

One in a million

A £100,000 job, five million viewers a day, and guaranteed fame – Welsh TV presenter Alex Jones seems to have landed on her feet with a dream-come-true job at The One Show. But it's the deserved result of years of hard work, says WM editor Claire Rees

ALEX Jones has just woken up a whole lot more rich and famous. Congratulations Alex – we're looking forward to watching your ascent to national treasure.

The Ammanford-born 32-year-old S4C presenter will take over from Christine Bleakley on the BBC's hugely-popular early evening magazine programme The One Show. From August 16, she'll be sharing the sofa with comedian Jason Manford from Monday to Thursday, entertaining the nation with her West Walian accent and sparkly personality on a show that draws average nightly figures of five million – and she's celebrated with a glamorous new haircut.

Perhaps it's to stop the obvious comparisons being made between her and Christine.

Yesterday she said even her own grandfather has confused her with the famous brunette – but insisted she is “completely different” from her predecessor.

“My grandfather congratulated me when Christine first started on The One Show,” she admitted.

“He went, ‘Oh brilliant Alex you've got the job on the BBC,’ but of course he was watching Christine! But at least now he will be able to watch me on it.”

Alex will be swapping a life in Grangetown, Cardiff, for the dizzy heights of London after Bleakley left the BBC to join her former co-host, Adrian Chiles, on new ITV breakfast show Daybreak.

And in what may appear to be a strange choice (it's reported Alex competed against names including Yorkshire presenter and Boddington's girl Melanie Sykes), the national press are already describing her as an unknown



Alex, far left, baring all after she was photographed without make-up for WM; centre, on S4C fashion programme for children, Salon; left, in style icon mode for a WM shoot

replica of her Northern Ireland-born predecessor.

There's certainly a similarity between the two women – the glossy brown locks, the wide smile and the distinctly non-English tones. And BBC executives are hoping Alex, who will be stepping into one-time stranger to prime-time Bleakley's shoes, will serve as just as winning a formula.

Sandy Smith, editor of the show, is singing her praises already: “Alex is warm, funny and very experienced despite being almost unknown outside Wales,” she said.

“It feels right for many reasons to be developing someone new at this time and I hope One Show viewers enjoy seeing her relationship with Jason develop on screen and take her to their hearts.”

But here in Wales, fluent Welsh speaker Alex is no unknown, the hard-working presenter has spent a decade on Welsh TV.

She's been quietly building up a reputation as a charming and professional personality who can turn her hand at anything from children's presenting to extreme sports, and we couldn't be happier for her.

Alex is no stranger to us at WM – in the past, our former Wales' Sexiest Woman winner has modelled for us, shared her fashion tips, and has always been enthusiastically on-hand for a last-minute interview. People who know her don't doubt she deserves the coup – and yesterday it

emerged she was head-hunted for the role after show bosses found an old internet show reel. Her stunning looks will no doubt have helped her to the position.

Alex agreed to go au naturel for a WM feature on stars without their make-up – save for a pair of dramatic false eyelashes – a trick that would probably make fellow glamour-puss Bleakley proud.

But aside from her beauty, there's plenty more to the Aberystwyth University graduate. She's approachable, and we've never found her in anything less than good spirits – which will come in handy for those difficult sofa interviews. When she misses a call, she contacts you back within minutes, and when WM telephoned her recently to run past her a rumour about a new man she was supposedly dating, she was courteous and good-humoured.

“I promise I'd tell you,” she laughed, thanking us for checking it out with her first. “We're good friends, he'd have a fit if he thought people were saying there was anything more in it!”

In fact, gorgeous Alex is fabulously single. Since splitting with fellow TV presenter Matt Johnson of The Wales Show at the beginning of the year (the pair have remained firm friends), the ambitious brunette has clearly been focussing on securing the job of her dreams.

Last year, famous T4 Romeo Steve Jones, whom Alex dated for two years, was telling us to just why the down-to-earth girl manages to stay on good terms after a break-up.

In an interview about ex-partners, he told us: “It sounds ruthless, but I'm not into the whole ‘let's be friends’ thing. “To me, ex is ex – ex means I'm not going to see that person again,” adding a significant ‘but’.

“There's only one ex I'm still friends with and that's Alex Jones. There's something about that girl – she's an exception to the rule.”

And former colleagues who know her best have been queuing up to congratulate her. Fellow presenter Amanda Protheroe-Thomas was genuinely excited when she said of the announcement: “It's awesome. It's fantastic. “When I woke up and heard the news I was thrilled for her.”

Sports presenter Amanda has worked with Alex on TV projects and charity engagements and said she thought she would do “a brilliant” job.

“Alex has always been so professional and lovely and she uses her status to help others,” she said, adding: “I think she does look remarkably like Christine Bleakley. But they also share qualities like that warmth and chattiness, and brilliant smile, which is obviously why she was chosen.”

Gwenda Griffith, executive producer at

Fflic, has worked with Alex since 2002 on children's TV including the recent young people's fashion programme, Salon, and said the role was “made for her”.

“Alex is a safe pair of hands,” she said. “She's a complete professional and she'll have a go at anything – she has the looks too – but most importantly she has a great sense of humour and she cares about everything she does.”

And yesterday, Katherine Jenkins was quick to send her congratulations via Twitter, saying: “Many congratulations to Alex Jones on getting The One Show job. She's a really lovely girl and deserves it!”

The high-profile appointment will mean she'll be a target for the kind of exposure received by outgoing Bleakley – photographs of the 31-year-old, who is dating Chelsea footballer Frank Lampard – appear in the tabloids almost daily.

But the down-to-earth Welsh girl has already dismissed any similarity.

She said: “She is a gorgeous girl and she did a great job while she was on The One Show so hopefully when I get on screen people will realise we are quite different,” adding patriotically of any suggestion she will net herself a footballer boyfriend: “I'm more of a rugby player girl than a football player girl. I prefer rugby.”

Good luck Alex, we know you'll do us proud.

Alex with her new shorter hair cut

Alex Jones' CV

- Born in Ammanford. The fluent Welsh speaker trained as a ballet dancer before studying theatre, film and TV at Aberystwyth University.
- Takes her finals in Magaluf, Spain, where she takes part in a Sky One show fronted by Davina McCall, Prickly Heat.
- Works as a TV researcher on graduating aged 21 – is sacked twice (she puts it down to being “dippy and forgetful”), before a production company asks her to go in front of the cameras.

- TV achievements include S4C travel show Tocyn and Welsh-language extreme sports series, Chwa.
- Hosts coverage of this year's Six Nations rugby championships with former Welsh player and commentator Jonathan Davies as new recruit to Jonathan's revamped show on S4C.
- Lands dream job on The One Show – beating rivals including Melanie Sykes, Sky News host Charlotte Hawkins and BBC science star Liz Bonnin.

and how everything is going to change ...

life –

Living and socialising in Cardiff means no hungry photographers, and Alex can enjoy herself at her favourite nightspots in peace. In contrast, predecessor Christine Bleakley is trailed on trips to the gym and is rarely out of the tabloids. On a positive side, like Katherine Jenkins for Neath, the Ammanford girl will be able to educate them over the other side of the bridge on the beauties of West Wales.

love –

The star has managed to keep a low profile and her relationships away from the public eye. She was able to deal with a split from long-term love, the Wales Show presenter Matt Johnson, in private. Bleakley is followed on holidays to Spanish towns and the interest in her relationship with Chelsea footballer Frank Lampard is huge. Alex could also receive unwanted attention about her previous relationship with T4 star Steve Jones.

looks –

Alex will be swapping her cosy house in Grangetown for a plush pad in London and has admitted she's nervous about starting a new life there. Popping out for a pint of milk on Clare Road is going to seem like a distant dream now she'll be on the paparazzi's hit list. Everything from what clothes she is wearing to a bad skin day will be analysed in women's magazines from now on.

fashion BULLSEYE



The glitz hangover from Christmas lingers on, with the celebs turning up for the premiere of new Angelina Jolie film Salt in an array of gun metal (Naomi Watts) and black sequins (Jolie herself). Cameron Diaz hung out with co-star Tom Cruise at Knight and Day in a long-sleeved knitted silver number too. This sequin and stud dress covers all those bases. It's £32.90 from Bon Prix. www.bonprix.co.uk



easy life

Our men never wear anything like this, but this Blue Bell boyfriend shirt is pretty cute nonetheless. And it's making us want to do absolutely nothing this weekend, but lounge around looking totally comfortable. It's £35 from WomenLikeUsClothing.com, who design clothes in sizes 10 to 22. www.womenlikeusclothing.com or 0845 230 1931.

crystal couture

Who said wedding shoes had to be a sensible kitten heel? New Marshfield-based company Crystal Couture specialise in bridal footwear with added wow, and super platforms. The woman behind the brand is a mum-of-three who devised the idea while pregnant with her youngest and now it's been snapped up by House of Fraser in Bristol, the Trafford Centre in Manchester and Debenhams in Swansea, who will be stocking them from October. Until then, you can order online at www.iwantcrystalcouture.com. Prices range from £50 to £250.



stand out

Going on holiday? There's a slim chance someone else will pick this up on the carousel. Match the glossy red Samsonite suitcase to your lippy. It's £145 from www.samsonite.co.uk

