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JOAN COLLINS

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'My Mother Used To Call Me Miss Perpetual Motion'



Dame Joan Collins - never shy of voicing her opinions on life - has a new film tailor-made for her. Sandie Jones gets the low-down

Waiting for the Dame is how I imagine waiting for the Queen must feel. I sit down, stand up, and am still working out whether I should curtsy, bow or offer a hand, when the double doors open and there she is, Joan Collins, ridiculously glamorous at the age of 83. Her bright red lipstick almost enters the room before she does, set off perfectly by her jet-black hair, black jumper and black trousers.

I check for a tiara, as she sashays towards me, but alas there isn't one. My hand hovers awkwardly, as I ask her how she is.

'Do you really want to know?' she says, our hands meeting. 'I've got builders working to the left, right, below and above my flat, my ceiling's collapsed and I've had to put all my possessions in storage and move out for five months. It's hell.'

Part of me wants to run out and wait five minutes before coming back in and starting

again, but suddenly she smiles and says sweetly, 'But we're not here to talk about that, are we?' Phew!

What we're here to talk about is Joan's new film, *Time Of Their Lives*, which is rather akin to *Thelma & Louise* on HRT, or at least glucosamine supplements.

So, tell us Joan, what's it all about?

'It's a road movie, a buddy movie, about two women of a certain age who have come to the end of their tether. They feel their lives are over. I play Helen, who was once a famous actress but screwed her life up big time. She tried to get back on track but was rejected, and is now seeing her time out in a retirement home.

My partner in crime, Priscilla [played by Pauline Collins] has been in an

abusive relationship for years but is too weak to do anything about it. Unknown to each other, they are thrown together by a set of circumstances and embark on an adventure together.

It's a story about the power of friendship and how friendship can help you get through and start another phase of your life.'

So, is it ultimately about having another chance at life?

'Yes, absolutely. We have the opportunity to achieve what we want to achieve and change our lives if we're unhappy. That's what these two women do.'

Is it ever too late to do that?

'Never! It's totally down to the individual, but age should have nothing to do with it. People can no longer be lumped into age groups. Once we reach the age of 45 to 50, we age in completely different ways.

I see people in their fifties who look 80 and people in their eighties who look 50. We should not be defined by a number.'

Are we guilty of giving up once we hit a certain age?

'I think a lot of people stop looking after themselves physically and mentally and that's very sad. But there are also many people who are still very active. I had dinner the other night with David Hockney, who's

80 and he's fabulous. He hasn't given up. He's still turning out 17 paintings a week or whatever! And then there are the likes of Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Michael Caine, Roger Moore - and they're just the people I know! I'm sure there are all kinds of people who are still working and keeping active.'

In the film, Pauline's character and yours are polar opposites. Are you like that in real life?

'Yes, we are completely different and we live completely different lives. She lives in the country with her husband John Alderton, who's retired. She doesn't work that much. She doesn't give interviews. When we did our first rehearsal, it was July and very hot, so I was wearing a T-shirt, flowery peasant skirt and some sandals and she said to me, 'Oh, you're all dressed up.' I said, 'This is not dressed up!'

You're still making movies and toured the country last year with a one-woman show. Where does that energy and drive come from?

'I was born with it. My mother used to call me Miss Perpetual Motion! I've always had a huge amount of energy, I eat good food, take care of myself and exercise. I look at people my age and think, 'You've got to be joking, I'm not the same age as her.' So that's why I say age is just a number. It's up to you what you do with it.'



'Once we reach 45 to 50, we age in different ways'

Should we care what other people think?

'Too many people *don't* care what others think. I see people cycling on the pavements, spitting and insulting people. Unfortunately care and concern for other



International acting legend Franco Nero joined Joan and co-star Pauline Collins, above, for this fun road movie

people has gone by the board in the 21st century.

I care what people think about me up to a point, mostly my husband [Percy Gibson - 32 years younger than Joan - is a producer. They have been married for 15 years] and my family. But in terms of the general public? Not really. I would never Google myself, for example, because I don't want to read the horrible things that people say. You could be Mother Teresa and you'll still find people saying horrible things about you.'

Are there things that you've not done, but would like to?

'I enjoy producing. I'm Executive Producer on this film and Percy and I have spent a lot of time getting involved and raising the money it needed to get off the ground. I fell in love with the script four years ago, so we have busied ourselves talking to a lot of different people, and we managed to put up half of the financing. Aside from work, I'd like to go to New Orleans, Havana and India.'

Has there ever been a time when you have taken life by the throat and regretted it?

'Yes, getting married to the wrong man. Many times! But specifically the Swede [Peter Holm, to whom she was married for 13 months in 1985]. But I was in dire straits in terms of what was going on in my life and it was all becoming too difficult to deal with. It was at the height of *Dynasty* so I had this intense fame, working all week and doing interviews and photo shoots at the weekends. My children were living in London, so every three weeks I would get a flight from LA to see them for a couple of days. I was also in really bad financial shape. I'd been ripped off badly, so I was feeling weakened, and that relationship seemed like it was going to solve some of those problems. But, unfortunately, it only made things worse and I regret I allowed that to happen. It's the only regret I have.'

❖ *The Time Of Their Lives* is in cinemas from 10 March

