

"I do a lot of things that make me look the way I look," says Madsen. "I go to the gym. I eat good foods."

Oscar-nominated Virginia Madsen reveals why, at 45, she regularly goes under the needle—and what it's like to age in Hollywood

BY ALLISON ADATO

**'YES, I  
USE  
Botox'**

**D**oes she or doesn't she?

Virginia Madsen often found herself in conversations about actresses and cosmetic enhancements. "Oh, *she* uses Botox," someone would say of another star. "See that frozen face?" Then Madsen would drop this: "I'd say, 'Well, I use Botox.' They would say, 'You do?! But your forehead moves!'"

Madsen, 45, nominated for an Oscar for 2004's *Sideways*, laughs as she tells the story, and her eyes do crinkle slightly when she does. She admits she has been a twice-yearly Botox user since 2003, which puts her in good company; last year more than 3 million doses of the drug—a purified form of botulism toxin that temporarily paralyzes wrinkle-causing muscles—were sold in the U.S., making it the most popular nonsurgical cosmetic procedure. And in youth-crazed Hollywood, Madsen is clearly not its only celeb fan, though few (Vanessa Williams included) cop to it.

But with the announcement this month that Madsen is launching an informational campaign with Allergan, the drug's manufacturer, she has become the first star to actually endorse it. "I don't like to criticize other actors for what they choose to reveal or not, but let's be honest. I know a lot of people who are doing it, who aren't talking about it," she says

after a photo shoot in New York City, where she is filming a comedy, *Diminished Capacity*, with Matthew Broderick. Now that she's talking, people are asking questions: *Does it hurt?* "It isn't a tetanus shot, but you feel it," she says. *Does your hairdresser do it?* "These are medical products!" she insists. "Why would you do this in a place where people are getting their nails done?"

On another question, however, the actress's candor fades. Asked what she is paid to promote Botox and Juvéderm, a wrinkle-filler she recently tested on the lines beside her mouth, Madsen declines to say. She will make appearances in four cities later this year. So, more than a movie? "Depends on the movie, but, yes, it's lucrative," she says, adding, "I'm not advising anyone to use it—I'm talking about my personal experience." (See box for more on injectable procedures.)

That history began in 2003, when Madsen sought help for her migraine headaches and was prescribed Botox, a non-FDA-approved use that some have nonetheless found effective. The treatment came with a pleasant side effect: She no longer had the two parallel creases that formed between her knitted brows—the dreaded "11" lines. "I looked good!" says Madsen. Next came shots above the outer edges of her brows. "If something about my body bothers me, I go to the gym," she explains. "Something about my face bothered me—and there was an alternative."

A medical procedure, Botox can come with side effects, among them drooping eyelids, bruising and nausea. Madsen says she has always received her injections from a dermatologist, never at Botox parties (where the shots are given in private homes), though she was invited to some. "I was horrified," she says. "I felt like I needed to say, 'Be careful. Know what you're doing is a medical treatment.'" She adds: "I'm very motherly. I was motherly when I was 12 years old."

Upon arriving in L.A. from Chicago at 19, Madsen built a résumé of playing vamps in films from the pulpy Catholic-school romance *Fire with Fire* to 1987's sexy *Slam Dance*. Off-screen, she had high-profile relationships: She was married for three years to actor

Danny Huston (Anjelica's brother) and later had a son, Jack, with actor and underwear model Antonio Sabáto Jr. Long since uncoupled, the two live close by each other and are raising Jack, now 12, together, with Madsen homeschooling him.

Despite the early heat she generated, Madsen found it hard to return to work in her 30s after taking time off to be a full-time mom. Despite some TV work and help from friends and family, including her actor big brother Michael Madsen (*Kill Bill*), she faced foreclosure on her home twice. "My son didn't know what was going on, but he knew I was really tense about going to Chuck E. Cheese's."

Was it the age-old complaint that, for actresses of a certain age, good roles are few, far between and already booked by Susan Sarandon? "Actors like to blame other people for not working," says Madsen. "If you're an actor, the product is *you*."



“Other actresses have more pressure on them to be ‘super beautiful.’ I was always a little charactery” —MADSEN (WITH PAUL GIAMATTI IN *SIDEWAYS*)

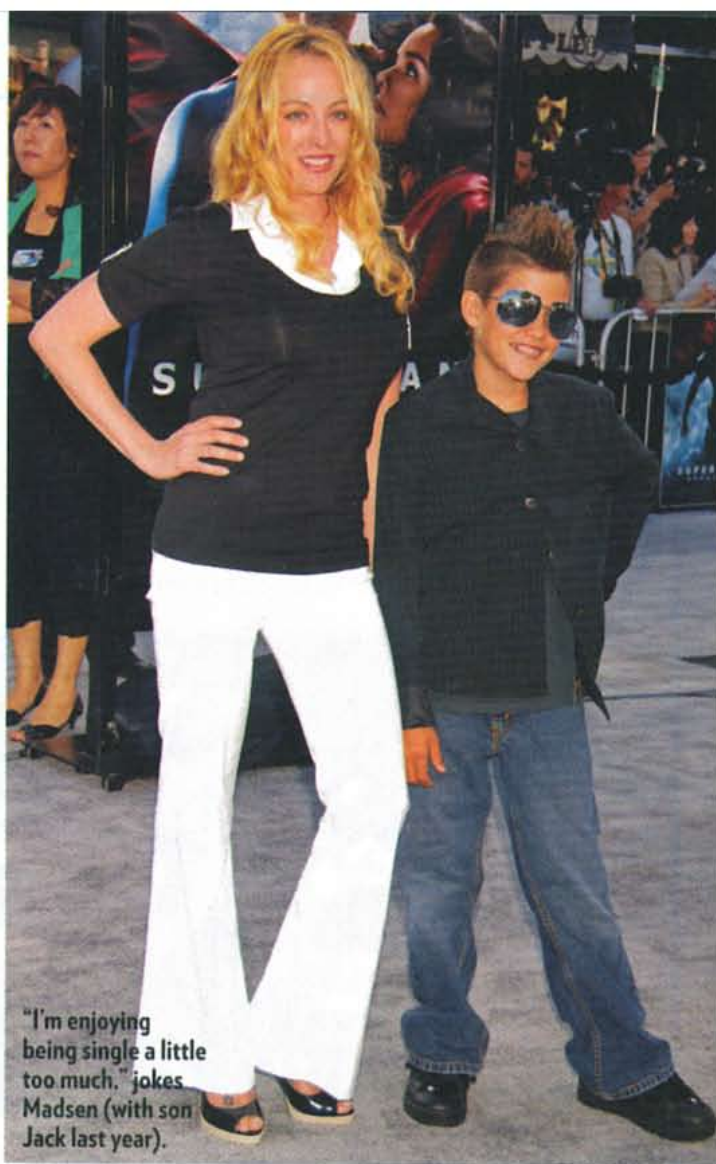
Determined to emerge from a five-year career dip, she hired an acting coach and began working out with personal trainer Joe Sanceri, now 77, whom she calls "Burgess Meredith to my Rocky." Madsen ate better, lost weight—and started using Botox. "I didn't do it for Hollywood," she says. And yet some combination of her renewed appearance and the self-confidence it brought turned things around: Later that year she landed the part of Maya in *Sideways*.

Ironically, to actually inhabit the role of the shopworn waitress and wine lover, Madsen, then 42, halted the Botox—she says her headaches returned—and put on pounds by eating pancakes. Then she shot the movie without makeup. Not Hollywood's lip-gloss-and-light-foundation version of no makeup, she insists: "No makeup." The film earned her swooning reviews, a Spirit Awards win and an Oscar nod.

"The thing that brought me the greatest success was a movie where I looked my age," she says proudly. She wishes younger stars would get the message—even if she chooses to use Botox today. "There was an actress about to turn 30 who was so freaked out, saying, 'Now I'm just going to play the wife and the D.A.' I was like, 'I'd love to play a D.A.!' In every era of your life you can play different parts."

She's proved it this year in *The Astronaut Farmer* (as a mom of three) and *The Number 23*, which included a return to her sexpot past. "I walk around in lingerie," she boasts. "To do that at 25 was hard. Now, it's really cool—I never expected to be asked."

Facing her 50s, Madsen won't predict her future on-screen—or at the plastic surgeon's office. A face-lift? Probably not. "I want to look like myself," she says. She smiles and shows her laugh lines again. "But ask me in 10 years." ●



"I'm enjoying being single a little too much," jokes Madsen (with son Jack last year).



Madsen has had Botox injected in her forehead (1) and a filler in the lines beside her mouth (2).

## 'INJECTABLES': What's in the syringe?

Injectables have an advantage—in both cost and safety—over face-lifts and other surgeries.

"They allow us to keep the scalpel at bay longer," says Beverly Hills cosmetic dermatologist Mark Rubin. Botox is the most-used, but others are gaining popularity:

**HYALURONIC ACID** Gel fillers like Restylane and Juvéderm add fullness to

the folds between the nose and the mouth, smile lines and lips, for six months or more. Possible side effects are swelling and redness, and in rare cases, bumps beneath the skin (\$600 per syringe).

**COLLAGEN** Derived from cows (Zyderm, Zyplast) or humans (CosmoDerm, CosmoPlast), these fill in fine lines, plump the lips and soften

the appearance of scars for at least three months, though redness, bruising and allergic reactions are possible (\$500).

**RADIESSE** Made from a form of calcium, it smoothes wrinkles for up to two years. But it may shift and cause bumps beneath the skin (\$850). *Ashley Williams with Debbie Seaman and Maureen Harrington*