



AHEAD OF HER TIME

Actress Shirley MacLaine has long explored the spiritual side of life

On April 24 Oscar winner and spiritual searcher Shirley MacLaine turns 70. She'll be on the set of her new movie *In Her Shoes*, which she stars in alongside Cameron Diaz and Toni Collette, and after that she'll fly to Ireland to shoot *Closing the Ring* with Dennis Hopper and Ryan Phillippe.

She's lived a life that has entertained and touched movie goers, with roles in movies such as *Terms of Endearment* and *Irma La Douce* to *The Apartment* and *Mrs Winterbourne*. She was also an honorary member of the original Rat Pack, close friends with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr, a fun loving and unconventional actress who always went against the rules.

She has also inspired millions through her incredible travels and the amazing books she has written of what she has learnt as she wanders the planet meeting psychic channellers, native healers and guides from other lifetimes as well as witnessing UFOs, psychic surgery and other spiritual phenomenon.

Her classic book *Out on a Limb*, published 20 years ago and later a TV movie, was one of the first to bring new age concepts to the mainstream.

At the time she had many critics, but slowly her supposedly far fetched thoughts are being proven by scientists and embraced by a growing number of people in search of happiness, peace and a measure of enlightenment.

'Yes, people are more open to it all now,' Shirley says. 'It's becoming mainstream instead of extreme. Not all of it – I'm probably 10 years ahead still, but I think people are beginning to look at invisible realities and dimensional truths much more than they ever did. Starting to realise that you don't have to thump on something to have it be real,' she laughs.

'People are opening up to their right brain capacities, the ability to hold contradictory thoughts simultaneously without being confused. With the left brain it's all about linear thought and perception, but I think we're beginning to learn to balance the two.'

But even when her first book *Don't Fall off the Mountain* was published in 1970, Shirley was not afraid to go out on a limb and discuss the new things she was learning, even knowing how many people would react against it.

'I've never had a problem telling people how I feel or what I'm learning, I've never been worried about other people's reactions. I don't know why.'

'My mother was Canadian, so if it was just her then I'd have that problem, but my dad was a small town person from Virginia, and in those small towns you

just said what you thought – as long as you really believed it,' Shirley says.

'I would have an absolutely impossible time saying things I don't believe. I couldn't do it. I don't have the smarts – I don't have the intelligence to deceive, I'm really dumb about that. So I just say what I feel, what's been my experience.'

Shirley grew up with her brother Warren Beatty in a loving family – but with parents who were fearful of expressing themselves and following their dreams.

Ironically their children became two of the finest actors of their generation, as well as respected, outspoken and passionate political activists.

Years ago Shirley campaigned for Democratic candidate George McGovern against Richard Nixon, although her political idealism has been destroyed by the current state of American affairs.

'The journey into yourself is the only journey worth taking'

But she says it's not disillusioning for her to no longer believe in politics.

'I gave that up years ago to tell you the truth. What's much more important is the spiritual underpinnings of every human being – and I don't mean religious, I mean spiritual. That's become a top priority for me. And that's what happens when you become involved with nature and animal life,' she says.

Her latest book *Out on a Leash* is a beautiful story of the lessons she's learnt from her dog Terry – lessons of simplicity, of caring for the earth and each other, of being in the moment and content.

But before that her books were primarily about physical journeys.

The Camino detailed her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, an 800km walk through the mountains of Spain.

In other books she describes her stay with a Masai tribe in Africa, surviving a military coup in Bhutan, questioning her religious beliefs in India, travelling in Russia, Romania and South America.

She also took a women's delegation to China in 1972, when few westerners were allowed into the country, and wrote and directed the Oscar nominated documentary *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir* about their experiences.

'The most important thing travelling taught me was that wherever I would go, it was a journey into myself. You're splashed up against a foreign culture, something that's not familiar, and when you do that you learn who you are.

That's what I learnt – isn't that ironic!

'It prepared me for not wanting to travel now. I can dispense with the airplanes and go right into myself.'

'The journey into yourself is the only journey worth taking, it really is,' she says.

So after enough physical journeys she has learnt enough to be happy at home?

'That's what's happened. I don't care about travelling anymore. First of all it's too difficult, and secondly I would take Terry with me, and a lot of people won't have her, so I won't go.'

'I like living the life I'm living, which is more amalgamated with nature than it is with seeing what civilisation has done to itself when you travel. I'm very very happy not going much of anywhere.'

Instead she spends as much time as she can on her New Mexico, US, ranch, walking through the mountains and feeling the power of a part of the earth renowned for its magnetic power.

'It's a magical state, it's called the land of enchantment. It's really an extraordinary place. And the ground and the rocks and the land absolutely speak, everyone says it who lives here. And sometimes it speaks and says you don't belong here and spits you out – but that hasn't happened to me,' she says humbly.

And it won't, because Shirley has a special gift to understand what the earth is saying. She takes time to tune in to her surroundings, to learn from everyone and everything that she encounters.

'I have a communication now with all of nature that I didn't have before, that's absolutely true,' she agrees.

'I've been a city person, and an over achiever, and doing all that stuff in the acting business, and with politics and the women's movement and everything, but now I'm quite content to listen to what I've never listened to before, and that is nature.'

