

TV MAGAZINE

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It's back! Simon, Amanda, Alesha and David celebrate 10 years of brilliant and bonkers TV as Britain's Got Talent returns

INSIDE: JAMIE OLIVER'S RECIPES + GARDENING WITH PETER SEABROOK + FREE KIDS' MAGAZINE THE FUN

Britain's Got Talent Saturday 7pm ITV

EXCLUSIVE PHOTO SHOOT AND INTERVIEW

TEN YEARS OF TALENT

Britain's Got Talent boss and judge Simon Cowell is hoping the 10th series delivers a worthy winner for the Royal Family

Did you ever imagine that you would find enough talent for 10 series of Britain's Got Talent, Simon?
I never really thought about that when we first started – we thought: 'If we can scrape through year one, that's a success.' Britain's Got Talent attracts a lot of acts from all countries, they think it's the best talent show in the world. But there was one particular day during this year's auditions where I went home quite depressed because I genuinely thought: 'Have we run out of talent now?' Thank God it picked up.

How have you enjoyed working with David Walliams again?
It's like having an 11-year-old schoolkid who's been blown up with hot air to create this monster. I've never met anyone like him. He's so odd. But he is a good friend as well. You really are on your guard when you're working with him because he's so unpredictable. We've got on better this year, but it made me feel sick when he dressed up as me at the Birmingham auditions. It looked a bit like me – but a huge blow-up version. I had to say to him: "Get out of that wig because this is really uncomfortable."



Simon with his two-year-old son Eric: "He's such a funny little boy"

And how have Amanda Holden and Alesha Dixon been this year?
Amanda tries, in her words, to be "down with the kids" by dropping her aitches. I said to her: "Darling, you used to go to drama school. You will never be cool, Amanda." Then the other day she went: "Oh yeah, this record's really sick." I said to her: "Why are you talking like that? You're 45 years old, Amanda!" So she's stopped doing it now.

How do you think you've changed over these 10 years?
There are times when I worry about whether the show's going to be good or not, so I do lose my patience and can be a bit over-the-top mean with certain people. What this show has given all of us is a sense of humour because it is very funny. Always at the back of your mind watching some of the weirder acts, you're thinking: 'God, I'm going to have to put this in front of the Royal Family [at the Royal Variety Performance]!' That's daunting.

Have you ever had any feedback from the Royal Family after a Britain's Got Talent-winning act has performed at the Royal Variety?
Well, if they didn't like it I don't think we'd be here! I think they get it. The phone votes raise a lot of money for charity, and one of the reasons people from all over the world buy into this show is because of the chance to perform for the Royal Family.

What have been the most dangerous acts you've seen audition this year?
I'm not going to describe it to you but you've got to see it [laughs]. You will not be able to swallow for about an hour... It's unbelievable. But I'll say no more.



"I'M VERY HAPPY FOR ALL OF THE VOICE UK JUDGES TO STAY ON THAT SHOW"

When TV Magazine came along to watch the auditions, there were a couple of good magic acts...
A small part of me is starting to believe that people do have magic powers. Amanda's feeling is that we all had magical powers at one time, but through evolution we've lost them. So I'm with her on that.

Your son Eric is now two years old. How are you enjoying fatherhood?
Eric is incredible. He doesn't shut up. He talks and talks and talks but he is such a funny little boy. Very sweet.

Will you be following Elton John and David Furnish's lead and taking your son to high-street restaurants like Pizza Hut to help keep him grounded?
He's a bit young at the moment, but definitely when he grows up. I totally understand what Elton's doing. You have to make kids understand that they have to earn money – and what it means to earn it. I used to love it when I'd go out and wash cars and do the gardening as a kid, anything to make money. Because I'd earned it, I really enjoyed it. My mum and dad taught me that. If they were going on holiday with me, they'd say: "We'll pay for the holiday but you earn your spending money." So I did it. I went out and worked in warehouses and petrol stations. It was great fun.

Amanda announced at one of the auditions that she would like to have Abba's song Dancing Queen played at her funeral. What would you like played at yours?
The Monty Python song Always Look On The Bright Side of Life. Something to cheer everyone up. I've got a few suggestions for David's funeral. I may even do a playlist over the weekend – Songs I've Chosen For David's Funeral.

We've sadly lost a lot of big names from the music industry this year. What did the likes of David Bowie or Lemmy [from Motörhead] mean to you?
I met Lemmy a few times. He was good fun – sometimes a bit grumpy because he was hungover – but a really great guy. He was always very friendly and I liked him a lot. I never met David Bowie but as a teenager I bought all of his records. I can remember hearing those for the first time. He was a total star.

Do any of the auditionees' stories on Britain's Got Talent still move you?
Sometimes people rehearse their sob stories as much as

THE BIG INTERVIEW



Ant and Dec (l-r) are back to present the show – and giggle from the sidelines

they rehearse their song, which is a bit tedious. Other times you have to get it out of them. I like to get to know someone in the very short space of time I've got with them.

Would you like to poach any of The Voice UK coaches for The X Factor or Britain's Got Talent?

I think those days [of poaching judges from other shows] are probably over. I'm very happy for all of them to stay on that show. I've done my poaching and upset a lot of people. I'll just concentrate on my shows.

You've been in the business a long time, but do you still feel under pressure to get great ratings for your TV shows?

I was reading some of [The X Factor's] 'obituaries' last year. But then you compare our numbers to The Voice UK and you go: 'We should all be thankful.' To get millions of viewers every week is something to celebrate, not knock. Some of the criticism levelled at us last year was valid. I think we made a few mistakes. But you do that as producers. You try different things and go: 'Okay, we are listening and we'll do what you want us to do.'

How are you feeling about judging America's Got Talent later this year?

I've produced the show for 11 years, but this is the first time I'm going to be on it, so I hope it will be fun. Funnily enough, I did turn down two other shows in the last 12 months because I thought maybe I'll just have a break, but when this came up, and because it's my show, I thought: 'I want to do this now.'

Would any particular act be a worthy 10th anniversary BGT winner?
Whoever really turns it on during the live shows. But this is going to be a defining moment, the 10th winner. As long as it's not a dog act that has got a twin, I'll be happy. ♦ Preview p21

JUDGEMENT DAY

We've interviewed ALL the judges!



NEXT WEEK Alesha Dixon



SAT 23 APRIL David Walliams



SAT 30 APRIL Amanda Holden

Words: Paul Simpson. Photography: Roy Burdett. Hair and make-up: Alesha's: Francesca Nelli and Michelle Sultan.