

NICOLA BREYTENBACH

“I was walking through Times Square and saw this massive poster of me”

The gorgeous **Nicola Breytenbach** talks to Jessica Levitt about her new husband, charities and Leonardo DiCaprio...

**Y**OU'D BE FORGIVEN for thinking that Nicola's been born with the silver spoon... She's worked with big names such as Versace, Revlon and Dior, and has been on billboards in Times Square. And recently, she got hitched to her very own Mr Big – New York business mogul Ben Steiner. Now she's living the charmed life of shoes, cocktails and dinner parties. But she's surprisingly down to earth, and has no problem spilling the beans on her fairytale life!

So, Nicola, we want to know everything about Ben... How

**and where did you guys meet?**  
We met in Paris. I was working there and befriended some of his lifelong friends. We were introduced and it was set from there. It wasn't love at first sight, it kind of evolved into that. We decided to take time to get to know each other.  
**Does he spoil you?**  
Oh yes, he's very generous! He buys me tons of jewellery, but I guess what I really like is that when he goes out with friends he'll come back with a package of bags or shoes! And you wouldn't think that a guy could buy such classy stuff. He really does have great taste!  
**Lucky girl! We are dying to know how he proposed?**

It actually wasn't romantic at all! He asked while I was blow-drying my hair in our apartment in Trump Towers. I didn't believe him and kept telling him to get out of the bathroom because I was late. Eventually he shook me and showed me the ring. Then I got all emotional... It was actually quite funny! As it turns out, he had asked my dad for permission to be my husband and organised a whole surprise dinner. It was amazing...  
**So did he redo it to make it more romantic?**  
Nope, but that's Ben. Once he's bought something or wants to do something he >



Mess with Snow White  
and you'll end up as a  
garden ornament!





**Lucky man!**  
Nicola and Ben  
looking more than  
stylish on their big day

**“It intrigued me to know why he didn’t make a move. I always say he’s a silent giant – and I love him for that!”**

has to do it there and then. Once he gave me my birthday present three months before my actual birthday, just because he couldn’t wait anymore!

**What is it about him that makes you go weak in the knees?**

He’s so mysterious. In my line of business, I always had guys hitting on me and he didn’t do that at all. It intrigued me to know why he didn’t make a move. I always say he’s a silent giant – and I love him for that.

**So did he make the first move?**

Of course!

**We bet you are asked this question all the time, but do you guys want children soon?**

Oh, yes! We are just finishing up a few projects and then we’ll have kids.

**Do you like playing house and cooking and cleaning?**

Of course! It’s part of being a wife and eventually a mom. I’m very obsessive. I can’t stand a dirty kitchen. And yes, I love cooking. I do the most amazing roast chicken and Ben says I cook great salmon. We try and eat healthy food. **It’s been a while since you’ve been in SA. Why did you come back home now?**

I actually come home a lot. I really love South Africa and it will always be my home. But this time ’round, I’ve come back for a few reasons. I’m working on my fragrance, which will be called *Nicola*, and I will be doing a shoot for that here. It should be released next year. Also,

I’m involved in a project that funds education at a tertiary level. Many people focus on schools, but where does the youth go afterwards? So basically, we are providing free university education to those in need.

**That’s really amazing! Do you see yourself ever coming back for good?**

[Laughs.] I don’t think I’d ever live anywhere for good. I just move around so much. Even though I’m based in New York, we don’t live there. I get itchy feet and could never stay in the same place for too long! **Don’t you miss SA though?**

That’s why I’m here so much. I miss the people. There’s just this feeling you get when you are among your own...

I don’t have that feeling anywhere else. **Your life has really been an amazing journey, but not many people know how it all started...** Well, I was actually discovered by my mom’s hairdresser! I left South Africa when I was 13 years old. I moved with my mom and my stepdad to Switzerland and then to Holland. One day my mom was getting her hair cut and I was just lazing around when the hairdresser mentioned that he was starting a modelling agency and that I should join. I was 17 at the time and didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life, so I decided to try it out for a year.

**A good decision as it turns out! When exactly did you realise you had “made” it?**

Ha! It wasn’t like this epiphany, but one moment that sticks out is when I got the Revlon contract. Cindy Crawford had been doing it before and they wanted fresh faces. I went to a casting with thousands of other girls and only four of us were chosen. After the campaign I was walking through Times Square in New York and saw this massive poster of me. It was an amazing feeling! But it wasn’t easy at all! That was when I was 24. So for about six years, I was traipsing the sidewalks in Paris, constantly looking for work.

**When all the big contracts started rolling in, did your life change drastically?**

Yes, but luckily it all changed in a good way. All of a sudden you don’t have to go looking for work, you are constantly offered jobs. You stop doubting yourself and it’s almost like the process has come full circle. You work so hard and it’s great to eventually reap the benefits. I’ve been very fortunate to work on projects including Chanel, Dior, Revlon and Versace.

**So who are your celeb friends?**

In this industry it’s very difficult to say people are

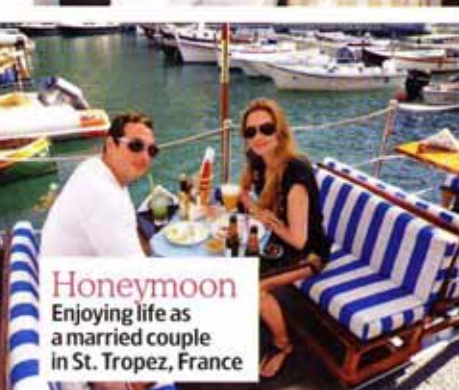
## Nicola's charmed life...



**Swinging 30th**  
Ben, Nicola, Constant and Minki in Cape Town celebrating Nicola's 30th



**Extreme sports**  
The girl loves getting her adrenaline pumping regularly!



**Honeymoon**  
Enjoying life as a married couple in St. Tropez, France



**Modelling**  
Her beauty has earned her contracts with the likes of Versace...



your friends. You see them all the time, but it's not like you'd call them up to meet for lunch. But yes, I do have a few celeb friends. David Blaine is very close to Ben and I. Gisele Bündchen is also my best friend. I don't see her as



**Fun, fun, fun!**  
Testing her driving skills on the go-kart race track



**Jetsetter**  
Nicola has travelled all over the world

a star though, we both started out together and I knew her way before she became anything. She's hilarious – loads of fun. And Ben is friends with Leonardo DiCaprio, but you should ask him about Leo, he's not *my* friend. **Is there really a lot of pressure to be thin in the modelling world?** Yes, that is the way it is. You have to sell clothes, I guess. **What is your opinion on size zero models?** It bothers me as much as having 14-year-old girls working in the industry. Size zero is nothing – I've seen skeletons walk down the runway. The fashion

industry should really do something about it, like for example, boycott superthin girls. I've known teenage girls to die from starvation because they want to be thin and fit in. **That's intense! And what about the darker side: drugs, catfights and binge drinking?** That's 100 percent true. It's your choice whether you want to do it or not. And that's why I strongly believe young girls shouldn't be on the ramp. They don't know what is right and wrong and make silly mistakes, which really cost them later on. I was tempted, but I also have a strong support base. Ultimately modelling is a job – not

your life. It's a very competitive industry and everything is based on how you look. **You have to share some of the stories about the stars you have met! Who is a diva and who is actually a really nice person?** Hmm, David Blaine is my friend, but I can honestly say that he is a diva! **So what is the most expensive item in your closet?** All I'm saying is this: it's a bag worth more than a small car. **Uyanda Mbuli told us she bought a dress for R68 000 once. Have you ever done something like that?** Erm, yes! But it was a gift from my father-in-law, so

technically I didn't pay! **What is your indulgence?** I have so many! I love bags, shoes, sunglasses and swimsuits. It's really bad and has got to the stage where it is out of hand! I have about 35 swimsuits! **But where do you wear them all?** [Laughs.] When I go on holiday for two weeks, I take about 20... **Lots of people look at your life and wish they could be you. Is there a downside to being Nicola Breytenbach?** You know, I really can't complain. I have a great family and an amazing husband. I am very fortunate for how my life has turned out! ■