

Calista's SECOND act

BY CHARIS TORRANCE

At the pinnacle of her career, Calista Flockhart stepped away to focus on her family. Now, she's back to reclaim her place in the limelight.

Micro-miniskirts, dancing CGI babies, *The Biscuit*... If you were watching TV in the '90s, you were most likely a fan of *Ally McBeal*. This legal comedy-drama had us glued to our TV screens one night a week from 1997 to 2002. (This was before you could binge shows, kids. You know, back in the 1990s.) Despite its relatively brief five-year run, the show cemented itself as a cultural touchstone, earning an impressive 34 Emmy nominations throughout its 112-episode tenure. Notably, three of these nominations were for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series, honouring the incomparable portrayal of its titular character by Calista Flockhart.



Calista played the titular role in the series *Ally McBeal*, which was on air for five seasons, from 1997 to 2002.

Born on 11 November 1964 in Freeport, Illinois, Calista Kay Flockhart grew up in a close-knit family that instilled in her the values of hard work and perseverance. From a young age, she showed a natural affinity for the performing arts, going on to study acting at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and after college she worked in regional theatre in Cleveland, Louisville, Chicago and Houston, earning just \$400 for eight weeks of work.

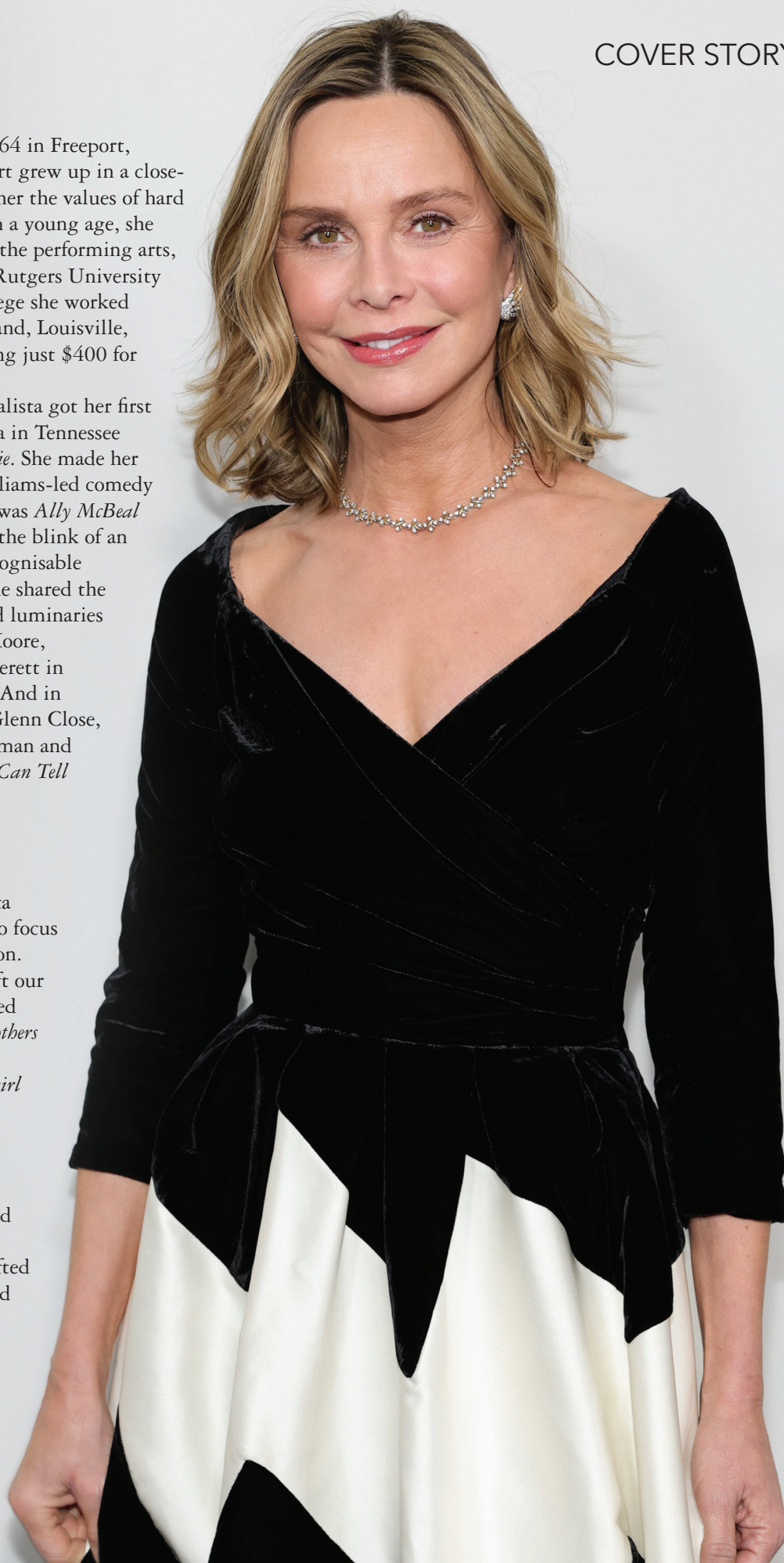
But it all paid off when Calista got her first Broadway role, playing Laura in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. She made her film debut in the Robin Williams-led comedy *The Birdcage* in 1996, but it was *Ally McBeal* that changed everything. In the blink of an eye, Calista was the most recognisable face in television. In 1999 she shared the silver screen with Hollywood luminaries Michelle Pfeiffer, Julianne Moore, Stanley Tucci and Rupert Everett in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And in 2000 she starred alongside Glenn Close, Cameron Diaz, Amy Brenneman and Holly Hunter in *Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her*.

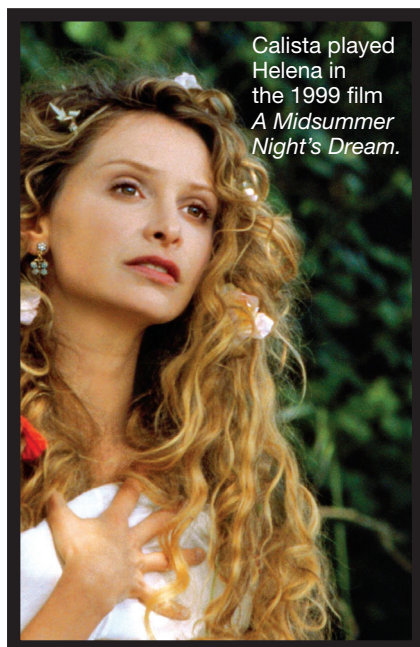
Family first

As *Ally McBeal* ended, Calista decided to take a step back to focus on her family and raise her son. Although she never really left our screens completely: She played the lead role in the series *Brothers & Sisters* (2006–2011), and was a series regular on *Supergirl* (2015–2021) during its first season. She also returned to her first love, the theatre, in stage productions of *A Doll's House* and *The Seagull*, and did occasional voiceover work.

It's clear her priorities shifted significantly after she adopted her son Liam in 2001. 'I felt very grateful that I had a choice. So I made a choice to walk away, and I don't regret it at all. I was 99% a stay-at-home mom.'

For the most part, Calista has embraced





Calista played Helena in the 1999 film *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

a quieter existence, relishing in the joys of motherhood alongside her husband, Harrison Ford, whom she met a year after she adopted Liam. She keeps her personal life with the *Indiana Jones* star to herself.

The two of them met at the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in January 2002. A year later, Calista and Liam (then 2 years old) moved into Harrison's Los Angeles home. Harrison, who already had four

children of his own by that point, was more than willing to step into the role of father to Liam. After he and Calista married in June 2010, he made it official by adopting him.

In an interview with *Reader's Digest* in 2008, Harrison spoke about how grateful he was for both Calista and Liam. 'She's brought a child back into my home,' he said. 'It's a wonderful opportunity to be part of a child's growing up, which is always an endless springtime.'

'Calista devoted herself to Liam and has done a really wonderful job raising him. I'm happy to now have a part of the job.'

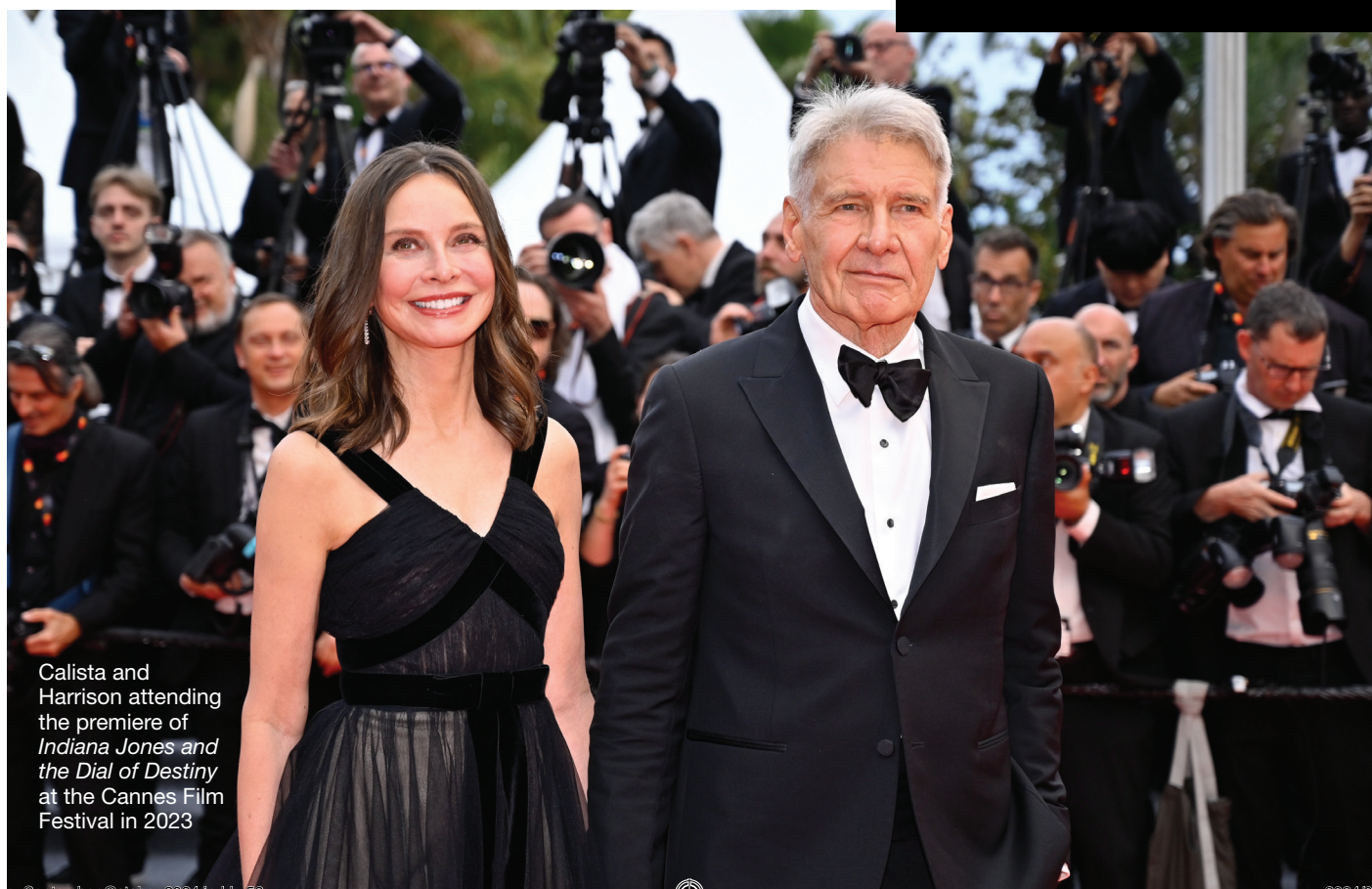
When Harrison was recently honoured with a Career Achievement Award at the Critics Choice Awards ceremony, he said, 'I want to thank my lovely wife, Calista Flockhart, who supports me when I need a lot of support. And,' he added, 'I need a lot of support.'

She's very proud of him and happy for him, Calista said in an interview on the chat show *Live with Kelly and Mark*. Host Kelly Ripa

asked her what her favourite film of his was, to which she responded, 'I have a few, but I would have to say right off the bat, *Mosquito Coast*.' She also said she loved *Working Girl* because he's very funny in it. 'And Harrison is very funny. He's surprisingly funny, like, "Oh, oh, wait, that was funny," like, "Wait, was that a joke?!"'

The two like to play practical jokes on each other when they're at home. 'I'm called the "scare monster" in my house because I hide behind every corner,' she said. 'And so Harrison will walk in, and then I'll go, "Raaah!" And he'll go, "W-uy-aah!" And then I die laughing. I'll put a plastic spider inside his big ice cubes in the tray,

'I felt very grateful that I had a choice, so I made a choice to walk away, and I don't regret it at all.'



Calista and Harrison attending the premiere of *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* at the Cannes Film Festival in 2023

'She really went for it, which I admired. She was sharp and dagger-like.'

Calista as Lee Radziwill in *Feud: Capote vs. The Swans*



The cast of the 1996 Broadway production of *The Glass Menagerie*: Calista, Kevin Kilner, Željko Ivanek and Julie Harris

and then he'll drink it. But then I'll go to bed two weeks later, and he's out of town in Jackson, and I'll take the covers down and there's this little rubber scorpion. It's fun.'

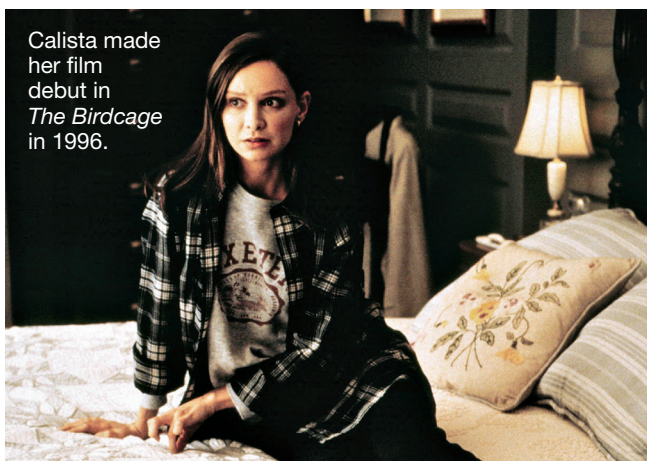
A welcome return to TV

Now, at 59, Calista has made another return to our small screens. She portrays Lee Radziwill in Ryan Murphy's *Feud: Capote vs. the Swans*, the follow-up to his FX anthology series *Feud* (which, in its first season, told the story of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford's bitter feud).

Ryan has called it 'The Original Housewives'. It tells the story of writer Truman Capote's circle of high-society female friends, whom he dubbed his 'swans', and how he betrayed their confidence by divulging their secrets in an instalment of his new novel published in *Esquire* magazine in 1975. He made almost no effort to hide their identities, quipping, 'They're too dumb. They won't know who they are.' The women never forgave him – and he never recovered from the fallout.

Based on Laurence Leamer's best-selling book *Capote's Women*:

Calista made her film debut in *The Birdcage* in 1996.



A True Story of Love, Betrayal and a Swan Song for an Era, the film also stars Tom Hollander as a deliciously devilish Truman, and Naomi Watts, Diane Lane, Chloë Sevigny, Molly Ringwald and Demi Moore as the other swans.

Lee Radziwill was Jackie Kennedy Onassis's younger sister and an aspiring actress and socialite.

'Lee Radziwill was, of all of them, the most viperous and the darkest, the most in pain,' Ryan says. 'She was the most famous – American royalty. I wasn't sure that Calista, who had been *Ally McBeal* and really had a reputation of being America's sweetheart, girl-next-door, would want to do something like that at this point in her life. But she said yes with no hesitation.

'She really went for it, which I admired. She was sharp and dagger-like.'

'Truman Capote recognised that she [Lee

Radziwill] was living in her sister's shadow,' Calista says. 'He would say things like, "You're so much prettier. You're so much smarter. You're more interesting. You have better style." She really needed to hear that. I think it made her really love Truman. He was fun, and she confided in him, like they all did.'

This role couldn't have come at a better time. With Liam now in college, Calista says she was ready to get back to work.

We might even see her on stage again; maybe even on TV in an *Ally McBeal* sequel. 'I would definitely consider it,' she says.

Here's hoping! ♦

Watch *Ally McBeal* and *Feud: Capote vs. the Swans* on Disney+.