

TV Close-Up: Cat Deeley

by Eirik_Knutzen

Bras, panties, frocks, blouses, sweaters, coats, handbags and shoes whirled around in the master bedroom at Cat Deeley's Beverly Hills home as she was packing a handful of large suitcases only three weeks before Christmas.

CAT DEELEY - Cat Deeley will host a 'New Year's Eve Live' show in front of the Planet Hollywood restaurant in Times Square this year. CNS Photo courtesy of Jeff Neira. She was in the eye of the relatively calm (make that frantic) multicolored hurricane, preparing for several weeks of business and pleasure back home in England on four days notice.

Deeley was on her way to London to tape at least 10 episodes of "The Soundtrack of My Life," each featuring a 45-minute interview with a rock or pop star before performing four of their own songs.

The program, produced for ITV-1 in the U.K., is expected to have an American version in place approximately 30 seconds after it premieres in England sometime this winter or spring. Somehow all things British wind up on a FOX Network channel controlled by media baron Rupert Murdoch, where Deeley is already hosting the enormously popular show "So You think You Can Dance."

After a huge Christmas gathering of friends and relatives for turkey with all the trimmings - and a couple days off learning how to horseback ride - Deeley was on her way back to her second home in Los Angeles on a Virgin Atlantic jumbo jet, snug in a first-class seat stripped down to her airline-provided Virgin Atlantic pajamas.

The brief stopover in L.A. was mostly to dump her sullied laundry and repack for New York City with custom-made winter clothes and costumes for her second crack at "New Year's Eve Live" from Times Square (11:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m., FOX) with practically unknown chat show star/co-host Spike Feresten. The outfits, finished while she worked and played in Europe, include several "amazing fake fur coats" with ski jacket linings.

She will definitely need the Arctic gear while hosting "New Year's Eve Live" from an open-air platform built in front of the Planet Hollywood restaurant to keep her out of harm's way when the other one million revelers in Times Square get worked up as the glittering countdown ball slides toward midnight.

The live show, taped for all regions beyond the Eastern time zone, features in-the-moment performances by the likes of Lifehouse, Jordin Sparks and Blake Lewis. DVD video premieres by Fall Out Boy and Mariah Carey were announced weeks ago. Negotiations with other artists continue.

"It's the most fun, crazy and fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants party you've ever seen or imagined," said the statuesque former model, "and I want you to see and feel it as I do."

Once the frosty festivities wrap, Deeley, 31, is on her way back home to Beverly Hills, Calif., in order to prep for appearances at several auditions for "So You Think You Can Dance" - held from Jan. 17 to April 3, opening in Dallas and ending in Salt Lake City.

"I love my job," said Deeley, who took over the "Dance" job two years ago when pregnant original host Lauren Sanchez opted out in favor of stay-at-home motherhood. "I know it sounds like I'm extremely busy on an exhausting schedule, but the truth is that I love it this way. I have the energy."

Perhaps a recovering workaholic after all, Deeley actually took time off totally for about one month during the past year. Her activities included attending her younger brother Max's wedding to a local lass, Caryn, in Sydney, Australia, in mid-November. "My whole family (in the U.K.) went there for a lovely time," she said.

"They were married in a little church above the harbor, which was followed by the reception nearby and climaxed in a huge, spectacular fireworks display," Deeley continued. "Then the whole wedding party went to

Hamilton Island at the Great Barrier Reef for snorkeling, water skiing and playing cricket on the beach. It was brilliant."

With "serious" relationships to publicist Mark Whelan and singer Huey Morgan over, she is "dating, but there is nobody special to talk about yet."

This left Deeley - who grew up in Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham - relatively generous time to visit friends and acquaintances in London and Birmingham, plus take surfing lessons in Costa Rica. "I would love a small dog to care for, but it wouldn't be fair to the animal. I'm gone too much," she said wistfully.

Part of the current British invasion of American airwaves, Deeley thinks hard work and being in the right place at the right time led to success on two continents.

"It all started when I was 7 years old and woke up one day wanting to be Julie Andrews or a presenter on the 'Blue Pizza' children's show," she explained, laughing.

"I came from a small town, mum and dad weren't famous and I knew nobody in show business, but I won a modeling contest at 14. I modeled for 18 months, then sent a demo tape from my dad's camcorder to MTV UK where I became a presenter (in 1997). I have done many, many television shows since then and consider myself very, very lucky."

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