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## ALL HAIL THE WINKLE!

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# CLAUDIA REIGNS IT IN

All hail the Queen of the box! Even though she has a brand-new series, **Claudia Winkleman** tells **buzz** why she's quitting her much-loved *Strictly* show to concentrate on baby number three

Words Paul Simper  
Photographs John Wright

THE LAST TIME **buzz** put mum-of-two and all-round good egg Claudia Winkleman on the cover she told us she didn't want another baby, she wanted a kitten. Today with no mewing fur ball in sight but a ginormous kicking tummy present before us under a loose-fitting Simeon Farrar T-shirt, it would seem she may have been telling us a bit of a porky.

"Yeah, I was lying," she says cheerily. "I lie all the time. I love the fact that a journalist asks: 'Are you planning a baby?' As if I'm going to go: 'Yes, I haven't told my mum yet, but I think I might come off the Pill.'

"But as you can see, I'm going to be having a pony. Well, it feels like a pony. My children want a penguin. But yes, I really wanted a third. I'd have ten if I was allowed. They fit in drawers. You don't need a lot of space."

Claudia, 39, may well be seven months pregnant with a pony, but that hasn't stopped her trooping to our studio where she leaps (sort of) on to a throne, takes the weight off and tells us about her new show *King Of*. The Channel 4 programme sees her harrying celebrities like Miranda Hart and Sarah Millican to passionately debate and crown everything from *King of Nuts* to *King of Roast Dinners*.

It's billed as a chat show but really it's more of a dinner party/pub debate.

"It's a game I've played for years with my husband, my family and my friends," Claudia says. "What's the *King of Roasts*, for instance? And don't say lamb. Each category will be debated by two guests and the studio audience, and it will be a very heated discussion."

She insists this is not a place for frothy showbiz chit-chat or even light-hearted joshing, and says she's already come down hard on new pal Miranda Hart.

"I don't give a stuff about these people other than their view on the *King of Vegetables*. If they don't care, I can't talk to them!" she exclaims. "It's very serious. I did the pilot with Miranda and she was laughing as we played *King of Nuts*. I said: 'No more laughter, Hart. I'm bringing out the walnut.' I have a torch that I shine on each item."

"But this is not for fun. This is not even really for telly. It is just so that I can write each answer after it has been thoroughly debated in a small red booklet that I'm going to leave to my children [Jake, eight, and Matilda, five]. They will have the definitive *Kings Of*. That's very, very important."

The latest addition to Claudia's brood announced its arrival last November when Claudia's body seemed to have something to tell her...

"When you wake up, get out of bed and are sick in your shoes every day you know," she says. "It was towards the end of the last series of *It Takes Two*."

Ah, *It Takes Two*. For many diehard *Strictly Come Dancing* fans, it's the early evening, five-times-a-week jewel in the crown of the BBC's →







**“I can’t believe I won’t be doing It Takes Two... I love it more than life itself”**

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flagship show. Intended as the go-to place for expert dance analysis on each season’s runners and riders, thanks to Claudia it’s become a hilariously freewheeling chat show with The Winkle engaging, in her own inimitable style, with anyone and everyone who has an interest in Strictly. It’s where you go to see author Marian Keyes stalking her favourite professional dancer Lilia Kopylova with a digicam, or Peter Andre, EastEnders’ Cheryl Fergison and judge Craig Revel

Horwood weighing up the consequences of Ann Widdecombe in a harness (“We can only hope that the harness fails and she doesn’t get out of it, dahling,” from Craig). For seven years, Claudia has made autumn’s teatime telly a funnier place to be, honking with laughter as she replays that clip of Pamela Stephenson teetering then somehow styling it out with her salsa, or testing Len Goodman’s patience with her own Bambi-on-ice-like attempts at the

paso doble with the long-suffering (but clearly adoring it) head judge. But now there’s a pony on the way and, imaginary kittens aside, the cat’s out the bag. “Yes, I’m not going to be doing It Takes Two this year,” she sighs. “I can’t believe I won’t be doing it but there’s just no way. My baby, knock on wood, will be six weeks old.

“I can’t go to work every night. It’s a physical impossibility. I love Strictly and It Takes Two more than life itself, so I feel totally miserable about it. I kept saying: ‘There must be a way. What if I bring the baby with me?’ But my husband [Kris Thykier, 39] was like: ‘Claud, you’ve got to sit this one out.’”

She’s hoping that there’s some way she can stay involved with the rest of the show, though.

“Maybe I can still do the Sunday show with Tess Daly,” she says. “But It Takes Two won’t be a sadder place without me. They’ll get somebody brilliant. I’m also excited about watching it. I’ll watch it every single night while breastfeeding the pony. It’s such a great show. The bosses just let me do whatever I wanted. They used to turn up, give me a muffin and say: ‘Off you go.’”

**NUT JOKING**

Maybe it’s not surprising Claudia wants to devote more time to her family – she certainly appears to be happy on the home front these days. There were reports that she and movie-producer husband Kris hit a rocky patch a couple of years ago, which was blamed on work commitments. “Lots of people have ups and downs and we had a down,” she told us then.

“Yes, we’re on an up,” she says now. “It’s all good. I feel brilliant. That is all.”

Her devotion and loyalty to Kris are apparent when we talk film, a lifelong passion of hers and the source of her dream job now that she hosts Film 2011. If Kris was to make a really rubbish movie (he produced the great Kick-Ass and is also behind Madonna’s forthcoming Wallis Simpson film, W.E.) how would she review it?

“I wouldn’t,” she says. “I don’t think I could review any of his films. Danny [Leigh] is the show’s critic. I’m just the girl who sits next to him to give my point of view. Kris has got a film coming out called The Debt with Helen Mirren, which is a brilliant thriller. But all I’d want to do is sit there and clap, and that would be deeply unprofessional.”

What was the last film she walked out of? “Australia. I’m happy to walk out of anywhere, just because I’d rather be asleep. That’s the only thing you need to know about me – if I could be napping, I would be napping.”

It’s a favourite activity that’s become even more appealing during her pregnancy. And despite the new member of the family, she will be returning to Film 2011.

“I am doing that again from mid-October,” she says. “But that’s at 11pm and hopefully my

**ROYAL SEAL OF APPROVAL?**

She’s the Queen of Chat, but how does Claudia measure up as a real royal?

**DID YOU THROW A ROYAL WEDDING PARTY IN APRIL?**

No. I watched at home with my brother, his fiancée, my husband [right] and the kids. My daughter got dressed up as Snow White. She looked marvellous. We ate bagels. I thought the whole thing was beautiful.



**COULD YOU BEAR TO SIT THROUGH A WHOLE ROYAL VARIETY PERFORMANCE?**

Yes, if Michael McIntyre was there. He’s funny as hell. I did Comic Relief with him and he’s the funniest man alive.

**DO YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE HOME, AS WIKIPEDIA CLAIMS?**

No. Wikipedia doesn’t know anything. I feel bad if Mr Wikipedia is

reading this, but I do not have a home in London’s Maida Vale whatever he says. Although I would like one. It seems like a nice place.

**WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR KIDS TO GET MARRIED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY?**

No, I’d like them to get married to me at home and never leave.

**WOULD YOU SHOOT A PHEASANT?**

Yes. But I don’t really like eating them so I probably wouldn’t. But I have no problem with people who shoot pheasants.



**WOULD YOU KNIGHT BRUCE FORSYTH?**

Yes, of course I would. That would be the first thing I’d do as Queen.

**DO YOU FANCY COLIN FIRTH (BELOW)?**

No, but I think he’s a brilliant actor.

**IS PIPPA MIDDLETON HOT?**

Super-hot. She’s smokin’ hot.



**DO YOU WEAR SARAH BURTON?**

No. I’d love to but no, as that would mean I would have to give up my home to pay for a dress.

**THE KING’S SPEECH OR MADONNA’S FORTHCOMING W.E.?**

Both. I’m not allowed to tell you anything about W.E. but it’s very good.

**WOULD YOU HAVE ELTON JOHN PLAY AT YOUR FUNERAL?**

If he wanted to. Or I’d take Nik Kershaw playing Wouldn’t It Be Good.

pony will be asleep. It’s also only one night a week’s filming.”

Her love for It Takes Two and King Of may be unbridled but she admits that getting the Film gig last year was the proudest moment of her TV career.

“That’s the show I’ve always watched. I’ve got old VHS tapes of it. When I went away my mum [former newspaper editor Eve Pollard] had to record it for me. Getting that job made me burst into tears in a very unprofessional, pathetic way. I was buying a colander at the time. If you want to know the King of Kitchen Utensils, it’s probably a colander. Or a sieve. I also like a kettle. I’ll come back to tongs in a minute.”

**THRONE-JACKER**

In deference to King Of, there’s a royal theme to our shoot today. But the truth is, there’s no pomp or circumstance about The Winkle. She shows up at the studio but unaccompanied by an entourage of her ‘people’. She says she thought about dropping her tax returns off (stuffed in a Tiffany shopping bag, a typical contradiction) at her accountant’s on the way over, but was worried she might be late.

That’s not to say she’s in any way a pushover. For all the little-girl-lost biting of her lower lip in pictures, she knows and says exactly what she’s prepared to do, both on camera and off. Certain poses are out today and any talk about her private life has her sharply pulling up the drawbridge.

“I can’t bear it,” she says. “I hate talking about my personal life!”

She does, however, offer up a few memories of her wedding day in the South of France in June 2000, mostly because your *buzz* correspondent happened to be there doing the DJing.

“I found the whole thing completely terrifying,” she admits. “I was really little when I think about it now. I was only 27.”

It was a very glamorous affair that had the great and the good of media old and new, alongside

**“If I could be napping, I would be napping – you need to know that about me”**



already feel 48. I was born 48. I have hang-ups about all kinds of things, but the only thing I don’t have a hang-up about is getting old. I can’t wait.

“You know when I’m going to come into my own? When I’m 67. I just want to become a little old lady wearing a comfortable outfit, burn these bloody shoes I’m wearing today, get some cats and eat hummus with a spoon. I just can’t wait.”

Queen of Old Age? She’s got a way to go yet.

**WATCH IT! KING OF... BEGINS FRIDAY 17 JUNE CHANNEL 4**



Stylist: Nicola Ahmed. Hair: Mitch Lumsden. Make-up: Natalie Eleri using Environ and M+A+C. Claudia wears: Red frill dress by Isabella Oliver, black tights by Falke and black shoes by New Look. Cream fur stole from the National Theatre Costume hire. Navy dress with turquoise ribbon by Tiffany Rose, black tights by Falke and black shoes by New Look. Crown provided by www.royalexhibitions.co.uk