

RELATIONSHIPS



DARBY WENTZ PHOTO

TRICK AND TREAT: First came oysters, bubbly and skinny-dipping at the Holiday Inn pool and then, eventually, Melleny Melody and Clive Smith tied the knot in a high-camp "Viva Las Vegas" ceremony.

Elvis was best man

AFTER a whirlwind first date that involved oysters, champagne and skinny-dipping, Melleny Melody moved her bags into Clive Smith's apartment — and that was just the beginning. Years later, when they felt the time had come to marry... well, it wasn't Halloween, but even their singing Elvis best man was in costume.

Melody is a singer and performance artist; Smith is co-founder of the Nelvana animation company. They won't say how old they are, but will admit to a nine-year age difference. They live in Toronto with their 15-year-old son, Zach Spydá Smith.

How We Met

KRISTIN RUSHOWY

CLIVE: The phone rings in my office.

MELLENY: The receptionist tells him there's a call from Santa Fé, from this woman Melleny Melody. He says, "I don't know Melleny Melody," but he takes the call. I've just seen *The Devil And Daniel Mouse* on television — it was one of Nelvana's shows — and I tell him, "You are a genius director. You are brilliant. I just saw your show and it's out of this world and I loved it and I want to do voices for cartoons and I want to meet you."

CLIVE: And I said, "Yeah, so what's your point?" Melleny was delightful, and so funny and so mysterious. I had no idea who she was or why she was calling, but she was so enthusiastic and bubbly — and, of course, I like to hear that somebody has seen the show a thousand miles away and thinks it fabulous.

MELLENY: So we started this phone relationship where I would call Clive because I was traveling around the United States. I'd call him from different places and he would always take my call and we'd have these great conversations. Finally, I came home to Toronto and when I found out my little sister was going to Nelvana for an audition, I said I'd take her because I wanted to meet Clive. I gave him a tape of some of my poetry and introduced myself.

CLIVE: I took her into the boardroom and played her tape, and I hated it.

MELLENY: I fainted on the floor because I was in despair and he just walked right over me, he ignored me. It was brutal.

CLIVE: I had to take a phone call or something, and had to step over her to reach the phone. It was a later phone call when she asked me, "Is there a part in such-and-such? Well, do you want to go for a drink?"

MELLENY: He was really aloof and didn't seem interested at all. So I thought, "Forget it," and ran off to England with this millionaire I knew because I thought I'd never hear from him again. While I was away, he called the house and spoke to my mother for an hour. He thought she was my roommate and he tried to pick up my mother on the phone.

CLIVE: I hadn't heard from Melleny for a long time and thought it was very strange. This female voice answered the phone — very English, very proper — so I didn't suspect that this could possibly be someone related to Melleny. We had the most hilarious conversation.

MELLENY: My mom calls me in England and said Clive had just called. I figured he was calling about an audition so I jumped on the next plane and came home.

I called him the minute I arrived and said, "I'm here, do you want to go for a drink?" He said, "Sure, I'll meet you at the Café des Copains on Wellington St." I, of course, was an hour late.

CLIVE: I was there on time and I had a couple of cocktails and waited. There were some people at the bar who were talking about this Cha Cha Queen and how she danced on the bar at Bemelman's. My ears perked — I had another cocktail so I could listen in on the conversation. It turned out they were talking about Melleny. Then the door opens and in she strides — just as I was about to leave.

MELLENY: He said, "You're an hour late." I said, "That's okay, because I'm not wearing any underwear." So we went across the road to the oyster bar and had oysters and champagne. Then we went roller-skating and then we hopped the fence at the Holiday Inn and went naked swimming in the outdoor pool.

CLIVE: By this time, it was about 1:30 in the morning and we're splashing around, thinking it's pretty safe because there's a fence up around it. I was swimming on my back, and I look up and I see the whole side of the building, on practically every balcony, people watching us. They started cheering and clapping.

MELLENY: We were soaking wet, and since I was visiting my parents, we went back to his place. His apartment looked exactly like my apartment in New York; he had a bathroom that was covered in comic books and there was stuff everywhere, stuff hanging from the walls, and I thought, "Wow, this guy is so cool, I really like him." We'd been having so much fun, so I moved my hockey bags in after that weekend. He didn't stand a chance.

CLIVE: That was 20 or 21 years ago, and we had our son about five years after that. But we are actually newlyweds. As our son was growing up, he would ask questions about our wedding pictures and our wedding and we'd answer the questions really briefly and change the subject.

As he got older, he would ask even more questions. So I think that was part of it — we wanted to do it for him — but it was time. We were committed to each other totally anyway, and we thought if we did it as a celebration, not as a formal ritualistic automatic thing to do, it would be a good thing.

MELLENY: We got married in Las Vegas. I wore a corset and a ballet tutu that I'd made — it was very, very short — and a garter belt and stockings with high platform shoes. Clive wore a red velvet suit and looked very handsome. Zach wore a little band uniform and played saxophone. Elvis was the best man.

CLIVE: From Toronto, we had booked into Graceland, a little chapel of love. When we got to Graceland, it wasn't the nicest place. And when we saw the photographs of the Elvis we would be offered...

MELLENY: Fat and ugly.

CLIVE: We figured we needed to do some shopping. We scooted around and found the Little White Chapel, where Joan Collins got married.

MELLENY: At least 10 times because there were several pictures of her.

CLIVE: Their Elvis was young and absolutely gorgeous. He sang and danced in the aisle — "Viva, Las Vegas" and "Love Me Tender." There was this little old lady who comes with the package, who sat at the back of the chapel playing the organ. Of course, Elvis comes with his boombox. It was brilliant.