

WHY I'LL
NEVER BE A
CALL GIRL

By Julie Burchill

HAYLEY SQUIRES

Red carpet
revolutionary

The redemption of Mark Wahlberg

“
*Seen a lot,
done a lot,
been through
a lot...*
”

Plus:
MARGHERITA MISSONI
and the return of the FUGLY shoe

“
I've had to
OVERCOME
some pretty
big ODDS
”

Dawn starts, regular Mass and three hours of exercise a day. *Elaine Lipworth* finds out how Mark Wahlberg went from teen delinquent to Hollywood power player

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ART STREIBER

Art Streiber/AUGUST





Right, in *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014). Below, as pop sensation Marky Mark in 1991



Top, with Heather Graham in *Boogie Nights* (1997). Above, with Thandie Newton in *The Truth About Charlie* (2002)



Above, modelling for Calvin Klein with Kate Moss in 1992. Right, *Rock Star* (2001)



It's noon in LA and Mark Wahlberg is stifling a yawn, sprawled on a peach-coloured sofa in a grey and pink suite at the Four Seasons Hotel, bright sunlight pouring in through the windows. Wearing a baseball hat and a grey T-shirt over khakis, he rubs his eyes. He's already been up for eight hours. 'I woke at 4am, made myself breakfast — egg whites, Ezekiel [sprouted grain] bread with butter and sliced avocado — then I was in the gym for 50 minutes. I went back up to the kitchen, had a protein shake and made salads and turkey burgers to travel with me.'

Goodness — isn't he exhausted? 'I do more before 9 o'clock than most people do in a day,' he laughs. 'I woke up the kids at 6:15 and left the house at 6:30.' By 7am he was on the golf course: 'I ran the course while playing — another hour and 30 minutes' exercise — and got home by 9:15am.'

But then, perhaps I shouldn't be surprised by his tightly controlled routine. Worth a reported £130 million, the artist formerly known as 'Marky Mark' is widely considered one of the most powerful (and disciplined) figures in Hollywood. Oscar-nominated for Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*, he's worked with everyone from Tim Burton (on *Planet of the Apes*) to Peter Jackson (on *The Lovely Bones*). Off-screen, he's an influential producer, responsible for the award-winning TV shows *Boardwalk Empire*, *In Treatment* and *Entourage*, as well as reality show, *Wahlburgers*, about his family's hamburger chain, which he co-owns with his brothers Donnie and Paul.

Currently, he's starring in *Deepwater Horizon*, about the 2010 oil spill tragedy, when an offshore drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 people.

It was the worst environmental disaster in US history; he plays engineer Mike Williams, 'the last guy off the rig'. He'll follow it up with another gritty, real-life drama, playing fictional sergeant Tommy Saunders in *Patriots Day*, in a film about the investigation into the

2013 Boston Marathon bombing. The combination is causing serious Oscar buzz. Having been overlooked in the past this could, say insiders, be Wahlberg's year. Do awards matter to him? He fiddles with his wedding ring. 'Listen, if those things come, fantastic, but that's not why I made it. I know guys who got Oscars and can't get movies made; I want to make sure my movies are very successful — that way if I go to an investor, they're going to say, "OK, I believe in you."'

It's all a long way from his childhood growing up in one of the poorest parts of Boston. The youngest of nine, Wahlberg's father, Donald, was a truck driver; his mother, Alma, a bank clerk. His troubled teens have been well-documented: the frequent brushes with the law, the cocaine addiction by 13, the episodes of violent crime culminating in vicious assaults on two Vietnamese Americans when he was 16, for which he served 45 days of a two-year prison sentence. (He applied for a pardon to the Governor of Massachusetts in 2014, which wasn't granted, and earlier this month he ended his bid saying: 'I spent 28 years righting the wrong.')

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Indeed, Wahlberg's redemption has been extraordinary. Once out of jail, he rapidly turned his life around, finding religion and then fame as teen pop sensation Marky Mark, and modelling underwear for Calvin Klein alongside Kate Moss before falling into Hollywood's embrace. His characters are often salt-of-the-earth heroes triumphing over adversity, not unlike himself (boxer Micky Ward in *The Fighter*, for example, or Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell in *Lone Survivor*). 'I can only base everything off my real-life experience,' he smiles, 'seen a lot, done a lot, been through a lot.' He's still a devoted Catholic, attending Mass 'almost' daily, and starting every day on his 'hands and knees. I read my prayer books for 15 minutes and do the same before I go to bed'.

Perhaps because of what he's overcome, he approaches his career with a similar sense of discipline to his exercise regime. He says he likes to memorise the entire script of movies he's working on, reading them out loud 10 times a day in the run-up to filming. 'If I'm not as prepared as I could be and don't give it 110 per cent, and then the movie doesn't work out, I'm going to feel bad,' he explains, simply. 'If I give it my all and it doesn't work out then I don't have to feel bad because I knew I put it all out there. It's frustrating when somebody comes in and doesn't know their lines — and they're being paid.'

He's just as exacting in his personal life. Despite his multiple film commitments and extensive business portfolio, he's clearly a committed family man. He lives in Beverly Hills with his 38-year-old wife, Rhea Durham, a model he met in New York in 2001; their first date was spent at church at St Patrick's Cathedral. This evening, he says, he'll collect their four children — Ella, 13, Michael, nine, Brendan, seven, and Grace, six — from school, then 'I'll work out again, 45 minutes jumping rope and then we'll eat — my wife is not into cooking so we have someone who cooks for us. They had Chinese yesterday, teriyaki chicken and steak.' Wahlberg, however, is following a strict diet in the run-up to filming

Rex Features; Alamy; Calvin Klein



Above, *The Fighter* (2010). Top left, Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch, in 1992

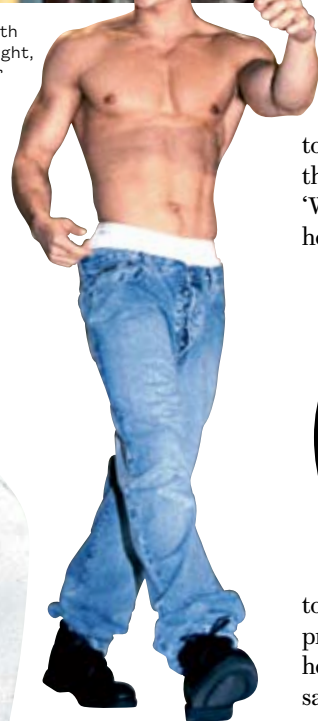


Clockwise, *Deepwater Horizon* (2016), as Dirk Diggler in *Boogie Nights* (1997), with Kate Moss in 1993 and below with Leonardo DiCaprio, also 1993





Top left, with fans. Top right, *Deepwater Horizon* (2016). Right, modelling for Calvin Klein



Above, *Planet of the Apes* (2001). Right, with his wife, Rhea, last year. Bottom, *Ted 2* (2015)



Transformers: The Last Knight, the final in the blockbuster franchise, and so ‘just sat there smelling [their food] for 45 minutes,’ he laughs. After dinner, ‘I get the kids bathed, I tuck them in and read to them for another 45 minutes and then I get my wife and we go to bed at 8.15 so I can get up at 4am again.’

“Where else but in America can you go from nothing to worrying about your kids being too spoiled?”

Do he and Durham ever have a night off? ‘We just went to Pelican Hill [a Southern California luxury golf resort] for three days and spent a little alone time.’ Just the two of them? ‘Well, no, I had my trainer come down and meet me there,’ he grins. ‘And I brought all my own food with me...’

Given the contrast between his own impoverished upbringing, it must be challenging not to spoil his children. ‘You know it’s funny, where else but in America can you turn your life around in one generation, going from nothing to worrying about your kids being too spoiled? But they see where I’ve come from and they’re pretty grounded.’ His daughter recently asked him to take her to a basketball game on the other side of the States. ‘I said: “We’re going to watch it on TV in the kitchen.”’

There’s a reward system for good behaviour: the Wahlberg kids are allowed to pick a treat ‘out of the hat if they get a great report from school. They’re well-behaved, but my youngest son is like me, he’s feisty and always having to compete with his brothers and his older sister.’ Are his kids religious? ‘I don’t want to force them, I just know that they see how important it is to me and how much I get out of it.’

Indeed, his parenting philosophy has clearly been informed by his own past: ‘I want them to learn that if you’re good and you do good, then good things happen and if you lie or you get in trouble and try to cover it up with a lie, there’s a snowball effect... you have to be responsible, talk nice, be kind to each other, clean up behind yourself.’ So far he hasn’t discussed his own chequered history with them. ‘When they get a little older, I’ll tell them where I’ve come from and what I’ve had to do to overcome some pretty big odds.’ It’s for his kids that he takes roles such as that in the blockbuster *Transformers* franchise in which he plays single father and struggling inventor Cade Yeager. ‘I like to make a movie every once in a while that [they] can watch.’

For *Deepwater Horizon*, at the instructions of director Peter Berg (Wahlberg’s frequent collaborator, with whom he filmed the 2013 Afghan war movie, *Lone Survivor*), he gained 20lb — a stone and a half — in a matter of weeks. ‘It really came down to eating as much as possible in Louisiana where we were filming, I went from 180lbs to 212lbs eating a lot of fried foods and drinking a lot of wine and beer, which was fun for two weeks, then it became

uncomfortable. I never thought I would have to sit down to put my socks on.’ Then, needing to shed the weight rapidly for another project, he ‘spent from August until December training like a crazy person for 100 days straight with a strict diet — no drinking, no pasta, no bread.’ *Patriots Day*, also directed by Berg, required him to bulk up all over again. Isn’t it unhealthy? ‘If you’re going for extreme weight loss, then you do it under the watchful eye of a doctor and nutritionist.’

Despite more than two decades in Hollywood, he still considers himself ‘a Boston boy’: ‘It’s where I was born and raised. I have a huge appreciation for Los Angeles, it’s beautiful,’ he gestures to the window, looking out onto the sedate, Beverly Hills street. ‘I’m a fan of this sunshine and the palm trees but hopefully, if things don’t go well here, I can still go back to Boston and be welcomed with open arms.’ Returning to film *Patriots Day* was emotional: ‘Everybody knows somebody who was directly affected, and it was tough. It was in my own backyard.’ There were concerns about grieving families seeing their story on screen just three-and-a-half years after the tragedy, in which three people died and hundreds were injured. ‘Everybody said: “Oh God, it’s too soon.”’ But Wahlberg argues that in the light of recent terrorist attacks, making the film was valid. ‘Look what happened in Brussels, in Turkey, in Paris.’

“I don’t want to force religion on my kids, I just know that they see how important it is to me and how much I get out of it”

One of the highlights of filming *Deepwater Horizon*, meanwhile, was meeting the real-life Williams. ‘I said: “Mike do you have a problem reliving all this?” He goes: “Dude, I lived it for real, what’s a couple of fake bombs, Hollywood make-up and blood going to do?”’

Our interview almost over, I ask Wahlberg what he likes about the UK — a few days later he will head across the Atlantic to film *Transformers*. He tells me he loves London, has plans to expand his restaurant empire here, loves filming in the English countryside, and playing golf.

He also likes the people — one person in particular. Liam, his driver on the set of the last *Transformers: Age of Extinction* film, has become a close friend. Recently, Liam enjoyed a golfing holiday in the States, courtesy of his movie-star mate.

‘I called him and said: “Dude, come to Pebble Beach (in Northern California) with me to play golf.” He thought I was just saying it! Anyway, his wife gave him permission, he flew down and stayed at my house; we played golf here and then we went up to Monterey and played golf at Pebble Beach and Spyglass — all these great courses — and we had a blast.’ After chauffeuring the actor throughout the *Transformers* shoot, ‘we’re going to St Andrew’s to play more golf, I can’t wait.’ Life sounds good, I say. ‘Listen I can’t complain — I’ve had to work hard to get to do something that I love... and they haven’t told me to get out of town yet.’

Deepwater Horizon is in cinemas now



Left, *Interview Magazine*, 1992. Below, with his wife and children



Above, Mark with his brother, Donnie. Right, with Reese Witherspoon in *Fear* (1996). Below, with Leonardo DiCaprio and James Madio in *The Basketball Diaries* (1995)

