



Catherine Keener

With four movies this year—including a hit comedy, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, and an Oscar-bait drama, *Capote*—Catherine Keener is on fire. Gay men love her work (and her husband, Dermot Mulroney). Lesbians just love her. She and I bond over growing up in Florida amid hurricanes and Anita Bryant (“She was nuts!” laughs Keener) and argue over whose Catholic high school volleyball team was better. “Excuse me, I was on the volleyball team,” she says. “We were excellent.” If Keener were still playing, the stands would be full of her queer fans. —Michael Giltz

How exciting to find out you have a big gay following. I was so ecstatic when [they] called me and said *The*

Advocate wants to do this. I called all my gay friends and said, “So listen! In case you didn’t know—it’s not just you!”

What movies do your gay fans always bring up? Uh, let’s see, *Maxine* in *Being John Malkovich*. [Laughing] That’s my favorite.

She sleeps with everyone! It must have been confusing by the end of the film. It was! ‘Cause look, I’m like, “I think I

have to go with Cameron [Diaz].” What else?

After playing lots of tough characters, this year you were finally allowed to be warm and sexy in a funny movie, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. You must have felt like “Thank God.” Thank God! I’m not intimidating everybody.

And *Capote* is such a special movie. You play the author Harper Lee. The movie doesn’t say she’s gay, but— [She’s intrigued; it’s come up before] Now, why do you get the impression that she’s gay from my performance? [Giggles]

I don’t know. There’s nothing you can point to except— There is nothing ever that’s indicated that Harper is or was or has been gay in her life. But as my manager just said, “Isn’t everyone gay?” It’s true. I’m a big Kurt Cobain fan. I just got that [Lee] was a person without a stereotypical female vanity.

What was the very first time you got onstage in front of people? Oh, Christ. College. I was an English history major. We didn’t even have a

drama major. I just happened to get cast in a play and I suddenly started doing them.

It just attacked you suddenly. It fucking attacked me, threw me to the ground, and shoved lines into my mouth.

Then, of course, you played the character with the deathless name Lt. Cricket Sideris on the TV show *Ohara*. Shut up! Is that her last name? Oh, my God, I’m so happy to know it was Sedaris.

Not quite spelled the same. Not the same as David and Amy?

But still—Cricket. Eww. I was so bad on that show.

You’ve been a lesbian icon for years. Now your sister Elizabeth plays a lesbian cartoonist in the short *Getting to Know You*, which has been a big hit on the festival circuit. She’s so great in it.

Are you ready to relinquish the crown? Oh, my God. My sister is reigning. Not everyone knows that yet, but my sister wears the crown. If you met her, you’d know why. She’s cool and beautiful and great. ■