



ALLISON'S WONDERLAND

Beneath Allison Janney's patrician veneer beats the heart of a daydream believer and a woman who likes to seriously let loose
by Degen Pener photographed by Jack Guy



Janney may look like a denizen of café society, but "I'm into rap too," she says. "There's a Tupac song I've been playing over and over." In the living room the piano sits under a Hirschfeld sketch of the West Wing cast.

"You can fire me now, because I know it's coming," recalls Janney.

But by that time Hollywood was already on to her, and after Janney stood out in a slew of juicy character parts—in *Primary Colors*, *Big Night*, *American Beauty* and *Six Days, Seven Nights*—she landed *West Wing*. "I've been acting for so long and to finally have this sort of recognition is really rewarding and validating," says Janney, who plays opposite Meryl Streep later this year in the highly anticipated film *The Hours*. "I'm so appreciative of it." As she heads back into the house she passes one of her Emmys, sitting on the armoire that holds her TV. "When success comes a little later, it doesn't skew your perception of things or your place in the world. I don't feel entitled."

But she does have the aura of a woman who—having achieved her biggest goal in life—is now raring to conquer a few more. She'd like to get back on the ice again. And go salsa dancing regularly. And get a dog. Janney breathlessly ticks off her list. She started taking tennis lessons recently. She just bought her first stereo and a CD burner, as well as her first piano. "I never thought I would own one," says Janney, who plays just for fun.

But the biggest step was buying her first home. "It was the most terrifying thing I've ever done. I had buyer's remorse every step of the way. I was the typical gypsy actor, always moving around. I have sort of committed to being here, I guess."

At first Janney thought she'd simply shop the aisles of Pottery Barn and Crate & Barrel and decorate the house herself. "Then I discovered this store in Santa Monica called Carlyle. I walked in and went, 'This is what I want my house to look like,'" says Janney. Working with one of the shop's decorators, Elise Breton, she has achieved a look that is casual and elegant with French, Indian, Indonesian and Chinese influences. Carved Javanese consoles and armoires harmonize with sumptuous Italian linen and Indian tapestry fabrics. Despite her penchant for fun, Janney spends a lot of time at home relaxing alone (she opts not to discuss a seven-year relationship with a man in New York), reading by the fire, listening to music, or watching movies. To feather her nest Janney "wanted things that were inviting, comfortable and yet stylish," says Breton. "What I like about her is she's very responsible. She had a budget. It's not like, 'I'm a star and here's my credit card.'" And she not only chose all the paint colors herself, but she also pretty much invented a new one for the kitchen. "I took a bucket and



"I'm a late starter. Everything in my life has come late," says Janney, reading a *West Wing* script by the pool. Opposite: In her bedroom (above), French-linen window treatments soften the California sun; cherished effects on her vanity table (below) include a silver grooming set of her grandmother's.

dumped in all the shades of yellow that didn't work, and it was perfect."

If only everything were that easy. Her steeply sloped and overgrown backyard is in need of some major landscaping, and Janney is eager for it to be finished (or at least begun). After all, she is already planning her next big blowout, an *I Dream of Jeannie*-theme party. "I want everything to be magic," she says, and she means not just for this party but *all the time*. "My whole life I have, I used to sit on my bed as a little girl and try to figure out how to make my nose twitch or some other trick. I figured it had to be a specific thing to me. I just had to spend time and I would find the right thing that would make my magic."

She scrunches up her nose. Alas, no new flower beds appear, nor flagstone paths fall into place, nor tulips materialize from thin air. No matter. As Janney will be the first to tell you, things bloom in their time. ■