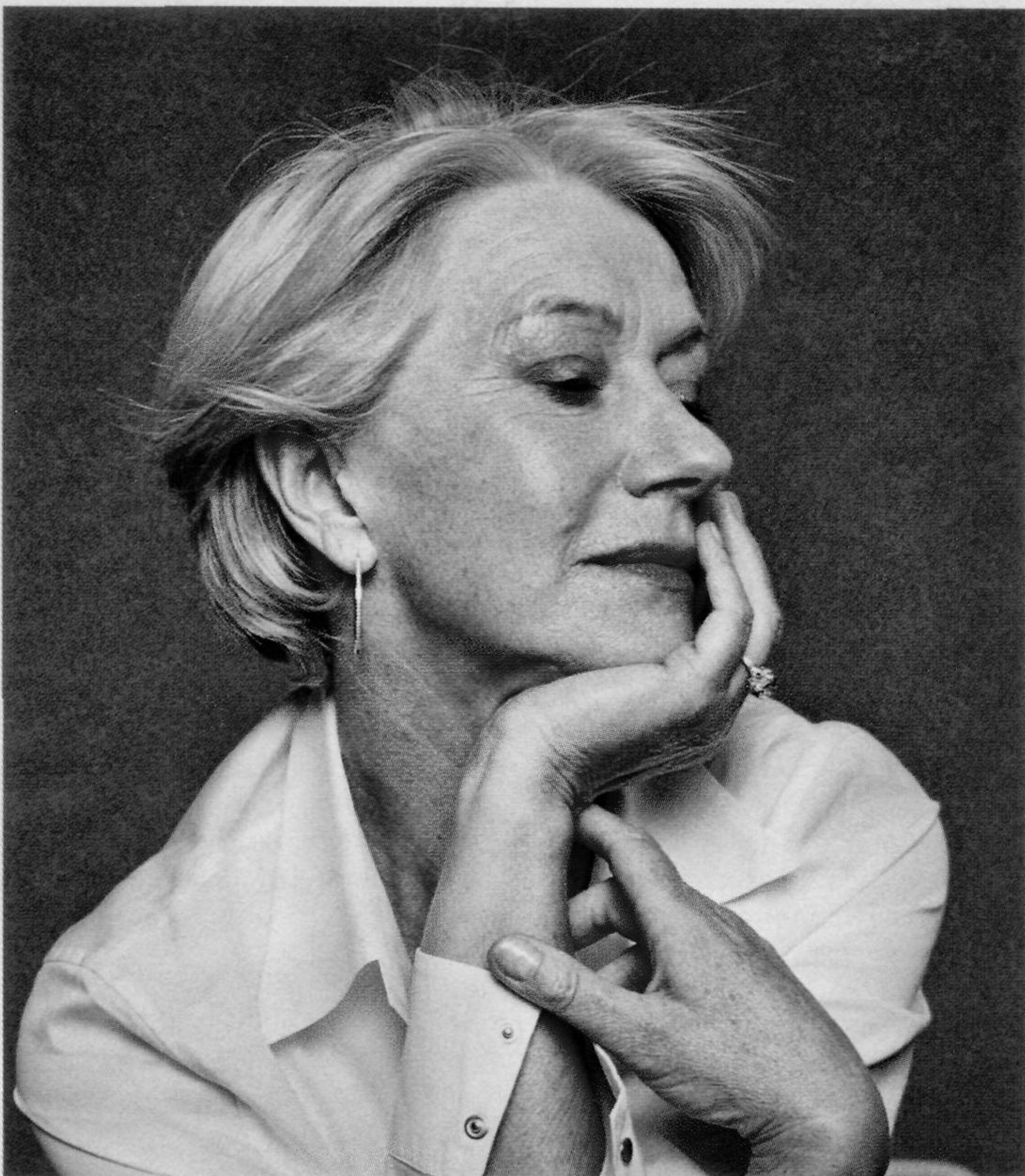


JASON BELL—CAMERA PRESS/RETNA



# OTHER GREAT PERFORMANCES

## Helen Mirren

### ● THE QUEEN

Helen Mirren is one of those terrifying British actresses whose competence is almost ferocious. She's built to play women of power and intelligence. But when it came to her sovereign, the biggest big dog in the female power kennel (sorry, Oprah), Mirren, 61, was the one intimidated. Worse still, in *The Queen*, which imagines the royal-family dynamics and political maneuverings after Princess Diana's death, she has to play two Elizabeths: the public one, whom everybody feels they already know, and the private, whom few have seen. "I was incredibly nervous," says Mirren. "I didn't want my performance to be clever but thin, and I didn't want it to be a satirical impersonation." (There have been enough of those.) What finally

helped her, she says, was looking at paintings of the monarch and concluding that she was going to do her own portrait—"my intellectual deconstruction of her." From there it was all about research, the voice and the bearing. The public persona came first. "As I watched her, I saw that although she has an extremely composed exterior, there's an incredible beat of energy within," says the actress. The private queen—mother, wife and grandmother—is where Mirren really gives the old girl a heart—a proper duty-bound, selfless one. Her queen is not cold and distant. She's just not programmed to display her feelings. Says Mirren: "To her, it would simply be rude to impose your emotions on others." —By **Belinda Luscombe**

# OTHER GREAT PERFORMANCES

## Forest Whitaker

### ● THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

He's a big guy (1.89 m., 100 kg.), and at 45, he's no longer a kid. But with his round face and eager, innocent eyes, there's still something childlike about Forest Whitaker. He made his strongest, early impression as Charlie Parker in Clint Eastwood's *Bird*—a man who was all appetite, savaging a genius-struck gift for music with his unrestrained lust for drugs and self-destruction. Whitaker has waited almost 20 years to get back in touch with his big inner baby. Now he's back, not as victim but as victimizer, one of the most horrendous in modern memory: Uganda's shrewd, mad dictator, Idi Amin.

Before he was overthrown, Amin managed to slaughter something like 300,000 of his fellow countrymen—often, as director Kevin Macdonald's *The Last King of Scotland* would have

it, with a merry, cunning grin. As Whitaker plays him, he's a prisoner of hair-trigger paranoia. Or possibly he has history's most virulent case of attention-deficit disorder. Whitaker brings the same whacked-out energy to both the charity and carnage Amin orchestrates—alternately charming and scaring the bejesus out of the international press, the diplomatic corps and a young, fictional Scottish doctor who becomes the tyrant's confidant.

The film wastes much time on the doctor—time that could have been more profitably spent on Whitaker, who gives one of the great bold-strokes performances of recent years. This is not about subtlety; his mood swings are teeth rattling, shifting in nanoseconds from boyish to brutal, manipulative to maleficent, while we hang on for a grim yet giddy ride. —By **Richard Schickel**



KEVIN MAZUR—CONTOUR