

# Parade

A full-page photograph of Rob Lowe is the background for the entire cover. He is a man with short, dark hair and a light beard, smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers. He is crouching in the shallow surf of a beach, with white foam from the waves around him. The background shows more waves crashing onto the shore under a bright sky.

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## MR. SUNSHINE

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**ROB LOWE**

BRIMS WITH BOUNDLESS  
ENTHUSIASM—FOR BIG  
WAVES, HIS 27-YEAR  
MARRIAGE AND AN  
EXCITING NEW BATCH  
OF TV PROJECTS

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# MR. SUNSHINE



**ROB LOWE BRIMS WITH HEALTHY OPTIMISM, AGELESS ENTHUSIASM AND BOUNDLESS ENERGY—FOR NATURE, HIS FAMILY AND HOLLYWOOD'S NEXT WAVE.**



BY NICOLE PAJER

COVER AND OPENING PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KATZ PHOTOGRAPHY

**R**ob Lowe pulls up to a stretch of Southern California beach in his black pickup truck, two surfboards in the back. As he opens the door, his German shorthaired pointer, Jack, hops out. Lowe follows, clad in Quiksilver board shorts and holding a tall iced coffee.

"It's *beautiful* out," he coos, flashing a sun-kissed grin, eager to hit the waves. For Lowe, 54, every day is a beach day.

It wasn't always so. He grew up in landlocked suburban Ohio before relocating with his family to the coastal city of Malibu, Calif., where he attended high school alongside Charlie Sheen, among several other actors-to-be.

In 1983, he made his big-screen debut alongside another batch of young actors in *The Outsiders*, which also featured Matt Dillon, Patrick Swayze, Emilio Estevez and Tom Cruise.

Now, after a three-year stint as Dr. Ethan Willis on the since-canceled

CBS TV series *Code Black*, Lowe is putting the finishing touches on his gender-swapped remake of the crime-drama classic *The Bad Seed*, which he produced, directed and starred in. It's set to air Sept. 9 on Lifetime.

"*The Bad Seed* was perfect to remake," he says of the 1956 film, in which a housewife has growing suspicions—which she wants to ignore—that her pretty, pigtailed daughter (Patty McCormack) is a heartless killer. "It's a classic, and was revolutionary for its time, but it's extremely dated. I had a specific idea of how to make it creepy [and] wonderful for today. It's a movie about rising, increasing dread. It's unsettling and scary but also darkly funny—and, at its heart, the story of a father's love for his damaged daughter."

He reveals that McCormack, who received an Oscar nomination for her chilling performance, returns in the new version as an adult "in a very important role."

Lowe's *Bad Seed* co-star is young McKenna Grace, already a Hol-

lywood veteran with roles in the movies *Gifted* and *I, Tonya* and on TV's *Designated Survivor*, *Fuller House* and *Once Upon a Time*. "I wasn't going to make the movie unless I found an 11-year-old actor who could crush the part," Lowe says. "And I did—Mckenna's work is worth every award there is. She's amazing."

Combining the roles of both actor and director was a big bite to take. But Lowe is always up for a challenge. In fact, he's a bit of a daredevil.

## EXCITEMENT JUNKIE

"If I'm not taking three or four showers a day, I'm not living," he says with a laugh. Lowe points to his surfboard and boasts that he once paddled out to get a look at some great white sharks that were schooling in the water near his home. He's also an extreme skier and surfs waves he says "would get your attention."

"I've always been the first to accept a dare," he says. "It's not always the best quality. You better manage it or you will get in tons of trouble," he warns.

The benefit of that trait, he says, is that it pushes him to take risks. The downside "is when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences says, 'Do a song and dance routine with *Snow White*, and you go, 'I'll do it,' and lo and behold, you are

number two on the list of the Oscars' most embarrassing moments. So it doesn't always work out," he says, recalling his hosting duties at the 1989 ceremony.

But it was that search for excitement that motivated him to create his one-man stage show, *Rob Lowe: Stories I Only Tell My Friends*, which he is currently touring across the country. And yes, he gets nervous before he takes the stage. "That's why I do it. I need the next level," he says. "When I get in front of a camera, it doesn't raise my heart one beat anymore; it hasn't for years. But if I get behind a curtain and it's just me by myself with something I've written and directed in front of people who paid to be there, that gets my heart going."

Lowe enjoys taking people by surprise. He jokes that throughout his entire career, he's never set his bar of self-expectation very high. "It's always been that way," he says, adding that he loves to prove people wrong. "I feel a real freedom that I can almost try anything and people will go, 'Wait—what?'" He lives to keep his audience on their toes and is thankful for the loyal fans who have followed him along the way. "I'm not bored and the audience isn't bored," he says.

In fact, when fans approach him, he has no idea what project they might



From top: Lowe with the casts of *The Outsiders* and *The West Wing*, with Nick Offerman in *Parks and Recreation*, in South Africa, where he shot Netflix's upcoming *Christmas in the Wild*, and in *Code Black* and *The Bad Seed*

Below, from left: with wife Sheryl and sons John Owen and Matthew



reference—movies like *Tommy Boy*, *Austin Powers*, *About Last Night* and *St. Elmo's Fire*, or TV's *Parks and Recreation*, *The West Wing* or *The Grinder*. "You never know," he says, "and that's so cool to not have just one thing that you're known for."

Most recently, he's been in Africa, shooting a new Netflix movie called *Christmas in the Wild* with Kristin Davis. "We shot entirely in the African bush. It was a rugged, beautiful adventure of a lifetime," he says. "It takes place in the world of elephant conservation, but it's a love story."

He's had too many career milestones to pinpoint a favorite, but at this point Lowe's looking for a role that truly allows him to leave his mark, and for characters that cut through the clutter. He cites playing Eddie Nero on *Californication* as an example. "A true character," he says. "In *St. Elmo's Fire*, my character, Billy, broke through. *The Outsiders*' Sodapop broke through, Sam Seaborn on *The West Wing* broke through."

## FOREVER YOUNG

Lowe doesn't seem to age. The actor blushes as the topic comes up but admits to hearing it quite often. It's partly in the genes, he says, inherited from his mom, Barbara, a schoolteacher, and (particularly) his dad, Charles, a trial lawyer. "When we would go to the county fair when I was young, my father would win me stuffed animals at the 'guess your age' booth. Nobody could



ever guess how old he was because he looked so young,” he says.

Genetics aside, Lowe works hard to keep healthy. He eats high-protein, low-carb and serves as a spokesman for Atkins. “They came to me and asked me to partner with them because they knew I took fitness really seriously,” he says.

Lowe can pinpoint the exact moment he was inspired to permanently ditch the breadbasket. “I was coming out of the water in the ocean. My dear friend, the late great actor Bill Paxton, was sitting on the beach with my

wife and giving me crap. He was looking at me and was like, ‘Damn, buddy. You’re getting a gut!’ And I was like, ‘All right. Time to dial back the pizzas.’”

Lowe says the lifestyle—including all of his cross-training, hiking, running, surfing and swimming—has helped him lose the dad bod and gain boundless energy. “I feel like I’m 25,” he says, adding that at this point in his life, he’s in a better place mentally, physically and spiritually than he was at his quarter-life mark.

## PROFESSIONAL EXTROVERT

The thing that Lowe says people would be most surprised to hear about him is that he’s an “extrovert only professionally.”

“In my off time, I prefer calm, quiet—not a lot of people around. But when the light goes on or I’m at work, I can show a different side of myself,” he says, noting that “the scene” was great when he was much younger, but at this stage of his life, he’s happiest away from Hollywood.

“My wife and I have lived in

Santa Barbara for 25 years and raised our kids,” he says. His son Matthew, 24, just finished his second year of law school and is working with a law firm in Los Angeles; son John Owen, 22, recently graduated from Stanford Uni-

versity and is an actor.

His day-to-day life, he says, is “normal.” Off the clock, he’s content with his dogs, cuddled up with a good book or playing in the water with his family. When asked about the secret to his 27-year marriage to Sheryl, a jewelry designer, he says “no relationship is perfect” but notes that director Alfred Hitchcock deemed “casting” as the recipe for a successful movie. “I think the same thing is true in marriage.”

He adds that it’s also important for couples to have separate interests and careers. His wife’s Sheryl Lowe Designs business “is massive,” he says proudly. “She just got into Bergdorf’s!” He admits to being in constant admiration of his wife’s ingenuity,

Visit [Parade.com/lowe](http://Parade.com/lowe) to watch Lowe playing in the surf with his dog, Jack, in our behind-the-scenes video.



work ethic and creative outlook. “I’m inspired by that; it keeps it interesting and fresh. And she has always been a great mom and homemaker.”

The Lowes recently entered a new phase of life as empty nesters. He was initially worried he’d be gloomy not having his sons around but has been enjoying the chance to reconnect with his wife. “All of a sudden, it’s like we’re back to the beginning of our relationship,” he says with a wink.

Though he’s acted, directed and authored several books—including *Stories I Only Tell My Friends* and *Love Life*—Lowe still has a lot left to accomplish. “I’m ready for my superhero moment!” he exclaims, hinting that it would be fun to do something like a “big Marvel Green Hornet” kind of role. He’d also like to tackle “a legitimate theatrical classic,” like *Death of a Salesman* or something by Shakespeare.

To Lowe, aging is a privilege and he looks at each year as a chance to fill his life with new experiences. When asked if he’ll ever slow down, he immediately cackles—how absurd! He attributes his good attitude to a continuous sense of enthusiasm, optimism and curiosity. “Those are the things that start to erode over time, so I think it’s really important to keep that part of ourselves alive,” he says.

So what’s on Lowe’s new-experience bucket list? “I keep hoping Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk will put me in space,” he says with a mischievous look in his eye. “I just want to live long enough to do that.”

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What’s on daredevil Rob Lowe’s “won’t try” list? Go to **[Parade.com/lowe](http://Parade.com/lowe)** to find out.