

OK! EXCLUSIVE

'WILLOW HAS MADE LIFE SO MUCH BETTER!'

KIMBERLY WYATT CHATS TO OK! ABOUT HER HYPNOBIRTHING EXPERIENCE AND TAKING MOTHERHOOD IN HER STRIDE...

When Former Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt breezes into our hotel room for an exclusive photo shoot, she looks every inch the poised and glamorous celebrity. Her svelte, athletic figure and immaculate styling make it hard to believe she only gave birth to her first child, daughter Willow, in December.

As she cradles her super-cute tot in her arms, we are struck by how effortlessly she has taken to motherhood.

'I love being a mum,' says Kimberly, 33. 'You can have the worst day and then Willow will give one of her little smiles and everything else just melts away.'

Kimberly's calm approach extended to Willow's birth by caesarean section on December 2 last year. When it became clear she would not be able to give birth naturally because the baby was in the breech position, the former *Got To Dance* star and her model husband Max Rogers put together a playlist of music for the operating theatre.

'It was incredible walking into the theatre knowing that you're about to meet your child,' says Kimberly. 'The best moment was seeing her for the first time. There isn't a word to describe how incredible that was. When they put her into my arms, the three of us had our first moment together to the sound of the song that I walked down the aisle to at our wedding - *To Build A Home* by The Cinematic Orchestra. It really encapsulated just how wonderful the moment was.'

Kimberly spends as much time as possible with Willow and took her to the recent Danceathon in aid of Comic Relief. Kimberly danced for six hours, later giving Willow her first taste of celebrity by taking her on stage.

But caring for Willow is a two-way thing between Kimberly and hands-on dad Max, who she describes as 'amazing and wonderfully supportive'.

Aside from her new role as a mother, dance is a huge part of Kimberly's life. Throughout her pregnancy, the star was busy putting in the hours judging and mentoring acts on Sky 1's talent show *Got To Dance*. With her six-month bump covered by a glitzy galaxy-print ensemble, she even took to the stage to perform during the show's live semi-finals, wowing fans with an intensive dance routine. Sadly, after five years on air, Sky announced in October that the series was to be cancelled.

But with training for the Vitality World Triathlon London and promoting her own perfume and make-up lines, Kimberly hasn't shown any signs of slowing down - and she wouldn't have it any other way.

'Life is completely different in so many amazing ways. I love it. I love little Willow. I love the family that we've created in England. Having Willow is a juggle, but she's made life

so much better. She gives me that added push to do great things,' she says.

Given her impressive career trajectory, it's hard to imagine Kimberly ever taking her foot off the gas. Born in Missouri, in America's Midwest, she began dancing at the age of seven. When she was 14 she earned a scholarship at New York's Joffrey Ballet and the Broadway Dance Center, and at 17 she headed to Las Vegas to audition for cruise ship and casino shows. Her next stop - aged 21 - was Los Angeles, where she joined the Pussycat Dolls in 2003. The band split in 2010.

OK! Mum & Baby caught up with the star at the glamorous MyHotel Chelsea in the heart >

Doting mum Kimberly spends as much time as possible with her daughter. 'Willow will give one of her little smiles and everything else just melts away,' she tells us







Kimberly says there is a 'bigger purpose' to everything she does now she has Willow

of London, where the singing and dancing sensation talked pregnancy, broken sleep and celebrity mummy friends...

How are you juggling work and baby?

I feel more stretched, but make choices to fit in with my family. There's a bigger purpose to everything I do, whether it's career stuff, being fit or being the best me I can be so I can be the best mum I can be. It's not just about me any more. I have to think about us.

What was your pregnancy like?

I was lucky. I had only mild morning sickness during the first three months. I've heard other

women's stories where it can be brutal. I felt ill here and there, but it wasn't so bad that I couldn't deal with it. I didn't like meat for most of my pregnancy – couldn't eat it, couldn't look at it, so I became a vegetarian. I had dizzy spells and a bit of backache too.

How did you get yourself ready for the birth?

I trained for it. A doctor told me something that rang true – pregnancy is not an illness so just continue to do what you can. When it came to the birth, I worked with pregnancy fitness coach Jane Wake. She taught me a lot of different exercises to help with a natural

birth, the birthing squat, for example. She helped me realise you don't just walk into a room and everybody does it for you. You have to wrap your head around the fact that you're doing this yourself. Your body is pushing and you need to find ways to help it. Gravity is great – and finding different poses you can get into. I was ready to take on that challenge and make it happen. I was sad that in the end I couldn't have a natural birth.

Were you scared about giving birth?

HypnoBirthing is a great thing – just looking at pain as pressure – focusing on it as being a great experience instead of being fearful of it. It's true everyone gives you their worst horror stories about birth, but I tried to surround myself with people who were more about the excitement and challenge of it; that it's going to be fine, that it's the most brilliant thing a woman's body can do. I tried to embrace those factors.

'I WAS WORKING OUT AND DOING YOGA UNTIL ABOUT TWO DAYS BEFORE I HAD WILLOW'

They're so important, but people don't really talk about those things.

What books did you read to prepare for the pregnancy and birth?

I read loads of books and the one that helped me the most was *The Contented Little Baby Book* by Gina Ford. I don't follow it strictly, but it gives me a template. It's taken the guess >



Top: Kimberly cradles her daughter. Above: Husband Max has been 'super-supportive'



The star turned to books and apps for support during her pregnancy



work out of being a mum. I know when she needs to be fed and I know when she needs a nappy changed. It's helped us to get her sleeping through the night as much as possible. It's been extremely helpful. Apps have been amazing too – BabyCentre and The Bump.

What was the birth like?

I'd dreamt of doing a natural birth but due to the baby being in the breech position I had to have a caesarean. Max and I wanted to keep it really chilled and not freak about anything. I was scared before the caesarean but I was swept up in what was happening, so I didn't focus on the operation too much. I immersed

**'I THOUGHT:
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WHAT WAS
INSIDE ME!"**

myself in it being an amazing experience. We wanted a safe me and a safe baby. And that's what we got.

Did you bond with Willow instantly?

The first thought was: 'Wow! This is what was inside me!' She was bigger than I expected



Kimberly and Max made guesses as to how much baby Willow would weigh, with Kimberly spot on with her estimation of 7lb 5oz

ly can't stop smiling as
xes with a sleeping
at the MyHotel Chelsea





A peaceful Willow rests in her mother's arms. 'Ultimately you feel a love that you've never really felt before,' Kimberly says of becoming a mum

— and much more purple. Max and I took dibs on how much she would weigh and I got it on the dot, 7lb 5oz. I bonded straight away, but you do build upon what you're creating with this little being. That first time you hold her and know you're a mum, it's empowering and a little scary. It's full of mixed emotions, but ultimately you feel a love that you've never really felt before.

Did the Pussycat Dolls give you any messages of congratulations?

Ashley [Roberts] is one of my closest friends and was one of the first people to meet Willow

'ASHLEY ROBERTS WAS ONE OF THE FIRST PEOPLE TO MEET WILLOW'

after she was born. Almost all the girls are back in Los Angeles so they haven't met Willow yet, but they sent congratulatory messages. The last time they saw me I was heavily pregnant.

What is Willow's personality like?

She's content and smiles and giggles. She's not too fussy. She knows what she wants, though. She hates the *Itsy Bitsy* song. As soon as you sing it, her lip goes down. I sing to her all the time, my own songs and made-up ones too, which she loves.

How quickly after the birth did you start to exercise?

Six weeks is pretty much the time you can start to exercise after a caesarean. At seven weeks I fell down the stairs running to my crying baby and broke my ▶



'I try to keep everything in my stride and bring a smile to Willow as much as I can. I don't want to create stress around her,' says Kimberly

energy – but exercising helped me physically and mentally to find the best me so I could be the best mum for Willow.

What sort of mum are you?

I'm quite laid-back. I'm more uptight than my husband, but that's part of being a mum. I try to keep everything in my stride and bring a smile to Willow as much as I can. I don't want to create stress around her. I don't want to bring negativity. I just want to work on being the happiest I can be so I bring that kind of energy to her. I'm on a mission to stay fit, creative and healthy and lead by example. That's the best thing you can do as a mum, so that's what I strive for.

Does Max help out with the nappy changing?

Yes, he does nappy changes. He'll do the last bottle feed at the end of the night. He's super-supportive. He dressed Willow today – even though her shirt's on backwards!

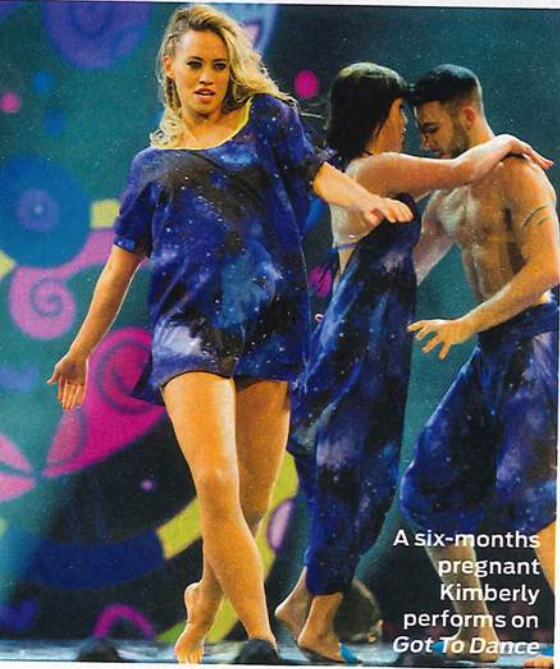
'I'M ON A MISSION TO STAY FIT, CREATIVE AND HEALTHY AND LEAD BY EXAMPLE'

Has your style changed since you have had Willow?

Your life changes and I guess your style changes a bit. It's just about practicality because you're breastfeeding. I've always loved the 60s and I love sportswear. I just go with what works and stick to it. Fitness is really important to me, especially as I'm training for the triathlon. I find sports clothing that works, day in day out, so I can fit in my fitness as and when it can happen.

How do you feel about breastfeeding – do you think there is a lot of pressure on women to do it?

I felt the pressure. I was scared I wasn't going to be able to do it because of that surrounding pressure. You have to find your own way and



A six-months pregnant Kimberly performs on *Got To Dance*

toe – my middle metatarsal on my right foot. I continued training on one leg. I did the bike as cardio because it kept high impact off my foot. I did squats, upper body, Pilates, bands, sit-ups and push-ups in circuits. Now I do about an hour-and-a-half to two hours of daily exercise. About half an hour to 45 minutes of that is cardio – running, swimming, cycling or dancing. Then for the rest of the time I do circuit training, bands, weights and sometimes machines. I don't have a gym in my house, just free weights, bands, a yoga mat and ball as well as a bike that folds up and which I can just shove under my couch.

Do you think that being so fit made you bounce back more quickly from the caesarean section?

It definitely helped. I was working out and doing yoga until about two days before I had Willow. After that I had to sit on my bum for a good six weeks. Getting back into exercise afterwards was tough. You feel like you're hanging everywhere – you have no



Kimberly poses with her former Pussycat Dolls bandmates. Ashley (far left) was one of the first people to meet baby Willow



not take on the criticism so much. We need a little bit more support. You find yourself going through the pain of it and then a midwife comes over and says: 'You must be doing it wrong'. It was done in such an angry way. I just need you to tell me I'm doing okay! Uplift me and support me and say: 'You can do it' – be my coach, don't talk down to me. I've got a baby who's not sleeping, I'm trying to figure out how to be a mum and you're talking down to me. I'm at breaking point! Luckily I have great friends who supported me into continuing.

Do you have a good network of mummy friends at all?

I've got my sister and my nieces and I've got a little circle of mum friends. It's funny how, when you're going through pregnancy, other people who are going through it then become your social circle. Kimberley Walsh's baby is just a couple of months older than Willow. We haven't had a play date yet, but we talk a lot through social media and texts. We're planning to meet up.

Tell us about your belief in holistic health. I'm trying to get more into cooking so I can regulate what we're eating. I buy natural produce and eat organically. I like to juice and eat raw foods, which are important to maximise nutrients. I use essential oils, which are good for mind, body and soul and relieve stress. I burn them, put them in the bath or put a few drops into my hands and rub them into my neck, heart and tummy. I love

'GETTING BACK INTO EXERCISE AFTER THE BIRTH WAS TOUGH'

lavender, white angelica and rose. I also write a journal, which helps me stay on top of stress.

Have you any advice for first-time mums?

Just take everything in your stride; patience is

all. Make sure you don't forget to fulfil you, so you can fulfil your baby. I make sure I feel good so when I'm spending time with Willow I'm giving her the best me.

Would you like a big family?

I definitely want to have another baby one day, but for now I'm focusing on getting to know Willow, watching her grow and just being able to have all the excitement with her before we move on to the next one.

What's next for you in terms of work?

I've a few TV shows in the pipeline. I've got my Beautiful Movements Cosmetics range, which is going out to another 150 stores and Holland & Barrett, as well as my Kaydance perfume and I'm training for the triathlon. I'm keeping busy. **OK!**

INTERVIEW BY FIONA MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHS BY TONY WARD STYLING BY MARIE MCCAVER MAKE-UP AND HAIR BY AMANDA GROSSMAN ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES, INSTAGRAM, SKY, WIREIMAGE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE SHOT ON LOCATION AT MYHOTEL CHELSEA. VISIT WWW.MYHOTELS.COM OR CALL 020 7225 7500. ROOM RATES START AT £170 PER NIGHT FOR A STANDARD DOUBLE ROOM

Kimberly tries to maintain the feel-good factor and keep negativity at bay when she's with baby Willow



The laid-back star tells us: 'I'm on a mission to stay fit, creative and healthy and lead by example. That's the best thing you can do as a mum'

