

— IN CONVERSATION WITH —

Jim Carrey

He has shown his gift for physical comedy in some wonderful films. Now, the actor adds the wisdom and pain from his own life to the new series Kidding

WORDS: JENNY COONEY CARRILLO

In *Kidding*, you play Jeff Piccirillo, a children's entertainer whose personal life isn't as rosy as the one he presents on TV as Mr Pickles. How did you find this role, which mixes comedy with pain?

I've dealt with some deep currents in my life over the past few years, and because of those things, whatever doesn't kill me makes me bitter.

[Laughs] You don't let those things defeat you – you kind of allow them to just float you down the river and bang off some rocks for a while. You come out of it pretty good; you come out

of it deeper. Because of those things, I'm no longer wading in the tidal pools. I'm at the bottom of the Mariana Trench [the deepest point in the ocean] with experience, and I can sit with anybody and understand their pain. So these scripts are finding *me*, because I have that to express.

It feels like we haven't seen much of you in the past five years or so.

I don't feel like I'm in the business anymore. I know that sounds strange, but I struggled for a long time feeling literally like Truman [his character in the

hit 1998 film *The Truman Show*] at the doorway going, "I don't want this anymore, I don't care about fame anymore and I don't need to buy another house." I'm pretty set that way, so the only thing that matters to me now is what I'm saying, what I'm doing, what I'm attempting to do.

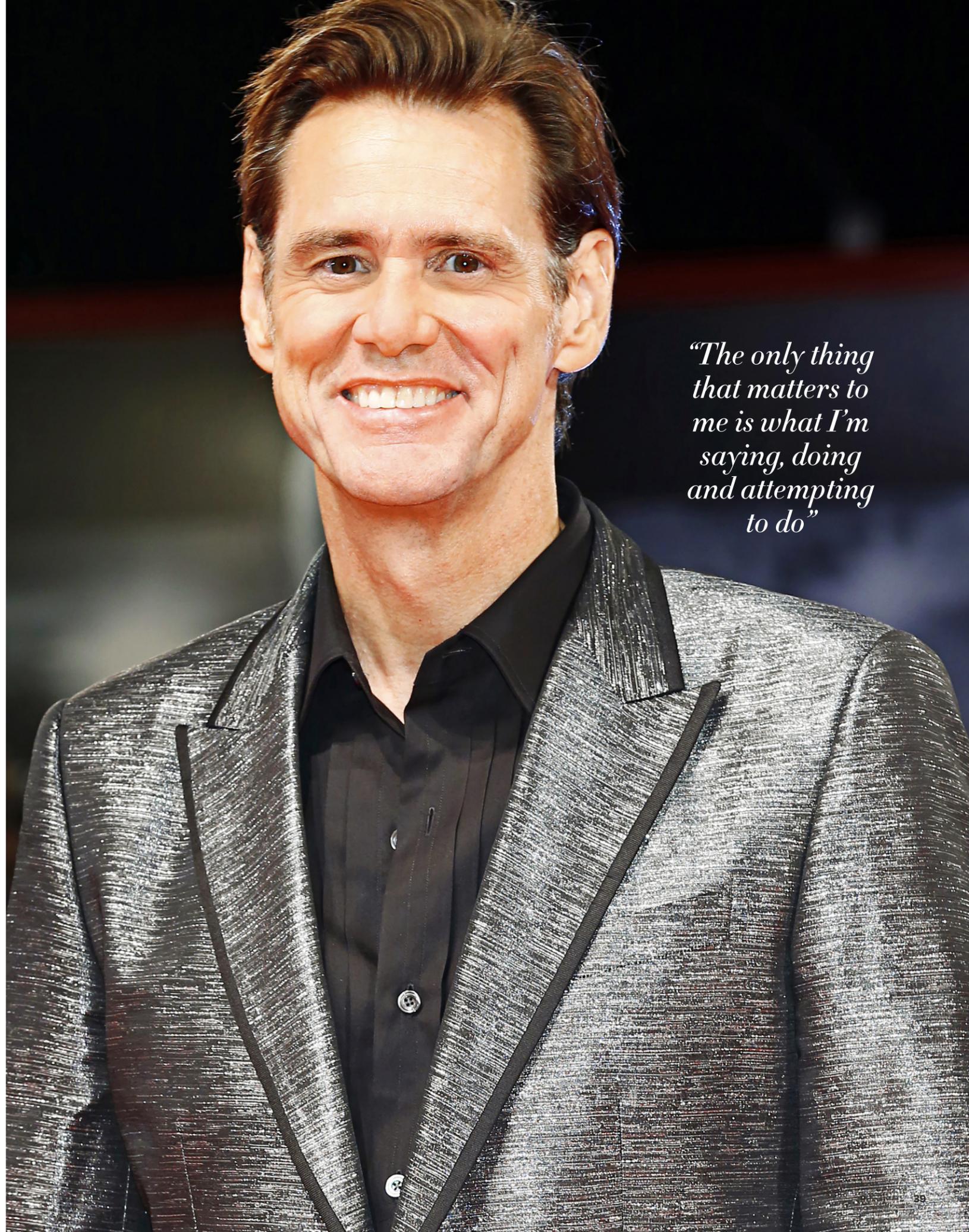
This is your first time back on television since doing sketch comedy in the '90s with *In Living Color*. Why now?

When I first decided to do the show, of course all those thoughts go through your mind: "Is this OK to be doing television and moving to television?" Such incredible work is being done; the greatest writers in our business are cutting their teeth right now in television and they're going to do magnificent things. So it's about jumping in while the water is warm and getting where it's happening, with people who are happening. That's where I want to be: wherever it's happening. And I'm getting to do it all now, so it's amazing.

You're a comedian, but this show is also sad. What's your take on depression and sadness and if there should be a silver lining?

Well, there's always a silver lining. There's always everything at once in the same space, depending on what angle you're looking at it from. So yeah, heaven and hell are in this room. [Laughs] ▶

"The only thing that matters to me is what I'm saying, doing and attempting to do"





“This show is about the effect of one kind person”

Right: Acting up during a photo session in 1992. Below: Jim snapped on the set of his new series *Kidding*.



Above: Jim as troubled children’s entertainer Jeff “Mr Pickles” Piccirillo in *Kidding*.

***Kidding* strikes us as a show that’s about how it is to be a kind person, but also that we have to work harder to be kind.**

Kindness isn’t a thing – it’s not a tangible thing you can put your hands on. Kindness comes from people who care. This character on the show just happens to be an iconic personality, like a Mister Rogers [Fred Rogers, the host of the revered US children’s show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, was much loved for his kind and gentle demeanour] type that has penetrated because of his authenticity. So this show is about the effect of one kind person – and also the effect of being hit by a lightning bolt if it doesn’t kill you.

With Jeff, sad things are happening to him, yet he tries to push away those thoughts. But that seems to create a breakdown.

Yes, and you’re *supposed* to break down! That’s the problem we’re having in society – you’re supposed to break down; everybody breaks. But there’s such shame and humiliation about it. The fact is, this is too much for all of us and we break. So that’s an

important part of the message in this show: that there are circumstances in this life. I don’t care what kind of guru, enlightened thing or whatever you think you are, you’re going to break.

How have you battled your own demons?

You handle them in different ways. Sometimes you escape and sometimes you deal with them. To me, all the dark forces or whatever experiences that had happened always led to either a serious recalibration of where you are or an appreciation for what is good. So we’re all experiencing the same thing. There’s no difference between us – we’re all getting pounded. [Laughs]

Has fame affected your life and personality? And, at 56, do you feel differently than before?

I think I’ve handled it pretty well. I think it’s odd as hell. Anybody can wish for it, and you can want to be an astronaut, but until you get in that machine that spins you around and makes you want to vomit, you don’t know what it’s like. You don’t know what the moon is like until



KIDDING
Season 1,
Stan

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

you get up there and go, “Oh, one wrong move and I’m dead.” [Laughs] Being famous is kind of like that – you get there and you go, “Oh, this is actually not a survivable environment, so how can I make it survivable?” And for a lot of people it hasn’t been.

How have you made it survivable?

So far, I go back to very simple things. Family is huge – and knowing that I’m expressing myself honestly is huge.

At this time in your life, how are you doing? Have you found love again?

I’m happy and I’m sad and I’m lonely and I’m satisfied, so everything is going on at once. In general, I’m very satisfied with my life and excited about where it’s going. But I can’t tell you the details – I’m just excited about life.

What advice would you give 20-year-old Jim Carrey if you could go back now?

“Hang on! It’s going to be a wild, bumpy, but wonderful ride.” Also I’d say, “It’s not who you are.” You will never be able to define yourself through this business, so enjoy yourself and do things that serve people and bake them up something cool

they’re going to love. And that’s it – you’re just making meals, and people are going to eat them or not eat them and that’s as important as it has to be. But I do love the idea of people escaping. That’s a good thing Hollywood does: they allow people to escape for a couple of hours. It’s an amazing job.

Your character goes on a huge journey in *Kidding*, but seems to retain his optimism. Are you a hopeful kind of person?

I’m not an optimist in every aspect of life, I’m really not. I’m an optimist in the way Terry Malick, the director of *The Tree Of Life* [the acclaimed experimental drama film from 2011, starring Brad Pitt], is an optimist. It’s like, in the middle of the sh*t, in my mind, I cut to outer space and it’s silent. That’s how much it matters, but we do have to play our game. ■

Above: With comedian Reggie McFadden in sketch comedy series *In Living Color* in the early 1990s. Below: As happy-go-lucky Truman Burbank in *The Truman Show*.

