

Young, Rich & Royal



Today's young royals range from rebels and iconoclasts to fabulously glamorous dilettantes and very regal class acts, writes *Sue Russell*

Their antics are as captivating as those of soap opera stars, replete with glitter, glamour, gossip, fairytales and scandals. But, in fairness, the parents of some of today's young royals were questionable role models in their time.

Take Monaco's Grimaldi family for instance. Princess Stephanie cavorted in a mobile home with a circus ringmaster; while bachelor Prince Albert failed to give his anxious countrymen an heir, despite fathering two children out of wedlock. Even the teen-aged Princess Caroline was the first royal to go topless on the beach.

Nowdays, commoners often co-star in fairytale royal love stories. Mary of Denmark, Letizia of Spain and Maxima of the Netherlands were all transported from the real world into lofty regal households. Crown Princes Frederik of Denmark and Felipe of Spain both dated lingerie models before marrying, and Felipe actually wed a former topless model.

And monarchies are modernising their images. Britain's future King, Prince William, doesn't like to be called "Sir," let alone "Your Royal Highness." What's more, today's royals are trying to stay relevant by venturing beyond their palace walls – and not just on formal, organised state visits.

Noel Cox, law professor at Auckland University of Technology and president of New Zealand's branch of the royalist Monarchist League, describes the newcomers as " ... probably a reflection of the radical changes in society. We may or may not approve of them, but perhaps it is better for these royals to follow today's trends rather than be compelled to adhere to standards that are increasingly ignored by the rest of us."

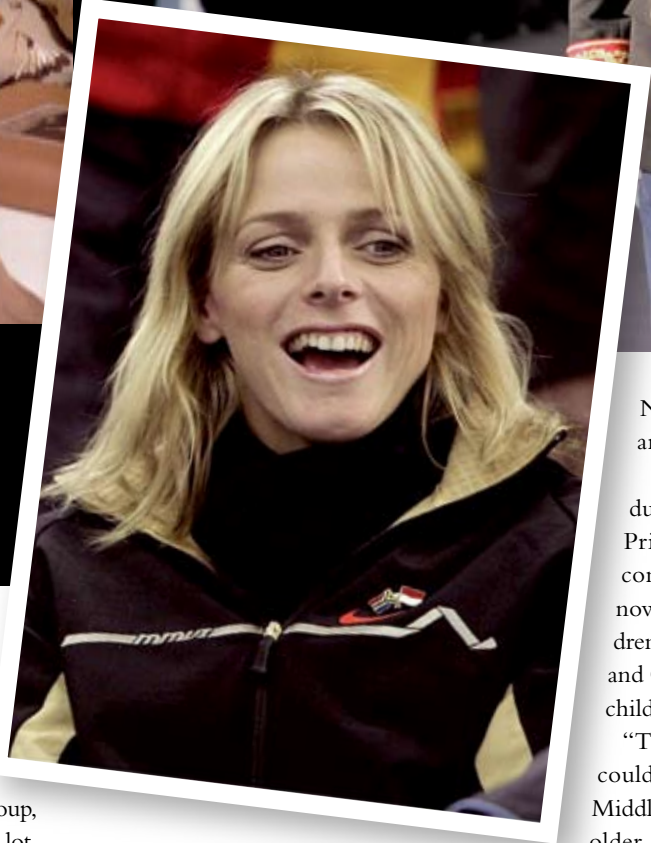
Of course, the British monarchy had female power long before anyone coined the word feminist, yet the male bias in succession rules has also loosened in other countries. Sweden changed its law in 1980 to give equal precedence to first-born females like Crown Princess Victoria. That suddenly relegated her brother,

Crown Prince Carl Philip, to second in line. In 1990, Norway took a similar step, but it will affect future heirs only. Prince Haakon retained his existing position, despite having an older sister, Princess Martha Louise. Belgium set the stage for crowning the first-born, irrespective of gender, way back in 1991.

The luxurious lifestyles of young royals don't come cheap; so just how rich are various royal families? The finances are notoriously tricky to pin down. In 2003, Queen Elizabeth II's personal fortune was estimated at US\$1.6 billion dollars; but in 2004, another source put it at a comparatively paltry \$680 million. The royals of Monaco and Luxembourg are rolling in money, while Norway's are considered rather poor. Yet, the Norwegians are better off than the Swedes, who in turn are wealthier than the Spanish and Belgians. However, all of them can still afford their palaces, pomp and ceremony. It just remains to be seen how the next generation will wear their crowns.



Opposite page: Princess Caroline persuaded her father, Prince Ranier, not to give her children royal titles; Charlotte Casiraghi and Andrea Casiraghi with Pierre Casiraghi in the background, taken at the Monaco National Day Celebrations
This page clockwise from above left: Princess Stephanie; the bachelor Prince Albert fathered two children out of wedlock; Charlene Wittstock, the South African beauty dating Prince Albert



Andrea & Charlotte Casiraghi (Monaco)
A BOHEMIAN PRINCE, A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS

Andrea and Charlotte Casiraghi are Monaco's hottest paparazzi magnets. They and their younger brother Pierre are the children of Princess Caroline, married since 1999 to Queen Elizabeth II's cousin, Prince Ernst of Hanover. They grew up with an aunt and uncle, Princess Stephanie and Prince Albert, who were simultaneously glamorous, intriguing and scandalously shocking. Some question the Grimaldis' royal clout, because, as Patrick Middleton of *The Riviera-Reporter* explains, "Ruling an area the size of Hyde Park doesn't really impress everybody. But they make up for it with fabulous wealth. In terms of real estate, they own a lot of Monaco."

Tragedy struck Andrea and Charlotte's lives when they were aged six and four, respectively. Their father, Italian businessman and playboy Stefano Casiraghi, died in a speedboat accident. Because he was a commoner, they do not have titles. Charlotte, 20, is a stunning beauty often likened to her grandmother, the late Princess Grace. She's passionate about designer brands like Christian Dior, Chanel and Gianni Versace, and loves show jumping, swimming and skiing. Andrea, 22, is sometimes called "the Bohemian prince," thanks to his long blond hair and chiselled good looks. He's like a hip-er Prince William, with a sexy, continental air and rock star charisma. Tall and slim, he plays the guitar and wears snake-hipped trousers. Although he smokes, he's very athletic.

Princess Caroline persuaded her father, the late Prince Rainier, not to give her children royal titles. "She wanted them to have some peace and normal childhoods," says author Catarina Hurtig. "They are trying to protect their kids," says Middleton. Yet, Charlotte and Andrea are photographed extensively. "Anyone like Andrea, who appears as though he's cast as Prince Charming, is going to attract a certain amount of attention," he adds. "A lot of girls and older women are interested in Andrea," reports Hurtig. "He once had a relationship with a woman around 15 years older, which was very good for his image. He frequents clubs, drinks a lot of champagne and goes to many parties. Like Sweden's young Princess Madeleine, I think

the Grimaldis may have too much freedom and too much money. "They are the wildest of today's young royals, as well as the most glamorous and interesting, along with William and Harry. Charlotte moves in a very exclusive group, but she also hangs around with her brother a lot. You often see them together at parties." They also party with Ernst August Jr, who is something of a playboy and one of their stepfather Ernst's two sons from a former marriage. Their rarefied social circles mean that Andrea flew to the UK to attend the lavish Windsor Castle 18th birthday party of Princess Beatrice, the daughter of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson. Andrea and Charlotte have apartments in Paris, where they study, and they also sometimes reside in their mother's nearby Parisian mansion. Since

marrying Prince Ernst, Princess Stephanie has given Andrea, Charlotte and Pierre a half-sister, Alexandra of Hanover, now aged six. Prince Albert might be getting into a serious relationship with Charlene Wittstock, 28, a South African beauty and Olympic swimmer, but who knows if he'll marry? The two children he fathered out of wedlock are 14-year-old Californian Jazmin Grace Rotolo, the daughter of a former waitress, and a three-year-old son, Alexandre, his child with

Nicole Coste, a former flight attendant from Togo. In 2003, when Albert still hadn't produced a legitimate heir to the throne, Prince Rainier III changed Monaco's constitution so that the succession can now pass to Albert's sisters and their children. Andrea is third in line, Pierre fourth, and Charlotte fifth, but Princess Stephanie's children are non-starters. "There's no way illegitimate children could succeed," explains journalist Patrick Middleton. He's noticed some changes in the older Grimaldis, though. "Even Stephanie likes to give the impression of being a proper royal now," he says. "She went off to Switzerland to baptise a dolphin. They're doing the kinds of things traditional royals do." Andrea loves the beaches of Ibiza and St Tropez, but he recently upped his philanthropic cred like William and Harry by making a poignant visit to impoverished children in the Philippines. Princess Grace started working there 40 years ago with Amade, a children's charity. Princess Caroline is now its president.

Andrea saw a children’s halfway house and dreadful, stench-filled shantytowns outside Manila. In one, families lived in cardboard shacks beneath a mountain of rubbish. The children’s warmth and strength touched him so deeply he kissed them, saying: “I am lost for words. My legs are shaking.” He left with promises to return.

Charlotte’s current beau is a cutie called Felix Winckler; but at 17 she fell for Hubertus Herring-Frankensdorf, an Austrian business student eight years her senior. Andrea is the kind of boyfriend who gives gifts ranging from a miniature pot-bellied pig to a \$48,650 diamond ring.

He met his current love, Columbian heiress Tatiana Santo Domingo, in Ibiza in summer 2004. Tatiana studies at the American Intercontinental University in London’s Marylebone. Her serious side fits nicely with Andrea’s interest in history and the environment.

Zara Phillips & Lady Gabriella Windsor (United Kingdom)
INNER CIRCLE... OUT IN THE COLD
Britain’s royal “It” girls are both highly attractive blondes, but the similarities end there. Zara Phillips is the frisky, riding champion daughter of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips. Anne’s children have no titles at her request.



Right: Britain's Zara Phillips is the oldest granddaughter of the Queen
Below: Lady Gabriella Windsor, the daughter of Princess Michael

Gabriella Windsor’s parents are Queen Elizabeth’s cousin, Prince Michael of Kent, and his controversial wife Princess Michael. Nicknamed Princess Pushy, Princess Michael recently made headlines by tactlessly announcing that her children were more educated than other royals. Also, after calling her marriage “one long snooze,” she cavorted in Venice with a wealthy Russian furniture mogul. He’s 40, she’s 61. They held hands publicly, but say their relationship is platonic.

Until Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson’s daughters, Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice, now 16 and 18, finish studying, Zara Phillips and Gabriella Windsor will corner the limelight.

Zara, 25, the Queen’s oldest granddaughter, has a brother, Peter, and she is very close to her cousins William and Harry. Cheeky Zara has given up the tongue and navel piercings that got her labelled a royal rebel when she was 16. Feisty and vivacious, she has been photographed sunbathing topless and has gone bungee jumping. She attended a prep school in Dorset, then prestigious Gordonstoun. Afterwards, she took a year off and worked as a stagehand on *The King and I* in Sydney. Horses are her great love and she specialises in equine physiotherapy.

Her biggest achievements have been equestrian – she is the world and European champion – and she’s due to compete in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing with equestrian

events scheduled to take place in Hong Kong.

Zara lives with her boyfriend, six feet and two inches-tall rugby star Mike Tindall. They met in Australia and became – as the earthy Yorkshireman says – “really good mates.” Things snowballed from there. It helps that Princess Anne and Mark Phillips are resolutely down to earth. Even so, Zara recalls Mike’s first meeting with them as nightmarishly intimidating for him. Zara and Mike are both fun loving, competitive and passionately dedicated to their sports.

“Zara is our real glamour girl, because she is a truly natural beauty,” insists Judy Wade, royal correspondent for Britain’s *Hello!* magazine and author of *The Truth: the Friends of Diana Princess of Wales Tell Their Stories*. She rates Zara as more exciting than Gabriella.

“She likes wearing low-necked frocks and is generally more curvy and greater fun,” she explains. “Besides, she’s now a world champion in her chosen sport. Ella – as Gabriella is called – hasn’t achieved anything so far.”

Despite growing up at Nether Lypiatt Manor, her parents’ Gloucestershire home, and London’s Kensington Palace, the lives of Gabriella and her brother Lord Freddie have been quite different. “They never get invited to spend Christmas with the Queen, Charles, William, Beatrice, Eugenie, etc,” says Wade. As 31st in the British line of succession (Zara is 11th), Gabriella will never be required to perform royal duties. Meanwhile, Zara has christened a ship and auctioned off an evening gown for the 2005 tsunami victims. She also supports horse-related charities.

A pivotal difference? Gabriella’s parents are hurting for money. Princess Michael once said “I’ll go anywhere for a free lunch,” and apparently meant it. She has an unfortunate reputation for prodding her wealthy friends for help. When Gabriella and her brother Fred shared a birthday party, those rich friends picked up the tab. With biannual lecture tours of America that plug her books about historical courtesans, Princess Michael is really the family breadwinner, yet she still has to keep up appearances.

Gabriella’s only rebellion was a school suspension at age 13 for sneaking to the local village to buy cigarettes. She recently condemned all American food as “unhealthy and revolting,” but is generally polite. Her brother, Lord Freddie Windsor, now 27, caused greater uproar when he and his pals celebrated a birthday while the late Queen Mother was lying in state in 2001.

Despite a great start – he landed a scholarship to Eton and went to Oxford – he made headlines for dabbling in cocaine. He got a law degree, though, and now works in banking.



Clockwise from above left: Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik; Crown Prince Frederik married commoner Mary Donaldson in 2004; Australian Mary Donaldson became the Crown Princess Mary

Crown Princess Mary & Crown Prince Frederik (Denmark) AN AUSSIE COMMONER’S FAIRYTALE LIFE

In 2000, she was just plain Mary Donaldson from Tasmania, Australia. Then she met Prince Frederik of Denmark while enjoying a drink with friends at the Slip Inn, a fashionable Sydney bar. Freddie, as the Australians call him, is a sailing fanatic (Mary also loves sailing) and he was there to support the Danish sailing squad during the Olympic Games.

The 38-year-old heir to the Danish throne was formerly known as the Turbo Prince for his parking ticket collection, and the Party Prince for his womanising. He’s since reformed, but to the consternation of his mother, Queen Margrethe II, he once dated a pop singer and an underwear model. Fred’s flighty reputation hadn’t reached Australia, though, and Mary didn’t even know who he was.

“Frederik was so impressed with bubbly Mary that he called her the next day,” says Holly Wainright of *OK! Australia*.

The eldest son of Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik, Frederik grew up in Amalienborg, a complex of palaces occupied by the family since 1794. He was schooled in Denmark and France, and spent a year studying at Harvard while he was a student at Denmark’s

University of Aarhus. Intrepid Frederik has served with the Naval Frogmen Corps and is a commander in the Navy and a major in the Army and Air Force. He studied winemaking in California with Robert Mondavi too.

Armed with a law degree, Mary, whose heritage is Scottish, worked in marketing, advertising and PR. The Australian press positively salivated over their very own fairy story when she moved to Paris and Copenhagen to be closer to her Prince Charming. The relationship deepened through letters and long phone calls before blossoming into a true love match.

Prince Frederik proposed in Rome after writing to Mary’s father to formally request her hand in marriage. They got engaged in October 2003 and were wed in May 2004, after Mary gave up her Australian and Commonwealth citizenships and converted to the Lutheran church. Baby Christian – half-Australian and second in line to the throne – was born in October 2005.

An attractive brunette with a great smile, Mary is rather outdoorsy and was once more at home in sailing shoes than stilettos. But there’s been quite a transformation since she met Frederik. She dropped several kilos and polished up her fashion style, leading to some Jackie O comparisons. Behind her laid-back Aussie manner, however, there is an ambitious and disciplined woman.

“Before they even met, she took a deportment course,” Holly Wainright explains. “Apparently, she was keen to change her life and maximise her abilities. But we doubt she had any idea how extreme her life makeover would be!”



Clockwise from above left: **Actress Faye Dunaway;** Jerry Hall received a diamond bracelet from Prince Haji Abdul Azim after he saw her perform in *The Graduate*; Azim is usually invited to Elton John's White Tie and Tiara Ball; Prince Haji Abdul Asim



Clockwise from above left: **Supermodel Eva Herzigova;** actress **Scarlett Johansson** is a frequent companion; **Prince Azim's father, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah**



Mary's academic father and his author wife Susan Moody (Mary's mother died when she was a teenager) have relocated to Denmark to be closer to her. Her baby son and royal duties keep her busy, but she and Frederik still take in the occasional rock concert (they are U2 and Robbie Williams fans). They also love candlelit dinners at home with friends – good conversation, good wine and good food.

Prince Frederik once admitted he found the prospect of becoming king quite frightening, akin to having a blanket thrown over him. "Something that limited my opportunities and my desire to explore the world," he said. However, Mary "has never publicly displayed any doubts about her role, and always appears to take it all in her stride," reports Wainright.

Despite causing outbreaks of Mary Mania when she visits Australia, she remains down to earth. The couple's residence, Fredensborg

Palace, is in a hamlet outside Copenhagen, and they also have an apartment in the main palace. Mary frequently shops in the village, pushing the future King in his pram, and she powerwalks, jogs, and plays with the baby and family dog Ziggy in the grand, 300-acre garden.

She is due to give birth to their second child in May 2007. Since Frederik was raised by nannies and often only saw his parents in rather formal situations, he's determined his own children's lives will be very different. Although there's a certain amount of pomp and ceremony, both Mary and Fred like to play it down.

Mary's friends say she's unaffected by the dramatic turn her life has taken. However, Holly Wainright notes: "She has certainly learnt to be more reserved in public. She's become a perfectly polished princess who rarely puts a foot wrong on the outside. But, in private, she's still an Aussie girl who likes a laugh with her mates."

Prince Haji Abdul Azim (Brunei) THE PINT-SIZE PARTY-LOVING PRINCE

Prince Haji Abdul Azim, 24, son of the Sultan of Brunei, is a decidedly offbeat playboy given his stature that is just shy of five feet six inches, rounded figure and penchant for scruffy clothing. What he lacks in movie star appeal, however, he makes up for with his ever-ready chequebook. Money is no object, because his father, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, is one of the world's richest men. His oil-rich kingdom on the island of Borneo is barely larger than Greater London, yet his fortune has been estimated at over US\$25 billion.

The Sultan once owned 165 Rolls-Royces and a gold-plated Ferrari, a fleet of jets and the world's largest palace with 1,700 rooms. Unsurprisingly, the environment Prince Azim grew up in is reflected in his high-flying, jet-setter lifestyle.

"He's very friendly," says Laura Bishop of the British *Daily Mail*. A gregarious character, he has wine and dined some of the world's most glamorous women like Faye Dunaway and model Caprice. He's known for hotly pursuing ladies, and the occasional unseemly attempt to get himself photographed next to Hollywood stars like Gwyneth Paltrow, who haven't a clue who he is. Yet he's a harmless, fan-like, true admirer who prefers hanging out with celebrity types than fellow royals.

Azim is invited to A-list events like Elton John's prestigious annual White Tie and Tiara Ball. Actress Scarlett Johansson, supermodel Eva Herzigova, other models, and his frequent companions – his sisters Princess Azimah and Princess Sadzillah – all accompanied him at a family birthday bash in Frankie Dettori's, a chi-chi restaurant in London's Knightsbridge. Diana Ross sang to entertain the guests.

Prince Azim's most famous crush was on the former Mrs Mick Jagger, actress Jerry

Hall. After seeing her naked on stage in *The Graduate* in London's West End, he felt moved to send her a diamond bracelet the very next day. After another play's opening night, he sent her a bouquet that was so huge she had to ferry it home in a separate taxi.

His apparently unfettered cash flow and generous nature has led to him picking up tabs like a \$27,200 drinks bill in London's trendy hangout Paper for a crowd that included Sienna Miller. He is said to treat lady companions like Emma Samms, Minnie Driver and singer Chantal Alleyné of the girl band Fierce to frequent gifts of diamond and platinum jewellery. Rumour has it, though, that they're all platonic friendships. Azim loves music so much that he is reputed to have presented African-American singing star Usher with a dazzling pair of diamond-encrusted tennis shoes when he performed in London.

The truth is that Prince Azim's early ambition was to become a pop star himself. He practised his moves with a karaoke machine, but realised he lacked the physical attributes to make girls swoon. So, he switched tack and wrote a novel entitled *Scandalous*. He also aspires to be a film producer.

When he was 15, his father sent him to a Quaker boarding school in Reading, outside London. It was an unusual choice for a Muslim and Azim finished his schooling in Singapore. The Sultan's attempts to get him into Oxford University, like his older brother, failed miserably.

The Sultan had 10 children from two marriages when, in 2005, he wed Azrinaz Mazhar Hakim, a former Malaysian TV journalist. When wife number three delivered a baby boy last June, Azim was no longer the family's incredibly indulged youngest child. However, he still divides his time between the United States and London, where he usually resides at The Dorchester Hotel, which is owned by his father. And whenever his father summons him to Brunei, Prince Azim answers the call.

Princess Madeleine & Crown Princess Victoria (Sweden) A FREE SPIRIT, AND A RULER IN TRAINING

Blonde, blue-eyed Princess Madeleine, 24, is a head-turner with over 40 websites dedicated to her. She claims her social butterfly reputation is exaggerated. Perhaps she's forgotten how she once arrived at a rather stuffy Nobel Prize dinner wearing a very low-cut outfit, but others have not.

While Crown Princess Victoria, 29, has been adjusting to her royal destiny, Madeleine and her brother Carl Philip, 27, have greater freedom. King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia's eldest child, Victoria became next in line to the throne in 1980.

"Victoria told me that they hardly ever discuss the matter, but when she once asked her siblings whether they felt jealous, they both said, 'No!'" says royal expert Catarina Hurtig, author of the book *Princesses*. Hurtig has travelled abroad with the Swedish royals for a decade, and attended

From below left: Crown Princess Victoria; Sweden's Princess Madeleine; King Carl Gustaf



call that professional, but I find it boring. I strongly believe that the more we know about our royals, the more we love them. Being heir to the throne has sometimes felt like a big

burden. Yet, she has decided it is her mission to fulfil that role. It's her destiny and goal."

Victoria was schooled in Sweden, then at the Centre International d'Etudes Francaise in France. She also took two years of political science and history classes at Yale. Tirelessly grooming herself for the throne, she did a spell as a trainee at the United Nations too. Madeleine went to junior college and briefly worked at a decoration magazine, but more for fun than anything else.

"Madeleine has never worked anywhere," Hurtig laughs. "It's just a way for the royals to experience the real world. I remember Prince William cleaning toilets in South America. I am still waiting for Princess Madeleine to do that!" Madeleine studied briefly in London, but left early, complaining about the paparazzi circling the Chelsea home she stayed in. "I felt chased," she said. "It's no fun to have people lying in wait for you at the door of your house."

"I think she is a rather shy young woman who sometimes just wants to forget that she is a princess, and live an ordinary life with family and friends," says Hurtig. "But Madeleine is no push-over. She is strong-willed and quite stubborn."

Crown Princess Victoria earned the respect of many Swedes in 2002, when she admitted that she and Carl Philip are dyslexic. Reading

and writing difficulties have long been associated with the Swedish royals, but only Victoria has spoken out about it. "I used to think I was dumb and slow," she once said. "But I had a lot of help and support."

She compensates by allowing herself extra time to read documents and prepare. "She is very brave to talk about it," Hurtig says, "I admire her for being so open-minded. This is a good example of how royals can be good role models and bring attention to problems or issues in society."

In 2003, Victoria did tough military training alongside ordinary Swedes. "I saw her on army tanks and walking several kilometres carrying heavy equipment," Hurtig recalls. "She is athletic, very fit. We both slept in ordinary military beds, and I can assure you it was not at all comfortable. Yet, I never heard her complain."

Victoria, who once dated Prince Nikolas of Greece, has been happy with gym owner Daniel Westling (nicknamed Sweden's Gym King) for several years now. Hurtig predicts they will wed in summer 2007 or 2008, after a traditionally brief Swedish-style engagement. The King and State Minister have to approve her choice of husband, but it's a formality. Daniel Westling has changed a lot over the years, too. By swapping camouflage pants for a classic suit and Gucci loafers, he seems to be polishing up the image of the prince he is to become.

Many Swedes would prefer Victoria to marry a blue-blooded German prince rather

than a commoner, but blue-bloods are few and far between. Other Swedes would rather see her with a self-made man like Westling than a rich playboy.

Madeleine's beau is a hunkily handsome, curly-haired law student, Jonas Bergstrom. "But Madeleine still has a lot of interested guys hanging around her," says Hurtig. "She will never be lonely, that gorgeous girl. All girls want to be her, and all guys would like to be with her."

"It's very good for a man's personal CV to date her. Several of her ex-boyfriends have gone on to become well-known event planners and club hosts. I think girls are rather jealous of Madeleine, and there's a lot to envy. But being her friend makes you very popular. Some of her friends get as many invitations as she does."

Victoria and Madeleine live in Drottningholm, a stunning baroque palace outside Stockholm, and have a flat in the city.

The King and Queen raised their three children quietly, aiming for normal childhoods. However, living in the palace in Ekero outside Stockholm, and primarily mixing with children from the upper class and those of friends of the royal family, wasn't that normal.

Carl Philip is second in line to the Swedish throne. After attending Lundsberg, a posh private school, he completed a graphic design programme at Forsbergs advertising school

before attending military school and then studying for two years in the United States.

His long-time girlfriend, Emma Pernaid, a beautiful brunette publicist, is known for her great sense of humour, just like the King. She is not overawed by the royals, and treats them like anyone else, which they seem to appreciate.

Crown Prince Haakon Magnus & Princess Mette-Marit (Norway) A SINGLE MOTHER ENTERS THE ROYAL CIRCLE

Ninety per cent of Norwegians live together before they marry, and Norway's royal family is perhaps the most approachable in Europe. Nevertheless, Crown Prince Haakon's popularity took a nosedive in 2002, when he moved in with his commoner lover – and now wife – Mette-Marit Tjessem Holby. She was a single mum with a son, Marius, now eight. Worse, Marius's father was a convicted cocaine user. Hardly the stuff of royal fairy tales.

Yet, royal expert Catarina Hurtig insists that "Mette-Marit's is still the true *Cinderella* story, and we love *Cinderella* stories. She wasn't a criminal, but I think she thought it was a little exciting. She liked clubs, and worked in several as a waitress. After she and the Prince met at a rock festival, he was totally obsessed. In Swedish we would say they have "marriage looks." It means

they look the same. They're a rather beautiful couple, and Haakon really stood up for his love. He really wanted this girl, but, of course, it was a nightmare for the King and Queen. It wasn't at all what they had hoped for."

However, King Harald and Queen Sonja Haraldsen didn't lack empathy, since Harald himself had fallen for a commoner, and waited nine long years for King Olav to approve his marriage to Sonja. King Olav never even spoke to Sonja before her engagement to Harald, and Harald ultimately threatened to spend the rest of his life alone if permission was not granted. He finally got the green light. Bottom line: King Harald knew just how his son felt, so how could he deny him?

Experts say the British would never allow an unwed woman with a child to marry a future king. But, compared to Sonja's ordeal, Mette-Marit was accepted quite quickly. Although the King still had his doubts about how the country would accept Haakon's bride, he didn't try to stop him. When he finally welcomed Mette-Marit into the royal fold, he even called her an "extraordinary young woman."

According to a recent official biography by Per Egil Hegge, a plot to kidnap Prince Haakon was discovered when he and Mette-Marit began living together before they were wed. It was easier to arrange good security for the young couple if they were living under the same roof.

They married in August 2001, with Prince Charles and Prince Edward in attendance. Haakon gave a beautiful wedding speech, describing his struggle to be allowed his bride and his eventual triumph. They've since had two children, Princess Ingrid Alexandra and Prince Sverre Magnus. And now Mette-Marit is pregnant again.

The couple are active in the fight to stop AIDS, and involved in a UN study of violence against children. In October, they visited New Orleans for the 100th anniversary of the Norwegian Church abroad. Prince Haakon also promotes aquaculture as a means to help feed poor nations and boost their economies.

His sister, Princess Martha Louise, 35, is a certified physiotherapist. She has also studied literature and is a literacy advocate. A fairytale fan, she has written a children's book too. She has two small daughters and enjoys a close friendship with Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria.

Haakon and Victoria are also close, and Princess Mary of Denmark is said to be good friends with Mette-Marit. "They share a common bond as thoroughly modern princesses," says Holly Wainright of *OK! Australia*. Crown Princess Victoria read a poem at Prince Haakon's wedding to Mette-Marit, and the young European royals seem like one big, happy – if highly unusual – family on such occasions. □

Photography Corbis; Getty Images; Reuters; Rex; WireImage



Left: Metter-Marit Tjessem Holby already had a son from a previous relationship when she married into Swedish royalty Below: Crown Prince Haakon Magnus fell for his bride while at a rock festival