

"I believe there's no age limit to being sexy"

After posing as a pin-up at 72, screen siren, author and grandmother-of-four Sophia Loren tells **BERNARD BALE** why life still has so much to offer

Not many grannies bring a room full of people to a sudden halt when they enter or have grown and normally sensible men trembling at the knee in her presence. But then Sophia Loren is no ordinary granny – she's a living legend of beauty who modelled for Pirelli in her early 70s and teases that she might yet do it again.

Whether at home in Switzerland or sitting in the VIP Lounge at London's Heathrow Airport, the screen siren still has that same presence that has stolen the hearts of millions throughout her film career – including many of her leading men who pledged their undying love.

"I'm still enjoying life and am always looking for new things to do or perhaps going back to some of the things I have enjoyed before," she says, clearly grateful for her glowing health. "When I posed for the Pirelli calendar, that was fun as opposed to work and I am fortunate that I can do things for fun. I'm amazed people

still want to take photographs of me – so it might be good to do another calendar!"

Although said with a mischievous look in her eye, she means it too. Sophia is still flirty at 78 with a ready smile and a twinkle in her eye. She recently stole the show at a reception when she appeared wearing the lowest cut frock of the night.

The cameras flashed at her all evening and she serenely smiled back while on the arm of her eldest son, Carlo.

"I'm an actress, I like to make an entrance and try to look as good as possible for the whole time I am in public," she explains. "Making an entrance is good, but you don't want just a quick glance – you want people not to be able to take their eyes off you. At the same time you want to be dignified and sophisticated – classy. Anyone can just show flesh, but that soon gets very boring."

She is indeed a class act and pays tribute to her mother who gave her self-esteem even though her

upbringing was in altogether more humble surroundings. Born Sofia Villani Scicolone in Rome in 1934, her father Riccardo, a construction engineer, refused to marry her mother, Romilda Villani, although they had another child, Maria, a few years later. Life was difficult and Sophia, her mum and sister lived with relatives in Naples.

"My mother was an actress and I wanted to be like her, even though she was never what you might call a movie star. She was a lady and taught me very much about how to conduct myself and be a lady – hopefully an interesting lady. When I was a little girl I adored musicals. I would watch them over and over, and I think I was in love with Gene Kelly. I watched wide-eyed as he sang, danced and acted. The funny thing is that when I eventually met him I wanted to tell him what an inspiration he had been, but I nearly couldn't speak because of the enormity of being face to face with one of my real heroes. I had ►

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