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The sweet smell of success

By KASHIEFA AJAM

Even though stunning South African-born model Nicola Breytenbach is not terribly well-known in her home country, she has worked alongside international supermodels Kate Moss, Cindy Crawford and Claudia Schiffer and mingled with the likes of Brad Pitt, Jennifer Lopez, Tom Cruise and Madonna.

She has also graced the covers of dozens of international magazines, strutted the fashion show runways of Milan, Paris and London and has featured on a huge screen in New York's Times Square advertising L'Oreal hair products.

You may recognise her as the former girlfriend of hunky swimmer Ryk Neethling – a relationship which made headlines even though it only lasted a few months.

Born and raised in Durban and then Pretoria, Breytenbach later moved to Europe with her mother and stepfather shortly after her 16th birthday.

Her modelling career was launched when Breytenbach's mother's hairdresser spotted her and managed to convince her to see an agent in Amsterdam.

She got her big break when she was appointed Dior's



HOME: Nicola Breytenbach is set to launch her own perfume

in-house model and it wasn't long before she turned into one of the hottest ramp models in Europe. A few years later she was approached by Trump Models in New York and moved her life to the Big Apple.

This week, during a trip to South Africa, Breytenbach

spoke of her upcoming projects – the biggest of which is her wedding to US businessman Ben Steiner. The couple met eight years ago when they were both about to turn 21.

"We grew up together – both as individuals and as a couple. He's wonderful, a gentleman,"

she says, with a dreamy look in her beautiful green eyes.

But, she adds, the relationship hit a rocky patch two years ago when Steiner broke up with her because of her modelling career.

"He said he wanted to be with me but I was never there."

It was during that period that she hooked up with Neethling.

"Do people still talk about that?" she wanted to know. "I am sure they don't! Do they?"

One of the main reasons for her current visit is to finalise details for the upcoming launch of her own fragrance.

"It has got to be representative of me. I plan to market it to the younger crowd.

"It has to be a light fragrance – something you smell on someone when they walk past and you just catch a subtle waft of it."

Breytenbach says becoming a model and living in the US has not changed her personality and, in fact, she does not have any close friends who are celebrities, except magician David Blaine. "I do know a lot of well-known people but they are not my friends," she says.

But Breytenbach says she has no plans to turn her back on South Africa.

"I will always be loyal to South Africa, it is my home."