



**AT HER STUNNING HOME IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE BRIGITTE NIELSEN REVEALS ALL ABOUT HER DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION – INSIDE AND OUT**

**S**itting on the shaded terrace of her villa in the South of France, Brigitte Nielsen's eyes well with tears as she reflects on the transformation she has made in the past year. "I feel I've been given a second chance," says the *Red Sonja* star, who entered a rehabilitation centre for alcohol addiction in July 2007. She has been sober since. "I'm lucky. I guess someone is looking over me." The Danish-born actress, 45, has another reason to feel blessed. She's "super happy" with fifth husband Mattia Dessi, 30. "It's thanks to Mattia – he doesn't smoke or drink – that I've

changed my life and become a sane, serene person," says Brigitte, who also gave up smoking last year. Warm and friendly, Brigitte is the picture of contentment during this exclusive photoshoot – and seems smitten with Mattia. "This is the first time I've had such a young man," she smiles. "He's 15 years younger – and 15cm shorter!" They met four years ago when Brigitte visited the restaurant where Mattia was a waiter. Two years later they married. They divide their time between California, Italy and France, and Mattia helps his wife ▶

Actress Brigitte, 45, stunning after surgery, with dogs Joker and Tootsie (above). Relaxing in her Nice villa, which she has owned for ten years, with husband Mattia Dessi, 30 (above left). The portrait of Brigitte, bought by Mattia for her birthday, is by Sasha de St Tropez, who has also painted Ivana Trump and Sir Mick Jagger. "I like it because I'm eternally young," jokes Brigitte. The garden boasts a pool and panoramic sea view (left)



on projects including clothing and cosmetics lines. They're together 24 hours a day.

Brigitte, once known for her party lifestyle, has worked as a model, actress, reality TV star and talkshow host – but now she and Mattia tend to shun the red carpet. “I’ve said it twice before, but I think I finally made it,” declares the one-time *Celebrity Big Brother* contestant. “This is my first relationship where nothing is hidden.”

The statuesque blonde – nicknamed the Great Dane because of her 6ft 1in figure – was married for 18 stormy months to Sylvester Stallone and has four sons: Julian, 24, by her first marriage to Kasper Winding; Killian, 18, by her one-time fiancé Mark Gastineau; and Douglas, 15, and Raoul, 13, from her fourth marriage to Raoul Meyer. “The children have kept me going,” she says.

Now the actress has not only undergone an emotional transformation, she has made a physical one, too. Weeks before our shoot, she had plastic surgery that included a breast lift, eyelift and liposuction. “I’d cleaned up the inside and wanted to freshen up. It’s like this house. It’s old and needs improvement.”

Celebrities aren’t always so honest about their plastic surgery, but Brigitte had hers filmed for a German reality TV show. “My life is an open book,” she says. Here, she talks to HELLO! about surgery, sobriety and finding happiness at last.

**Brigitte, are you pleased with your surgery?**

“I’m really happy with it. I had it done in Germany because they try to stick to your natural look. In

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America – no disrespect to the plastic surgeons – everyone comes out looking the same.”

**Did Mattia encourage you to have plastic surgery?**

“No, because he loves me and liked me the way I was. But he said, ‘If it’ll make you so happy, do it.’ I said, ‘Darling – it’ll look better, trust me.’”

**Does the ageing process worry you?**

“God made a mistake – he shouldn’t have given us numbers. It’s not about age, it’s what a person is capable of transmitting to you. But 15 years isn’t a long time, then I’ll be 60 and Mattia will be 45. That worries me, not physically because you can fix little things, but the energy levels and how Mattia will feel when I’m 60.”

**You’re appearing in *Playboy* later this year...**

“This December it will be 20 years since my last *Playboy* shoot. So back in LA I’ll get a personal trainer and tone up. It’s a great challenge and if I can do it I’ll be very, very happy. If my body’s in good shape, I want to show people

I worked hard at it. Maybe that’s a Danish thing.”

**Did you and Mattia come into each other’s lives at the right time?**

“When I met him, I was having a war of a divorce. I wanted to be single, party, be with my kids and dogs. When I saw Mattia, I fell in love. I was like a 16-year-old. I fought my feelings, told myself to forget it, but we stayed together. It’s the best thing that could have happened to me.”

**What makes your relationship work, Mattia?**

“We complement each other. Brigitte is impulsive and I think about things. It’s my first serious relationship. I never felt like this before.”

**Brigitte: “We never argue. We discuss everything and he knows how to treat a woman in every way.”**

**Have you learned from past relationships?**

“I’ve always said I don’t regret anything, because I’ve learned so much that I take with me. I’m taking my words back – I do regret one thing as I believe my last marriage turned me into an alcoholic. I was so miserable and stayed because of the kids, but in the end it was awful for them because we were arguing.”

**Were you battling your addiction for a long time?**

“Six or seven years. I hid the bottles. When I met Mattia, I was still hiding. I realised I needed professional help. People say, ‘Can’t you stop?’ but it’s more powerful than that. When you’re that depressed you can’t even do it for your kids – that’s the most disgusting thing.”

**What made you enter rehab?**

“I thought if I don’t do it, I’ll lose my husband ▶



Brigitte, a keen cook, poses in the kitchen with Mattia (above left) and in the bedroom (above). Their love is plain to see. “It’s thanks to Mattia – he doesn’t smoke or drink – that I’ve changed my life and become a sane, serene person,” says Brigitte, who a year ago entered a rehabilitation centre for alcohol addiction and has remained sober since. She has also given up smoking and now prefers staying in with her handsome husband to going out partying



On her return to Los Angeles, the Danish-born actress, reality TV star and mum-of-four, whose surgery included a breast lift, eyelift and liposuction, will employ a trainer to help her tone up for a *Playboy* shoot. She also plans to advise young people about drugs and alcohol and produce new TV shows

and kids. I was so ashamed. If I'd carried on, I think I'd have died from alcohol poisoning.

"Rehab was the toughest thing ever. I had my 44th birthday in there. They teach you how to admit your faults. When you're hiding your drinking, you feel like a gangster, but the freedom to surrender is the best, it gives you strength."

**M:** "Going into rehab was the best, and hardest, decision of her life. We never argue. The drinking was the only problem between us."

"For the first ten days, I wasn't allowed to speak to her. Every night I'd leave her a present with a card. Then I waited until she wrote back."

**Brigitte, do alcoholics face a constant battle even when they've given up drink?**

"Always. If you have a little drink, it triggers a thing in your brain where you want more. When I go to a hotel now, I have everything taken out of the mini-bar, no temptations. We have no drink in the house but if he left me, I'd be in danger."

**You signed up for US show *Celebrity Rehab* after your stint in a clinic...**

"People have seen me as silly, wild, crazy, drunk, whatever, and I wanted to show that if you make mistakes, you can get better."

**Mattia, what did your family think when you first announced that you were dating Brigitte?**

"They couldn't believe it. My mum wasn't happy. But as soon as she met Brigitte, they got along. It was like they'd known each other years."

**Were you a fan of Brigitte's before you met?**

"I love movies and I'd always found her attractive

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but I couldn't have imagined one day I'd marry her."

**Who wears the trousers?**

"We have one leg each."  
**B:** "I think Mattia does. I've always left my men – and now I'm afraid of losing him. I've never ever suffered from jealousy before, but that's sort of become my little fixation now."

**You weren't put off marriage?**

"No. Where there's a will there's a way. I've always jumped in and lived life to the full."

**You've said that your marriage to Sylvester Stallone suffered from being in the spotlight...**

"It was the most hectic, unbearable kind of lifestyle. Sylvester had beautiful homes and things to enjoy but we never relaxed. We didn't get along in the end. It was so tough. Everybody said, 'But you're married to Sylvester Stallone,' and I said, 'So what? I'm not happy.' The papers printed things about the divorce settlement

which weren't true and I felt I was massacred."

**Your children don't live with you...**

"Julian lives between Copenhagen and London. Killian is in Milan. The youngest two are also in Milan, living with their dad. It wasn't right to take them to LA when I left. We see them during vacations, but I miss them tremendously."

**How does Mattia get on with them?**

"Fabulous. They see him as a real friend. He has been lovely about it and has a lot of patience."

**You've said you've been portrayed as a bad mum...**

"I've been a bad mum at times – when you take the bottle over your kids, you're a bad mum. But I love them and there has always been a close bond. I've been affectionate, caring. It's unfortunate they've seen me in a bad way. But kids are great, they're the most unconditional, forgiving people."

**What are your future work plans?**

"I want to give advice about drugs and alcohol to young people. I'd also like to produce – I have two ideas for shows about people in need that I want to take to Oprah Winfrey."

**Finally, would you like children with Mattia?**

"We're going to try. After I do *Playboy*, we want to try IVF. It's asking a lot, but if it's possible, it would make our package complete." **H**

INTERVIEW: DAWN EMERY  
PHOTOS: TREVOR LEIGHTON  
HAIR & MAKE-UP: ALICE THEOBALD USING FEKKAI, NO7, BOBBI BROWN