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Abbey Clancy

How the
MODEL,
MOTHER,
DANCER
& DESIGNER
is redefining the
WAG TAG

'THE WAG LABEL DOESN'T OFFEND ME'

But ABBEY CLANCY is far more than *just* a footballer's wife. The model, mother and designer talks to *Julia Neel* about her work ethic and life after *Strictly Come Dancing*

PHOTOGRAPHS *Mark Cant*

“
You don't need a
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”

TOP, £20, and PENCIL SKIRT,
£20, both Abbey by Abbey
Clancy for Matalan



DRESS, £35,
Abbey by
Abbey Clancy
for Matalan.
SUNGLASSES,
Dita Von Teese
for Dita

WAGS ARE A CLASS of pampered, over-groomed, hyper-tanned, underworked women, right? Abbey Clancy, 28, is another breed. For starters she knows about work ethic – she took a day out of her family holiday on the exclusive Cap Ferrat, near Nice, to shoot this story for YOU. She has designed a new range of dresses for Matalan, her fourth collection for the high-street store, and post *Strictly Come Dancing* triumph (she walked away with the glitterball trophy last December) she has transformed into something of a design whiz. 'It's ridiculous to work on holiday. I know, but I love it,' she says during a break in shooting. 'I work so hard all year so I can have everyone else enjoy the summer. I really love taking everyone on holiday and relaxing, eating, drinking, making a show of ourselves, dancing on tables...' She may be married to footballer Peter Crouch but it's Abbey who is sponsoring this glamorous getaway. Peter, three-year-old daughter Sophia, her mum, brothers and a few close friends are all sunning in the South of France. We stopped by to talk about modelling, designing and owning more bikinis than a girl knows what to do with...

I come from a normal, working-class family in Liverpool, where everyone loves a bargain. Young girls now want a new dress every time they go out. When I was 16, I couldn't afford a Louis Vuitton dress, so I shopped at places like Matalan. I like the fact that everyone can afford my collection – the prices and the fabrics are great.

Designing is quite difficult; I'm used to dressing just me but suddenly I have to think about everyone else. I have to think, 'How are the girls with double-D cups going to wear a backless ➤

Below, from left: Abbey with husband Peter Crouch on their wedding day; with her daughter Sophia; performing with *Strictly Come Dancing* partner Aljaz Skorjanec at the O2, and collecting the glitterball with Aljaz



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◀ dress? How can I get girls who don't like their bellies to feel comfortable and confident? I spoke to friends and family of all different shapes and sizes and asked them what they love and hate in a dress. It's not a collection limited to 20-year-old girls.

I live by the fashion mantra that if you get your legs out you've got to keep your top half covered and vice versa. I love a pencil dress, miniskirts worn with long sleeves, and I think backless dresses are so flattering.

The only thing I've ever really wanted to do is walk in a Victoria's Secret show. As a 15-year-old, I remember looking at the VS angels and thinking they were the epitome of goddesses – sexy, strong and feminine. That's always been the dream.

Pete likes a girl to look like a girl. He doesn't like baggy. He doesn't like colour. He doesn't like prints. So he's on the same page as me – we don't like sacks! He likes me to show off my body, as all men do. He just doesn't get that whole big, baggy dresses and flat shoes thing.

I don't overthink or plan what I wear day-to-day. I wear J Brand jeans, Burberry biker jackets and Alaïa shoes and bags. I love Isabel Marant's boho vibe for the day. Zara is amazing for accessories, or if you want a really well-cut jacket. I'll sometimes wear a onesie around the house. But I don't wear anything to bed, I have to be free.

Even though I have shot for *Love* magazine and *Russian Vogue* I still get nervous on shoots. I just try to channel it into, 'Come on, you can do it, you're here for a reason. Get on with it!'

My daughter Sophia is obsessed with clothes – everything has to be princessy! She wants to choose her own outfit every day – always wacky and mismatched. She wants to wear leopard-print tights with a tutu and a vest and finish it with a fur hood. But I want her to stay natural. I'm never going to let her dye her hair or get fake eyelashes.

We're building a house in Surrey and I'm planning on having a tiny bedroom and a big wardrobe. I'm hyper-organised – hangers have to match and they have to face the same way. All clothes need to face the same direction and they are filed according to style and colour.

I'm also OCD when it comes to holiday packing. Sophia has ten outfits for day, ten for evenings, ten bikinis, ten cover-ups all neatly folded and

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DRESS, £40,
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for Matalan

paired together! Pete's the same. But I'm terrible at packing for myself – I often panic and end up bringing my whole wardrobe. Most of it ends up coming home unworn. I must have 50 bikinis with me on this trip – mostly by Melissa Odabash, she's my favourite.

I used to read a lot on holidays. Now I have Sophia I'm playing in the pool all the time. I read four James Patterson thrillers when I was on one holiday in Hawaii. I also read *Gone Girl* – I was questioning my own life, my own brain.

You don't need a gym membership when you have a baby. I have such a hectic life, busy running around everywhere. Looking after a toddler is hard – any mother will tell you that.

Since *Strictly* finished, I have felt a massive difference in my body. I was so toned and tight after the show; now I feel more sluggish – I'm not as fit as I was then. I still eat the same, only the dancing I'm doing now is on tables at beach clubs!

The wag label doesn't offend me, but I hate hearing girls say that it's their ambition. It's not a job. I come from a background where we work hard. I don't have to work – my husband's a footballer – but I choose to because it's good for Sophia. I hate laziness. Sophia will be brought up in a privileged way, we can't avoid that. But it's important for me to have her respect things and know their value. **■**
The latest Abbey by Abbey Clancy for Matalan collection (modelled here) will be in store and online from the end of August