

# FILLING PIPPA'S GAP

Irish Model, beloved society beauty, and one half of celebrity power couple 'Pormond', Pippa O'Connor is in the process of scaling down her public image. How can she expect people to take her seriously, says one of Ireland's best known faces, if she's flaunting herself around town every night? The new Pippa will also have new teeth, and **Julia Molony** was there as Ireland's most photographed gap-toothed smile was made over — with, you'll be glad to hear, Brian Ormond's blessing.

Photography by **Lili Forberg**

**P**ippa O'Connor's smile is her fortune. As a model, attending grin-and-pose promotions, she trades on it every working day. At photocalls, fashion shows and parties it is wheeled out as one of the key weapons in her arsenal. And it seemed to work fine. In an industry where success is measured out in profile, Pippa is doing well. Then she heard about a way she could swap this weapon, a perfectly serviceable little revolver, for a mega-watt, beaming, napalm bomb. And what right-thinking Irish Model would turn down the chance to perfect and amplify her attributes?

"I really don't think that filling a couple of gaps in my teeth will have that much impact on my career, or anything. I'm not getting a facelift," she says with insouciance, when I ask if the dental work is an investment in her future. It's not, apparently, a means of helping her chances in the cut-throat world of the photocall.

But still, pimping her smile can't be a bad move for Pippa. Especially since she is starting to think more carefully these days about how to direct her career. She reckons she is likely to get about another four years out of modelling. And what then for a savvy and driven former beauty-pageant contestant, with an eye for the main chance and no shortage of ambition? She has her sights set on a career in television. "I know it sounds so clichéd," Pippa says. "I hate when girls — models especially — and young girls, say: 'I want to be a TV presenter.' I'm, like, 'Ugh'. But it's genuinely something I'm really interested in and think I'd be good at."

Otherwise, she's quite keen on the idea of print journalism. "I'd like to do what you do,

basically," she says, brazenly eyeing my tape recorder with an almost predatory gaze.

But back to the teeth. "I had a slightly gappy smile," Pippa says of her old look. "But in a photograph, or on TV, or anything, that was heightened by 10." When we meet, Pippa is midway between the two stages of the veneering process. The final attachment of her designer gnashers is still to come. Her permanent, state-of-the-art da Vinci veneers are yet to be fitted, and her temporary ones glint winsomely in the light. "Da Vinci's are like normal veneers, but much better, I'll have you know," she says, with a rather charming note of self-parody.

Pippa's boyfriend, the television presenter Brian Ormond, was encouraging when she mentioned her plans to him. "He thought I was dead right," she says. "I think he would hate for me to get Botox or something, but he said, 'If you are self-conscious about it and it will make you happy then go ahead, great.' He's had his own teeth done, years ago. And he said that it made such a difference in him, in terms of confidence."

A friend recommended the Seapoint Dental Clinic to Pippa, and once there, the deal-maker came when her dentist showed her the custom-made CGI mock-ups of her new smile. Pippa requested that they preserve the trademark centre gap that she knows is part of her image. "The press are so funny," she says. "I've often been referred to as 'the gap-toothed model', and then the other day some people picked up on my new teeth and wrote in the papers, 'We didn't mind the gap.' So it's like, make up your mind!" But seeing her new look on paper decided it for Pippa. Soon, she was signed up and ready for an arduous round of bleaching, filing and gluing.

"It's actually fine," she says, lightly, of the

most daunting part — the filing down of the teeth. "It took half an hour. I was thinking, 'Now this is going to be, like, "Oh my God, tie me down and give me a few Valium."' But it wasn't like that at all."

"Ed," she says of the dentist with whom she is on a first-names footing, "gave me a sedative drink, which made me feel like I'd had about a bottle of wine." As for the actual experience of the filing, all she has to say is that "it sounded like a drill — or like a thing you would use when you are getting your nails done." The sound is the only thing Pippa remembers. She didn't feel a thing.

The worst part over and done with, Pippa paused to have her picture taken before hopping back in the chair. If nothing else, this is evidence of her professionalism and commitment to the cause. Only a certain type of person would be bold enough to agree to be snapped halfway through an invasive dental procedure, and it demonstrates a moxie that is quite admirable.

Next, the temporaries were put in and

fastened with "something that smelled like nail glue". A few days after we meet, Pippa is off to visit Ed for the final appointment and the fitting of the new teeth. By the time you read this, she will be flashing them at photocalls all around the country.

Pippa insists she is inured to whatever the press or the public has to say about her new teeth or, indeed, her look in general. She's robust enough to deal with the vagaries of scrutiny that are the inevitable result of the sort of public attention that she courts as part of her job. "It doesn't really bother me," Pippa says. "I've been called fat in the papers. A couple of years ago it was, like, 'She's put on a bit of weight.' And then the minute you start going to the gym and lose a bit of weight, it's, 'Oh, Pippa's a waif'. It's always something."

She's not entirely immune, though. And there is one part of her life that she wishes was off limits. "The only thing that ever really gets to me is when they slag myself and Brian. Because I hate that."

"I don't really mind me, for my appearance, or anything like that," Pippa explains. "I'm confident enough in myself. I don't think I'm perfect by any means, or think I'm gorgeous — we all have our things and our moments. But I hate when they go really personal into your life or your relationship. It's the only thing that would kind of get to me, to be really honest."

But wait. Aren't they Ireland's foremost celebrity couple? Doesn't she recognise that there is a trade-off for becoming well known on the basis of who you are and what's going on in your day-to-day life. Hasn't she willingly signed that Faustian pact?

"There's an amount of things we would actually get asked to do as a couple that we turn down," she counters.

**'I can see why people would be interested in us. He's a TV presenter, I'm a model, and that's more interesting than if I was going out with a bricklayer, obviously'**