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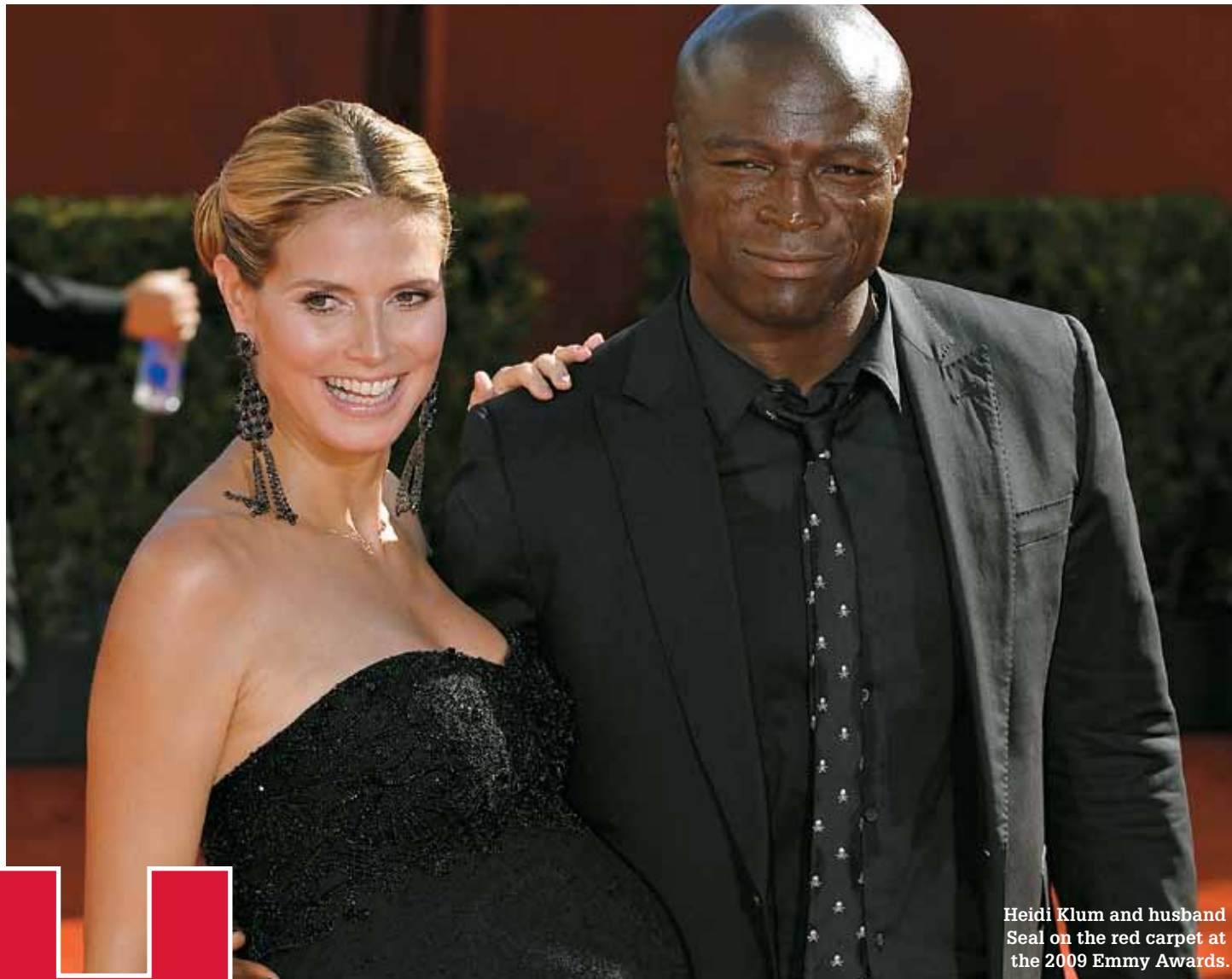


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the Icon

SUPERMODEL SUPERMOM
MANAGES MULTIMEDIA
SEDUCTION...WITH A SMILE

BY EIZABETH RAHE



Heidi Klum and husband Seal on the red carpet at the 2009 Emmy Awards.

H Heidi Klum is enjoying a summer day in a New York City park with her children when the paparazzi swarm. Other parents encourage their kids to pelt the photographers with water balloons, and Klum, six months pregnant, makes a fast exit.

"I don't think that people should start fighting over it," she told *The National Ledger* after the July incident. "I don't want people to get hurt...I'm always worried that something might happen."

A dozen years earlier, the paparazzi did make something happen – in a positive way – for Klum's career. Before her first Victoria's Secret runway show, a publicist strategically planted the rumor that Klum had stolen the title *The Body* from Elle Macpherson. As the models prepared for the show, photographers mobbed the 23-year-old from Germany and launched her into supermodel orbit.

Life is different now, however. The stakes have changed.

These days a more apt title might be *The Icon*. Klum is entrepreneur, reality-TV star and producer, top product endorser, designer and talk-show favorite. She is married to British singer Seal and the mother of four children under age 6. She recently got her own Barbie doll, in the *Blonde Ambition* line, featuring fellow icons Marilyn Monroe and Goldie Hawn. Plus, she is the subject of an alluring new coffee-table photo book that shows she's still got it – as well as nearly every inch of her.

In a world where beautiful faces and shapes come and go, Klum has created a multifaceted empire that has kept her brand at the top of the market. And make no mistake – Heidi Klum is a brand, carefully crafted by a savvy businesswoman who trademarked her

name in 1996, before she hit it big. Now 36, she is No. 2 on the *Forbes* Top-Earning Models list, bringing in \$16 million last year.

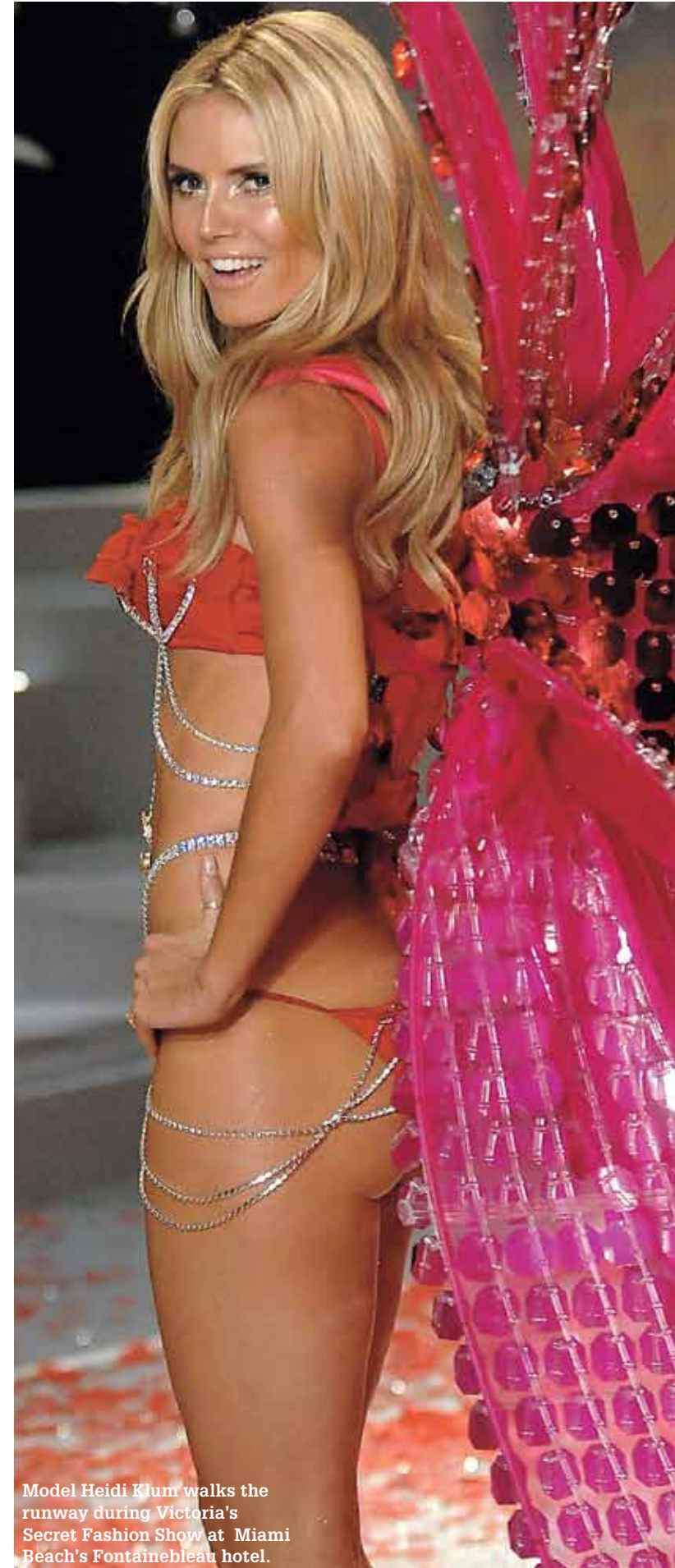
Her friend designer Michael Kors sums it up: "Heidi runs her life as the CEO of Heidi Klum, Inc. Everything is done with precision and elegance. And then when you think she has a husband and three [now four] children – she is a supersonic, sexy android to be able to accomplish all she does in a normal day," he told *Ladies Home Journal*.

Klum's approach to marketing herself – and to life – is clear in the book *Heidi Klum's Body of Knowledge* (Crown, 2004):

"Creating a persona that seduces – and I don't mean 'seduce' in the sexual way, though of course that's part of it – can work whether I'm courting a client, meeting new people or firing from all cylinders for a public appearance."

Klum's seduction of the world began, innocently enough, when a friend convinced her to submit a photo to a German model search contest. At age 18 she beat out more than 25,000 entrants to win the contest, but it did not win her great success as a model in Europe. Her curvy figure was not in vogue in the early '90s, and her face was too American Pie. She decided to come to America. Ever practical, she says she first acquired a lawyer, insurance and a phone to keep her connected to her parents.

In 1993 she landed in Miami, which she deems a great city for partying but a harsh environment for models. She went on casting calls with hundreds of models and paid for portfolio shots – and



Model Heidi Klum walks the runway during Victoria's Secret Fashion Show at Miami Beach's Fontainebleau hotel.

ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

AP PHOTO/EVAN AGOSTINI

had her passport and credit cards stolen from her hotel room. "I knew a lot of starving models who would go out with men just to get a decent meal, but the guys would invariably want more at the end of the day. Me, I wasn't getting anywhere fast."

After a month, she told her agency she was moving to New York. Soon she was sharing a run-down brownstone with other models, doing casting-call marathons. After struggling for a few months, things started moving. She became the face of *Bonne Bell*, got a couple of covers and then broke into catalog jobs. She worked her way up to making \$10,000 a day, but she wanted more.

Klum was determined to reach the top of the modeling ranks, but she had some handicaps. "I'm shorter than most of them, and heavier, plus I smile a lot...I have what I call a German butt, probably from eating too many potatoes," she says in her book. What she did have, however, was unsinkable ambition and optimism.

Despite her agency's claims that she wasn't a show girl, she pushed to get an interview for *Victoria's Secret* catalog. She got that gig and then lied that she had runway experience, thus scoring the live *Victoria's Secret* show as well. In another strategic move, she hired publicist Desiree Gruber, who fabricated the *The Body* rumor. Soon Klum was yodeling and trading jibes on *Late Night with David Letterman* and flying to the Maldives for the 1998 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit shoot. There her now-famous camera presence and décolletage earned her the cover.

Klum had learned the value of assembling the right team, choosing the right projects and pushing at the right time – and always with a smile.

"You have to be ballsy enough to go after what you want, creative enough to do it strategically and humble enough to know that you can learn a lot by asking those who have more experience and wisdom...If you don't ask, you don't get."

Klum and Gruber are strategically linked to this day. Gruber's Full Picture Entertainment represents Klum, and the women are executive producers of the Peabody-winning, Emmy-nominated Lifetime series *Project Runway*, a reality competition for fashion designers. Klum, who has received two Emmy nominations as host, jettisons eliminated contestants with her signature "auf Wiedersehen." She also hosts *Models of the Runway*, launched this year, and *Germany's Next Topmodel*.

With her trademark wit and humor, Klum revels in playing varied roles, whether she's biting Evander Holyfield's ear in a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit shoot, imitating Tom Cruise's *Risky Business* moves for a Guitar Hero commercial or doing a superhero stint as *The Kluminator* on the fashion site *Modelinia.com*.

She continues to bring her playful personality and toned abs to the *Victoria's Secret* runway, including the 2008 show at Miami Beach's Fontainebleau hotel, where she also cut the grand-opening ribbon.

For the June issue of German *Vogue*, Klum took over the entire magazine. In one shoot she transformed into a '50s starlet making a film in the California desert. A video on *HeidiKlum.com* reveals her playing a ditzy brunette actress, tossing water in her boyfriend's face in a diner scene. She repeats the splashing move several times, then asks for more water in her glass – which cracks up the crew.



Michael Kors, Heidi Klum and Nina Garcia on the runway at the Project Runway Fall 2009 fashion show during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in the Promenade at Bryant Park.

AP PHOTO/MARION CURTIS, AP PHOTO/PETER KRAMER

Klum, in Times Square, promotes the Project Runway move to Lifetime in 2009.



“I love dress-up because I’m always me anyway. So I prefer shoots like this where you do different things,” she says in the video.

A fondness for role-play fostered her annual high-profile Halloween party, which marked a decade this year. Her eagerly anticipated costumes have included Lady Godiva (on a horse), Betty Boop, a Hindu goddess and a snake-wrapped apple to Seal’s Eve.

She has landed a few small acting roles, sang a duet with Seal on his album *System* and even recorded a Christmas song for charity, but promotion has been her stock in trade. From her catalog days when the clothes she wore sold, as she says, “like hotcakes,” Klum has understood her knack for selling. Endorsement deals on both sides of the Atlantic have included Diet Coke, McDonald’s, Volkswagen, Jordache, LG and just recently, Ann Taylor. She has designed jewelry, jeans, a line of sandals and clogs for Birkenstock, and she has her own perfume and skin care line.

Klum carefully controlled advance press on the new book, *Heidilicious* (TeNeues, October) by photographer Rankin, which features art photos of the model. Only a few images were released before publication, including a photo shown on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, in which Klum is slathered in chocolate sauce.

“It’s very naughty. I’ve been shooting with Rankin for seven years, and working with him is fun because he always makes me look different,” she told *Los Angeles Confidential* magazine. “He always gets me to take my clothes off for some reason.”

Her Barbie, however, can never be nude. Klum says it always bothered her that Barbie was naked. Thus, her doll is wearing painted-on pink lingerie under her glittering hot-pink and gold mini-dress.

“I don’t think there’s anything shameful or harmful about nudity in and of itself. In fact, many years from now, I might like to have images of me in my entirety, during my ‘good old days,’ with my body in its prime, before gravity does the inevitable!”

Klum is determined to delay the inevitable as long as possible. In November 2005 she cruised the Victoria’s Secret runway in an electrified bikini and angel wings, just two months

SCOTT GRIES/GETTY IMAGES

after giving birth to her second child. The feat required three weeks of intense workouts with celebrity trainer David Kirsch. She made no promises about her runway plans after her fourth baby, Lou Sulola, born on Oct. 9, though her track record would indicate a quick recovery.

Keeping up with her children is a workout in itself. Lou joins Leni, 5, Henry, 4, and Johan, 3, in the family’s Beverly Hills home base. Leni was conceived with Italian businessman Flavio Briatore, but Seal is the only father she has known.

Klum met the soulful British singer of Nigerian descent in the lobby of a New York hotel when she was pregnant with Leni, after she had broken up with Briatore. (She previously had been married to hairstylist Ric Pipino from 1997 to 2002.) Seal was making his way from the gym, wearing bicycle shorts that left little to the imagination. “I pretty much saw everything,” Klum famously said on *Oprah*. “The whole package.”

“That’s my wife...she’s not backwards in coming forwards, that’s for sure,” Seal told Reuters in a subsequent interview. “She keeps it light, keeps it fun.”

He proposed in an igloo high on a glacier in British Columbia, complete with rose petals, candles and champagne. They were married on May 11, 2005, on a Mexican beach near Seal’s home in Costa Careyes and have renewed their vows each year with an elaborate party. This year’s celebration had a retro theme, with Seal in a mullet wig and Klum in corn-row braids repeating their vows before an Elvis impersonator. A tattoo on Klum’s forearm is the color of Seal’s skin and features his name with a star for each of the children.

With two busy careers and an active family life, they work to keep the romance going, planning regular date nights. “You’ve got to put each other first. You know, she will always be No. 1 for me,” Seal told *Oprah*.

“I have the most romantic husband,” Klum responded. “I do.”

Their days revolve around the family, and Seal often carries a camera to capture every special moment. Their home is very kid-centered, with toys everywhere, Klum says. Her mother, Erna, often flies over from Germany to lend a hand.

Project Runway’s Tim Gunn has praised his co-star’s style and grace, as well as her priorities. “Seal and her kids always come first, and frankly we schedule things around that. I have the greatest respect for her. She’s very, very grounded,” he said in *People* magazine.

Klum became a naturalized American citizen in 2008 in time to vote in the presidential election. “Having mixed-race children, I feel that when I tell them they can be anything, it now means they really can,” she said, referring to Barack Obama’s presidency, in *Ladies Home Journal*.

She is often seen taking the children to karate class, birthday parties or to play in the park – and being photographed by the ever-present paparazzi.

“It’s something that you just deal with, unfortunately,” she told *The National Ledger* after the balloon-throwing incident in New York. “I know people say, ‘They’re celebrities and why shouldn’t we get photos of them all the time?’ But people forget about the person being shot all day long, and their children.”

“That which doesn’t challenge you makes you weaker.”

Heidi Klum is well schooled in dealing with such invasion attempts and adept at keeping her public brand separate from her private life. In October, she petitioned to have her last name changed to her husband’s surname, Samuel, though she will still use Klum professionally. It is, after all, her trademark. ■

