauses for four seconds - an uncharacteristic age. "I believe it's possible for a woman who really likes sex to have agency over her sex life. If she's in charge and decides, 'I'm going to go under the table for him', she doesn't lose anything. I know actresses who were very sexy and who chose who they wanted to have sex with."

Does she also agree with her character that nobody speaks frankly in the film world? "I think that's quite true. Look at what happened with Sony and the hacked emails. Look what happens when you speak frankly. These days, everything is public. If you're a powerful producer and I want you to hire me I'm not going to tell you what I really think of you. I'll kiss your ass. That's what happens."

Isn't it disconcerting to live in such a world? Oh no, she smiles. "Growing up is knowing who you can trust, when you can tell the truth and when you can't. Most of the time, you don't. And that's life."

Fonda was raised in a family "where there was not a lot of laughter. A long line of depressed people". Henry was undemonstrative, plagued with self-doubt; her mother, Frances, slit her throat with a razor in a mental institution when Jane was 12.

"If a child grows up in a family where the parents look at them in the eye and reflect the child back to itself with love then love will be easy for that child. If that was not there when you're little, then love will be very hard." Hers did not, she confirms. "It doesn't mean your parents are bad, it's just they never got it themselves. As you get older you try to break the cycle."

She married three times, the first to Barbarella director Roger Vadim, who steered her into threesomes with Parisian prostitutes, then to counterculture author Tom Hayden, then MGM head Ted Turner, and she speaks freely of other affairs and crushes. Her first casting call was opposite Warren Beatty, who she assumed was gay because "he tried too hard, all his friends were gay, and he played beautiful piano". "And I was always in love with Robert Redford - I made three films with him and nothing happened because I was married and he was married."

"There are certain things I wish I had or hadn't done but they made me who I am. I could have done many things smarter, better, safer. One thing that's really important: what makes you what you are is your mistakes. It's not your successes."

Fonda's hope that she serves an example to other women means she's highly aware of her own narrative; of why it matters and what it might represent. Her return to acting, for instance, she says has "never been done before". "A woman coming back at 65 and recreating a career; it's totally unique."

But for all her tub-thumping, it would be an error to see Fonda as a blanket feminist. Even the possibility of Hillary Clinton returning to the White House is tempered with scepticism. Taken alone, it's not necessarily a blessing, she says.

"I hope that changes something. But there's a lot of women who've been presidents round the world and they might as well have been men. Margaret Thatcher was hawkish, militaristic, her policies not good for the environment or peace." She drums the table with elegant nails and her metal-filled thumb. "It's always more a question of conscience than gender. And that's important."

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