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JEN & MEGAN!

On feuds, friendship,
family & fame

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SPEAKING WITH

Jennifer Hawkins

They're the homegrown girls turned top model-moguls. Now for their first-ever magazine feature together, Jennifer Hawkins and Megan Gale open up to Jackie Frank about fame, feuds and joining forces

Jen wears
dress, \$1190,
by Jonathan
Simkhai at Myer.
Megan wears
dress, \$1990,
by Jonathan
Simkhai at Myer.

PHOTO: GUY AROCH



TOP MODELS
Left, Jeni and Megan with mentor (Alex's sister) from after their *Friendly Fires* modeling interview.
Below: Jeni with former Miss Universe in 2004, marrying Jake West in 2013.

Taking care of business

JACQUE FRANK: Let's go back a bit. Who were your role models in the early days?
MEGAN GALE: Mine was Elle Macpherson. Not just because she was Australian, but because she was a trailblazer. She was one of the first to pioneer the transition from modeling to businesswoman, to really make it work beyond just being a face or a body.

JENNIFER HANSON: Elle Macpherson comes to my mind, but so does Kathy Ireland as she jumped into the entrepreneurial side. She just kept expanding her business and that's inspiring.

JACQUE: What's the greatest lesson you learnt back then?

JEN: Not to take on board everybody's opinion. Be true to yourself. You just have to be confident in what you believe.

MEGAN: You learn most of your lessons from your

mistakes and by trying not to look at them as bad experiences. For example, I did a film when I was first living in Italy and I was still very green. There was a scene where they substituted me for someone completely naked and they didn't tell me. When I watched the film, here was this naked woman doing all these things and everyone thought it was me. That taught me to be so savvy with contracts; I'm just a hawk with contracts now.

JEN: Mistakes definitely make you learn. For example, at a certain time in my life I took on too much, and I didn't take time for myself or for my family. From then on I really made sure that when I schedule things, I allow for breaks.

JACQUE: You are both strong businesswomen. What are some of the lessons there for those who are just starting out?

JEN: Persistence is key because people will tell you different things - you can't do this, that won't work, there's already that - but if it's a passion and you can't stop thinking about it, keep going.

MEGAN: And believe in what you stand for and your vision. Vision with hard work. It can take years to achieve it.

JACQUE: What's your greatest strength?

MEGAN: Resilience. I can get knocked down and then dust myself off and get back up. If I didn't have resilience and persistence, it wouldn't be here.

JEN: Drive and passion. I'm not always resilient; sometimes I'm a little too sensitive for this industry. Sometimes I think, "How did I get into this industry?"

MEGAN: There's definitely those moments. But you're resilient, my god!
JEN: I'd say persistent.

Starring role

JACQUE: This year, you're both judges on Australia's Next Top Model. The girls are all gorgeous but what sets one apart?

JEN: They have to have an "it" factor, a spark. They have to possess this drive and determination. They've just got the fight and you're like, "You're going to make it."

MEGAN: I like looking for ones who are absolutely professional, who have a great attitude and are respectful of the whole process. A lot of them get stressed and anxious, which is understandable, and some have too much attitude... But being malleable and open to trying new things. I just love seeing that. That's rare.

JEN: And it's hard to see straightaway too, because sometimes you have to come into your own. I didn't have that straightaway when I got into this industry.

MEGAN: Oh God, no. It can take time.
JEN: It's when you think you can't handle it and then all of a sudden you're like,

"Yeah, I can do this!" It took me a few years and I was in tears a lot.

JACQUE: And the techniques needed as a judge? It must be hard to be honest but not crushing. Having Alex Perry there probably helps a bit, doesn't it?

MEGAN: It does. He's quite soft this season, don't you think? For him, he's been throwing out a few 10s.

JEN: That's true actually.
MEGAN: He hasn't been your classic bad cop but...

JACQUE: Who has been?
JEN: Compared to us, Alex is still the bad cop. He's blunt, which I love.

MEGAN: I told [the contestants] on day one that I'm going to be firm but honest. It's not to be mean or rattle you, and if I critique you, it's because I can see something needs to be fixed. That said, I've probably cried six times on the show.

JEN: I treat [the girls] like my little nieces. You want to help them as much as possible but you don't want to sugar-coat it, so you have to give constructive criticism. So I'm forever talking to them off

"I'm persistent, but at times I'm too sensitive for this industry"

- Jeni Hawkins

DAVID CLARKE/GETTY IMAGES; LAURENCEAU/REUTERS



Jeni wears dress, \$1450, by Alex Perry. Megan wears dress, \$2050, by Roland Mouret at Myer.

camera, trying to get them to empower themselves and believe they can do it.

Family ties

JACQUE: You're both in serious relationships and, Jen, the story goes that you actually went up to [now-husband] Jake West, introduced yourself and asked him out.
JEN: Oh, where did you get that? We just met at a bar and then things went slowly. To be honest though, when I first got into the industry there was so much travel, we broke up many times. But then there was a certain period where we moved in together and it was like, "Oooh, he's the one." I mean, nothing's perfect, right, but now I'm so grateful. I found a nice guy, you know.

JACQUE: Megan, let's talk about your son, River. He's just turned two. I recall you got up with a lot of media scrutiny about motherhood and pregnancy before River was born. People asking you "Are you pregnant? Aren't you pregnant?"

MEGAN: Oh gosh, that started when I was about 25. I believe so-one should ask a woman, or a couple, that question because you don't know if someone's just had a miscarriage, or trying to fall pregnant and they're doing IVE. When I was trying to conceive with River, people kept asking me and someone said, "You should get a crack on." And I was like, "I've been trying for months, shut up!"

Body beautiful

JACQUE: Jen, back in 2010, you posed nude for marie claire, which was just sensational. The cover was designed to help encourage positive body image and it created a massive stir at the time, for and against. Were you surprised by that reaction?

JEN: It's not that I wasn't surprised, but I was OK with the opinions because it's a sensitive subject. That's life and that's fine with me.

JACQUE: And, Megan, we had the pleasure of photographing you naked when you were pregnant with River.

JEN: I love that cover!
JACQUE: Isn't that incredible, the two of you. Both naked.

JEN: Next we'll be doing a naked cover together!

MEGAN: Don't put ideas in her head.



Cover story



BEYOND THE CATWALK

From far left with fellow judge Alex Perry (in Australia's Next Top Model) increasing on FOX from September 20, Megan with partner Shaun Harwood and son Flor, all smiles during our interview.



Jen wears dress, \$1950, by Alex Perry. Megan wears dress, \$1950, by Alex Perry.



JACKIE Megan?

MEGAN Mine is probably my eyes as well. I've got my dad's eyes and they're a family heirloom now because my son has my eyes. My dad's no longer with us, and when I see my son, I sometimes see my dad. That's kind of cool.

JACKIE Megan, you were once quoted saying you'd rather quit modeling than get under the knife. Do you still feel that way?

MEGAN I do. If I was at the point where I was getting suggestions or advice along the lines of, "Your career would be better if you alter yourself," then I'd feel like I was being asked to change the essence of who I am. I wouldn't be comfortable with having to alter things in order to be relevant. And if that's the message - that what comes out of my mouth doesn't matter anymore, and my professionalism, my work ethic is just completely worthless - then I don't want to be a part of that.

JACKIE Jen, would you agree?

JEN Yeah, I just think women should empower other women. I feel like we should be judging other women on their accomplishments, not their appearance, and that's the beauty of being

involved in different industries and owning your own business, because it empowers you to go: "I'm not just the way that I look."

Inside story

FUN FACTS

Your best beauty tip?

Jen: Sleep.

Megan: Never go to bed without washing your face.

Go-to karaoke song?

Jen: Anything by Jay Z.

Megan: My last karaoke song was Mr. Brightside by The Killers.

Last TV show you binge-watched?

Jen: Ray Donovan.

Megan: Jessica Jones.

Best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Jen: Don't read the negative feedback.

Megan: One day at a time.

Who's your celebrity love pass?

Jen: Will, Mark Wahlberg.

Megan: I've got to say that one. He's so cute.

Megan: I don't think I have one. Sorry. Boring.

If you were an emoji, what would it be?

Jen: The monkey.

Megan: The wink.

JACKIE You've spent quite a bit of time together now. What do you most admire about each other?

MEGAN I can understand, probably more than anyone else, the amount of hard work she's put into her career. From where she's started, the amount of things she has had to juggle; that is serious work. To do it all, be so well-liked and regarded for it, and to have longevity in this fickle, fast industry is incredibly admirable and I respect her for it.

JEN That's so nice.

MEGAN But it's true and it must be said.

JACKIE Jen, what do you admire about Megan?

JEN Megan, you've been in the industry for 25 years and I've been in it for 12, and it can be tough. I admire how long you've been here and you're still at the top of your game. You're now juggling motherhood as well. I've seen her jumping on flights,

turning up to set early mornings. I admire that because I haven't done [motherhood] yet. I'm always asking her, how do you do that? I really admire Megan on a work level.

MEGAN Thanks, honey.

JACKIE It's nice for everybody else to see what we've seen between the two of you for so many years because there's been so much media about the rivalry when you were at different department stores - the "store wars" - but in fact ...

MEGAN It never existed. It was a fallacy.

JEN But it's OK because you know that's a part of the industry; that's the media doing their job.

MEGAN They didn't need to do it. I'm not sure about that.

JEN I suppose so.

MEGAN We kind of got roped into it.

JEN We did, didn't we.

MEGAN It sucked in a way, truth be told, because you do all those weeks of shooting the campaign, you get ready and do this amazing show, and then in the paper it's just about the two of us hating each other and it's like, really?

JEN So it's quite fitting, now that we're doing a show together.

MEGAN I know, I love it! Full circle. I think we both get why "store wars" happened. It drew attention to the stores, the brands, so ultimately you understand it, but it was odd because it was based on this feud that never existed.

JACKIE Did you ever call each other when the stories were coming out?

JEN It was so bizarre because we had never really hung out together, so how can we hate each other when I'd love to know Megan? Coming into the industry, I was like, "Oh, Megan." And then all of a



"You do this amazing fashion show, and then in the paper it's just about the two of us hating each other and it's like, really?"

- Megan Gale

WHAT RIVALRY?



sudden they're pitting me against her and I was like, "What?! No!"

MEGAN I remember one year, I was in the Emirates marquee and Jen was at Myer [at the races]. You came in to use the bathroom or something, and we saw each other and hugged, kissed, got a photo. Open up the paper the next day, it's "Catfight in Emirates!" To me, that was the moment where it was obvious this is just always going to happen; we had to live with it. So if people watch the show and think we hate each other, the answer is?

JEN We don't! Get over it.

JACKIE So the only thing we've got left for you two to do is the double naked cover.

JEN Oh no! I put it out there.

MEGAN Now look what you did! Jackie is like a dog with a bone. □

Megan, who was a David Jones ambassador for 13 years (pictured top in 2007), says the media created a non-existent feud between her and Jen, who has been the face of Myer since 2007 (pictured above in 2014).