

TALES FROM...

LOS ANGELES

A love of acting led Renae Plant, 35, to Hollywood. She's still there 13 years later, but now she's helping other wannabes and dressing yummy mummies

How did you wind up in the City of Angels?

I came here to pursue acting when I was 23, with just \$600 and a suitcase to my name. I hung around in LA for a year before I moved to New York, where I stayed for six years, doing Broadway shows, independent films, modelling and bit parts in features. In 2000, I decided to give LA another go.

What's been keeping you busy since then? I've opened up my own talent-management company, Nebula Management, where I help up-and-coming actors get a foot in the show biz door. I got one of my clients a small part alongside Eddie Murphy in DreamWorks' new film *Norbit*.

And you have your own clothing line, too. How did that come about?

Three years ago, when I was pregnant with my daughter, Ilan [Plant also has a son, Mateo, who is nearly one], I transferred her ultrasound images onto T-shirts. Recently, my husband lost his job, so I decided to revisit the T-shirt idea for a bit of extra cash and came up with the idea of printing '[bump]' – an acronym for 'Baby Under Manufacturing Process' – on them. They really took off. In just a few months, they were stocked in more than 50 stores across the US and Canada. [You can buy online at www.bumpbabies.com.au.] Meanwhile, my husband found a new job.

Who have you spotted wearing your T-shirts?

Heidi Klum, Gillian Anderson, Tori Spelling, Jaime Pressly, Melanie B (aka Scary Spice) and Marcia Cross. The other day, I went to an event for 'The Hot Moms Club' at a swanky LA home and actor Brooke Burke was there wearing a [bump] T-shirt. I was rapt because the PR scene in Hollywood is just crazy. Sometimes you have to pay to put your product into gift bags. I also have what I call a 'celebrity [bump] watch' and every time a celebrity

falls pregnant, I send them a T-shirt. It's fantastic publicity when a celebrity wears my stuff.

Where do you live? I live in Los Feliz and it's a cool place. It's near downtown LA, but away from Hollywood, so it's a little quieter and not as trappy. Feliz is Spanish for happy, so I like to think of it as the happy town. It's a lot like Beverly Hills before everyone starting wearing designer clothes. Heidi Fleiss' father is our pediatrician! He's down the road at the Children's Hospital Los Angeles and he's the best-known pediatrician in Hollywood. Even Madonna takes her kids there.

Do you have a local haunt? I like heading to The Grove. It's a new shopping centre with an outdoor dancing fountain made by the same company that designed the fountains at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. Every half-hour it dances to songs by Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Kool and the Gang and Lionel Richie.

Is it true Los Angelenos are health freaks? Everyone in LA is health conscious. The dressing is always on the side and, most bizarrely, they eat salads with chopsticks. And no one orders straight from the menu. It's always, "I'll have that, but can you take off the pickles and could you add cheese?"

What is their junk food weakness? Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. I think they taste horrible. I'm pretty sure if Americans were introduced to real chocolate, they'd fall over and die of excitement.

If LA were a movie, it would be... *March of the Penguins*. LA is all about the car you drive and the clothes you wear but once you get below the water, everyone's the same.

What will you remember most about your time in the States? The opportunities. LA is a city that allows you to be who you are and strive for it. If you have a dream and you set your mind to it, LA makes it possible. But it's still bloody hard work.

(clockwise from above) Looking towards the Hollywood Hills in downtown Los Feliz; Renae with husband Livinio Stuyck, daughter Ilan and son Mateo; cool shops abound on Hillhurst Ave; Renae on the road.



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