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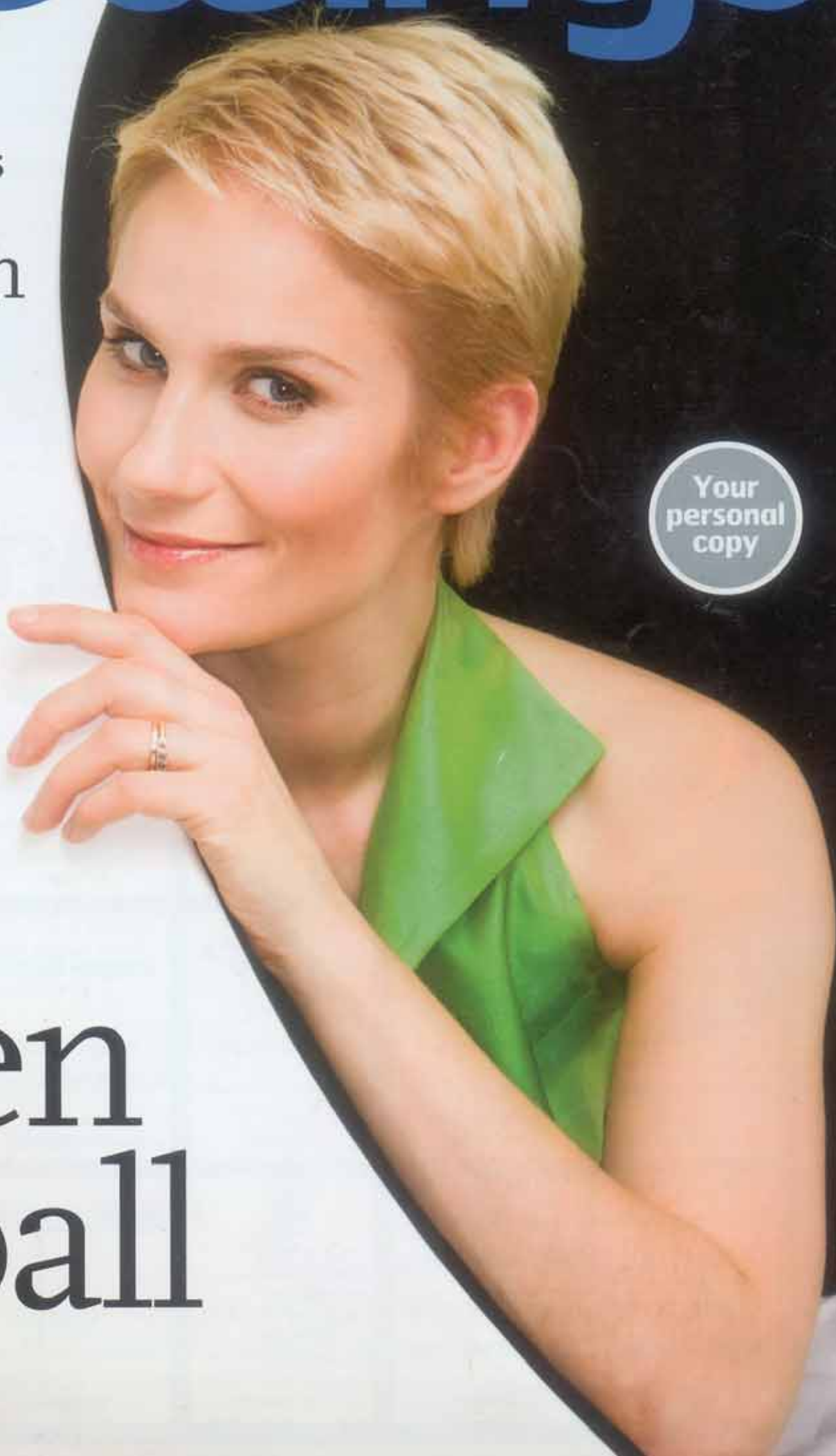
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**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

**Actress Laura
Malmivaara
kicks off
the New Year
as the**

**Queen
of
Football**



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Bend it like Malmivaara

BY PEKKA SÄILÄ PHOTOS BY FABIAN BJÖRK

In the new football comedy FC Venus, Finnish actress Laura Malmivaara plays a star goalkeeper who leaves men weak in the knees. A German version of the film is already in production ahead of next summer's soccer World Cup.

Clothing courtesy of Muotikuu/Valkainen
Elefontti and Stockmann. Ero-Aarnio's
Ball Choir from Aero.



THE NEW WINGS OF POWER

The new wings of power are here. They are the wings of the future, the wings of the past, the wings of the present. They are the wings of the soul, the wings of the heart, the wings of the mind. They are the wings of the spirit, the wings of the body, the wings of the soul. They are the wings of the world, the wings of the universe, the wings of the cosmos. They are the wings of the earth, the wings of the sky, the wings of the sea. They are the wings of the land, the wings of the air, the wings of the water. They are the wings of the fire, the wings of the ice, the wings of the wind. They are the wings of the sun, the wings of the moon, the wings of the stars. They are the wings of the galaxies, the wings of the planets, the wings of the comets. They are the wings of the universe, the wings of the world, the wings of the soul.



Mis-en-scenes: Carita, played by Laura Malmivaara, in goal; Pete (Petteri Summanen) and Anna (Minna Haapkylä) share a moment on the field; Katariina (Miia Nuutila) takes the ball from Simo, played by Hannu-Pekka Björkman).

FC Venus combines three elements with global appeal: love, humour and football.

practising for the film and noticed that the women's national team was training on the next pitch. When they heard we were making a football picture, they started cheering us on loudly. That added a bit of pressure to perform," says Laura, with a laugh.

During shooting, she also learned – literally – one of the most important skills in acting: how to throw herself into a role.

"I'm a football fan, and my respect for the game grew as I worked on this picture," she says. "People might think that you don't need to be in tip-top shape to be a goalkeeper. But based on my experience, it's one of the most demanding positions on a team, both physically and mentally."

Laura says she has always been a big fan of Ajax Amsterdam. As evidence, a jersey hangs in her wardrobe bearing the name of the team's former Finnish star, Jari Litmanen.

"Now that I've started to watch how goalkeepers work more closely, maybe my next hero will be a goalie," she muses.

NOT CAMERA SHY

Along with her acting and singing careers, Laura has gained recognition as a photographer. She had almost completed a degree at the University of Applied Arts

Helsinki when she left to attend the equally prestigious Theatre Academy of Finland.

Laura still takes her camera with her everywhere and tries to use it as much as possible. That work has paid off: she has already had her own photography show, and most recently did a poster campaign on behalf of organisations for public health and people with handicaps.

With good reason, Laura is often referred to as a multitasker. That description seems to bother rather than flatter her.

"How so, multitasker? There are countless things that I can't do well, such as baking or organising my time reasonably," she says, with a chuckle.

"I've also been asked whether I consider myself primarily an actress, singer or photographer. I have a really hard time answering that question, and on the other hand, I don't see why I should have to."

Sometimes Laura sees her own work through outsiders' eyes. "When someone says to me, 'it's wonderful that you're so successful,' I wonder what that success is supposed to mean. After all, I haul grocery bags and change dirty nappies just like other people. And my work takes up so much time that I basically have no social life."

Laura stresses that success is something you have to work towards – but that the most important thing is personal satisfaction.

"I have to admit that I feel very privileged: I can't imagine having chosen a different life." ■

