



Marni silk-cotton dress with vinyl paillettes and leather bag with viscose (on chair). Earrings and rings, worn throughout, her own. Delfina Delettrez rubber and silver choker with zircons and freshwater pearls (top) and rubber, silver, gold-plated, and resin necklace with rubies. Fendi printed- and patent-leather heels with studs.

# MOTHER'S NATURE

You know *Jessica Alba* as a mom, an actress, and a Hollywood bombshell—now she's sharing her passion for healthy living with a new book, *The Honest Life*. The seriously chic activist opens up about balancing work and family, and what she hopes to teach her daughters about men when they grow up

BY LAURIE SANDELL PHOTOGRAPHED BY DUSAN RELJIN  
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“My style is more adventurous since I became a mom. In the past, I was into my uniform of leggings and a sweater. Now I’m willing to try bold prints, bright colors, and different cuts.”

Derek Lam guipure lace cropped camisole and skirt. Delfina Delettrez rubber and silver choker (top), rubber and silver cuff with zircons and freshwater pearls, and silver bracelet with enamel, freshwater pearls, and rubber. Tom Binns Design crystal, epoxy resin, and rhodium necklace. Nicholas Kirkwood leather and suede heels.

# W

hen Jessica Alba strides into the office of her business, the Honest Company, she's on the phone with a prospective client, speaking with self-assured authority. "He was just mocking up ideas because no one ever got back to us on creative," Alba says, holding up a finger and flashing an apologetic smile as she finishes the call. Nodding crisply, she hangs up the phone and settles onto a leather couch, then grabs a handful of Skittles from a glass jar and tosses a few into her mouth.

"Sorry," she says. "Putting out a little fire."

The ease with which Alba issues business directives and keeps it all together is impressive, especially if you consider that the 31-year-old actress is still starring in films, flying to Austin, Texas, for four- and five-day stints on the set of *Frank Miller's Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*, and lending her voice to the animated *Escape from Planet Earth*, out this month. She is also married to producer Cash Warren and is the mother of two young girls, 4-year-old Honor and 1-year-old Haven. Alba says it's her transformative role as a mother that inspired her to launch the Honest Company with environmental specialist Christopher Gavigan a year ago—and that this affects everything she does, both at work and at home. "We're looking to redefine the family brand, to offer the essentials that everyone needs," she says. "And I know, as a mom, what has to be done."

The Honest Company, which specializes in eco-friendly family goods such as diapers, hair-care products, and cleaning supplies, has already attracted \$27 million in funding from excited investors, as of



"You don't always have an answer or a formula. So more than ever, I live in the moment."

Derek Lam polyester-nylon jersey pullover. Carolina Herrera silk faille ball skirt. Delfina Delettrez choker. Marni poui wood, leather, acrylic, and metal necklace. Fendi metallic-leather heels with studs and leather bags (bottom left).

last March. Alba clocks in at work every day, overseeing a staff of 63 in an airy, loftlike space where employees play music at their desks and blown-up photos of cute babies hang on the walls. “All of this started with me doing research, reading labels, and figuring out what I should avoid,” Alba says, waving at one of her “work husbands” as he walks past her door. She learned that even minimal exposure to toxic chemicals can lead to serious problems for children. “You can’t turn a blind eye to that.”

Nor can you ignore Alba’s own formative experiences with health problems: She spent time in the hospital as a child, recovering from kidney-related troubles and other issues. Now she wants to prevent her daughters and other parents’ children from suffering as she did. In keeping with her toxin-free philosophies, she’s also written a book, *The Honest Life: Living Naturally and True to You* (published by Rodale, due out mid-March), that dispenses wisdom and tips—from DIY family projects to healthy recipes—in a conversational tone. And in May 2011, Alba lobbied Congress in support of the Safe Chemicals Act, which would require consumer products to be tested before appearing on store shelves.

When we sit down to talk about what’s going on in her life, Alba is her usual confident, stylish self. Today she exudes casual sophistication in Current/Elliott printed leggings, a white shirt from H&M, and suede Sartore boots. She’s also a woman who loves her jewelry: Geometric Wendy Nichol earrings and a rose gold Lena Wald safety pin dangle from her ears. A metal necklace by House of Lavande encircles her neck. Around her wrist, she still sports a friendship bracelet a girlfriend bought her in Mexico a year ago. When we sit down to talk, she is open and forthright about her goals for her career, business, and family.

**There are many celebrity-endorsed products on the market, but few are as carefully developed as yours. How did you come to create the Honest Company?** When I was pregnant, I was cleaning my dishes and doing laundry and found there were toxic chemicals in all of the products. I tried to shop around the problem, but there’s a ton of greenwashing out there—that means only the container is eco, and what’s inside of it is just as toxic as anything else. So you say to yourself, ‘If the product itself isn’t organic, what’s touching my baby?’ But I’m a mom on the go, and I have to do a million things. I’m not going to sit there and read every single ingredient on every single package I buy, and I don’t think other parents are either. Creating this company was something I *had* to do. We’re completely transparent. All the goods we make are high-performance—and safe—but they’re also beautifully designed, so people will be drawn to them too.

**How hard was it to get the company up and running?**

## WHAT WORKS ON ME

*Apply the star’s style tips to your look*



**CREATE AN EMPIRE WAIST**  
“I like high-waisted silhouettes. I especially love tea-length skirts. Those are my favorites.”  
Rachel Comey dress

**PULL ON STRETCHY DENIM**  
“I wear everything from boyfriend to skinny to a wide leg. But my jeans need to have Lycra. If they’re too stiff, they’re not flattering on me. I don’t have a boy shape.”  
J Brand jeans

**STEP OUT IN STRAPPY SHOES**  
“I feel confident about my ankles and feet—I’m not afraid to show them off with open-toe sandals. But there has to be a strap across the toes to look good.”  
Ralph Lauren Collection shoes

It took me three and a half years to launch. There was a lot of trial and error. I would do all of this work, home in on a concept, then not be able to cross the finish line. I cried with frustration many, many times.

**Did your husband, Cash, tell you to stop obsessing?** He was like, “You are so extreme!” But I happen to have the best husband in the world. I would say to him, “Maybe this isn’t going to happen. Should I give up?” He would say, “If it’s meant to be, it will be, and if not, you can’t say you didn’t try your best. Give it one more shot.”

**What about your “work husband?” Who is he?** Actually, I have three [laughs]! We’re more like work siblings, and I’m the annoying little sister blurting

out random things. But I am married to all of them; we are in it for life.

**Speaking of your real partner, did you know that Cash was ‘the one’ right away?** I didn’t. I just knew when I met him that I was going to know him forever. It was weird; he instantly felt like family. It was so easy. I’d never felt like that with anyone. I was usually pretty self-conscious, minding my p’s and q’s, very aware of every time my fork hit the plate when I was having dinner on a date. With him, there was none of that. We got each other. We’re kindred spirits.

**Were you friends for a while before you dated?** For a very, very, very short while. But we like to go with that story [laughs].

**Is courtship still important to you at this stage?** I like grand gestures once in a blue moon, but for me, it’s mostly about thoughtfulness and consideration. What was romantic in the beginning of our relationship is totally different now. On a weekend Cash might say, “Go get your nails done with a girlfriend. Haven is down for her nap, and Honor and I will play. I know you work hard. You deserve some time for yourself.” That, to me, is romantic. He’s saying, “You matter,” and that I’m more than just the mother of the kids or the wife who goes out to events with him.

**You and Cash, like your parents, have different ethnic backgrounds. How has that informed your relationship?** When Cash and I moved into our family house, we collected hundreds of pictures of our aunts, great-aunts, moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, and sisters and brothers. Then we mounted them in the foyer of our home, covering the wall from top to bottom. Our daughters are continually reminded of where they come from.

**What’s one thing no one ever tells you about motherhood?** Before I had kids, I was very responsible and serious. I used to be all about controlling my environment; everything had to be just so. Now my idea of perfection is different. You can label bins and have a place for stuff, but when the kids go into the playroom, you’re not going to say, “We can’t paint, because how are we going to clean it up?”

**As a mom, what do you think you’re really good at?** **What are you terrible at?** I’m open and creative and playful, and I try to make all we do a collaborative process, from getting dressed in the morning to cooking with the girls. But sometimes I can take multitasking to a level of insanity. Then all of a sudden, the bath is too high, and I’ve forgotten to give my daughter the thing she needs for school.

**Which designers have you been drawn to lately?** I have a hard-core obsession with Narciso Rodriguez. I also adore the collaboration that Opening Ceremony did with Maison Martin Margiela. I have black ankle boots

with a sock attachment that turns them into a high boot. I love Oak and also Cheap Monday. They take classic items and make them cool, like a soft white V-neck T-shirt with a keyhole cutout in the back.

**What’s one trend you won’t wear no matter how much it’s in style, and one you won’t give up even if it’s out of style?** Never say never, but I probably won’t ever wear booty shorts. I feel pretty confident about that. And I don’t like oversize shoulder pads, but I do appreciate a strong shoulder profile, like the ones Isabel Marant is doing.

**What’s the one thing every woman should splurge on?** A tailor. Whether you shop at H&M, Topshop, Target, Forever 21, or buy high-end, if the piece doesn’t fit, it will be halfway there. So get your jackets nipped in at the waist and your pants hemmed at the perfect place. If you get your clothing tailored, you can look like a million bucks.

**How dedicated are you to a workout routine?** I’m not dedicated. Ever. I will go years without doing anything. Then I’ll work out for a week and won’t again for months. It’s good to be in a routine and take care of yourself, and I feel good when I do it, but it hasn’t been my priority, unless I have to get into shape for a role. An indoor cycling class at Flywheel is extremely fun because I’m a little bit competitive. During the sprints, you can see where you’re ranking in the class and go harder to make your number better.

**Who are your girlfriends? Do you ever go on vacation with them?** One of my closest girlfriends runs a nonprofit, another writes the curriculum for the biggest online university, one is a publicist, another is an aesthetician, another is a yoga teacher, a few are stay-at-home moms, and another is trying to figure out her way. We’re diverse. I’d like to do a girls-only vacation, but the most I’ve done is fly to fashion week for a night and bring one of them with me. At max I’m there for two days.

**You’ve said you wouldn’t allow your kids to pursue a career like acting until after college. What made you come to that decision?** If it turns out my kids are interested in acting, I’ll tell them, “Write and perform some plays.” If you want to be an artist, then paint, draw, sketch. Read books about other artists. It’s a luxury to be able to learn before you have to make a living, and you can never get that time back.

**What do you want to teach your daughters about relationships as they grow up?** We’ll figure it out when it happens. But there is a cause and effect for everything that comes out of your mouth and for all of your actions. So be mindful and be careful, especially in a fit of sadness or happiness. It’s not always going to be the greatest day of your life. It’s not always going to be the worst. ■