

## Lesley-Anne's Trans-Atlantic success

BORN IN LONDON, SHE TURNED TO ACTING AT A TENDER AGE AND SCORED A ROLE IN THE MAJOR BRITISH DRAMA 'UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS' ON HER WAY TO HOLLYWOOD FAME; AT AGE 54, THE SOAP OPERA STAR SAYS SHE IS TODAY IN A PLACE OF PEACE

Lesley-Anne Down's daily assignment for the last five years has included trying to wrest the fashion empire from her rival Stephanie Forrester, and conniving to steal the woman's husband.

"I am so lucky to be doing *The Bold and the Beautiful*; I thank the Lord every day," the British actress said of her part as Jacqueline Payne Marone, the vixen who has no qualms about moving in on other people's property in the mega daytime soap opera.

It's not only that she relishes the success of starring the second highest rated daytime show in America, a pinnacle she could not possibly have imagined herself ascending when she set out at age 12 in London to become an actress.

Down cherishes the series because it allows her a life other than the hectic, nanny-dependent existence she has witnessed in Hollywood.



“I can actually take my child to school. I can pick my child up from school. I can cook dinner,” she said with glee. “Most actors don’t get to experience domesticity in its entirety, and I do.”

Down is in a place of peace, she said, where she finds happiness in her career and her personal life.

But, she acknowledged as she opened up to *Monaco Revue*, it’s taken her a long time to get there.

Born in 1954 in a deprived London neighbourhood, she was teased in school for the refined manner of speaking she picked up after spending six weeks with an aunt during her younger sister’s birth. Feeling alienated from her peers, she yearned to be among adults. At age 10, she saw her chance when she came across a newspaper advertisement for a child model.

“I thought, ‘I could go and work, I don’t have to go to school. I can be a grown up at 10’.”

Two years later, she took up acting and enrolled in a stage school, which she said, “was really a way of doing absolutely nothing, going to school late, not working, dancing occasionally, saying a bit of Shakespeare...having fun.”

She entered and won several beauty contests and picked up small parts in film. In her mid teens, she went to a party that was to have a profound impact on her.

“Across the room, a man turned and looked at me and it was like the room fell away.... We fell in love and I was with him for 10 years.”

She fondly recalled her relationship with Bruce Robinson, the actor/director eight years her senior, who wrote the Oscar-nominated screenplay for the 1984 movie *The Killing Fields*.

“That 10 years of being with Bruce taught me everything I knew,” Down said. “He was older, all his friends were older, they were smart people, very clever people. I learnt everything I basically know in that 10 years.”

It was during this time she found fame as a principal character on the hugely popular British television



**Down, at the Monte Carlo Television Festival, with actor Eric Close**

drama *Upstairs/Downstairs* and in films, including *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*.

**W**hilst starring in the 1981 movie *Sphinx*, she met an assistant director and married him within days. The couple split after 18 months. It was an “an Argentinian whirlwind”, Down said with a smile.

Upon her second marriage, to director William Friedkin, however, her “personal life went to complete craziness”, she said. It was disaster, but very instructive. “You should never ever get married to somebody that you don’t truly love,” Down said. “It doesn’t matter that you feel that they are successful or that they can offer you things. You should only get married for love. It’s a very bad mistake not to.”

She heeded the lesson when, 24 years ago, she embarked upon her third marriage with cameraman-turned-director Don E. FauntLeRoy, whom she met while making the miniseries *North and*

*South*. They are still together.

“I’m so blissed out – as they say in California – about that,” Down chirped.

Her first son (with Friedkin) is going on 26 and her last (with FauntLeRoy) is still a pre-teen. Born when she was 44, he requires a different kind of parenting, Down said.

“I am trying very hard with him to make him independent, because to be very honest, because I had him so late in life, who knows what will happen? I don’t know that I’ll be here in ten, fifteen, twenty years’ time.”

Her pastures are “pretty green at the moment” and she is enjoying a stress-free existence, Down said. “Unless you’ve experienced huge stress, you can’t truly appreciate a stress-free existence,” she added. Her hope, she said, is that *The Bold and the Beautiful* “just goes on and on”...so she can continue conniving and trying to steal Stephanie Forrester’s husband and business. ●