Jessica Alba's Honest Revolution

The actress and mom of two has turned her love of natural living into an empire of nontoxic beauty, home and baby products. Her advice to all? "Know what you're putting into your body."

By Amy Spencer
Photography by Marc Baptiste
There's a new Jessica Alba in town. The screen star is still here, of course—this fall she appears in two major films, the comedy A.C.O.D. and the action movie Machete Kills. But the mother of two daughters (Honor, 5, and Haven, 2, with her husband, Cash Warren) is also an entrepreneur, who saw a need for more natural products for new moms and made it happen. A year after launching The Honest Company—which sells everything from nontoxic diapers to body wash, with a book on clean living, The Honest Life: Living Naturally and True to You, and is in the process of moving the company into new headquarters in Santa Monica. It's a bright, skylit space, where one wall is peppered with positive mantras. Among the painters and movers shuffling through, Jessica, 32, fits right in. She's wearing denim overalls and a black-and-white-striped tank top, her hair up in a topknot. It's a style inspired by "um, hammering things," she says, laughing. "It doesn't get done unless I do it!"

As she sips a green drink she brought from home, the down-to-earth star chats with Health about how she got her brand off the ground, which healthy change helped her allergies the most and what it took for her to finally wear a short skirt in public.

When you started this company, you were already a movie star. Was it daunting to try something completely new? There were certainly moments when it was scary. The day we launched, I was like, is anyone even going to our website? [honest.com]? Our distribution is mainly to the Internet. It took me about three years of people telling me I was crazy and that there's no way it could ever happen before I found the partners who could balance my weaknesses.

What is it with people feeling the need to tell you it will never happen? Well, because it's so untraditional, in a space that's dominated by big, big players. But at the end of the day, when you're so big, it's hard to be makeable; it's hard to have a soul. We never entered thinking we were going to be the opposite. I think, to get the most out of your experience as an actress. So now I don't feel the pressure to be that girl. It's also part of getting older and being a mom. So it's a nice balance, because this business can really wear you down, especially being in it as long as I have. This year, I've acted for 20 years. That's a lot! How do you do anything for 20 years? [Laughing] Now I don't work just to work. To me, doing two or three days on a movie with a cool director is more important than spending my life on a set.

What advice would you give to other women thinking about starting their own business? Be the best. Be the cooled. And deliver on something that's different from everyone else's. What need isn't being fulfilled? Because if you're not doing anything innovative or cool, someone is going to come in and steal you. You're going to get copied, but if you're in that space, then no one can really copy you.

You have a history of asthma and allergies. Has your more natural lifestyle helped? Yeah, I used to have a stuffy nose every morning, and once we got a HEPA filter in our main air-conditioning unit in our house, it went away. Just having clean air: crazy! Even Cash—
**Healthy and Happy!**

I'm a lot more confident now. And I'm a lot happier.