

SOCIAL MEDIA

TikTok gave Addison Rae's family Hollywood fame. Now it's exposing their secrets.

Rae's parents have become fixtures in the Los Angeles influencer scene, but a series of TikTok videos has also put them at the center of a social media firestorm.



— From left, Monty Lopez, Sheri Easterling, Addison Rae and Enzo Lopez attend a special screening of “He’s All That” at NeueHouse Los Angeles on Aug. 25, 2021 in Hollywood, Calif.

Vivien Killilea / Getty Images file



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By Kat Tenbarge

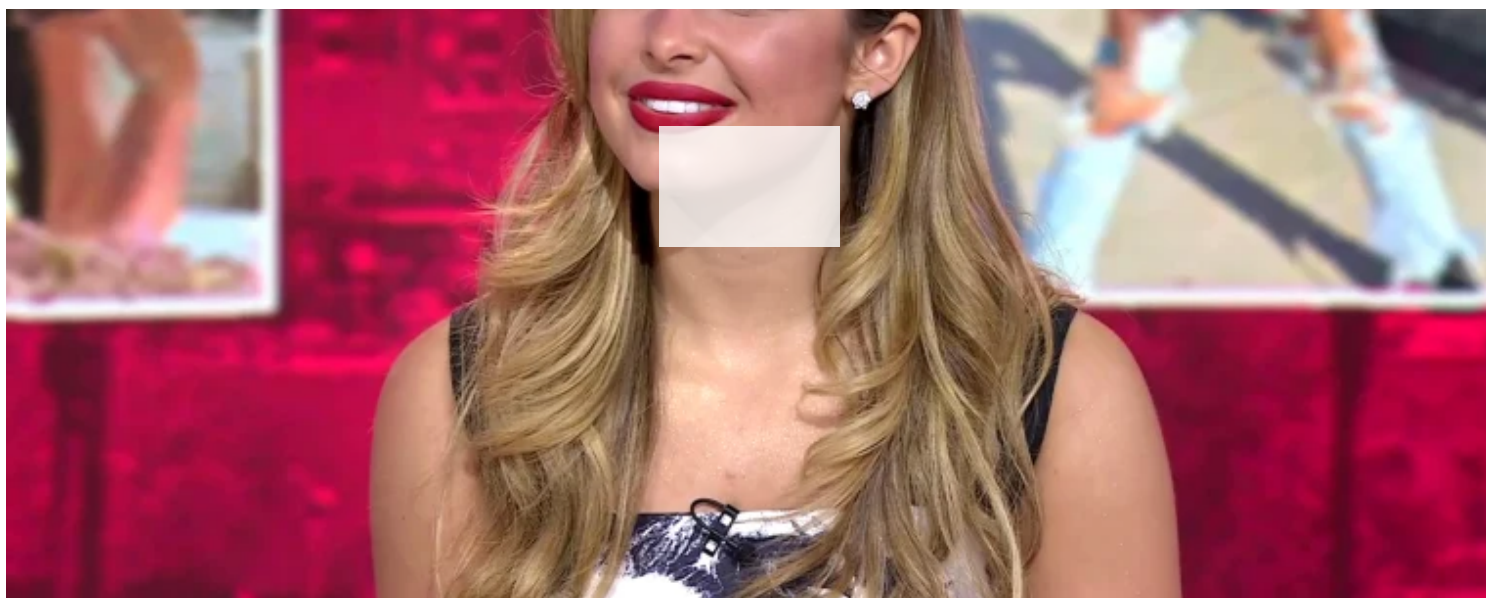
One of TikTok's biggest families is now being undone by the very platform that made them famous.

Videos posted to TikTok in recent weeks have sparked a media firestorm surrounding the family of Addison Rae Easterling, 21, who has become one of the internet's most recognizable stars and counts more than 88 million followers on the platform. The videos appear to show Monty Lopez, 46, Rae's father, flirting with young women over FaceTime and touching one woman's backside at a bar. Lopez has not addressed the videos and did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Since then, the family's every move on social media has sparked fresh cycles of speculation and led to further allegations about Lopez, including claims of infidelity. Rae and her mom, Sheri Easterling, 42, unfollowed Lopez on Instagram. Easterling changed her Instagram bio to "single mom" and released a statement that said in part: "I will be okay. My biggest concern is -and always will be- my children and their fragile hearts and minds."

Rae's family is among a new generation of influencers and stage parents who capitalize on the viral success of their children. And while many of them follow the well-worn tropes of reality TV, the drama isn't always entirely within their control. It can take a life of its own on TikTok.

TikTok star Addison Rae talks rapid rise to stardom



Lopez has looked to build on his daughter's fame, launching his own agency to represent TikTok stars and [comparing himself to Kris Jenner](#), the matriarch of the Kardashian family who negotiated many of her children's business and media deals and trademarked the word "momager." But three people close to Lopez who spoke with NBC News said Lopez was not responsible for Rae's deals and opportunities and sought to take advantage of her success.

"He just kind of went off the rails and fame got to him," one person in Lopez's professional network said.

Celebrity families have become a mainstay of Hollywood and reality TV, with the most famous example being "Keeping Up With the Kardashians," the long-running former E! series and expansive media and business empire.

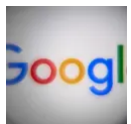
Social media has since brought the dynamics of reality TV and viral fame together to produce even more salient cultural icons and nonstop entertainment revolving around their lives – or at least what was portrayed from their lives online.

When Rae's TikTok account catapulted her to celebrity in late 2019, she and her family moved to Los Angeles. Rae, who dropped out of her freshman year at Louisiana State University to pursue fame, starred alongside her family on their YouTube channel and in TikToks. Her family joined her in "Addison Rae Goes Home," a 10-episode, Snapchat-produced reality series. Social media content with this kind of reach can net millions of dollars in sponsorships and ad revenue, and Rae is estimated to have earned [over \\$8.5 million](#) from TikTok alone in 2021.

While Rae's star rose on TikTok and she expanded into music, movies and modeling, the rest of her family grew their profiles, too. Rae's mother has a Spotify-produced podcast with her daughter, and both parents were signed to WME's digital talent agency alongside Rae in 2020.

Rae and Easterling did not respond to requests for comment.

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On social media, Lopez has played the part of a faithful husband to Easterling, posting couple dances together on TikTok and complimenting her in posts. Until the alleged cheating scandal

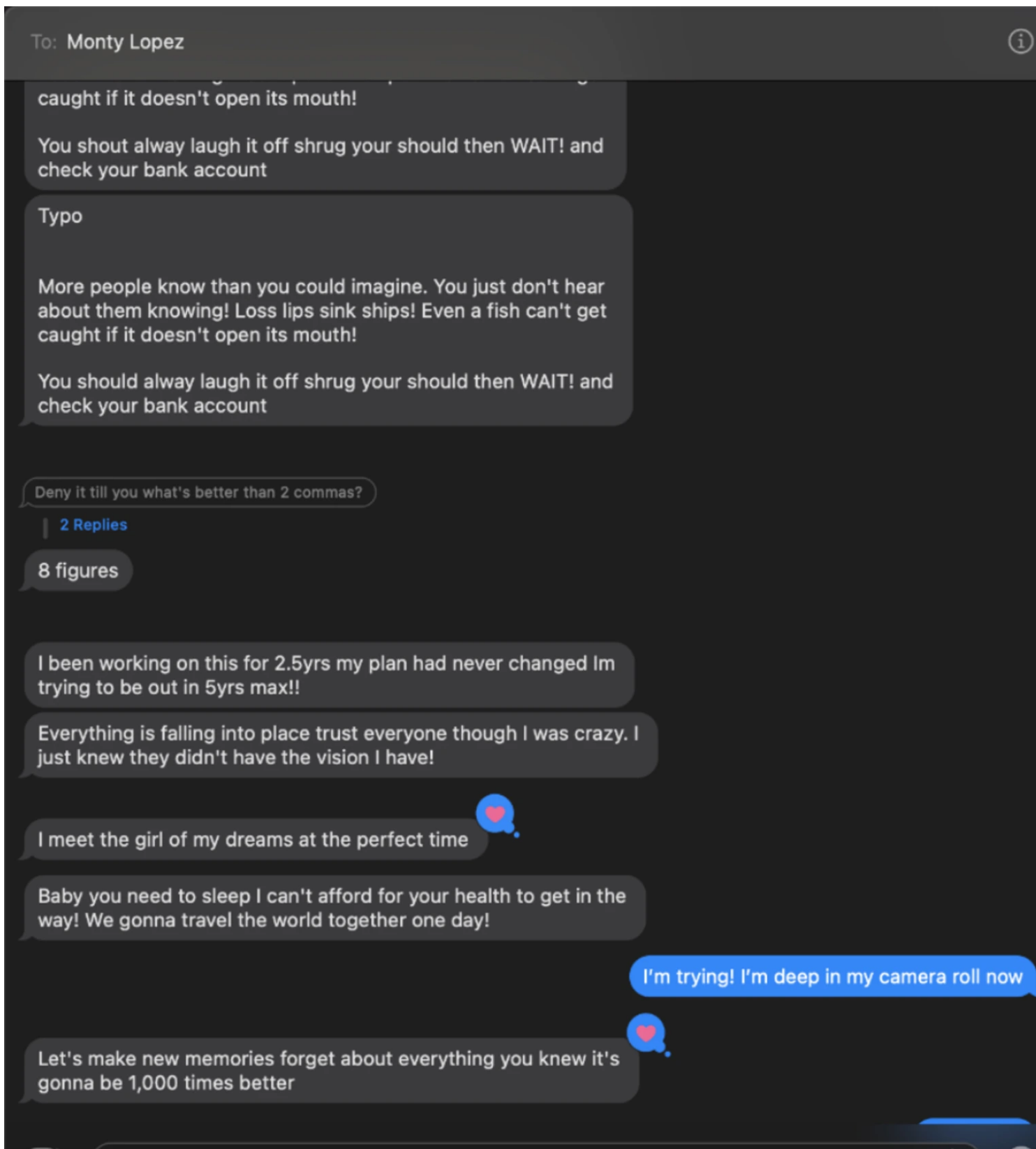
unfolded, Lopez and Easterling tagged each other and wrote “husband” and “wife” in their bios (both removed those tags and terms from their bios in early July).

Rae previously said her parents were divorced and dated on and off when she was young. They remarried in 2017, but the updates to their social media profiles have since been seized on by tabloids and celebrity media websites that they separated again. Three people who know Lopez and spoke to NBC News said they also believed the couple had separated based on what he told them. That speculation added to the early July media circus that had begun to surround the family and stood in stark contrast to the family image that was portrayed on TikTok in front of millions of fans.

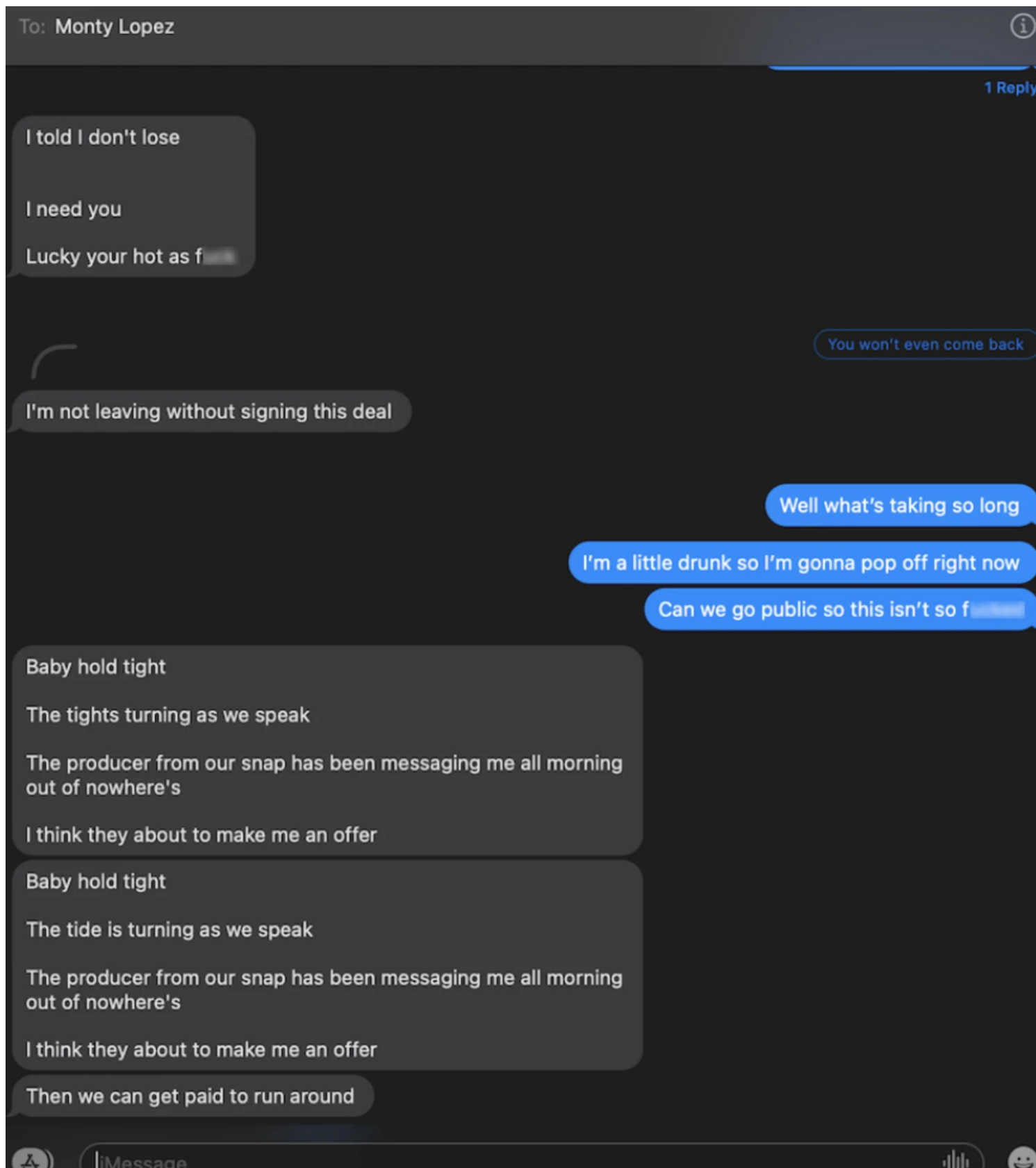
Young women have posted on social media about Lopez’s advances toward them, including Renée Ash, who told NBC News he misled her about his intentions to be her long-term partner and involve her in his professional business. NBC News has not corroborated those accounts.

Ash, 25, said she broke up with Lopez in July after dating for five months. She spoke to NBC News and shared over 150 screenshots of texts exchanged between her and Lopez during their relationship. The texts appear to show Lopez wooed Ash with promises of long-term commitment, as well as money and fame tied to Rae’s success.

“He would be telling me how we’re going to have a family, the second his divorce is finalized we’re going to be at the altar,” Ash said. “We’re going to have babies, and if they’re boys, it’s his name, and if they’re girls, it’s my name.”



— Renée Ash provided NBC News with screenshots of text messages she said were exchanged between her and Monty Lopez. Renée Ash



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On July 5, Ash revealed her five-month relationship with Lopez through posts on her Instagram story. Ash shared photos on Instagram of her and Lopez as a couple at red carpet events, on a trip to France and at the influencer convention VidCon, where hundreds of influencers, reporters and industry insiders mingled. The texts showed Lopez asked Ash not to post about their relationship online.

In texts, Lopez told Ash that he was talking with a producer on Rae's Snapchat show and that he hoped he and Ash could appear in the show as a couple. A person close to Lopez said he talked about his plans to "write her into the story." Texts show Lopez told Ash "The producer from our snap has been messaging all morning" and "Then we can get paid to run around."

Since Ash went public, millions of people have watched TikToks featuring photos of Ash with Lopez, their texts, and videos that purported to show Lopez pursuing young women. Gossip pages and even other influencers created content about the scandal. A representative for WME said it no longer represents Lopez, but did not clarify when the relationship with Lopez ended.

Both of the original videos were removed from TikTok but have been reuploaded by other users and watched millions of times. The same platform that propped up the Rae family seamlessly shifted gears to humiliate them.

In a podcast, YouTubers Jeff Wittek and Tana Mongeau talked about seeing Lopez at Hollywood parties without his daughter, hamming it up for the cameras.

"I would hate if my parents were out here trying to show up in all these paparazzi vids and get clout," Wittek said.

Bryce Hall, a TikTok star who dated Rae at the beginning of her career, reacted to the TikToks about Lopez on his podcast with influencer Josh Richards. Hall performed a comedy bit where he imitated Lopez introducing himself to women as "Addison Rae's dad."

"I'm sure Addison and Addison's mom are going through it," Richards said. "It would just suck; I can't even imagine having your dad all over the internet for that."

Kat Tenbarge



Kat Tenbarge is a tech and culture reporter for NBC News Digital.

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