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HOT STORY

The couple showed signs of strain at AmFAR's Cinema Against AIDS benefit in Cannes on May 22.

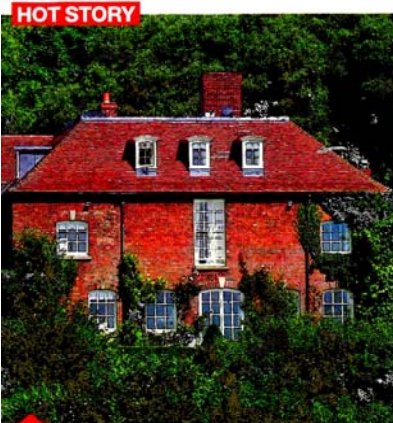
MADONNA & A-ROD Sexy New Friends

As divorce rumors swirl, the singer has been spending time with N.Y. Yankee Alex Rodriguez

On June 25, Rocco Ritchie happily romped in the grass at New York City's Central Park, dressed in a New York Yankees hat and shirt. The adorable 7-year-old enjoyed a fun day with his big sister, Lourdes, and little brother, David, looking like he didn't have a care in the world. The next day, newspapers reported that Rocco's parents, Madonna and Guy Ritchie, were on the road to divorce. According to the *London Times*, Madonna has consulted famed English divorce attorney Fiona Shackleton, who represented Paul McCartney in his divorce from Heather Mills and Prince Charles in his divorce from Princess Diana. And as the breakup talk continues, there have also been whispers that the Material Mom, 49, has been spending time with married New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez. In fact, OK! has learned the pop superstar and baseball great have been hanging out for months, as her relationship with her 39-year-old director hubby fizzled. Last October, Madonna and Alex were spotted working out together at Reebok Sports Club-NY in Manhattan, according to an online source. Two months later, Alex raised eyebrows by bringing in Madonna's close friend, entertainment



A-Rod, who is married to Cynthia (inset), attended Madonna's Raising Malawi benefit in NYC on Feb. 6.



HOT STORY

What's at Stake for Madonna?

The Ritchies are rumored to share as many as six townhouses in some of London's smartest neighborhoods, as well as a 1,200-acre spread in the English countryside and properties in New York City and Beverly Hills. Though the singer has an estimated net worth of \$325 million, filmmaker Guy should be prepared to dig deep: Financially, he would have to pay child support but not alimony. "Because Madonna has a higher income, his payments may be more limited since she doesn't need as much and it's based on the assets of the parties," divorce attorney Joshua Forman, Esq. of

New York's Chemtob Moss Forman & Talbert, LLP, tells OK!. While the couple reportedly doesn't have a prenup, that doesn't mean Guy will take Madge to the cleaners. "Prenups are not normally valid in England, because the courts don't have to abide by them — so how the assets would be divided is complicated and different in every jurisdiction," Forman says. "In California, it's community property, 50/50. In London, it's based on what a judge thinks is fair. They'll probably have a negotiated settlement that never goes to court so their dirty laundry isn't aired to the public."



The singer had front-row seats behind third base at a Yankees game on June 22. A-Rod is the team's third baseman.

manager Guy Oseary — who, incidentally, has no sports background — to help steer his career.

The entertainer and the sports hero reunited at the United Nations in February at a benefit for Madonna's charity, Raising Malawi. Madonna introduced A-Rod to her daughter, Lourdes, 11, and he invited her to a game, but she wasn't enthusiastic. According to the *New York Daily News*, he told her, "Well, bring your dad. He might get into it." Lourdes may not be the biggest sports fan, but Alex is clearly a fan of Madonna. In May, he attended her show at NYC's Roseland Ballroom, then partied with the performer and her pals at The Box nightclub until early morning.

The Rocky Ritchies

OK! asked Richard Rubenstein, who reps Alex and his wife, Cynthia Rodriguez, about the nature of Alex's marriage and his relationship with Madonna. Rubenstein's response: "No comment on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Rodriguez." Meanwhile, Madonna's rep Liz Rosenberg tells OK!, "They met briefly at a charity event and that's it," adding that Madonna's only other connection to Alex is having Oseary as their manager. As for whether Madonna and Guy are divorcing, Rosenberg says, "No comment at this time: it's all I'm prepared to say now."

Still, all signs indicate that there's trouble in paradise. In April, Madonna bought a new \$7-million apartment — directly upstairs from her current Upper West Side home — in her maiden name, Madonna Ciccone. Adding fuel to the fire, Madonna and Guy have rarely been seen together in recent months. Although Guy accompanied Madonna to Cannes in May, there were hints of trouble. At AmFAR's Cinema Against AIDS benefit on May 22,

an OK! eyewitness says, "Guy's smiles seemed to be few and strained. Madonna, on the other hand, looked to be enjoying the night thoroughly." That wasn't the case on June 3, when both parties seemed unhappy during a dinner at London's Locanda Locatelli restaurant.

So Much in Common

While Guy and Madonna seem to have grown distant, insiders say she has a lot in common with Alex, especially an obsession with fitness. He is lacrosse for his rigorous baseball exercise routine, and she works out religiously to get her sculpted abs and arms. Tellingly, the third baseman and his wife, Cynthia, who have two children, met in 1996 at a gym in Miami, where he was impressed by the physically fit beauty. "She would come in right after work and get on the treadmill and do her abs. And finally, I built enough courage after about three and a half weeks, and I said, 'I know you are going to go do some abs after. And do you mind if I join you?'" Alex said. They married in 2002.

If Madonna does split with Guy, it would mark a sad end for the couple who once seemed head over heels in love. In August 2000, she gave birth to their son, Rocco, and the pair married four months later. Guy also helped raise Lourdes, Madonna's daughter from her previous relationship with personal trainer Carlos Leon. The Ritchie family became complete in October 2006, when Madonna filed adoption papers for son David, 2, an orphan from Malawi. Regardless of their different backgrounds, all of the kids are now Yankees fans. On June 22, they joined mom for a game at Yankee Stadium. Where were they seated? In front-row seats, right behind third base.

— Carolee Gilnes & Ryan Smith

What About the Children?

With the rumored divorce looming comes the sticky question over custody. Lourdes, 11, is Madonna's child from her relationship with Carlos Leon, Rocco, 7, is the Ritchies' biological son, and David, 2, was adopted by the couple from Malawi. "Unless Madonna agrees to let Guy visit with Lourdes, he will likely be treated as a legal stranger to the child," family law attorney



Madonna and her kids visited NYC's Kabbalah Centre the weekend of June 28. Rocco wore a Yankees cap on one trip.



David G. Sant, of Atlanta's Kessler, Schwarz & Solomansky, tells OK!, "He would have no more rights than a passerby on the street." In David's case, "he will be treated the same as a child they had naturally." Sant explains, "Once a child is adopted, that child is treated exactly the same as a biological child of the parties." While custody can't be decided before a marriage is dissolved, New York divorce attorney Joshua Forman, tells OK!, "Since Rocco is their natural-born child, they would have equal rights to custody."

