

RETIRE? NEVER!

Former *Dallas* legend turned *Hollyoaks* star **Linda Gray** on staying youthful and happy

Almost 30 years after playing the glamorous Sue Ellen Ewing in *Dallas*, Linda Gray is **living up** evenings once again – this time as *Hollyoaks*' feisty Tabitha Maxwell-Brown. **Woman's Own** caught up with the actress, 76, who became a household name in the 80s playing the long-suffering alcoholic trophy wife of infamous oil tycoon JR Ewing (Larry Hagman), to chat about starring as Marnie Nightingale's mum in the Channel 4 soap, and the secrets behind her age-defying looks, energy and effortless glamour.

We've loved having you back on our TV screens in *Hollyoaks*, but how are you coping with the UK weather? [Laughs] Every time I speak to anyone from the UK they talk about the weather and then apologise. It's fine, I've been coming to the UK since the 60s and it's never changed.

Do you have any funny behind-the-scenes tales from the set?

One day they

kept taking about The Dog, saying they were going into the dog, and I'm thinking, 'What is this scene we're filming in a dog [they're talking about The Dog pub]? And there have been so many times when I can't understand their accents.

Woman's Own EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

'I'm lucky I still love what I do'

What's it like working on *Hollyoaks* compared with a huge production like *Dallas*?

US actors are the same whether we're in Los Angeles or Liverpool. We're this little family who get make-up put on, then work together to entertain the viewers. I'm lucky that I still love what I do. But it can be challenging moving on after playing Sue Ellen Ewing for so many years because women really related to her. They felt sorry for her being married to that horrible guy.

It doesn't sound like you plan on retiring any time soon...

No! That word does not enter my consciousness. I feel sad for people who retire. Retire from what – life? No, I just don't understand it.

What do your two children [Kehly Sloane and Jeff



Thrasher think about you being on a soap in the UK?

They shake their heads and say, 'Where are you going now?' They all laugh. I'm at this wonderful stage in life where I'm like, 'Bye! I love you, see you later!' My kids are like, 'Wait, where are you going?' And I say, 'I'm going to Liverpool to film *Hollyoaks*! I have fun with my life. They all think I'm a little bit wacky which makes it even more fun. You get away with a lot of stuff when you're a grandmother because they go, 'She's a little weird, let's just humour her.' But I'm having the last laugh!

We noticed you went to see Adele in concert with your daughter Kehly last summer. Are you a big fan?

Yes! She's amazing. Adele can just stand there and sing. She doesn't need any back up dancers and singers. She stands there and uses the gift that God gave her. You can tell those songs are from the heart.

You've chatted to TV presenters like *This Morning*'s Eamonn and Ruth and had a cheeky flirt with *Good Morning Britain*'s Ben Shephard. There's no stopping you!

I had a great time chatting to them all. I had no idea the impact that

Dallas made in the UK. I think it was bigger here than in the US. The way the UK has always embraced me warmed my heart. That's why when Bryan Kirkwood [*Hollyoaks* Executive Producer] invited me to do *Hollyoaks* I was thrilled.

You must get asked this all the time, but how are you so youthful at 76?

It's hard to hear the age word. I think that can't be me. I feel about 35! It helps

that I'm not obsessive about anything. I hear people say they have to go to the gym to work out for two hours, eat this and do that – that's so boring. We're put on this planet to lead a lovely life. I do take care of myself. I know what to eat and how to exercise. If you obsess about things, you make yourself crazy. Everyone is addicted to their phones these days. I wake up at 6am and I don't let myself near the phone for one hour. And then I put the phone to bed at 9pm – I can't believe some people sleep with their phones under their pillows!

Can you eat what you like or do you have to watch what you eat?

I eat real food. Once you eat real food like bananas and carrots your taste buds change. You don't crave sweet things.

'I have fun with my life'

Sue Ellen was so glamorous and you seem to ooze effortless style in real life too – do you have any easy tips for looking great?

I think glamour comes from your attitude. My tip would be for women to simplify themselves. Get a haircut that suits them but also suits their lifestyle. I think a little bit of make-up makes us feel better too. For me it's about simplicity, it doesn't have to be fancy.

In 2015 you wrote a book called *The Road To Happiness Is Always Under Construction*. What's your best tip to leading a happy life?

The way I see it, we have a choice. There are two words I sprinkle through the book. They are 'choose wisely'. Choose wisely your thoughts, what words come out of your mouth and be conscious of the things you put in your mouth. You're in charge. You don't get through this life without experiencing certain things but you can always choose your attitude and to be happy.

◆ Linda is a returning character in *Hollyoaks*, Weekdays, 6.30pm, C4, 7pm E4



Linda in character as Sue Ellen with the charming JR (Larry Hagman)



Getting flirty with *Good Morning Britain*'s Ben Shephard