

Miss Understood?

9 reasons why the always intriguing Britney Spears is more normal than you think

by Lisa Arcella



Whether you were just starting your first job or partying with the girls in college, you probably had a Britney moment a few years back. Bet you can still find “(You Drive Me) Crazy” or “Oops! ...I Did It Again” somewhere among your CD collection (and still love dancing to those songs). Yep, Brit has been there with us for all our major moments. But, *For Me* wondered recently, have we been there for her as she’s gone through some important life events of her own the last few years—her first “adult” tour, that quickie wedding and, now, her move into the world of marriage and motherhood? Fact is, if you’re like us, you were probably shaking your finger at her instead of standing up for her. Sure, maybe Britney, 24, asked for the attention, but does she deserve all the criticism? We looked into Brit’s world and discovered that the only thing “toxic” about her life right now are the rumors. Here are nine good reasons why the hardworking pop star deserves some respect.

OPPOSITE AND THIS PAGE: BENAINOUS ALAINGAMMA

PSST! FORGET POP-STAR ENVY. BRIT HAS NEVER FEUDED WITH CHRISTINA OR JESSICA.

1 Rumor Has It The stress of her huge career has taken its toll.

The Real Deal Time off from touring was way overdue.

By the time Britney began her Toxic tour schedule in 2004, the princess of pop was pooped. She’d already been in show business for 11 years and revealed that she was just as human as anyone else when she admitted to being “tired and frustrated” over the grueling 60-plus tour dates, which meant a new city almost every night, living out of a suitcase and no time for a social life. There were stories circulating that Brit would quit, but, ever the professional, she carried on. “She will complete her tour as planned,” a spokesperson said at the time. “She is tired, but anyone would be with that schedule.”

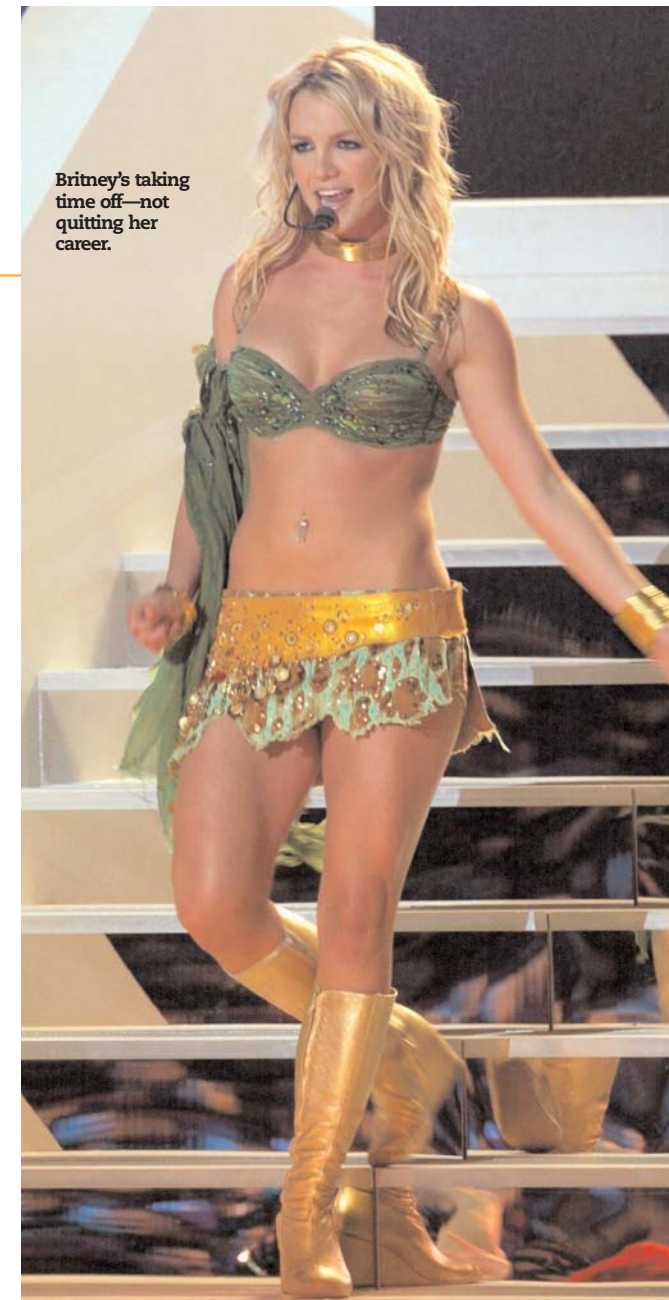
2 Rumor Has It Britney’s marriage is on the rocks.

The Real Deal She has ups and downs, just like any young wife.

Ask anyone who knows Britney and her husband, Kevin Federline, and you’ll find that the duo actually has a very passionate and loving marriage. It seems the chemistry has been there from the start. “He was like a magnet,” Britney was quoted as saying of their first meeting at the L.A. club Joseph’s. The young couple fell in love during her Onyx Hotel tour through Europe—and on the flight home, straightforward Brit popped the question! (Kevin’s *own* proposal five minutes later sealed the deal.) “I finally found my happily ever after,” Britney has said.

The couple is prone to impulsive acts, like inviting friends and family to what was billed as an “engagement party” at a private home in Studio City, California, on September 18, 2004, but that suddenly turned into a wedding instead. “I was like, ‘What are we waiting for?’” Britney has said. “We know this is the real thing, why not just do it now?” Since then, they’ve had their good days and bad days, like any newlyweds. “But they really love each other and take their commitment to each other seriously,” says an insider.

Britney’s taking time off—not quitting her career.



3 Rumor Has It She’s given up singing for motherhood.

The Real Deal She’s found a balance.

Britney hasn’t forgotten about performing by any stretch. She still has plenty of career dreams left to pursue, but, for now, she’s embracing life as a mom to Sean Preston Federline, who’ll be 7 months old on April 14. She told a reporter she was “ecstatic” about being a mother, and that the thing she most enjoys is “taking an afternoon nap in bed” with her baby. ➤

A source says she is already thinking about baby number two. "Britney would love to have another child with Kevin as soon as possible," says the insider. "She really has a natural talent for motherhood and wants a big, happy family. Everyone who knows her says it's wonderful to see how loving and tender she is with baby Sean."

4 Rumor Has It Britney became involved with Kabbalah because it's trendy. The Real Deal She's actually very spiritual.

Even though Britney and Kevin were married in a nondenominational Christian ceremony, she has been vocal about her interest in different world religions, including the Jewish mystical study of Kabbalah, which she was introduced to by her friend and mentor, Madonna. A source says Britney is very serious about her spirituality, and has even worn a red string on her wrist (it's said to deflect envious stares and evil intent) and donated \$32,000 to the Kabbalah Centre. After her wedding ceremony, Britney gave her bridesmaids custom-made Bolsa bags bearing the Kabbalah word in Hebrew that means "the power to heal." "Britney is searching for a way to cope with all the pressures of her life," says the insider. "Having spiritual guidance helps her to see the big picture and count all her blessings, which, of course, she does."



An interest in Kabbalah isn't the only thing Britney and Madonna have shared. Remember that passionate smooch?

5 Rumor Has It Britney can't shed her baby weight. The Real Deal Her weight-loss rate is normal for a new mom.

Shedding post-pregnancy weight is hard work for any new mama—even former ab-queen Britney Spears. But at this point, she has just a few last pounds to lose and has reportedly hired Mike Alexander—who made Jessica Simpson look so amazing in *Dukes of Hazzard*—as her personal trainer. Jessica spent every single day during filming doing lunges and squats while holding seven-pound weights, and was also told to avoid carbs

whenever possible. "Britney is following a similar regime," says the insider. "Her body is back, and even better than before. Plus, she still has that glow of new motherhood. She is more serene and beautiful than she has ever been."

6 Rumor Has It Britney's more interested in Kevin's career than her own. The Real Deal Britney's supportive—and is a little busy at the moment.

While Britney is totally behind 28-year-old Kevin's new rap career (his single "PopoZão" was recently released via the



Britney's only got eyes for Kevin.

Internet on the Yahoo! music site) and is his greatest fan, she hasn't given up her career—she just had a baby! Right now, she's enjoying precious moments with Sean and remodeling her fantastic new home in Malibu, California, before she gets her career back in full gear. Kevin seems to have a message on kevinfederline.com for all those rumormongers who had so much to say: "Keep messing with my family and you're through!" And he closes with this: "Now that I have your full attention, never judge a book by its cover."

7 Rumor Has It Everyone thought she would take Kevin away from his kids.

The Real Deal She loves all the children in her life.

Just two days after she married Kevin, Britney described her "ultimate goal" to a reporter: "I want to be a young mom. Next year, at 23, I'm so there." And, of course, she proved that prediction true—Britney gave birth to Sean Preston Federline on September 14, 2005. But even though she loves having her own child, she also enjoys her role as stepmom to Kevin's children with ex-girlfriend Shar Jackson. She often brags to her friends

about Kori, 3, and Kaleb, 1. "She talks about Kori nonstop, and every time I see her she always has new pictures to show me," her cousin Laura Lynne Covington has said. "She's always loved children."

8 Rumor Has It Britney has always had a huge crush on Brad Pitt. (OK, we threw this one in for fun!)

The Real Deal Yep, it's true!

Just like millions of women around the world, Britney goes gaga at the sight of Brad, and has even joked about how her obsession with him nearly got her seriously hurt! Don't read this, Kevin, but before she was married, Britney and a girlfriend used a "celebrity homes" map to find the Beverly Hills mansion Brad shared with his now ex, Jennifer Aniston. She and her friend stood on their car to get a glimpse over the security gate. But then Brad started to come down the driveway in his car! In her rush to hide, she fell off her car and injured her knee. "I felt like the biggest dumbass ever," Britney reportedly said.

9 Rumor Has It She's rude to photographers.

The Real Deal She doesn't tolerate illegal paparazzi behavior.

Britney certainly doesn't hate posing for pics for legit photographers, but there's no love lost when it comes to those pesky paparazzi, who seem to tail her from morning 'til midnight. "I want to get a water gun and squirt the s--- out of them," she once said. "Of course, that would probably get me even more press, so you lose either way." Britney actually *did* lose it at one point and reportedly threw a soda at someone who wouldn't leave her alone. "I want to talk to [California Governor] Arnold Schwarzenegger about creating a law where if you go to special events, it's fine for the paparazzi to be there, but in your personal time, it's stalking," she has said.

What's Next for Brit?

Psychic Medium and Energy Artist Linda Lauren predicts what's in store for Mrs. Federline

According to Linda, this could be a breakout year for Britney. "Brit's got it going on," Linda says. "She is trying to stay low-key until she and Kevin blast back onto the scene with his new music career and her courageous comeback, which will involve theater and/or music. Things might be short-lived with the onset of a new pregnancy (this time it will be a girl), and that will sideline the couple, which might lead to some stress. The best thing Britney can do right now is to store up her energy and work with a prioritized list of what she wants to accomplish this year, then work it with everything she's got!"

Time to make that to-do list, Britney!



Britney, the Mompreneur?

Mix the sweetness of the girl next door with the business skills of Donald Trump and you'll come up with the savvy career woman that Britney Spears has evolved into. She was once so excited by her new fame that she exclaimed, "I'm rich, freakin' rich. It's crazy!" But now she has multimillions and several homes (one is a new \$6.9 million, eight-bedroom beach place in Malibu, California).

Even though much of that fortune has come from singing and touring, Britney's also accumulated additional millions from endorsing products for McDonald's, Polaroid (the i-Zone camera) and Clairol (Herbal Essences). And while her debut flick, *Crossroads*, may have flopped and reality show *Chaotic* was, well, just that, she'll also keep acting—she's due to costar with Cher in next year's *In the Pink*.

And then there's her fragrance collection. Britney earned a cool \$30 million globally in the three months after the launch of Curious, and her new scent, Fantasy, is doing just as well. But Brit isn't all about money. The Louisiana native is involved in The Spears Family Hurricane Relief Foundation, which is providing aid to families and nonprofit groups in the Gulf Coast areas devastated by Katrina.



The smell of success: Curious grossed more than \$30 million.

OPPOSITE PAGE: JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC.COM (Britney and Madonna); KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM (Curious); THIS PAGE: GREENEHEINING/THORNTONGROFF.COM (Britney and Kevin); BENAINOUS ALAIN/GAMMA (bottom right)