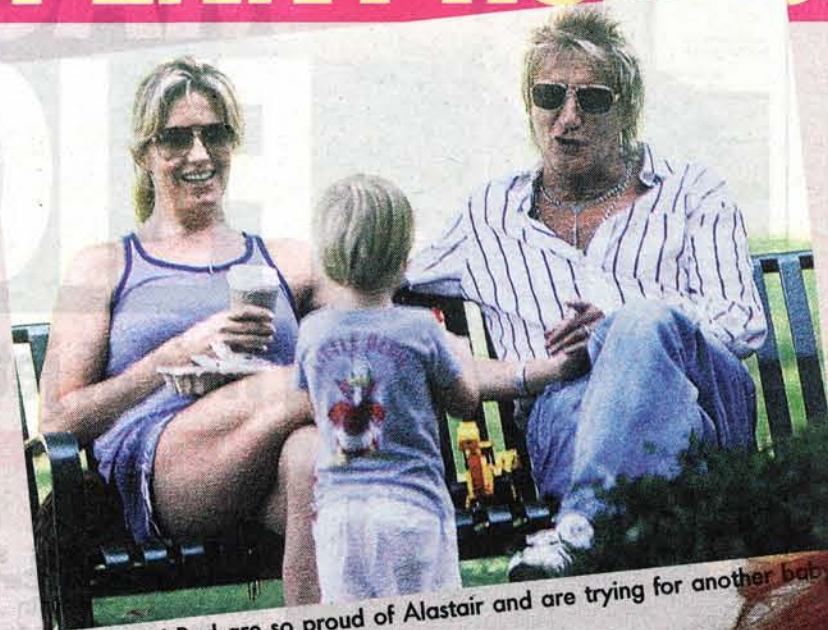


PENNY HOPES TO SWAP NIGHTS OUT FOR NAPPIES



Penny and Rod are so proud of Alastair and are trying for another baby



Such a great night... the couple after Penny's party Do ya think I'm tipsy... Penny messing around with a hat

THEY'VE been together for a decade now, but Penny Lancaster and Rod Stewart still looked like a pair of newlyweds – and tipsy newlyweds at that – as they left Penny's birthday party in London last week.

They'd obviously had a wonderful time at the Dorchester Hotel and were giggling like love-struck teenagers as they tottered to their car.

But Penny, 38, would be more than happy to trade her champagne nights out for sleepless nights in and nappies. For she reveals today that she and Rod, 64, have been trying for a second child together for more than a year.

Their son Alastair is three and they long for another baby to make their family complete. But Penny believes their hectic showbiz schedule may be affecting their chances.

She says: "I think touring and running around interferes with things but we're still trying and we have high hopes. Once you get over 35 it does take a little longer, but it's worth persevering."

Little Alastair Wallace Stewart is the apple of his parents' eyes. And while he is Penny's first child – born after she suffered two miscarriages – he is Rod's sixth.

Three of his older children, Kimberley, 29, Sean, 28, and fellow singer Ruby, 21, live with them at their home in Los Angeles where they spend half the year. Renee, 16, and Liam, 14 – his children with model Rachel Hunter – stay two nights a week.

Such a brood could exasperate any parent, let alone one who found herself with a ready-made family when she first met Rod.

But Penny is unfazed. "Alastair has a great relationship with his brothers and sisters," she says.

"Liam's a great role model – he's such a lovely boy. Alastair looks up to him with big wide eyes and talks about Liam this and Liam that. It's lovely to watch."

"He's in awe of Liam, who invites him to hockey tournaments. Rod and Alastair love football, but Rod feels like he's going to lose Alastair to hockey now."

But while Alastair may not be quite as keen on football as his dad, he's clearly inherited his love of the limelight.

"Alastair got up on stage in Tokyo and introduced his sister, who was supporting Rod on his tour," says Penny, brimming with pride.

"He said, 'Hello Tokyo... please welcome on stage my sister Ruby', and everyone went crazy."

"Alastair doesn't usually get to see his dad perform but the show was at 5pm, so he did this time. His favourite song is First Cut Is The Deepest, which he sings along to."

The family's thoroughly-modern domestic arrangements appear reassuringly normal. And that's quite a feat for a rock star worth millions and who has just ended a successful month-long tour across Asia.

But at the heart of Rod and Penny's approach to parenthood is a joint determination to ensure Alastair has a normal upbringing, protected from

EXCLUSIVE

BY SALLY BECK

features@sundaymirror.co.uk

the excesses of Hollywood's legendary "goldfish bowl" lifestyle.

This outlook seems all the more relevant in the wake of headlines last month about Rod's eldest son, Sean, who appeared on a US TV show discussing claims he hadn't paid his fitness instructor for over a year.

Rod paid the 5,000-dollar debt, but Sean said on the show: "Actually, the money he gave, I had to pay back. My dad's very cheap."

His comments made headlines across the world, but Penny doesn't take them seriously.

"It wasn't Rod's fault," insists Penny. "Sean's a grown man and he needs to take responsibility. Rod's always very, very supportive and generous with his children."

"Every situation is different but, rich or poor, you have to instil manners, respect and strong morals for children to grow up to be independent decent human beings. That's what a good parent tries to do."

Penny's certainly determined that little Alastair won't become a Hollywood brat.

"He was born here in England. He has family from my side and Rod's here, so he has strong connections in the UK. He's also lucky to have the great opportunity to hang out with his older stepbrothers and sisters in LA."

She adds: "When I started dating Rod it wasn't a relationship with me and a man – I was joining a family."

"I said I was just going to be myself so that the children could see me for who I was. I know they have great respect for me now. We have such a loving relationship and I put that down to me being me."

Although they have a privileged lifestyle, Penny is clearly aware of how lucky they are.

That knowledge partly stems from her experience working with the Lowe Syndrome Trust, a British charity which funds research into a little-known, rare and incurable condition

Why Rod & I want a new baby

which affects only boys. She is passionate about the cause and does whatever she can to help.

"One of the biggest challenges parents with disabled children face is financial," she says. "When you have a disabled child you have to change your whole house to accommodate their needs."

"The emotional side of parenting a disabled child takes its toll."

"I know as a mum that I devote all my time to Alastair. Whatever his needs are I'm there for him. That emotional input is doubled if your child is disabled."

Penny has been involved with the

charity for five years since founder Lorraine Thomas, whose 15-year-old son Oscar suffers from the genetic disease, asked her to help raise their profile and generate funds.

TV host Jonathan Ross, Spandau Ballet's Tony Hadley and actor Christopher Biggins have all joined her as patrons to raise over £1million for research.

The Government won't fund any research as the disease is so rare. There are only 50 families in the UK known to have children who suffer with Lowe Syndrome.

Oscar had an operation to remove cataracts in both eyes before he was three months old, which saved his sight.

He also had a hole in the heart, suffered a convulsion and pneumonia.

He finally learned to walk aged two, but didn't talk until he was five. He has recently been

diagnosed with glaucoma and autism. But Penny says: "He has a zest for life that you wouldn't imagine a child with his disabilities would have. He is an amazing child."

"When I first heard Lorraine's story I was speechless. Every single day of her life she puts all her efforts into finding a cure for Lowe Syndrome."

"I was amazed by her courage and dedication. She not only copes with Oscar's condition but she wants to help others too. It's hard to think that Oscar won't live to an old age. The idea that your child could die before you is awful. "How can you ever prepare for that loss?" There is little doubt that Penny is devoted to her own son, and indeed all of Rod's children.

"Rod knew that it was my biggest wish to have a child and that he'd been able to make that wish come true was lovely for him," she says.

● TO find out more about Lowe Syndrome, go to www.lowetrust.com

When I met Rod I was joining his whole family

Picture: STEVE POOLE/SCOPE



Close... Rod with (from left) Kimberley, Sean, Renee, Penny and Liam