

A salute to Pippa Middleton

8.11.11

The minute Philippa Charlotte Middleton stepped onto the red carpet at her sister's royal wedding, she became a star.

"There was almost a gasp across the world," says Ashley Pearson, royal watcher and journalist quoted in the TLC cable special "Crazy About Pippa" (which repeats at noon Sunday). The phrase on everyone's lips, says Pearson: "Who's that girl?"

It's Kate Middleton's younger sister, Pippa, 27. Or Pip, as her family calls her. With her winsome smile and demure but sexy Alexander McQueen dress, Pippa catapulted into pop-culture fame, stealing a slice of the spotlight at Kate's April 29 wedding to Prince William.



"The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are jolly and popular," writes Annabel Rivkin in *Tatler* magazine, which has Pippa on the August cover, but Kate's lil' sis "has gone global."

Plastic surgeons report that clients are clamoring to emulate everything from her rear to her nose. The name Pippa has zoomed up in popularity for 2011 baby names, now occupying the No. 1 spot on Nameberry.com, a baby website.

Porn outfit Vivid Entertainment has a standing offer out to her: \$5 million to do one scene in a movie. England's *Daily Mail* has declared her the "world's most eligible woman." And barely a day goes by that she doesn't pop up on a celebrity website, even when she's doing nothing more than walking down the street.

"We went through a number of different titles" for "Crazy About Pippa," says Amy Winter, general manager of TLC. "This one captured the tone of the show. It's very much how our audience feels."

As for what it is exactly about the youngest Middleton that is so appealing, Winter says, "I just think she's a sophisticated breath of fresh air. I think Kate is as well, but Pippa's the sporty, young sister."

She has been "a paparazzi favorite" since the wedding, says Jared Eng, founder of the celebrity website JustJared.com. He has posted at least 25 stories featuring Pippa in the three months since the wedding. "While her stories don't get as much traffic as Kate's, [Pippa] gets tons more than a lot of other well-established actors and musicians," says Eng. "Pippa seems to be a little less austere than Kate and has a bit more spunk."

But the wedding was only the beginning. Says Eng, "Pippa's time to shine has yet to come."

The British press seems to think that time is here.

"Perfect Pippa" is one of its nicknames for her — especially after photos of her and Kate in bikinis during a 2006 family vacation to Ibiza popped up two weeks after the royal wedding. Pippa has attributed her slim shape to Pilates, and she recently competed in a triathlon.

But it was the dress she wore to the wedding and its perfect fit that really captured imaginations — particularly that of Mike Bandar.

"I didn't even know Pippa existed," he said. "As soon as she stepped out of the car, we all went, 'Wow, she is stunning.' Turns out the rest of the world thought so, too."

Bandar quickly created a Facebook page devoted to Pippa's backside. By the end of the first day, he had 40,000 "likes" from folks who had a similar appreciation.

The plastic surgery industry "likes" her, too.

"She has exploded in the last two months," says Brian Glatt, a cosmetic surgeon in Morristown, N.J. "She's slim with fantastic curves."

"Dancing With the Stars" pro Mark Ballas told AOL celebrity writer Rob Shuter that he's a "huge fan" and would love to see her on the show. "My first choice of celebrity dance partner next season would be Pippa Middleton."

Annie Scudder, editor of *TresSugar.com*, the sex and culture site on the PopSugar Network, points out that Pippa's silence — whether it's a mandate from the royal family or simply a reluctance to step into the spotlight — has only helped build buzz.

"Keeping quiet in the press so far has increased the mystique around her while also preventing her from ruffling any feathers at Buckingham Palace. An interview with Pippa is a big score, as I'm sure the public is eager to put some personality behind the pictures."