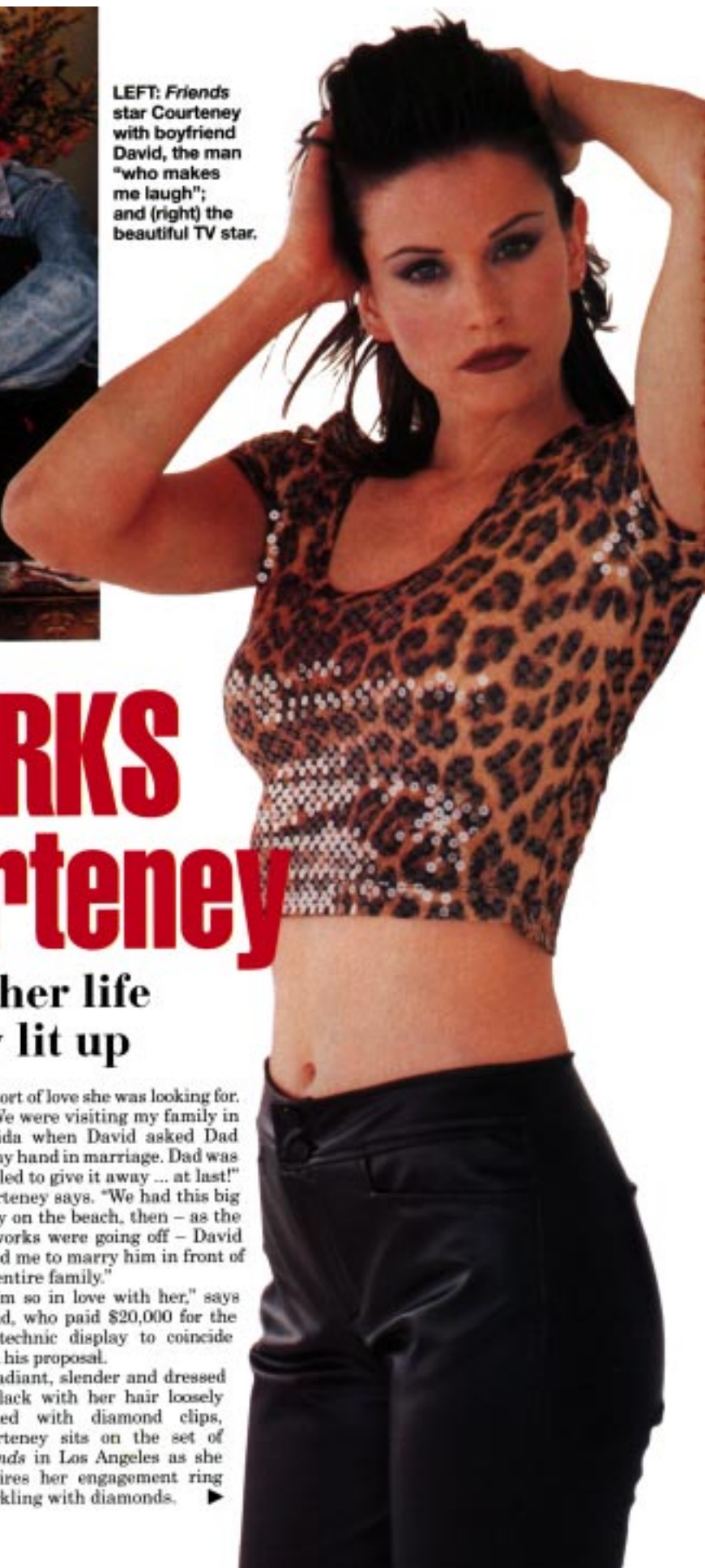




**LEFT:** *Friends* star Courteney with boyfriend David, the man "who makes me laugh"; and (right) the beautiful TV star.



# FIREWORKS for Courteney

**When the love of her life proposed, the sky lit up**

**T**he lovely *Friends* star has finally fallen in love and plans to marry. Courteney Cox, who plays Monica on the hit series, plans to wed actor David Arquette on New Year's Eve. At 28, David is six years younger than Courteney, but a few years age difference is unimportant and Courteney believes that finally she has found the man of her dreams. She says, however, that when he proposed in March she was startled. "I had no idea that was on his mind," she says, laughing. "But I said yes instantly, and then I almost fainted."

Courteney, who first shot to fame as Michael J. Fox's girlfriend on *Family Ties*, has been linked with some of Hollywood's most famous hunks, but it is only now she's found

the sort of love she was looking for.

"We were visiting my family in Florida when David asked Dad for my hand in marriage. Dad was thrilled to give it away ... at last!" Courteney says. "We had this big party on the beach, then - as the fireworks were going off - David asked me to marry him in front of the entire family."

"I'm so in love with her," says David, who paid \$20,000 for the pyrotechnic display to coincide with his proposal.

Radiant, slender and dressed in black with her hair loosely pinned with diamond clips, Courteney sits on the set of *Friends* in Los Angeles as she admires her engagement ring sparkling with diamonds. ▶

## FIREWORKS for Courteney

Wary of the media glare surrounding *Friends*' star Jennifer Aniston and her relationship with Brad Pitt, Courteney and David kept their romance a secret. Few friends knew until recently that David had moved into Courteney's \$3-million Los Angeles home and that the couple had been living together for 12 months. But with the happiness of her engagement, Courteney was too excited to keep it a secret any longer.

"I've always been shy of commitment, because I didn't feel I had the strength to make a relationship last," Courteney says. "But with David it's different. We are made for each other."

Before Courteney and David fell in love, both were well known for their various boyfriends and girlfriends. For five years Courteney was the girlfriend of Michael Keaton, of *Batman* fame. After Michael and Courteney split, she went out with Counting Crows rocker Adam Duritz, actors Kevin Costner and Christian Slater, and US TV talk show host Conan O'Brien.

Courteney has admitted having enrolled in "relationship therapy" to find out why she had trouble maintaining a long-term relationship. "I had this terrible fear of commitment," she says. "It was my biggest problem. My parents' divorce made me worried

that whoever I fell in love with would also leave me, so I became very conservative. I'd learned to take care of myself and found it difficult to trust anyone."

Then David Arquette came along and all that changed. "He makes me laugh," says Courteney. "He breaks me up."

David gives her a hug. "I love making her laugh," he says, and instantly does a manic soft shoe shuffle that dodges chairs and sofas on the *Friends* set and has Courteney doubled over.

David, who is the younger brother of actress Rosanna Arquette (*Desperately Seeking Susan*) and Patricia Arquette (*Beyond Rangoon*), met Courteney on the set of their smash-hit movie *Scream*. "But I think I scared her," says David. "I was always flirting and drinking and was involved with the wrong crowd. I think I was a little too scary for her. I was a troublemaker and that upset her."

With his mother's death last year, though, David reassessed his life. He not only quit drinking, but also quit his fast-lane party lifestyle.

"It was only then that I was really able to charm Courteney and today I'm the luckiest man alive," he says.

Both Courteney and David want to have children as soon as possible and Courteney's goal is to be pregnant by her 35th birthday.

"Babies are part of my future. I can't imagine a future without them," she says. "Family is so important and I want kids so much I've even considered being a single mum. But I'd prefer to do it the traditional way and now I can."

Marrying David will make Courteney part of two of Hollywood's most famous acting dynasties.

David's family is well known.

- Apart from Rosanna and Patricia, there's David's transsexual brother Alexis, who hosts a Hollywood drag act under the stage names Amanda B. Reckonwith and Eva Destruction.

- Another brother, Richmond, is a Hollywood scriptwriter.

- Grandfather, Cliff, is TV comic.

- Father Lewis is a well-known Broadway actor, best remembered for his role as J.D. Pickett in the TV hit series of the '70s, *The Waltons*.

- Courteney will also be related by marriage to the Coppola family. Future sister-in-law Patricia is married to Nicholas Cage, nephew of *The Godfather* films director Francis Ford Coppola.

"David and I both come from big families," says Courteney, "and we are both the youngest."

Besides having a lot in their families in common, both are happy with their respective acting careers.

David stars in the forthcoming romantic comedy *Never Been Kissed*, opposite Drew Barrymore, and in the horror thriller *Ravenous*, where he plays a cannibal opposite Australia's Guy Pearce and British actor Robert Carlyle (of *The Full Monty* fame). Courteney will shortly be seen in *Alien Love Triangle*, with Kenneth Branagh, and in next year's *The Runner*, with John Goodman.

No wonder they are happy. Glancing down at the ring on her finger, Courteney beams and says, "I'm on top of the world!"

— DAVID KING

*'I've always been shy, but with David it's different'*

Courteney (fourth from left) horses around with the cast of *Friends* — Matt LeBlanc, Jennifer Aniston, David Schwimmer, Lisa Kudrow and Matthew Perry.

