

BACKFLIPPING her way onto the music scene 15 years ago, Sporty Spice was the embodiment of 'Girl Power', outspoken and ultra-confident, flaunting her washboard stomach in her trademark tracksuit bottoms and bellytop ensembles.

Life in a girlband is tough. After battling an eating disorder and depression, Mel C emerged as the most private of the Spice Girls, leaving racking up headlines to Posh and bagging famous boyfriends to Scary and Ginger.

These days the Liverpoolian is happiest at home playing with her baby Scarlet (1) swapping Spice Girl songs for nursery rhymes.

There is always going to be an element of competition in a girlband - bagging the most famous boyfriend, racking up the most headlines, shrinking to the smallest dress size.

While each of the Spice Girls, well women now, started adding to their brood, all eyes were on Melanie to see when she would join the club.

At their 2007 reunion tour, the Spice kids joined their mums onstage, with Melanie notably being the odd one out without a baby to show off.

Even though she had found The One, in the form of property developer Thomas Starr (38) who she had met five years previously, the 36-year-old still resisted the urge to become a mum.

"I've always wanted to be a mum, I've always had a really good relationship with my mum and looked forward to having children," says Melanie in a soft spoken Liverpoolian lilt.

"I never really put any pressure on myself, before I had Scarlet I was very selfish, it was very much about me and my career.

"It's funny because people in the media were always waiting for me to have a baby because I was a Spice Girl and all the other girls had one.

"But I never felt any pressure

Older, wiser and a lot happier, Mel C tells *SWM* about life after the Spice Girls and her new role as a mother



Niamh **BYRNE**

because I knew hopefully it would happen when the time was right for me."

While she is looking forward to sharing the memories of the Spice Girls days with her daughter, Melanie is not altogether keen on Scarlet following in her mummy's footsteps.

"I started singing to Scarlet when she was in my tummy, I may have sang Spice Girl songs a couple of times to her but she'd much rather hear Ba Ba Black Sheep and Peppa Pig," she says with a laugh.

"I am looking forward to showing Scarlet the Spice Girls memorabilia, and the videos, let her see what mummy used to do.

"I do still have some of my Spice

Girl outfits for her, but I've saved much nicer things like some designer clothes that I think she'll appreciate much more."

Suffering an eating disorder and depression after being labelled 'Sumo Spice', Melanie is understandably wary of Scarlet entering a career in the music industry.

Fame is going to be something that baby Scarlet decides for herself as Melanie and her partner are determined not to trust her into the limelight like other celeb kids.

"My partner and I have decided that we want to protect Scarlet's privacy as much as we can," says Melanie.

"It would be wonderful if she could have a 'proper' job, but if she decides to go into the music industry I'm not going to try and dissuade her from it.

'The first time Emma visited, I'd had a bad day. I was tired, Scarlet was crying. I opened the door and burst into tears'



'I want to see some attitude'

Recent years have seen the domination of girlbands on the charts once more with The Sugababes, Girls Aloud and more recently The Saturdays, but what does veteran star Sporty Spice think of the new wave of popstrels?

"Oh I don't even know who's out there, I suppose The Saturdays, they're a girl band aren't they," laughs Mel.

"There doesn't seem to be a lot of individuality which is something I miss.

All the girls are beautiful but I think I'd like to see someone with a bit more attitude and individuality.

"I don't want anyone to try and be the Spice Girls but maybe have a bit more of an attitude."

BIG HITS: Girls Aloud, Sugababes and The Saturdays' Una Healy



"I'm just happy for her to do whatever makes her happy, but I know myself it can be ruthless."

Melanie has spoken out before about the in-fighting that was rife at the height of the Spice Girl days.

There is no doubt that the girls who shared a meteoric rise to fame and world wide chart domination share a special bond.

Older and wiser, her former

bandmates were all on hand with support for Melanie as a new mother.

"The first time Emma visited, I'd had a bad day, I was tired, Scarlet was crying and everything felt terrible," Melanie says.

"I opened the door and burst into tears and Emma and her partner Jade took Scarlet out and gave me the little break I needed to catch up on sleep.