

'I don't have any rules. I'll always be an

The newly married model Agyness Deyn talks to **Helena de Bertodano** about her fledgling film career, life in LA and settling down

A change appears to have come over Agyness Deyn, the quirky Lancashire model whose image has graced the covers of almost every magazine in the world. In her heyday she was the face of Burberry, Armani and Vivienne Westwood. Off the catwalk she is known for her eccentric, androgynous style of clothing, her bleached, cropped hair and her laid-back attitude.

But the woman who walks into Little Dom's, a trendy Italian restaurant in the Los Feliz neighbourhood of Los Angeles, looks so conventional that at first I don't recognise her. Instead of rocker hair, she has a neat, blonde bob scraped back into a ponytail, a knee-length cotton print dress, blue plimsolls and an unobtrusive handbag slung over her shoulder.

Perhaps the clue to her transformation is the gold ring she is wearing on her wedding finger. Two months ago, she married the *Friends* and *Avatar* actor Giovanni Ribisi at Los Angeles County Registrar — a union that came as something of a surprise. "CAT'S OUT THE BAG!!" tweeted her younger sister Emily excitedly after the news got out. "Congrats to my sis... and mi new bro inlaw Giovanni." The couple have set up home in Atwater Village, near Los Feliz, but have not had much time to get to know each other. In March this year Deyn was quoted as saying: "I'm all alone. There has been no man in my life for several months now and although it would be nice to have a boyfriend, I can't just settle for anybody."

Ribisi has some films under his belt but is best known for playing Phoebe's half-brother Frank on *Friends*. He is an active Scientologist and has a 15-year-old daughter called Lucia from his marriage to the actress Mariah O'Brien.

"Thank you," Deyn says shyly, when I congratulate her on her marriage. Sliding into her seat, she orders a peppermint tea. Although Deyn does not want to discuss her new husband, she does concede that, at 29, she is in the mood for settling down. "A lot of my friends have families and kids and it's a group I want to be a part of."

Spotted by a model scout while shopping in Kentish Town, London, Deyn was soon being hailed as the "new Kate Moss". In May 2007, she was featured on the cover of *American Vogue* as one of "the world's next top models".

When I ask her what happened to her usual eclectic style, she looks down at what she is wearing in some surprise. "I usually wear this dress with my Doc Martens," she says in the broad Lancashire accent that remains untarnished by her eight years in the States. Although toned down, the



PAUL STUART / CAMERA PRESS

Agyness Deyn

street cred is still there. Her dress is Topshop and she wears a turquoise Hermès watch with dog collar spikes.

Her collaboration with Dr. Martens is the reason she has agreed to meet. She whips out her iPad and scrolls through images of herself dressed in the new collection, which she helped to design. Deyn says that her favourite piece is the over-the-knee boots, which are "sexy but not too provocative — they're made out of a wetsuit material which hugs your leg".

"I can't wait to see someone walking down the street in it." Her friend and design partner Tracy Moore, who has accompanied her to the interview, pipes up: "Lucia — I want to see Lucia in it." Deyn does not respond but Moore seems to be referring to Deyn's new stepdaughter Lucia.

"I have always had a really intense relationship with Dr. Martens," says Deyn, "right from my first pair back when I was 13, which I bought as a combination of showing that I wanted to rebel against my parents, and they were the coolest boots that I could get away with wearing to school, which stood for something that gave me my own stamp of originality. Your bag and your shoes are what distinguish your personality."

Born Laura Hollins, Deyn grew up in Rossendale, Lancashire, and attended a local Catholic school. As a teenager, she took a part-time job in a fish and chip shop: "Chippie girl to conquer the world," declared the *Manchester Evening News* when she was voted Model of the Year at the 2007 British Fashion Awards. Suddenly she was being described as an icon of youth culture. "It's strange when you have your own icons." I ask who her icons are. "Joan of Arc," she replies immediately.

She changed her name on the advice of a numerologist who said "Agyness Deyn" would be a more fortuitous combination of letters. He seems to have had a point, as fame and fortune soon followed. The name change also created distance from her father, Ken Hollins, who became estranged from the family after divorcing her mother when Agyness was 13. In a recent interview, Hollins said he did not expect to hear from his daughter again. "The door's always open for her, she knows that and I'd do anything for her. It's just one of those things."

When I ask Deyn about changing her name, the shutters come down. "That's getting a bit personal." On almost every subject she is a lot more guarded than in the past, perhaps an effect of her recent marriage. Even when I ask her whether she feels models are subjected to too much pressure to look a certain way, she says: "I don't really want to be a spokesperson so I don't really want to talk about it." Did she

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ever feel that pressure herself? "I just go and do the job; it's not who I am, it's my job." She says she registers what other people wear immediately. "I always, like, clock it. The outlandish kind of dressing that's been going on is maybe coming to an end. I don't want to name people but I think they're becoming more intelligent in dressing. The younger generation today are more of a team, a gang. Back in the day..." She laughs at herself. "I sound so old, like my mother. Anyway, back in the day, when we were kids, you didn't know what kids were thinking or wearing in the next city. Now there's this creative, feminist kind of unitedness; younger girls are smart and witty."

Deyn loves living in Los Angeles: "I like the style and the freshness of it." It is also useful for her fledgling acting career. "I love modelling and I've been in it for 11 years. I just thought 'Let's have a go...' [Acting] has been a slow process, which is great. I'm not in any rush."

She talks with more enthusiasm about acting than about anything else. Earlier this year she appeared in the West End in *The Leisure Society* as Paula, "a promiscuous free spirit" receiving good reviews.

She is most excited about her upcoming role in *Sunset Song*, a film adaptation of the 1930s Scottish novel, directed by Terence Davies. "Oh my God," she says, suddenly coming to life: "I play, like, this woman called Chris Guthrie and it spans from her being like 15 to 30 and it's this incredible story of the strength of this woman who has terrible things happen to her and how she fights throughout that. It's this famous Scottish literature book and it's just so beautiful because of the connection to the landscape. It's pre-war and she's a farmer and she has this abusive relationship from her dad and it's just incredible. I read the script and I was just like so moved."

"I saw some Scottish friends like Christopher Kane and Jonathan Saunders [both fashion designers] and they were like 'Holy shit' because they did that book at school. They were like, 'Wow, you'd better not f*** this up.'"

She says she felt a strong connection to the role. "I think the strength of her... she's her own person and she's going forward all the time, whatever comes on her path, there's this constant drive. And she doesn't lose her integrity over anything."

In another movie, *Pusher*, due to be released this autumn, Deyn plays a stripper: "She's like this real fragile flower who has this persona of being hard, a kind of f***-you sexy vibe, but behind it all she's like total little girl. I think everyone has their moments of vulnerability and also trying to overcome that..."

Recently, she said that she'd love to play Jane Eyre. "I think I'm attracted to a role that is literally saying, like 'This is who I am' — there's strength in that..."

She has no truck with people who say models cannot be actors. "Look at Julia Roberts..."

When I ask her whether her life has changed much since her marriage, she sidesteps the question. "I suppose life changes all the time, you're just doing different stuff." But she insists the old Agyness is not forgotten: "I'll always be an adventurer... I don't have any rules."

The Agyness Deyn for Dr. Martens collection is available now at Dr. Martens stores and online at drmartens.com