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The Inventory: Jamie Lee Curtis

Interview by Hester Lacey

‘The single most life-changing thing I’ve ever done? Getting sober’



Bafta and Golden Globe winner Jamie Lee Curtis, 53, is known for her roles in films that range from *Halloween* to *A Fish Called Wanda*.

What was your earliest ambition?

I recognised order as being crucial to my life, so some sort of job involving order appealed to me – perhaps law enforcement. I studied criminology during my brief stint in college.

Public school or state school? University or straight into work?

Both: public middle school, private high schools. School was horrible for me, I didn't fit in. I fell into acting. I didn't get the first part I went up for but I piqued somebody's interest, quit college and started trying to get work as an actor, even though I had zero qualifications other than my own natural whatever – which is all I've ever had.

Who was your mentor?

I didn't have big dreams and I didn't have big mentors along the way.

How physically fit are you?

I'm genetically predisposed to having a nice figure and was able to achieve that with very little work. But in your fifties you have to work a little harder, so I'm probably fitter now than I've ever been.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

It depends what the job is.

Have you ever taken an IQ test?

No.

How politically committed are you?

Committed and disappointed. I see too much good that has a lot less to do with politics and a lot more to do with philanthropy. I am political in my heart, but the political process is very broken.

Do you consider your carbon footprint?

My husband and I have supported charitable and environmental causes since we've been together, which is 28 years coming up.

Do you have more than one home?

Yes. We live in California and have a log cabin in the mountains.



Second home: a log cabin in the mountains

What would you like to own that you don't currently possess?

The Sinead O'Connor album *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*.

What's your biggest extravagance?

The fact that there are many days when I don't have to head to a job at five in the morning is an indulgence lots of people will never know.

If you had a coat of arms, what would be on it?



Hangers: I'm very tidy. A big happy face. The symbol of sobriety – a triangle in a circle. And family. The motto would be our family motto: otium cum dignitate, leisure with dignity

In what place are you happiest?

Nowhere alone. I've spent my life building my family, so I'm probably happiest in our log cabin playing Apples to Apples.

What ambitions do you still have?

Specific goal-setting ambitions – none. My ambition is an internal one: to wake up with a purpose to go and do my best.

What drives you on?

That internal drive; it's how I have approached every single thing I've done. That's what makes me, me.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

I got sober 14 years ago. It's something I have tremendous pride about, the single most life-changing thing I've ever done.

What has been your greatest disappointment?

That I can't sing.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would she think?

I think we'd be friends.

If you lost everything tomorrow, what would you do?

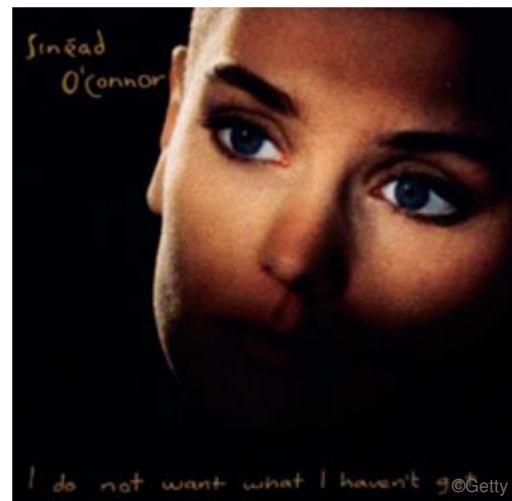
Get up in the morning and say, "Right, what are we going to do today?" I'm a freelance actor – I'm always ready for it all to fall apart.

Do you believe in assisted suicide?

Absolutely, passionately.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

Ask me after I'm dead.



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If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

10.

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An illustration by Elizabeth Blue of Jamie Lee Curtis's 10 favourite things will be offered in What are they Like?, a charity auction in support of the House of Illustration, Sotheby's London on December 10; www.houseofillustration.org.uk



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