

GIVE ME MOORE

She's bagged the role of a lifetime, found her soulmate and discovered a second lease on life. This is the reinvention of Mandy Moore

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MANDY MOORE THOUGHT HER CAREER WAS OVER. In early 2015 she'd completed filming yet another television pilot for a US network – a fourth straight, by her count – that again would not see the light of day.

Her personal life was a shambles; she was in the midst of a bitter divorce from indie rocker Ryan Adams and, after close to 20 years in the entertainment business, she was on the verge of chucking it all in and becoming a journalist like her mum or maybe even a blogger. Anything else.

"There was no forward momentum in any respect and it wasn't just frustrating and daunting, I was questioning whether or not I was meant to be a performer anymore," the 34-year-old actor and musician says from her mid-century home overlooking Los Angeles' San Gabriel mountains.

"I think I got to a point where I just felt like the engine had been completely shut off on the machine. And I couldn't find my way back to it and I couldn't start it up again."

A new agent made a final effort to get her to read yet another pilot script ("I'd said I didn't want to look at another one") and she flipped the first page more out of courtesy than anything else.

That script was *This Is Us* and, three years later, the massively popular weepy TV romcom drama is garnering Moore critical acclaim and a Golden Globe nomination for her role as matriarch Rebecca Pearson, in which she ages from her 20s to her 60s.

"You wait an entire lifetime, an entire career for something like this," Moore enthuses. "You just appreciate it and savour every moment. It's the best job I've ever had."

She believes audiences have found comfort in the show's emotional messages. "I think in the wake of people feeling more divided than ever, our show came along – an hour of escapist entertainment," says Moore. "It allowed people a place to put all of their feelings and their confusion. It's just a crazy world these days and [it's good] to know you have an hour of catharsis to feel all of your feelings – to laugh and cry and everything in between."

Moore also credits the show's success to timing and the fact it premiered just prior to the vitriolic 2016 US election. She believes people were looking for something warm and fuzzy in their lives and, basically, a good excuse to cry. (Moore cries a lot on screen. And she's utterly exceptional at it.)

Now, Moore says, America's political climate is even more ugly and divisive. "No-one's talking. They're just arguing," she says, exhaling. "They just want to scream at each other. They just want to go on Twitter or Instagram and be offended and tell you why they're offended and why you're wrong."

Moore feels that as a person with a public platform, she has a responsibility to speak out on issues she sees as important. For her, that includes encouraging young people in the US to vote, advocating gun control, acknowledging climate change and, subsequently, pushing the urgent need to protect wildlife. Subjects she knows first-hand invite online trolls en masse.

"I'm only human and those things are going to hurt your feelings but, I don't know, I've been doing this for almost 20 years now and you develop a thicker skin and you just try to let it roll off your back."

Moore has spent a substantial chunk of her life in the spotlight. In an unexpected twist of fate, she was spotted as a teen by a delivery man who heard her singing in a local studio and told a friend – who worked in the music industry – about her.

By 15, she was a fresh-faced, blonde pop star, gazing down the barrel of a camera in the perky "Candy" video.

The song, in much the same vein of a Britney Spears, Jessica Simpson or Christina Aguilera, did okay in her home country, but was a smash overseas, particularly in Australia where it went to number two on the charts. (She once said that if she had the money she would "give a refund" to anyone who bought her first album.)

But pop music wasn't the only aim; she wanted to emulate her hero Bette Midler and navigate music, film, TV and theatre. "I always knew if I had any shot or any opportunity, I wanted to try my hand at everything if possible."

On-screen roles in *The Princess Diaries* and *A Walk To Remember* cemented her status as a young talent to watch. And while she had major fame at a young age, it didn't translate into the awkward public breakdowns or serious drug and alcohol issues which befell some of her peers.

Moore points to her parents, Stacy, a journalist, and Donald, an airline pilot, as the reason she navigated child stardom into an adult career with barely a public stumble.

"They always were intent on just being Mum and Dad," she explains. "Nobody ever wanted to manage me or insert themselves into my career. They were happy just to tag along and be there for me. At a time when most people are pulling away from their parents, I had the opposite experience, and we became closer."

She also avoided a hardcore partying phase. "I completely skirted around that whole time in my life, and I just went straight to being an old woman and going to bed at 8.30pm," she says with a laugh. "I'm waiting for my partying phase, but I think inherently that's who I am – I'm just a bit quieter. I live a very healthy lifestyle." >

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These days, she says she feels for performers like Justin Bieber who have to do their growing up (often painfully so) with more eyes on them than ever before. "I can't imagine what it would be like to be a young person in the public eye nowadays," she says. "There's a lot of pressure and the scrutiny is intense."

On a positive note, she's buoyed by the #MeToo movement's impact on the entertainment industry. "It feels like a time of connection with women. We have so much more power and a unity and connection with each other," she says, adding that she personally was never on the receiving end of sexual harassment or abuse. "You can just see women at events and give each other a knowing glance. We all feel supported and understood and that, even a year ago, didn't exist."

Of her own close group of girlfriends, she says she feels the weight and importance of those friendships in her life, more so now than in her twenties. "I'm not sure what to attribute that to but I'm so grateful – they are my sounding board, they are my inspiration, they are everything. I love [my fiancé], Taylor, and he's my best friend, but my relationship with him is very different from the way that I'm fulfilled by my girlfriends."

Moore met musician Taylor Goldsmith in 2015, as her self-described "acrimonious" divorce with Adams was being finalised. New love was not high on her priorities list, but she posted a photo of Goldsmith's band Dawes on Instagram and he sent a polite message of thanks via his manager who passed it onto Moore's manager.

They began corresponding via (electronic) letters, like something out of a Jane Austen novel. "I was like, he's so lovely, such a normal man," she laughs.

Finally, they went out for a sushi date that lasted three hours. "I left that dinner completely smitten but we didn't hold hands or kiss or anything," Moore remembers.

But Goldsmith was headed out on tour for six weeks so they continued emailing, texting and FaceTiming.

"I completely fell in love with him without having done anything more than given him a hug good night."

Moore says her past ultimately brought her Goldsmith.

"When I met Taylor, I was more of a fully-formed woman. Before, I don't know if I would have been open for it, had I not gone through what I went through in my previous relationship."

Recently, Adams lambasted her on Twitter after Moore said in an interview that she "didn't choose the right person" and the relationship was "unhealthy". He countered her comments by saying their marriage was "doomed from the start" and that he didn't remember any of it.

By comparison, she describes Goldsmith as an "undeniably good person in every respect".

You have way more resilience than you give yourself credit for"

most about yourself and what you're made of. You have way more resilience than you give yourself credit for," she notes.

"I feel more comfortable in my skin now than I think I ever have at any point in my life and career. And I've enjoyed getting older and everything that's sort of come along with it, the wisdom, and the clarity that comes with it."

That clarity, she says, may even inspire her to get a new tattoo, to add to the three currently etched on her feet. She got her first one, a love heart, when she was 18. Her old friend Jack Osbourne went along to the tattooist with her. "He was the only person I knew with tattoos!"

The second has an infinitely more interesting back-story. "It's a sperm," she laughs. "I was on tour with a bunch of boys and the rule was they couldn't, 'rub one out' in the bathroom. It was a bit of an in-joke about not having babies on our feet!"

Recently, she got number three, which was inspired by a "bucket list" trip she took with Goldsmith and some pals to Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. After the trip, they all got an outline of the famous peak etched on their bodies.

That "life-changing" experience has ignited a new passion.

"I want to see everything – I want to hike, I want to swim, I want to experience... everything," she gushes animatedly.

"I have so many other plans." E

"I wasn't expecting it but I really lucked out. And I would go through everything that I went through a million times over if it meant landing Taylor in my life again and meeting him." (Goldsmith returned from tour the day of our ELLE shoot and drove straight to the set to see her in a relationship goals moment worthy of a heart-eye emoji.)

Now, the couple are collaborating on new music. It's been a decade since Moore has released a song and she's missed it.

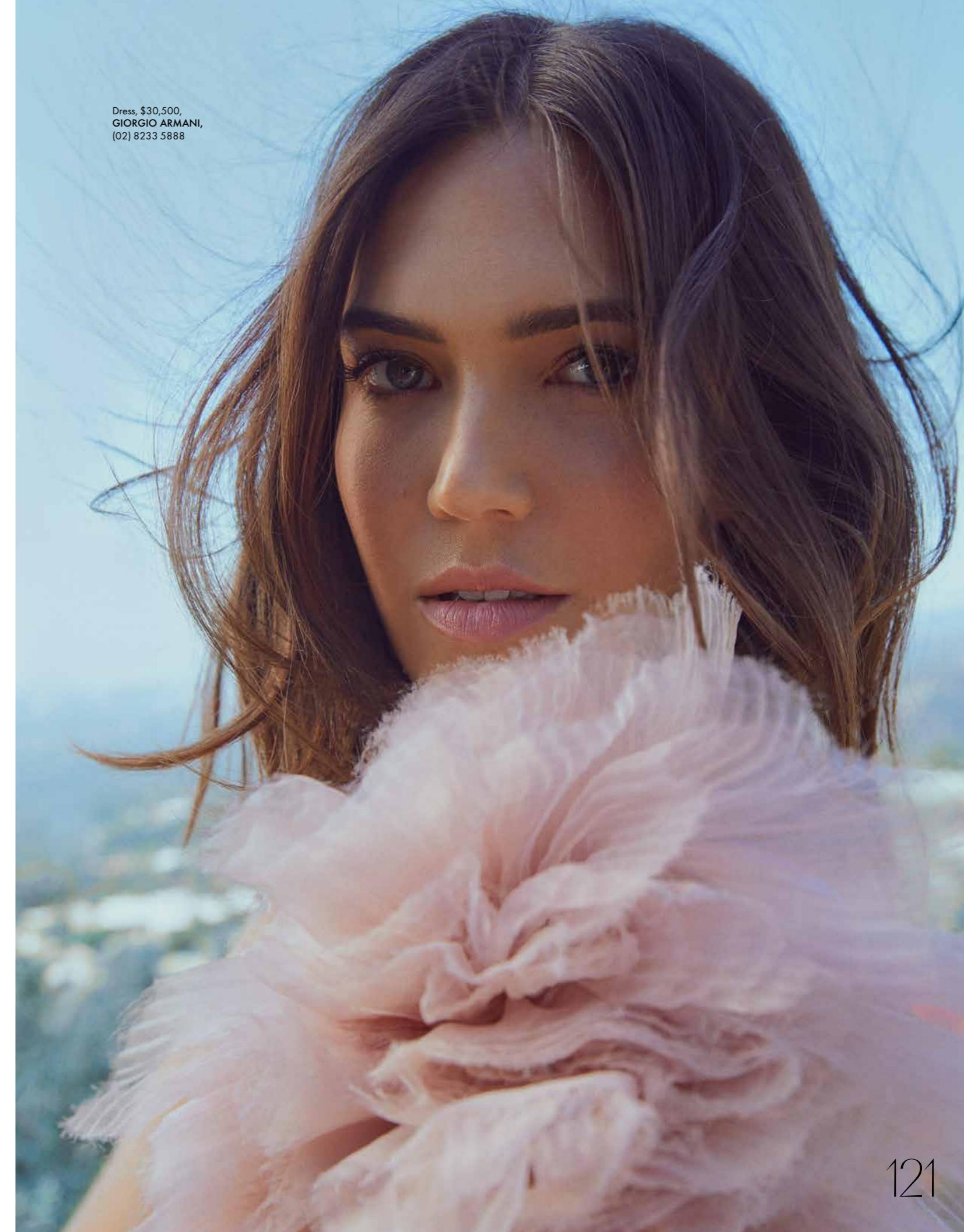
"It's been too long. I have something to say and it's so easy to find a way to put music out these days, you don't need the whole machinery of a record label behind you anymore," she says. "I think I'm just going to do it and put it out in the world. Why not?"

Music, she says, will also play a big role in the couple's wedding which is happening in "the next few months".

She and Adams eloped because she didn't "want any attention" on her. This time, she'll embrace the occasion with an intimate celebration. "I'm excited to mark that with some friends and family and I finally understand what it means to want to share that moment with people in a way that I didn't before."

These days, Moore says she often reflects on how far she's come, both personally and professionally. "It's about having patience, and it's about having unending belief in the way the world works. There's a lesson in everything and I think those perceived failures in life are the moments where you sort of learn the

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