

Best and worst Helen Mirren

Dame Helen Mirren has a career spanning five decades. She's worked with some of the biggest names in the business, but it was her remarkable portrayal of Elizabeth II in 2006's *The Queen* that earned her true international recognition and a best actress Oscar. Aside from her extraordinary acting talent, she is best loved for her no-nonsense attitude and liberal views. This summer, she is firing on all cylinders with three films in the pipeline, including *Love Ranch*, a collaboration with her director husband Taylor Hackford.

BEST CAREER MOMENT Getting a five-minute standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival for *The Queen*. It was an incredible moment, but also slightly embarrassing. I kept trying to stop them clapping. Then I went to leave, and they went 'Don't leave!' so I didn't know what to do. But it was great.

WORST The red carpet. It all becomes a bit like hard work. After *The Queen*, it became a bit like: 'I just do not want to go on another red carpet.' I was red-carpeted out. Of course it's lovely, but it's kind of exhausting, too.

BEST TRAVEL TIP I love a good charity shop, especially when I'm travelling. When I'm going to cold places, I take nothing – just underwear, literally. On the way from the airport, I ask the driver or taxi to take me to a charity shop and I buy boots, socks, trousers, jumpers, sweaters, hats, scarves and gloves – usually for about \$50 [£32]. And on my way back to the airport, I have it all in a big bag and I'll drop it off at another charity shop.

WORST Getting up at 4am and going out into the streets of a city with a bottle of champagne. I did that with a boyfriend in Venice. We saw the sun come up, and saw Venice wake up – the market stalls

One of our best-loved actresses talks exclusively to **Leo Bear** about standing ovations, keeping secrets and never being in debt

being set up. No tourists. No-one. It was wonderful. But by 10am you're drunk and it's time to go to bed.

BEST STYLE CHOICE I'm fairly non-materialistic. I don't need all that flashy stuff. It's not my taste. But I did work with a stylist for the Oscars because it was such a specific thing. My stylist organised getting my dress made for me at Christian Lacroix, which I could never have done on my own.

WORST There's a place in America called Forever 21 and you get these fantastic things for like \$20 [£13]. But it worries me because I actually make clothes – with my mother's treadle sewing machine – and you cannot make clothes for that much money, so it means somewhere, someone

is being abused – without question. It has to be, because it's not economically possible. It really disturbs me.

I think it would be much better if we had fewer clothes that were more expensive.

BEST CONFESSION

I've never had an overdraft or credit card debt or anything. Even when I was only earning £18 a week, I was never in debt. I do feel the propensity towards debt and credit that young people have nowadays is terrifying.

I don't understand it. It's just so dangerous.

WORST I don't keep a diary. But I have plenty of personal secrets stored in my mind – some of which are delightful and some of which are rather shameful.

