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# VICTORY LAP

*JORDANA BREWSTER SPEEDS INTO 'FAST & FURIOUS 9,' PANDEMIC PARENTING AND UNEXPECTED LOVE*

BY REED TUCKER PHOTOS BY KURT ISWARIENKO

**F**OR two decades, the “Fast & Furious” franchise has roared beside her, marking the milestones of her life.

In 2001’s debut, she was a student barely into her second year at Yale. Tick. In 2015’s “Furious 7,” she had just welcomed her first child. Tock. Now the upcoming “F9” will again denote a fresh chapter for Jordana Brewster, marking an era of newfound confidence and independence. And at an age when notoriously sexist and ageist Hollywood likes to freeze out film veterans, Brewster is just getting warmed up.

“Forty has been the best year for me,” she tells Alexa. “I feel like I’m coming into my own.”

The actor, who turned 41 a few days ago, is indeed racing to the next level. She’s reset her romantic life and — perhaps most importantly for fans — is confidently molding her place in one of the biggest film franchises going.

It’s been 20 years since Brewster debuted as Mia Toretto in the very first “Fast & Furious” film. In June she returns for “F9,” her sixth appearance in the biceps-and-bullets franchise and the first of three films expected to conclude the saga.

After sitting out 2017’s “The Fate of the Furious,” Mia joins brother Dom (Vin Diesel) and his usual crew — Letty (Michelle Rodriguez), Roman (Tyrese Gibson) and Tej (Chris “Ludacris” Bridges) — to take down a long-lost Toretto brother (John Cena), who’s trying to acquire a powerful cyber-weapon.

In the previous eight films, much of the butt-kicking has been left to the guys. But with “F9,” the women step into the spotlight (including Charlize Theron, whose bleached bob deserves its own spinoff film, and 75-year-old Helen Mirren, whose UK crime boss character gets to dodge cops on a wild chase through London’s streets.)

In one explosive scene, Brewster and Rodriguez team up to track a lead to Tokyo, where they’re forced to punch and

kick their way through a room full of evil henchmen.

Brewster first started advocating for more action when she guest starred in two 2019 episodes of TV’s “Magnum P.I.” (Justin Lin, director of “F9,” is the executive producer on that series.)

“I got to do a lot of physical stuff on that show,” she says. “And then I started taking taekwondo lessons and I would just send Justin videos of me training. And then I would send him videos of me on the ‘Magnum’ set wearing a ski mask and holding a gun. I was like, ‘Looks pretty bad[ass], right?’”

Brewster then worked with a stunt team for two days before prep for her big fight scene in “F9.”

“I’m the nerd preparing meticulously,” she says. “And once we were on set, Michelle showed up two days before, and she’s like, ‘Yeah, I got it. This is nothing.’”

But Brewster’s confidence on “F9” is still light-years ahead of where it was for the original 2001 film.

“I feel like I came onto that set and I was really intimidated





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by everyone, particularly Michelle, because Michelle is so strong and so comfortable speaking her truth," Brewster says. "I was a little bit more shy and timid."

She wasn't even particularly confident in the film's now-iconic title — she preferred its original "Red Line" moniker.

"When I heard the title change [to 'Fast & Furious,'] I didn't think it was going to work," she recalls with a laugh. "Now I look back and think, 'Wow, what a moron.'"

The new title indeed proved a solid one, and the franchise has helped make a name for a girl who grew up wanting to act.

Brewster was born in 1980 to a father who worked in finance and a mother who was a model. She spent much of her early childhood in Brazil.

The family moved to New York City when Brewster was 10. She attended Upper East Side religious school Convent of the Sacred Heart near her family's apartment at Fifth Avenue and 102nd Street.

"I just felt like a total outsider," she recalls. "I felt like I brought the wrong lunch to school. I felt like all the other girls were shaving their legs and I wasn't shaving my legs because my mom didn't let me."

When she was 15, she found an identity, in part by pursuing acting more passionately. Brewster, who was by then enrolled at the Upper West Side's Professional Children's School, soon landed an agent; one of her first auditions was for the soap "As the World Turns." She won the role of Nikki Munson in 1995, and played the character for three years.

"It was just like, oh, this is something I can actually do," Brewster says. "And with my parents' blessing, I was able to do it."

Brewster admits that she didn't have a "conventional adolescence." Appearing on a soap opera and keeping up with her schoolwork was taxing.

"I remember a friend of mine being like, 'What about when you look back on your life? Jordana, you are going to regret not going to your prom,'" she recalls. "And I was like, 'No, I'm going to look back, and I'm going to be really proud of the fact that I was on a soap and was in [1998 Robert Rodriguez feature] 'The Faculty' at 18. I think I'll be good.'"

But even with work and school, the actor still found time to enjoy New York City. She loved going to Le Bilboquet, an Upper East Side restaurant that pumped music after the dinner hour. She scarfed burgers at Jackson Hole, and hit the high-end clubs that defined NYC nightlife in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as Moomba and Bungalow 8.

"It's like now with the internet, we all worry about being spotted doing something that's a bit naughty," she says. "But I just remember back then being like, 'Oh my God, please don't be in Page Six, please don't be in Page Six.'"

She kept a lower profile while attending Yale, especially after taking a semester off to shoot "The Fast and the Furious."

"I sort of isolated myself a little," she says. "I didn't really get the college experience of having a lot of fun and going to parties. I was just super focused on getting through it."

Now, she's most focused on motherhood. Brewster has two sons, ages 7 and 4, with producer and ex-husband Andrew Form, whom she married in 2007 (the two divorced last year).

Despite becoming frustrated trying to ride herd on her eldest during online school sessions, Brewster says being locked down in her LA home during the pandemic has been a blessing.

"This last year has taught everyone to slow down," she says. "I realized I actually feel much better when my nervous system calms down, and I actually think this is the way we're meant to be."

The time at home, she says, helped ground her, leaving her more confident to make her own decisions. She's also more willing to reveal vulnerabilities.

"I'd have a conversation with friends, and I'd be like, 'Oh my God, you see me as this ice queen,'" she says. "I'm like, 'Why do you see me that way?' And then I realized it's because I'm not willing to be flawed in front of people."

She still takes a weekly acting class, which she sometimes finds humbling, and is committed to stretching herself, even if it means failing spectacularly. "I realize I'm always going to have to grow," she says.

She has also grown more comfortable with her body, even though she's been branded as the resident hottie through much of her career. Her Instagram is now stocked with bikini selfies she says radiate a new "fierceness" that wasn't there in all those beefcake shots once found in Maxim and other magazines.

"It's such a cliché, but you really do come into your own at 40," she says. "I feel like it's so much more fun being in front of the camera and using my sexuality and not feeling so self-conscious and so concerned about how I look."

She also has a new boyfriend after her split with her husband last year. He is finance executive Mason Morfit.

"Falling deeply in love with someone new at 40 has been wonderful," Brewster says. "I feel like it affects my work and my outlook on life and the way I parent — every facet of my life. It's been really positive."

And, as always, it arrived just on time.

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