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04

nicole

With a new star-studded TV series in the works and two young daughters to care for, life is hectic for the Oscar-winning actress. But, as she tells Jenny Cooney Carrillo, she always finds time to fuel one of her greatest passions – helping change the lives of vulnerable women and girls

Nicole Kidman is not an easy woman to pin down. After a flurry of emails, we lock in a time to chat, and then a message comes that we'll have to reschedule. A day later, when the Oscar-winning actress finally calls, she explains with great excitement the last-minute change of plans. Turns out she had a very good reason indeed. "We went to Las Vegas for a few hours to see AC/DC in concert because I'm a good wife and Angus Young is one of Keith's heroes," says Kidman, referring to her husband, country singer Keith Urban. "So we literally flew there, met them backstage, went to the show and then rushed back home to the girls."

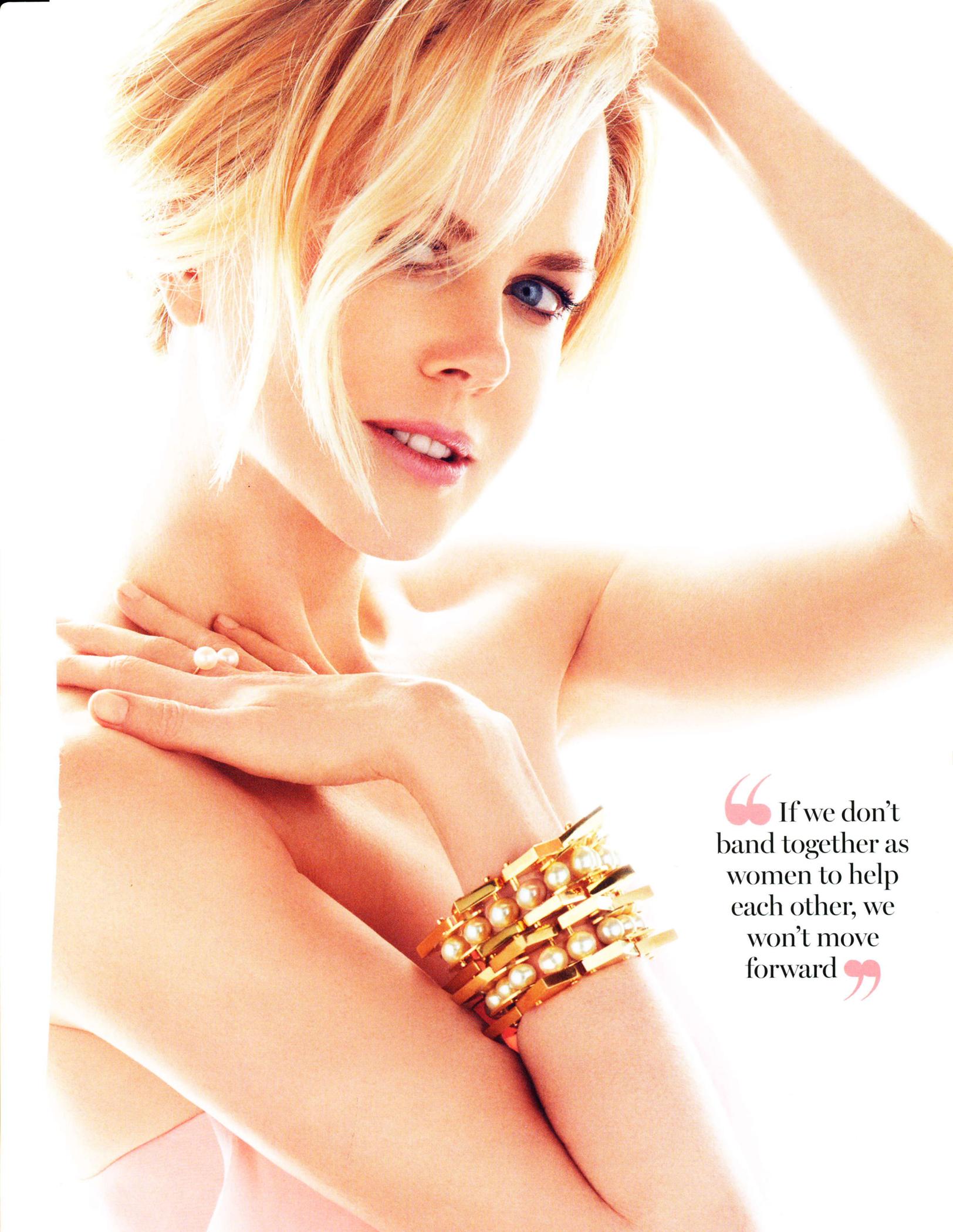
Who can blame an Aussie girl in love with an Aussie boy for dropping everything to go on a date to see an iconic Aussie band? "Keith really wanted to go and I'm like, 'OK, I'm going with you' because that's still our marriage," she says. "I don't want to be away from him for one night and I love that we both still feel that way."

It's impressive the couple can make time for a date night, given their schedules. Kidman is in Los Angeles producing and starring in the HBO miniseries *Big Little Lies*, alongside Reese Witherspoon, Laura Dern, Shailene Woodley and

Zoë Kravitz. It's based on the bestselling book by Australian writer Liane Moriarty, and follows a group of primary school mums who are all suspects when someone dies at the school fundraiser. Kidman and Urban, who is judging the final season of *American Idol* in LA, are also commuting to their Nashville home where their two daughters, Sunday, seven, and Faith, five (Sunny and Fifi), are attending school and Urban is putting the finishing touches on a recording collaboration with disco/funk legend Nile Rodger. "We spend five days apart at the most and that's it," says Kidman. "Once you commit to that, everything becomes simple because we make all of our decisions around that priority."

Despite her packed diary, Kidman's other main priority is helping causes close to her heart. This year marks the 10th anniversary of her involvement with UN Women as a Goodwill Ambassador, and her commitment to improving the lives of women. "Nicole has been invaluable in helping us raise global awareness on the discrimination women and girls still face around the world," says Nanette Braun, communications and advocacy chief with UN Women in New York.

This year, Kidman has lent her name and image to the #FaceItTogether campaign by the Australian National Committee (NC) ▷



“ If we don't
band together as
women to help
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won't move
forward ”

for UN Women. It aims to fight the horrific prevalence of abuse faced by women in the Pacific region.

Kidman kicked off the campaign by uploading an image of her face to a visual petition on February 29, under the hashtag #FaceItTogether. In the Pacific region, including Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, two in three women will experience violence in their lifetimes – double the rate of violence experienced by women in Australia*. “This campaign is about saying, ‘I’m willing to face it and put a face and a voice to it,’” says Kidman. “But it’s also about the word ‘together’ – if we don’t band together as women to help each other, we won’t move forward.

“Since I’ve been involved over the past decade, it’s become so much more a part of the vocabulary; women’s rights and feminism,” she adds. “Violence is reinforced when it stays hidden, and once you start making it a part of the conversation and people feel that they can speak out – that they’re not going to be shamed or ostracised because of it – that’s when laws get changed and those people will reach out for help and go into programs or see the possibility of counselling and legal aid. So this campaign is about donating your face, not just your money – although basically we need the money, too!”

There is not much Kidman hasn’t achieved as an actor, with 10 Golden Globe nominations, including three wins for *To Die For* (1995), *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *The Hours* (2002), and three Oscar nominations (one win for *The Hours*), as well as a long list of upcoming films: *Queen Of The Desert*, *Genius*, *Lion*,

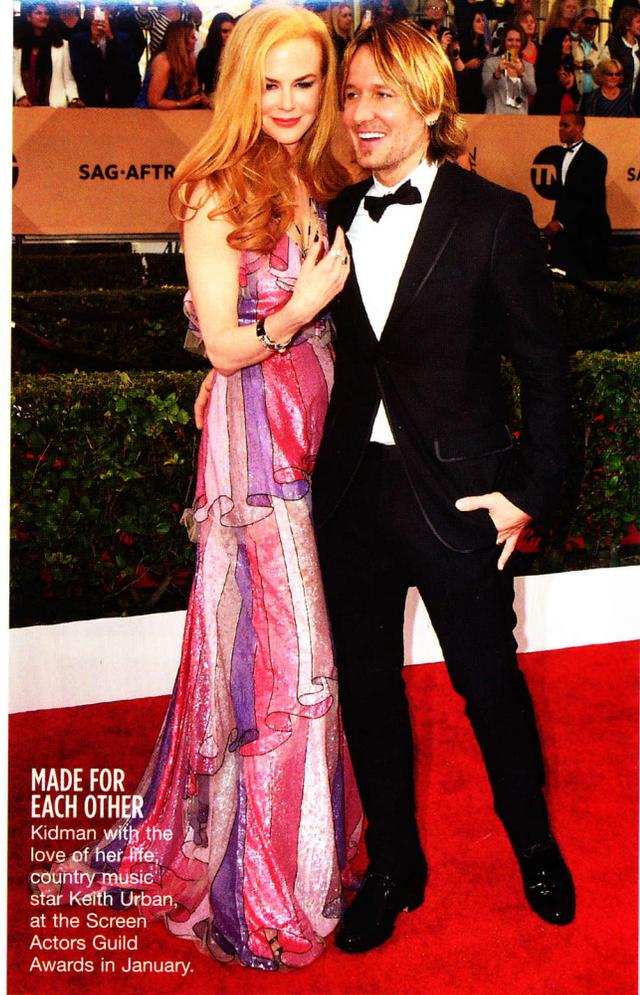
The Family Fang, and *How To Talk To Girls At Parties*.

But she’s deftly achieved all of this with a dogged determination to support gender equality, long before it became a hashtag or a debate about the gender pay gap among A-list stars. In 2014, she chose to work with first-time Australian director Kim Farrant in the bleak drama *Strangerland*, and last year she returned to London’s West End, after a 17-year hiatus, to star in the play *Photograph 51*, not only written by a woman (Anna Ziegler), but also telling the story of female scientist Rosalind Franklin and her overlooked role in the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA (she won the best

#FaceItTogether – How you can join in

This year, Australian (NC) UN Women will launch the world’s first visual petition. To get involved, visit Faceittogether.unwomen.org.au between now and March 13 to upload a photo of yourself. Each day of the campaign, the images will be merged to create an evolving, real-time portrait to make a bold statement that we must #FaceItTogether to end violence in the Pacific.

You can also support the life-saving work of UN Women by making a donation at unwomen.org.au. Your contribution will help empower and protect survivors of violence by helping provide safe houses, counselling, legal aid and prevention programs in the region. We must #FaceItTogether to end violence against women and girls.



MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Kidman with the love of her life, country music star Keith Urban, at the Screen Actors Guild Awards in January.

actress accolade at the prestigious *London Evening Standard* Theatre Awards). *Big Little Lies* was a project she actively pursued, buying the rights to the book under her Blossom Films production banner. She then approached her Australian friend, Bruna Papandrea, and her producing partner, Reese Witherspoon, to join forces. “It’s about women and children and I met with Bruna and Reese and we were like, ‘Yeah, come on, let’s do it!’” she recalls.

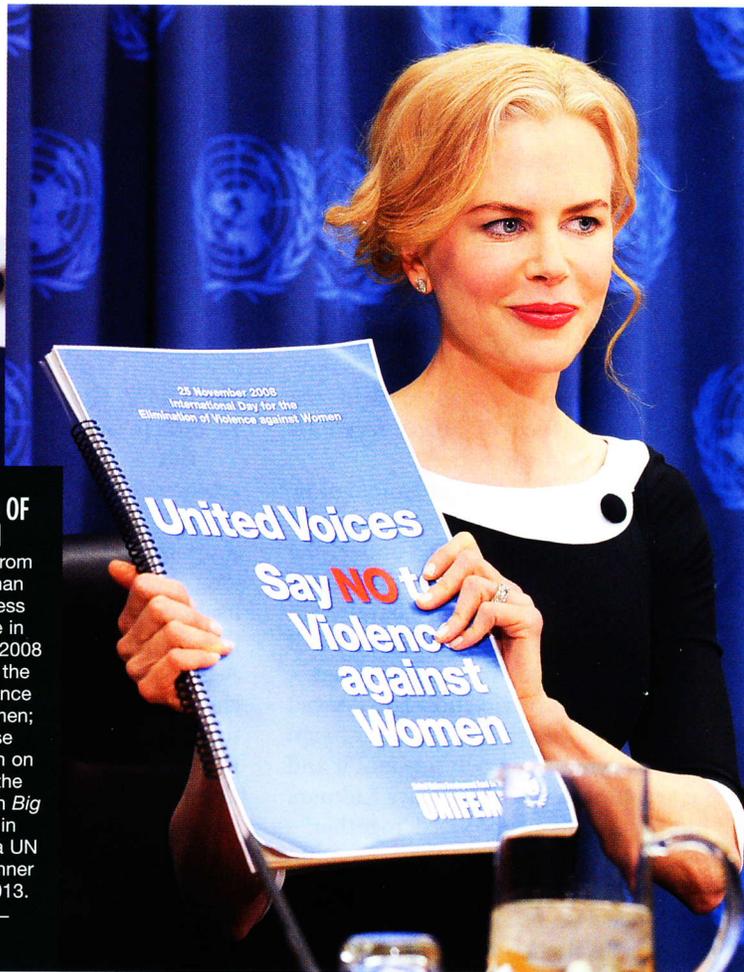
Kidman will also be returning to the small screen this year in another female-driven miniseries for season two of *Top Of*

The Lake. In June, she’ll be in Sydney to film a supporting role in the award-winning drama, starring *Mad Men*’s Elisabeth Moss and co-written and co-directed by Jane Campion – who cast Kidman in the 1996 drama *The Portrait Of A Lady*. “I’ve known Jane since I was 14 and I’m very much in a place where I just want to support other women in the industry,” she states. “To support Jane and the Australian film industry by coming home to film is fantastic!”

Billy Ray, who directed Kidman in the 2015 drama *Secret In Their Eyes*, knows what makes her such an extraordinary actor, but his comments could just as easily apply to why she’s such an effective advocate for women. “The thing about Nicole is she has an enormous engine in there with a lot of power and she has kitten-like softness too, with instant access to both,” says Ray. Yes, Kidman knows when to rev-up that engine, as she did in 2009, speaking in favour of the Violence Against Women Act in front of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee in the US Congress. But she’s also learnt how to be a voice of compassion when women globally have shared their devastating stories of abuse, rape and torture. Her voice breaks a little as I ask how on earth she can put aside her own ▷

Interview

“ I’m there for Keith
and he’s there for me,
but we miss both of
[our dads] so much ”



CHAMPION OF WOMEN

Clockwise from right: Kidman fronts a press conference in New York in 2008 to promote the end of violence against women; with Reese Witherspoon on the set of the female-driven *Big Little Lies* in January; at a UN Women's dinner in Berlin, 2013.



CINEMA FOR PEACE
BERLIN 2013

UN WOMEN
The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

emotions, especially as a parent, to hear such heartbreak. “I’ve had to learn how to hear the stories without becoming so enmeshed,” she says. “I think if someone has gone through it, then I should be able to hear it and retell it and help.”

During my 20-year friendship with Nicole, I’ve watched her lead with her heart, always. When I told her I was involved with a Red Cross fundraiser in LA, she offered to chair the event and wrote a large cheque without telling me. A few years later, she picked up my son’s cot to add to boxes of children’s clothing and furniture that she took back to a Romanian orphanage she’d supported while filming the drama *Cold Mountain*. “We had one day off on Sundays and a lot of us would just go into that orphanage and hold the babies because that’s what they really needed,” Kidman now reminisces. She still loves holding babies, she adds cheekily, but sounds a little disappointed when asked if she’s done with them in her own family. “I wish I wasn’t but yes, I’m done with babies,” says the 48-year-old mother of four (including her two grown children Isabella, 23, and Connor, 21, from her 10-year marriage to Tom Cruise). “But it’s a great time for us as a family because we’ve got

these two glorious children who are five and seven and such a joy to be around!”

But there have also been dark times in the Kidman-Urban family in the past couple of years. In 2014, Kidman’s world fell apart when her beloved father, Tony, passed away unexpectedly and last December Urban’s father, Robert, lost his fight with cancer. “When you lose your fathers in the family, both of us, it makes you even stronger because when you have love from your partner, you can be there for each other to get through it,” says Kidman, as her voice cracks. “I’m there for him and he’s there for me, but we miss both of them so much.”

Her voice perks up again when she’s reminded of a happier occasion taking place this year: the couple’s 10th wedding anniversary on June 25. How does

it feel? “It feels like no time, but it also feels like we have been together forever, and I mean that in the highest compliment,” she says. “I just think we were meant to be together, it’s that simple. We are just really into each other and we’re into our kids and we’re just a family.”

Tonight she’ll be in Anaheim, outside Los Angeles, to support her husband’s charity performance benefiting the Children’s Hospital of Orange County and tomorrow the family heads back to Nashville, back to building snowmen with her children and doing daily school runs before the family eats dinner at 5.30pm. “It’s all pretty boring,” begins Kidman, before catching herself. “It’s not boring, actually, I don’t use that word. It’s incredibly satisfying and the simplicity of it is what’s most satisfying.” □



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

SHOP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

To mark International Women’s Day on March 8, Esprit will be selling an exclusive purple scarf (the traditional colour of the women’s movement). Available in stores from February 22, 100 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of the scarves will go to helping prevent violence against women and girls in the Pacific. In addition, 20 per cent of all Esprit sales in-store and online for the weekend of March 5–6 will be donated to advance UN Women’s work in the Pacific.