



BABY & TODDLER
RACHEL STEVENS

‘Sleepless
Nights Are
Just As Bad
Second-Time
Around’

Rachel Stevens' life is more playdates than pop parties these days. Here she opens up to M&B about mini meltdowns, early mornings and coping with a new dose of sleep deprivation.

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Hair and make up by MATTY COLEMAN

IT IS A TRUTH universally acknowledged – among parents anyway – that Sophie la Girafe is the solution to pretty much everything. That’s the case at M&B’s photo shoot, where the squeaky teething toy being held behind the photographer is the only thing keeping Rachel Stevens’ six-month-old daughter remotely interested in having her picture taken.

‘Yeah, Minnie loves Sophie,’ laughs Rachel during our interview later that afternoon. We’re sitting happily cross-legged with comforting mugs of tea on a plush carpet while the crew finishes lunch in the next room. Rachel’s management is with them so we’re by ourselves – a refreshing change from the usual celebrity interview set-up and a reflection of how down-to-earth Rachel is.

It’s easy to forget (maybe because she looks much younger than her 36 years – seriously, we’ll have whatever she’s having) that Rachel has been in the public eye for nearly 16 years now, her career launched in noughties Brit Award-winning band S Club 7.

With more than 14 million records sold and a hit TV series under their combat-trouser belts, the group split in 2003 and she’s now enjoying the new and most important role in her life – parenthood. Today, her eldest, four-year-old Amelie, is at nursery while baby Minnie is with us on the shoot, happily rolling around in the pretty tutus and dresses the stylist has brought along for her.

‘I’m so into putting the girls in the same clothes at the moment,’ smiles Rachel. ‘I’m going to milk that for as long as I can! We didn’t know we were having a girl when I was pregnant the first time around so it was all creams and neutrals, but we found out with Minnie so I went mad with the clothes!’

Strike A Pose

A poster pin-up for most of her career (the excitement of two male friends when we tell them we’re interviewing her says it all...), Rachel was nearly three months pregnant with Minnie

when she was photographed for the cover of *FHM* magazine, in black underwear and next to the line ‘The All-Time Sexiest Women Of *FHM*’.

‘I have such a good relationship with the magazine, so I really wanted to do it,’ she explains. ‘Nobody knew I was pregnant, but I wanted to be honest with them. Fortunately the team was brilliant and I was starting to feel a bit more normal after my early nausea, so it all worked.’

It was surreal doing it, though, just feeling all maternal and different in my own body... I guess I’ve done lots of shoots before so it’s like wearing different hats.’ And Rachel’s sure she’ll show her daughters the

photos when they’re older: ‘I think it’s important to be open and speak to them honestly. And I’m very proud of the images – they’re more fun than sexy.’

Girl Power

Rachel jokes about her husband Alex, who works in property, contending with two teenage versions of their daughters, especially as she admits that they’re already both quite fiery like their mum: ‘The other day I went to pick Amelie up from a friend’s house and she didn’t want to go, so there was a proper meltdown. She’s so strong willed that when she has something in her mind, that’s it.’

Amelie is also going through a phase of springing up at 5.30am every morning, and Rachel acknowledges that while ‘you know what to expect more’ from the whole sleep-deprivation thing second time around, it’s still tough. She and Alex found a middle ground between Gina Ford and another book that was ‘a bit more hippy dippy’, which helped both girls pretty much sleep through the night from around three months.

‘I feel lucky as I don’t know how parents manage beyond that,’ Rachel says. ‘Alex and I both aren’t great without sleep anyway, so we’re hideous to each other when we’re both up in the middle of the night!’

The pair have been married for five years and Rachel sends Alex phone▶

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snaps of the photo shoot between takes. She credits the routine Minnie and Amelie are in for helping them find couple time – they’re both massive foodies (even though Rachel admits she’s not a great cook) and love restaurants for date nights.

‘The thing we’re trying to do is to get off our phones,’ she says. ‘They take over our lives and they’re so bad for a relationship – we say we’re going to ditch them but we never actually do it.’

Surrounded By Support

The family has a strong network around them, including a nanny who’s come with Rachel to help look after Minnie. Both she and Alex also have parents living minutes away who help out – her mum will look after Amelie after a playdate this afternoon.

It’s something that no doubt helps Rachel with work, which she’s returning to more and more now Minnie’s a little older. She’s an ambassador for WaterAid, describing a humbling trip she took with the charity to Ethiopia, and her agent also politely interrupts us to reveal Rachel’s going to be a judge on *The Voice* in Ireland. Music is clearly her first career love and she grins when we ask what she’s clearly been asked a lot: is the rumoured S Club reunion going to happen? ‘It would be so much fun and there’s a lot of goodwill behind the band, but it’s just difficult getting seven people together – I’ll keep you posted!’ she says. Days later, a verified Twitter account opens for the band...

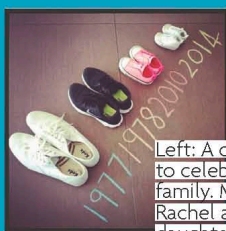
Still, millions of fans and some epic dance routines don’t have everyone convinced – Amelie’s more into Disney princesses than watching her mum’s old music videos. She is into *Strictly*, though – Rachel came second in 2008 with partner Vincent Simone.

‘Amelie just loves all the dresses and dancing,’ she says. ‘She also likes *Peppa Pig* at the moment – whoever came up with that show is a genius... I wish I’d invented *Peppa Pig*!’

Rachel is supporting WaterAid’s Christmas appeal, *Child of Mine*. To support the appeal and donate £3, text CHILD to 70300. To find out more, visit wateraid.org/uk/mother

FROM FIRST PAGE: RACHEL: JUMPER, £50, AMERICANAPPAREL.CO.UK; SEQUIN SKIRT, £54, LITTLE-MISTRESS.CO.UK; BRACELET, £42, GAG & LOU AT BOTICCA.COM; MINNIE: DRESS, £175, MARIECHANTAL.CO.UK; HAIRBAND, £15, ILOVEGORGEOUS.COM. THIS PAGE: RACHEL: JUMPER, £69, BODEN.CO.UK; SKIRT, £210, TARAJARMON.COM; SHOES, £159, PRETTY-SMALL-SHOES.COM; MINNIE: CARDIGAN, £38, ILOVEGORGEOUS.COM; TUTU, £35, ANGEL’S FACE AT CHILDRENSALON.COM

PEEK INTO RACHEL’S FAMILY ALBUM



Left: A clever way to celebrate your family. Middle: Rachel and elder daughter Amelie



The family foot collection!

