

HELLO!

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR
NUMBER 1330 • 2 JUNE 2014 • £2.00

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REVEALS WHY BABY
FRANKIE IS SUCH FUN**



**'BRITAIN'S GOT
TALENT' EXCLUSIVE
AMANDA HOLDEN
FEELING SEXY, SPANX
AND SIMON COWELL**



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Amanda is looking better than ever as she models for HELLO! and it hasn't gone unnoticed, especially by her *Britain's Got Talent* co-judge Simon Cowell. "That's the biggest compliment of all to me because I'm sitting next to someone who sees me right up close - I can't get away with anything," says the 43-year-old





THE GOLDEN GIRL OF 'BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT' **AMANDA HOLDEN** ON HER STYLE, BEING A YUMMY MUMMY AND WHY IT'S TIME SIMON COWELL GOT DOWN ON BENDED KNEE

It's not often that Amanda Holden is lost for words, but she seems to be having trouble spitting out what she's trying to say.

"Yes, it's been..." She pauses, shuffles back in her chair and takes a drink of water. "It's been a very complimentary year for me and..." Another pause, before: "Well, that's always a boost, isn't it?" She smiles — a little awkwardly. "I don't really know how to put it without sounding like I'm..." Blowing your own trumpet? "Yes," she laughs.

What Amanda is too modest to say, so we'll say it for her, is that she is looking mighty hot right now and it hasn't gone unnoticed. Not by her fans, not by her friends and family and most definitely not by her

Britain's Got Talent boss and fellow judge Simon Cowell. Never one to mince his words, he has, Amanda confides, been fulsome in his praise, both to her face and to others.

"He's been amazingly complimentary to me this year," says the 43-year-old mum of two, the only judge to have graced the *BGT* panel since its start, in 2007.

"I know there have been comments on the s--- from Simon, too, about how I look so of course that's the biggest compliment of all to me because I'm sitting next to someone who sees me right up close — I can't get away with anything." Would he be brutally blunt if he didn't like what he saw? "He's never rude, but he does this thing where he'll just kind of

stare and his eyes will widen," she says, demonstrating.

"I remember one time I came on with this particularly Eighties-style hair and he just kind of honed in on it with this look on his face. I thought, 'Quick, hairbrush!'"

BLONDE BOMBHELL

With her hair falling around her shoulders and her body sheathed in a selection of stunning designer gowns that fit her like a second skin for *HELLO!*'s photoshoot, the actress is in great shape and she tells us the changes are more than skin deep.

"I've probably been more toned in the past, but I definitely feel at my happiest," says Amanda, a trained gymnast in her younger years. "I think

it shows. I've adopted this 'F**k-it' attitude," she adds with a chuckle. "And that's very liberating."

She has also become a devotee of kundalini yoga, the "yoga of awareness", which she discovered in Los Angeles, where she and her husband of more than five years, record producer Chris Hughes, have a home. The practice combines powerful breathing techniques, postures, mantras and meditation to unlock inner spiritual energy.

"A lot of people advised me to do it for calmness," says Amanda. "I don't really sit still, I'm always on the go. I thought it would be too intense for me — I didn't think I'd be able to switch off — but it's turned out to be incredible," she adds. "I do it



'I hate Simon seeing me without my make-up. He's got this saying, "Don't kill the magic"'

two or three times a week and it involves a lot of breath work and relying on your own body weight to tone up.

"It's hard work, but I've seen the benefits in so many ways. The breathing techniques can be used to help you stay alert when you're feeling tired, or to calm you down if you get anxious. I truly believe that how strong you are and what you put out is what can make the rest of your life work.

"And it's definitely made my tummy flatter," she adds. So much so, she's felt confident enough to banish that red-carpet staple – and every celebrity's go-to safety blanket – Spanx pants to the deeper recesses of her wardrobe.

"I was always very open about my love of Spanx but by not eating cake every day and doing a bit of yoga, I've realised I can get away without them," she says.

"Also, I'm not the most graceful at getting out of cars and there were a few paparazzi shots of me where you could see them. It's not a great look, is it?" she laughs, wrinkling her nose. "No one wants to see my sturdy trunks."

GRAND DESIGNS

Earlier this month, Amanda was photographed emerging from the London showroom of designer Suzanne Neville, whose elegant gowns she's long been a fan of, ahead of the live *Britain's Got Talent* shows.

Tuning in to see what gorgeous creations she and her fellow female judge Alesha Dixon will be wearing each week has become as much of a draw as the acts. "Alesha's style is much more edgy than mine, I'm more classic," says Amanda.

Despite the best efforts of some sectors of the press, there's never been any rivalry on that score between the two women.

"One of the biggest annoyances I've had was when Alesha joined the show and I got hundreds of questions, mainly from female journalists, saying, 'Oh, how do you feel about working with someone eight years younger than you?' I thought, 'I don't give a toss,'" she says. "Perhaps if it had been someone similar to me, then possibly it might have been a tricky situation, but Alesha and I couldn't be more different, physically and in our style."

As well as Suzanne, Amanda's also a fan of Victoria Beckham's designs, as well as the woman herself. "I love Victoria. I've met her a few times and she's funny and sparky and, I think, much misunderstood sometimes. I feel this strange connection to her, even though I don't really know her at all.

"I'm thrilled that her fashion lines have been so successful because I'm sure there were a lot of people who would have loved to see her fall flat on her face. Her dresses are incredible and the pieces I've had, I just know I'm going to wear forever or keep them for my girls.

"I also love the fact that her sizes are quite generous. I can happily fit into a Victoria Beckham size 8, when I actually think I'm more a size 10."

Amanda's daughters, Lexi, eight, and two-year-old Hollie, appear to have inherited their mum's flair for style.

"They're very girlie girls. Hollie literally goes around the house with a crown on. I deliberately bought her a fire engine, a bus, a racing car so as not to stereotype her, but she goes around in a cape and tiara waving a wand," says Amanda, with a "what can you do?" shrug.

"She loves playing with make-up. At the ▶

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW HARRIS; STYLING: KATE WOODS; HAIR: TONYA WOODS; MAKEUP: JESSICA WOODS; GROOMING: JESSICA WOODS; DRESS: SUZANNE NEVILLE; SHOES: ANDREAS KRISTOF; JEWELRY: JESSICA WOODS



Though she's always had a wonderful figure, Amanda is looking impressively toned these days – something she puts down to kundalini yoga (and saying no to cake every day). As a result she's more confident when wearing figure-hugging gowns such as these glamorous creations, as well as those by such favourite designers as Victoria Beckham and Suzanne Neville

'When Alesha joined BGT, I got hundreds of questions saying, "Oh, how do you feel about working with someone eight years younger than you?" I thought, "I don't give a toss"'



Since hitting her 40s, Amanda is more self-assured in her looks and wardrobe choices – something she's reveling in. "I think, 'My God, I was never someone people would look to for fashion, make-up and hair tips,'" she says. "Will I still be... flashing a bit of thigh when I'm 50? Probably not. Then again, come and ask me when I'm 50"

moment, she's into red lipstick – the slutty look.

"Lexi has such a good eye for pulling an outfit together," she adds. "I took her into Zara the other day to choose a new outfit and I looked at what she'd picked out and thought, 'Wow, Lexi, you've got that spot on.'"

It's too early to say if the girls will follow their mum into showbiz but if they choose that path, Amanda has

said she'll support them all the way. "I think Lexi will be behind the scenes, though, while Hollie will be out front giving it her all. She's the show-off."

Simon celebrated the birth of his first child, son Eric, in February. Alesha became mum to daughter Azura last autumn and fourth judge David Walliams is the father of one-year-old Alfred; has parenthood affected the dynamics on the panel?

"Alesha cries now, she didn't before," says Amanda, who this year had the honour of being the first to use the new BGT "golden buzzer", propelling 79-year-old ballroom dancer Paddy Jones straight through to the semi-finals. Amanda and Simon are tipping the pensioner and her dance partner, Spain's Nicolás Espinoza, 39, to win the competition. "Simon was always the best with

children," continues Amanda, who also has a wonderful way with the show's youngsters.

"He's never patronised the kids on the show and they like that – although it did used to worry me when he'd say to them, 'Right, I'm going to talk to you like you're an adult.'"

"I'd cringe inwardly and think, 'Oh God, please don't. What's coming next?'" she says. ▶

'Holding [Simon's son] Eric is like holding a baby Simon in your arms - a nice, quiet placid one. They're so alike'

"But I think there must be a moment now when he looks at the kids on stage and thinks, 'That's somebody's baby,' rather than just, 'That's a child.' There's that emotional connection.

"Holding Eric is like having a baby Simon in your arms - a nice, quiet, placid one," she adds. "They're so alike."

JUICY GOSSIP

Fatherhood and finding happiness with his son's mother, New York socialite Lauren Silverman, has had a great effect on her colleague and close friend, says Amanda.

"He's met his match in Lauren, 100 per cent," she says. "They make a great team - she's a feisty, strong, opinionated, beautiful girl who's going to give him as good back, which is what he needs. Simon needs to be challenged."

Does she also think they'll marry? "I do. And I think they'll have more children, too, because he loves it."

"Simon definitely should ask Lauren to marry him. He shouldn't let her get away. Lauren's such a good influence on him. I walked into work one day recently and he was there."

"Now, Simon is always the last," she explains. "He's the one we're all waiting for. It threw me a bit and I panicked because I had no make-up on. I hate Simon seeing me without my make-up - he's got this saying, 'Don't kill the magic' - so I was standing there, talking to him with my head turned slightly to the side," she says with a chuckle.

Having seen Amanda without her "slap" ahead of our photoshoot, she's being self-deprecating. Her skin is smooth and radiant, for which she credits the discovery of Nilam Patel's special collagen facial.

A vegetarian for many years, Amanda is also an advocate of juicing and the recipes of "Juice Master" Jason Vale.

"I find they really help make my skin look good," she says. "I get bad skin when I'm stressed and they've worked wonders."

"I'm not militant about it, though," she adds. "Delicious though they are, I couldn't sit there with a green juice while everyone else was tucking into fish and chips. And I do enjoy wine. And cheese. And cake."

She continues: "I was always a confident girl but I think I've grown in confidence recently because people have just said such nice things about me. I think, 'My God, I was never someone people would look to for fashion, make-up and hair tips.' Now I'm getting all these lovely comments and, well, that just makes you feel better about everything," she says, with a smile.

"Sometimes I think, 'Forty-three. How did that happen?' I remember my mum turning 43 and thinking, 'That's so old.' But nowadays, I look to women like Kylie and Dannii [Minogue], Jennifer Aniston - these incredible women who look fantastic and whose style I admire and it's not the same as it was back then."

"Will I still be getting my legs out and flashing a bit of thigh when I'm 50? Probably not. Then again," she smiles. "Come and ask me when I'm 50." **H**

INTERVIEW: BELINDA ROBEY

PHOTOS: DAVID VERRI

STYLING: ANGIE SMITH

MAKE-UP: FRANCESCA NELL

USING MAC & HD BROWS

HAIR: MINEY KARDASHIAN

USING T3 AND SHOW HAIRCARE

For an exclusive behind-the-scenes video from our shoot with Amanda, download our iPad edition, available from Apple Newsstand.

Amanda with husband Chris Hughes and daughters Lexi (now eight) and Hollie, now two (below, after Hollie's birth). Like their mum, the girls have their own sense of style - with Hollie's being particularly princessy

