

# Sunday

TOUCH  
ME UP  
QUICK-FIX  
BEAUTY  
AT YOUR  
DESK

WHERE  
HAVE  
ALL THE  
FEMINISTS  
GONE?

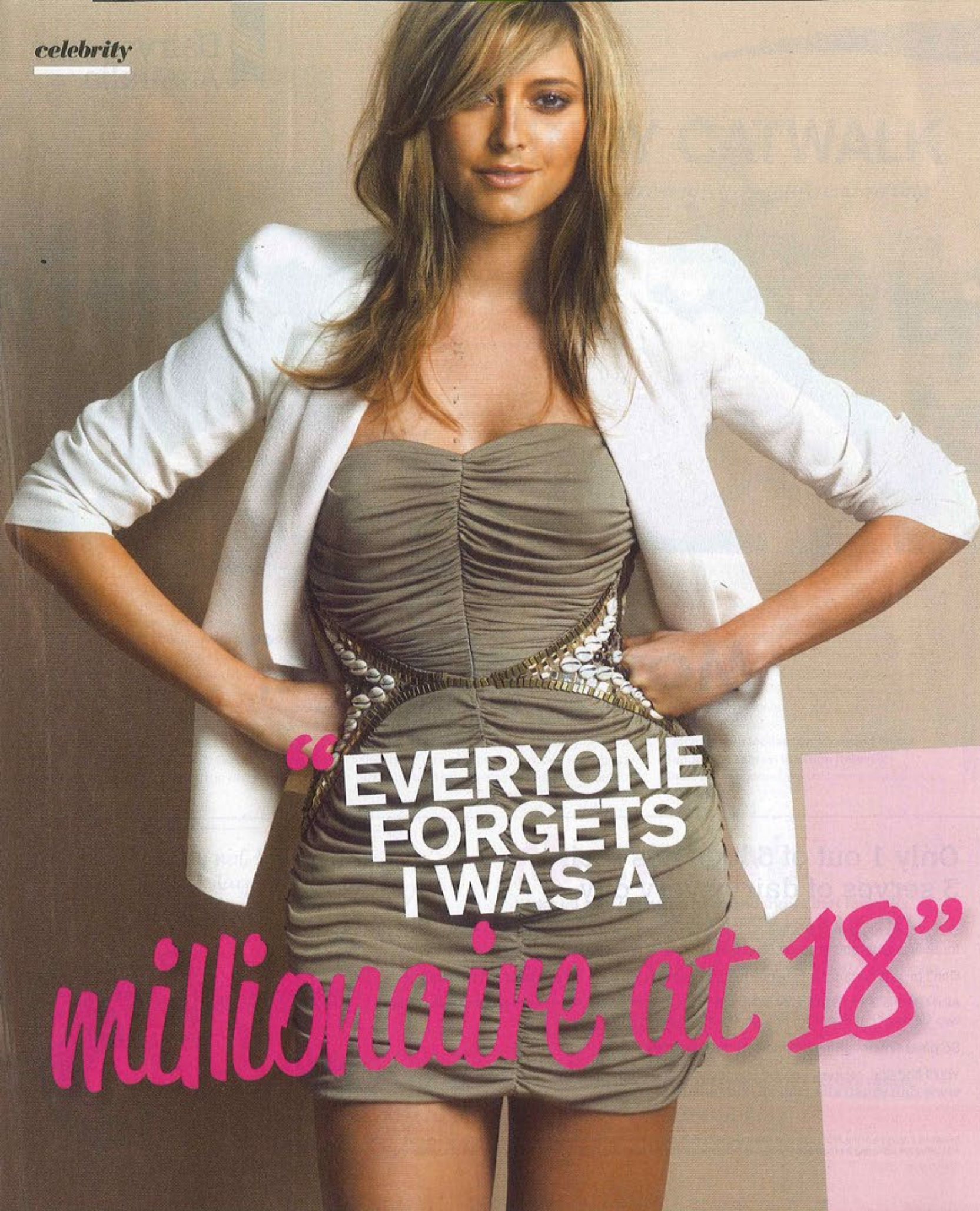


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“I’M SUPPOSED  
TO BE *Curvy*”

WHY HOLLY VALANCE REFUSES TO BE A SIZE ZERO





“EVERYONE FORGETS I WAS A

millionaire at 18”

**I love...**

“Twitter. It’s really just my silly thoughts. It’s also a good way of quashing a rumour. I’m able to say, ‘Sorry guys, that latest piece of gossip is a pile of crud,’ before it gets out of control.”

**I hate...**

“the British winter. I first moved to London in January last year, and it was freezing. But I’m slowly getting used to it. And I’m now enjoying the change in seasons, especially after living in LA, where it’s sunny every day.”



**I**t’s easy to think you know Holly Valance. She’s the former *Neighbours* starlet who turned her time on the soap into a (albeit short-lived) recording career, had a habit of shedding her clothes for men’s magazines and music videos, then went to LA and found moderate success in the TV show *Prison Break* and movies such as *DOA: Dead or Alive* (2006) and *Taken* (2008).

Then there are the men. Valance’s name has always been connected with someone, whether it’s her former manager and fellow *Neighbours* alumni Scott Michaelson (who successfully sued her for breach of contract after she sacked him), or former boyfriends Peter Ververis (who went to jail after being convicted on drug charges, blaming the breakdown of their relationship) and *Hawaii Five-O* star Alex O’Loughlin. Oh, and let’s not forget current live-in love Nick Candy, 38, who just happens to be a multi-millionaire.

Yes, it’s easy to think you can sum her up in

a few sentences. But there’s another Valance who’s not quite so familiar – one who’s funny, frank and fiercely independent. Not to mention loyal to her family and proud of what she’s accomplished. “Everyone seems to forget that I’ve achieved everything myself and was a millionaire at 18,” she muses. “But what am I going to do, show them my bank statement?”

It’s late on a Friday evening when the 28-year-old Valance (born Vukadinovic) calls from London for our interview and, I have to admit, I’m not looking forward to it (and not because Valance – who tells me she’s a Blues fan – calls in the middle of a Carlton vs Geelong game).

When I met her a few months before – at *sunday magazine*’s photoshoot – she gave the impression of being bored and disinterested throughout our interview (she had flown in from London to start shooting the film *Big Mamma’s Boy* a few days before). And she had a veneer of toughness, which I suspected might be her default position when talking to a journalist. >





Valance was with fellow Aussie actor Alex O'Loughlin (left) for almost four years; she moved back to London after meeting British real-estate mogul Nick Candy (inset) at a party.

But second time around, it's a relaxed and chatty Valance on the line, who happily talks about her new life in London and her relationship with property developer Candy.

"He's fantastic," she gushes. "He's working like a dog, as usual, but I'm so proud of him and his achievements. He's my best mate. We have such a laugh together, we giggle like children. It's probably quite nauseating to be around."

As well as enjoying her flourishing love life, she's happy to be catching up with old friends. Former *Neighbours* "buddy" Stephanie McIntosh is staying with her ("She's over from LA to shoot a film, so we had a girlie dinner last night") and she had breakfast with Ian Smith (aka Harold Bishop) a few days ago. "It was gorgeous to see his lovely face," she enthuses. "He's a legend."

(To complete the *Neighbours* theme, when I interviewed her last time, she mischievously said Daniel MacPherson was in her bedroom. But before we start a rumour, let's clarify - he was renting her West Hollywood apartment.)

The Melbourne-born Valance relocated to London from LA in January 2010, but says she'd planned the move before she met Candy.

"I'd spent a lot of time working in London in 2009 and it was growing on me again. I needed more hustle and bustle and a bit more culture, so I started to think about moving back."

Then she met Candy at a friend's dinner party in London. "We sat chatting for hours. I thought, Jeez, if I didn't fancy this bloke so much, I've found my new best friend in London.

"I thought he was lovely and gorgeous, but I had to go back to America. We did the long distance thing for four months, but I missed him so much, I moved earlier than I planned."

Valance said she had no idea Candy was wealthy when she met him (the kind of wealth that pays for five homes, including a 30-room, \$270 million Monte Carlo penthouse, a private jet and an \$86 million super yacht). "He was just a man whose company I enjoyed," she says, before admitting the scale of his wealth is "overwhelming; his lifestyle is fast and fabulous".

Then again, Valance isn't exactly a wide-eyed ingénue, having been in the industry since she landed the role of Felicity 'Flick' Scully in *Neighbours*, aged 15. "It's not as if I was brought into his world with my eyes closed," she says. "I lived in LA for seven years, so glitz and glamour wasn't something I'd never seen before."

Her life is now a whirlwind of jet-setting (she was off to the Monaco Grand Prix the week after we met), fine dining and holidays. And while she admits she's had lovely presents ("I don't do badly on birthdays and at Christmas, let me tell you"), she wants to pay her own way. >



"Even though it offends Nick because he's a gentleman, I do sneak the waiter my [credit] card when I can, so I can get in before him. And we were in Miami last week and it was nice to take him shopping and buy him a watch.

"It's a big pride thing," she adds, her Aussie accent still strong, despite her years overseas. "I like to be able to look after my family and to treat my partner. It's irrelevant to what degree because Nick doesn't live on a normal scale. It would be unrealistic for me to try to keep up, so I do thoughtful things I know he appreciates."

Valance has always attracted the attention of the paparazzi, and hooking up with one of the UK's most eligible bachelors has only exaggerated that. She now accepts it goes with the territory, even when she's snapped wearing a bikini, as happened on their Miami trip, as well as their Barbados holiday in January.

In both sets of bikini snaps, a glowing Valance looked voluptuous and healthy,

It seems that no longer interests her, for the moment, anyway. "I wouldn't say I'm becoming more conservative as I get older, but I don't think it's necessary. [Although] I don't want to make any rules for myself - if I feel like doing another shoot, then maybe I'll do one.

"The funny thing is I think I've only done three *FHM* shoots, but they seem to have lasted for about 10 years, with other magazines regurgitating the shots. But why would anyone have issues with seeing me in my undies?"

And what of the career girl who once claimed she was "born ambitious"? At the time of our first meeting, Valance was on a roll, filming parts in comedies *Surviving Georgia* ("My first Australian film, so that was pretty special") and *Big Mamma's Boy* ("I loved it, all the guys were hysterical and I ruined many a take giggling").

But since then, things have been quiet. "You go through cycles, which is a bit frustrating," she admits. "I'm reading scripts, but I'm really picky.



In *Big Mamma's Boy*, Valance faces tough competition for the affections of her man (played by Frank Lotito) from his over-protective Italian family.

**"I LOVE FOOD; I LOVE LIFE. I'M REPRESENTING REAL PEOPLE IN STORIES. I'M NOT REPRESENTING A MODEL, SO I DON'T NEED TO BE A SIZE ZERO"**

a welcome relief from all the stick-thin actors that fill gossip magazines. Valance says she doesn't watch her weight. "I'm a woman. I'm supposed to be curvy. I love food; I love life. No one hit 80 and said, 'Jeez, I wish I hadn't had that extra spring roll.' People are fixated on this stuff and it isn't what life is about."

And despite having lived and worked in LA - the home of the size-zero culture - Valance says she never felt any pressure to lose weight. "Never," she says firmly. "I'm representing real people in stories. I'm not there representing a model, so I don't need to be a size zero. Look down the street, no one is a size zero."

She pauses, then adds defensively, "I wouldn't say I call myself curvy. I call myself healthy."

There was a time when Valance seemed to revel in flaunting her body, regularly appearing on the pages of magazines such as *FHM* and *Ralph* with not a lot on. Then there was the video for her debut single, 'Kiss Kiss', in which she appeared to be naked.

I don't want to make the mistake of taking any job just because I'm bored."

In the meantime, she's doing some writing ("A couple of people here were asked by US TV network HBO to come up with stuff and, for some reason, they found me amusing and asked if I'd join in," she says) and is developing her own business ventures, on which she declines to elaborate until they're ready.

"Highly dull, sorry."

And then there's her relationship with Candy, which could be about to get serious. Valance, who says she's "very maternal", admits they've discussed marriage, but not at any great length. "Like most people who live together, you think, one day we should do this."

There's no doubt all is well in Valance's world. "I'm in a great place at the moment," she smiles. "I'm learning new things and I'm feeling confident. Everything is powering forward." ■

BY JOANNE HAWKINS

*Big Mamma's Boy* is in cinemas from Thursday.