

I want two weddings, and a few hen do's

My weekend

The singer Pixie Lott talks to **Helena de Bertodano** about getting engaged to her first boyfriend

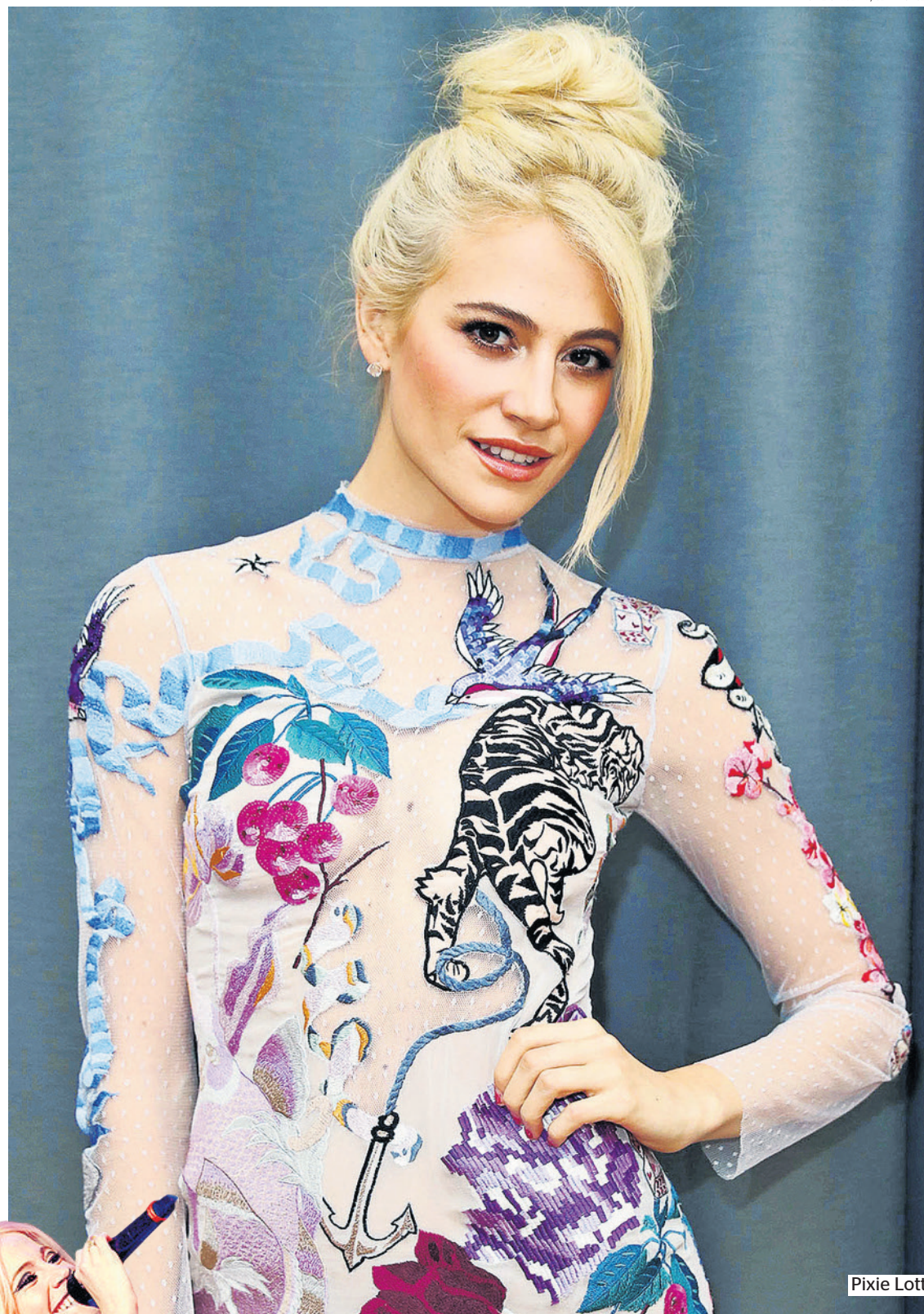
There is something confusing about Pixie Lott. On the one hand she is the sweet, giggly, polite young woman I meet: the wholesome Pixie who posts demure selfies on Instagram wearing a sailor outfit and blonde bob. And then there is the raunchy Pixie who leaves little to the imagination when she makes out with her nearly naked model boyfriend — now fiancé — in a racy photoshoot.

Trying to approach this delicately, I put it to her that her squeaky-clean pop-star image has recently become more... She helps me out: "Seductive? Yes. I love playing all different characters." So she doesn't feel pressured by an industry renowned for pushing the sexuality of performers? "No," she says, laughing. "I'm always the one who wants to push it further and everyone is, like, 'No, you can't do that!'"

The key to Lott is her single-minded focus on success. Ever since she can remember, she wanted to be a performer. The other day she found an old family video of herself as a three-year-old at a party. "Everyone is singing *Don't Be A Stranger* by Dina Carroll and then I just walk in and tell everyone to be quiet and start singing it myself." In fact, this is probably the first and last story of any diva-like behaviour from Lott. She could not be more unassuming.

We meet in West Hollywood, where she is staying while she shoots a video for her latest single, *Baby*, a collaboration with the DJ Anton Powers. Lott's distinctively raspy voice was first made famous by songs such as *Mama Do*, her 2009 debut single, which shot to No 1 when she was 18. Despite being only 26 now, she sounds like a veteran as she talks about how much the music industry has changed. "It's been a few years since I've put anything out. There used to be a huge build-up to the release, now it's the opposite and it seems a bit crap — you release the single, then do the promo afterwards."

Lott recently became engaged to her boyfriend, Oliver Cheshire, 28, a Calvin Klein model, who she has been with since she was 19. "Of course we have ups and downs. We are away from each other a lot and have miscommunications. But we really care for each other and have a really passionate relationship," she says. They are not planning to marry until 2018. "[This year] is going to be so busy and I don't want to just wedge it in and not focus on it. I want to have 68 hen do's. Why not?"



Pixie Lott



Lott on stage in 2013

She is only partly joking. "I do want several hen do's — my sister is my maid of honour and she has top organisational skills. She is the complete opposite to me. I'm going to have two weddings. Maybe one in London and one in the countryside. Or maybe one really tiny one somewhere hot where the sun shines."

Lott met Cheshire — known as "the model with the Midas touch" because of his ability to boost sales — seven years ago at a Vivienne Westwood Fashion Week party. "I saw him across the room and he was so well dressed and I thought he was going to sound really well spoken. But he was cockney and completely chatty, not what I was expecting at all."

He became her first serious boyfriend;

sometimes, she says, people ask her if she regrets not having other relationships before settling down. "I have no regrets at all. It is quite beautiful — all the memories and all the experiences we have shared. It's nice to say you're with your first boyfriend. If it feels right, why change it?"

They live in her small east London flat, but are looking for somewhere larger and eventually plan to start a family. "I have big family values because I'm so close to mine. I want three children — I always think three is a magic number, perhaps because I come from three."

The youngest of her siblings, she was born Victoria Louise Lott in Bromley. Her father is a stockbroker and her mother was a nursery school teacher. She was nicknamed Pixie by her mother because she was so premature and tiny. At 11 she won a scholarship to the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts in London.

Although she never had singing lessons

Pixie Lott's perfect weekend

TV or theatre?

I love them both. *Friends* is my go-to TV show.

Green juice or Frosties?

Green juice — but I used to love Frosties.

Hockney or Monet?

Monet — we would always paint his water lilies in art at school and they've just stuck with me.

Nobu or local pub?

Both. The food at Nobu is delicious, but I love my local pub.

Personal trainer or couch surfing?

I can't motivate myself without my personal trainer.

Period drama or reality TV?

My guilty pleasure is *Embarrassing Bodies*...

before this, she would listen repeatedly to songs by "the big powerhouse diva vocalists: Whitney and Mariah and Celine Dion", learning the words off by heart. Replying to a talent-seeking advert in a newspaper at the age of 15, she was soon signed by the music producer LA Reid, the *American Idol* judge. *Mama Do* was followed by another No 1, *Boys and Girls*.

Recently she has taken a break from singing to act, last year starring as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in the West End. "I thought doing pop was hard work, but it's nothing compared to being a theatre actress. The second act was really dark and sad."

For the role, she drew on sadness in her own life. Aged 11, her brother Stephen was diagnosed with Perthes' disease and told he would not walk again — but eventually he made a full recovery. She later watched her grandmothers, to whom she was very close, succumb to Alzheimer's — and last week hosted a charity football match in London for Alzheimer's Research UK.

"Both my nans would have hated it if they could have seen themselves like that," she says, her eyes tearing up. "I think it must be so scary to be so disorientated."

Lott may come across as sweet and guileless, but she says that she has toughened up over the years. "I'm not as naive as I was." Those who work with her describe her as very low-maintenance, somehow combining a strong work ethic with a laid-back vibe. "I haven't ever had a diva moment. I want everyone around me to feel happy and relaxed. I think kindness goes a long way."

Although she plans to do more acting, music remains her "passion" — she is releasing another single in July and a new album next year. She will also be appearing as a judge and coach on *The Voice Kids* (the children's version of the hit reality show).

Lott makes a point of telling those who do not make it that they should not feel like failures. "I've had so many rejections in my life, it's now like water off a duck's back. I auditioned for [the musical TV drama series] *Britannia High* with Ed Sheeran and we did seven gruelling rounds of auditions and got through to the last round. Neither of us got parts. And now, Ed Sheeran has gone on to take over the whole world..."

She is too modest to finish the sentence, but the implication is clear — like Sheeran, Pixie Lott has not done too badly herself. **Pixie Lott's new single, *Baby*, with Anton Powers, is out now (Virgin EMI)**