

YOUR SATURDAY STARTS HERE

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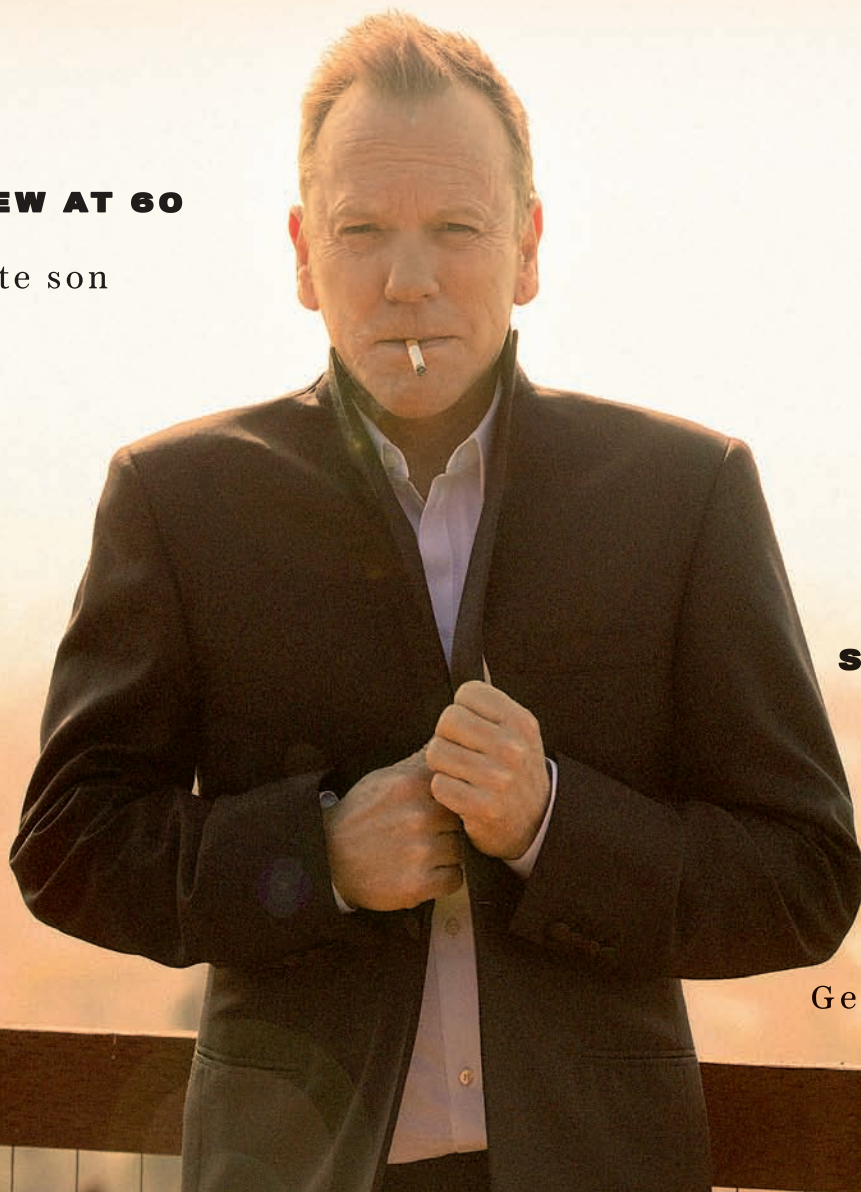
# KIEFFER

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

*HOLLYWOOD'S ORIGINAL BAD BOY*

on

**STILL HELLRAISING AT 53** and how **JULIA ROBERTS** broke his heart



## **PRINCE ANDREW AT 60**

How the favourite son  
fell from grace

## **FIRST PERSON**

'I unlocked my  
father's dark  
secret after  
his death'

## **SATURDAY SUPPER CLUB**

The ultimate  
chocoholic's  
menu by  
Georgina Hayden



EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW

'I'M ONE OF THE







# **LUCKIEST PEOPLE I KNOW'**

**Kiefer Sutherland  
is a man of many  
talents: actor,  
rodeo rider, farmer  
– and notorious  
bad boy. He is now  
making a new name  
for himself as...  
a country-music  
singer. Helena  
de Bertodano met  
him on the eve of  
his European tour.  
Photography by  
Mason Poole**



I am sitting on a sunny terrace with Kiefer Sutherland, overlooking California's San Fernando Valley, when suddenly he breaks into song. 'Cigarettes in the ashtrays,' he sings in a soft, gravelly voice. 'All in a line/ Empty glasses of whisky/ Show the passage of time.' He splutters to a halt and coughs. 'I'm so sick,' he explains apologetically (he is recovering from a bad cold) – before lighting another cigarette and inhaling deeply.

They are the lyrics to a song he is working on for his third album. If anyone can count the passage of their life in cigarette butts and empty whisky glasses, it is the notoriously hard-living – and hard-working – Sutherland. Best known for his iconic screen persona Jack Bauer, the counterterrorist agent of the hugely successful TV series *24*, he also played President Tom Kirkman in *Designated Survivor* and starred in hit movies such as *Stand By Me*, *Flatliners* and *Young Guns*. Now 53, Sutherland is making a new name for himself as a country-music singer.

We meet in Los Angeles just before he leaves for Europe to tour his second album, *Reckless & Me*. For years he resisted the temptation of becoming a musician – although he had played the guitar for decades. 'The stigma of actors doing music is pretty predominant,' he points out. But four years ago a friend convinced him to give it a try. At first he was terrified: 'There was no character separating me from the audience.' He suspected people might be going to gigs to laugh at him. 'I learnt they weren't coming to see a car wreck. They want you to be good.'

And he is. The response, both critical and from fans, has been overwhelmingly positive. 'Jack Bauer can do anything, even sing!' reads a typical comment under one of his YouTube tracks. His rootsy debut album, *Down in a Hole*, garnered stellar reviews and his second is a similar mix of up-tempo and raspy heartbreak, reminiscent of Tom

Petty. He writes most of his own lyrics. 'I have a pen and book nearby all the time. The melody comes later.'

After all, Sutherland had already faced down another stigma: that of being the offspring of two successful actors. His mother is Shirley Douglas and his father the mighty Donald Sutherland. 'It never occurred to me that was threatening,' says Sutherland thoughtfully. 'I was never trying to follow in his footsteps anyway, I was just so proud to have him as my dad.'

He arrives at the house where the photo shoot is taking place 15 minutes early, driving a silver BMW. It is chilly for LA and Sutherland emerges from the car well wrapped in layers of black and grey: a woolly scarf knotted round his neck, jacket, skinny jeans, gnarled cowboy boots and shades. He doesn't really look like Bauer and at first I can't work out why. Then I realise it is his almost constant smile. As any *24* nerd will tell you, Bauer's stressed features almost never relax into a smile in *204* episodes of the series, which ran from 2001 to 2010 and returned in 2014 for a ninth season.

Sutherland is the antithesis of your usual

**'COULD I HAVE BEEN  
A BETTER FATHER?  
ABSOLUTELY'**



**Action man** Sutherland as Jack Bauer in *24* (above) and playing the president in *Designated Survivor*



With his daughter Sarah, who stars in *Veep*

Hollywood celebrity. Courteous and unassuming, he talks honestly and openly, gamely tackling any subject, from his battles with alcohol, to jail (he has been a few times), to his relationship with Julia Roberts – who famously called off their wedding just days before they were due to marry in 1991.

Born in London with a twin sister Rachel, he was raised mostly in Canada. His parents divorced when he was three, but he vividly remembers them together. 'They came from the school of: "You're the children so adapt to our lives, we're not adapting to yours. We're not gonna redo our whole f—king house and make it a giant children's playground."' He laughs affectionately. 'So that meant me and my sister sleeping under the table at the bar at the Hamburger Hamlet because they were having a night [out].' He remembers his mother as the taskmaster while his father was 'peculiar and hysterically funny'.

Although Sutherland hopped around many schools, he didn't mind the upheavals. 'It was a lot tougher on my sister. I actually really liked it: making new friends, starting over...' He left school at 15 to act, landing his first leading role in the Canadian drama *The Bay Boy* in 1985. By 20 he was married (to actor Camelia Kath) and soon after had his daughter Sarah, 31, now an actor, best known for her role as Catherine Mayer in *Veep*.

He shows me the screen saver on his phone – a picture of him holding Sarah as a toddler. 'It was just after *Young Guns*,' he says. 'Could I have been a better father? Absolutely. When you have a kid at that age, you're winging it. By the time they're 10 you're like, "Thank God they're still alive."'

But father and daughter enjoy a close relationship: the closing track on his new album, *Song for a Daughter*, is a tribute to her: 'You'll always be your daddy's little girl.' As he talks about her, a text appears on his phone – coincidentally from Sarah. He reads it out. 'Pops, are you around for lunch or a walk Friday? I want to pick your brains before you leave for tour.' A smile spreads

PREVIOUS PAGE: STYLING: TIFFANICHYNE; GROOMING: STEPHANIE HOBGOOD; WOOL: TUXEDO; \$4,985; BRIONI ROMA (BRIONI.COM); SLIM-FIT SHIRT, \$65; COS (COSSTORES.COM); THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; REX FEATURES; FOX BROADCASTING COMPANY

across his face. 'Oh that's very sweet,' he says happily.

Sarah was only a year old when Sutherland began a relationship with Roberts, his co-star in *Flatliners*. Hailed as the Hollywood couple of the day, Sutherland was blindsided when Roberts called off their 1991 wedding and soon afterwards began a relationship with Sutherland's friend, the actor Jason Patric. 'I was heartbroken,' he says today. But he thinks she did the right thing. 'We were young. And I think she very smartly realised, "Oh gosh, this is for life. I'm not ready to do this." And fair enough. Good for you. Thank you - in hindsight.'

He says that he and Roberts 'run into each other every once in a blue moon at an awards show'. And like Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston when they met at the Screen Actors Guild awards recently, they greet each other warmly. But no, he says definitively, he could never imagine getting back together with her. Yet he understands why everyone is so invested in a Pitt/Aniston reunion. 'People are romantic. They want people to still care about each other. And I've never understood people breaking up and never talking again. How could you go from one day being that in love to hating someone?'

Of Roberts he says, 'She's someone that I loved and cared for very much and there were reasons for that and those reasons haven't changed. I wish her absolutely everything.' He says that being with her was an extraordinary experience. 'I developed an incredible understanding of how difficult it was for women in our business. She changed the pay scale for women in film, I was so proud of her for that. I also saw the way people came at her.' He exhales loudly. 'I was scared for her and I can only imagine that that got worse. She was arguably and is arguably one of the largest stars in the world.'

At the time, Sutherland sensed that the



With his then-girlfriend Julia Roberts in 1990

blame for the break-up would land on his shoulders and fled town. 'If you had to pick one of the two, you knew who was going down,' he chuckles. He kept a low profile for a few years, reinventing himself as a rodeo rider and a farmer. It was during this period that he started listening to a lot of country music, particularly Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash. 'I got kicked around for the first five years,' he says of his decade with the rodeo. 'There were a lot of broken bones. But it was something I cared about enough to follow through with.'

**A**lthough he also worked on and off as an actor, by the mid-'90s his star had dimmed and the films were mostly forgettable. 'There are certainly times when you're not relevant and no one cares.' It wasn't until 24 that he really returned to Hollywood. 'I had no anticipation of it being a success, but it took off and I was like, "OK, are you a farmer or are you an actor?" I had 3,000 acres in the Central Valley and I was running about 1,000 head of cattle. I sold that farm so f—king fast it would make your head spin.'

Today he lives in nearby Toluca Lake with his actor girlfriend Cindy Vela, 41. 'But I haven't been home for four years.' He is exaggerating, but not by much. As well as playing '500 shows in four years', he has spent much of his time in Toronto shooting three seasons of *Designated Survivor* (2016 to 2019).

On YouTube there is a video of him cooking steak in an immaculate kitchen, baking foil placed all over the top of the oven to catch any sputtering oil. 'Oh yes,' says Sutherland, 'that was in my home: the overly tidy kitchen.' He happily admits that he is a neat freak. 'The second you walk outside of your house, you lose control of everything. Bad stuff can happen. At least in my home, I can control that small environment, things are where I want them. And it allows me to just let go of everything else.'

He and Vela have been together for nearly six years, but after two failed marriages - one to Sarah's mother and the second to Kelly Winn, a film crew member - he does not want to marry again. '[Marriage] is not right for me. It made me lazy. Somehow you get married and it's a done thing and you start taking things for granted. I've watched other people flourish through it, so it's not an indictment on marriage as an institution. And it's certainly not an indictment on whether or not I love somebody.' He sighs: 'Oh God, you could talk until you're blue in the face and no one will buy that. But it's the truth.'

Does he mean people in general don't buy it? 'No, when you're trying to explain to your girl that it's a personal thing and it's got nothing to do with them. They're like, "Yeah, f—k you." But Cindy is cool with it? He hesitates and half smiles, half sighs. 'Coolish.' Hmmm.

Anyway, the song he started singing earlier is dedicated to her. After the cigarettes and whisky, it continues: 'Dancing round the kitchen island/There's no one left to

## THE BRAT PACK DAYS

### THE LOST BOYS - 1987

In this comedy/horror film, Sutherland plays David (centre), a vampire biker, alongside Jason Patric, Corey Haim and Alex Winter.



### YOUNG GUNS - 1988

Sutherland, Emilio Estevez and Charlie Sheen play young outlaws out to avenge the murder of their friend and guardian.



### FLATLINERS - 1990

Five medical students set out to discover if there is an afterlife. It was during this film that Sutherland met and fell in love with Julia Roberts.





stare/I feel you move around me/Like we're a perfect pair.'

'It's called *Two Stepping in Time* – it's the only song I've ever written for Cindy and actually it made her cry,' he says proudly.

A committed drinker, Sutherland's exploits are legendary: from drunken bar brawls to launching himself fully clothed into the pool at the Beverly Hills Hotel to rugby tackling a 9ft Christmas tree to the ground at London's Strand Palace Hotel. One morning a few years ago, he woke to a phone call from a friend. "Did you read the paper this morning?" I said, "No, I'm just getting up." He said, "There's a very funny article about the 100 dangerous things you need to do before you die, everything from car racing to parachuting. And number 11 is going out with you for a night." Sutherland laughs: 'It made me feel far cooler than I deserved.'

He felt less cool in 2007 when he was jailed for 48 days for drink driving. 'On the way [to jail] I remember thinking, "Oh f—k it, I'll read and work out." But there's no yard or gym in a county jail. And in the cell, every time I would go to do a push-up, from any angle, my head ended up in the toilet. There's no library and the process of getting a book into jail is [difficult] because so many people paint the pages with LSD. So all the fantasies I had of being constructive were dashed.'

It did, however, give him time to reflect. 'It was helpful in the sense that I don't ever want to go back. I am also smarter than that and I don't want to be that guy.'

The drinking has never compromised his work. 'I've never been late. I know what I'm doing.' So he's not an alcoholic? Sutherland hesitates. 'I would think by most accounts I would have to say that alcoholic is the term that I would have to probably deal with... Anything I've done that was a really poor decision, I can trace back to that. It's a very tricky catch-22 and trying to figure out how to balance it, God, that takes an awful lot of energy.'

Sutherland with his girlfriend Cindy Vela



### 'MY FATHER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST JOKE TELLERS OF ALL TIME'

Not that he ever plans to give it up. 'There's such a celebratory part of that world that I enjoy so much that I would be very disappointed if I put myself in a position where I would have to give that up completely. Drinking can get pretty funny if you let it move you. And by that I don't mean drive. But if you have an idea and you follow through with that idea.'

Are we talking Christmas trees? He snorts derisively: 'Oh God, that was nothing. I'm talking about really funny stuff where you wake up in a different town.'

One evening, for example, he was drinking with friends at Genghis Cohen, a live music venue in Los Angeles. 'I got my fortune cookie and it said, "Tonight you're lucky." I showed everybody and we were in Vegas within two hours. We did really well [gambling], then slept for a little bit and did a road trip through Nevada, Arizona and eastern California. Kind of sightseeing. In an aggressive fashion.'

Who are his partners on these escapades? 'You wouldn't know them. Most of the people I hang out with are guys I played hockey with growing up in Canada.'

He means ice hockey, which he still plays occasionally. Otherwise, he keeps fit through 'jogging and fear'.

For many years it was his dream to work with his father, now 84. In 2015, they finally starred in a western together, *Forsaken*, playing father and son. 'He's the only actor I was in the middle of a scene with where I completely forgot what I was doing, because I was watching him so intently. I was really embarrassed. He went: "Got lost in it, didn't you." And he smiled and laughed and I laughed. It was a great experience.'

He sees many similarities between himself and his father. 'The desire to [act] comes from an excitement for storytelling,'

says Sutherland. 'My father is one of the greatest joke tellers of all time, he's fantastic dinner company.'

Storytelling also underscores his love of music. The title track of *Reckless & Me* recalls his rodeo days, while other tracks are about loss or love affairs gone wrong. 'As wonderful as love is, I don't think anybody hasn't felt taken advantage of.' He loves the connection with the audience and always sounds authentic. 'I'm aware that the music I make is not challenging the top of the charts, but to have 500 people on your side, it's the best feeling I've ever had.'

But he doesn't mind that it is still Jack Bauer that people most associate him with. When fans meet him, 'they want me to say, "Dammit Chloe!" into their phones'. Dammit was Bauer's go-to expletive, Chloe his long-suffering colleague.

Recently there has been speculation about a return of *24*, with executive producer Howard Gordon saying last month that discussions were being held. 'I had lunch with Howard last week,' says Sutherland. Did they discuss a revival? 'We didn't actually,' he replies, not entirely convincingly. 'We just hung out.'

Would he be interested in coming back as Bauer? 'If they had a good story, I would be so happy. I love playing that character.'



Performing at the O2 in October last year

He attributes his longevity in the industry to his constant appetite for work. 'I've been so fortunate to be able to do the one thing that I love more than anything: acting. And it's then afforded me the ability to do rodeo or music. I'm one of the luckiest people I know.'

What really drives him, though, is a fear of being idle. 'That's when I go to jail. So let's avoid that and stay busy.' And with that he lights another cigarette, gets behind the wheel of his BMW and roars off down the hill to another recording session with his band. *Kiefer Sutherland's album Reckless & Me is out now. He tours the UK this month; kiefersutherland.net*