

# TV MAGAZINE

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## LOUD AND CLEAR

SIR TOM JONES AND JESSIE J ON WHY THEY ARE BACK TO DO BATTLE ON THE VOICE UK

EASTER TV TREATS  
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# ME AND Mr Jones

As *The Voice UK* returns, Sir Tom Jones and Jessie J reveal the secrets behind their sparking chemistry

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Maybe you were wondering why one of the UK's hottest music stars postponed a sell-out arena tour to appear on a TV talent show – one that saw ratings plummet during its first series?

Well, the answer is sitting snugly beside her in a bathrobe between photos on our exclusive shoot. Jessie J gazes in awe at her fellow *Voice UK* coach Sir Tom Jones. "I knew he was still going to be sitting next to me," she says.

"And I said to Jessie: 'I'll do it if you will,'" Sir Tom smiles back at her.

Our shoot takes place two days before Comic Relief, with Jessie gearing up to have her hair shaved off for charity, and as the pair engage in some gentle joshing about the big night ("I'm looking forward to that," says Tom, "so long as it's you doing it, not me!"), their closeness is evident. Both are easy and attentive in one another's company. Endearingly, Jessie leaps to Sir Tom's defence over the last series.

"I got frustrated last year with people taking the mickey out of Tom's name-dropping – making him feel like it was a bad thing to be proud of what he's done," says Jessie, 24. "You can't underestimate his experience. I've always said that if I auditioned, I would choose Tom as my coach."

"I just think, this year, we're more comfortable with ourselves," she reflects on why she and Tom returned. "And the talent is more confident too."

During his 50 years in the music business, Pontypridd legend Sir Tom has sung with them all – from Elvis Presley to Aretha Franklin.

"I've never seen anyone work so hard," says Jessie. "He's a gentleman. The one thing I'm hoping for is longevity, and I'm learning from the master, sitting in his robe, looking swagolicious."

They might seem an unlikely combination, but when it comes to God-given vocal talent, Sir Tom and Jessie are cut from the same cloth. Both started singing from an early age.

"How old were you?" asks Jessie, with the wide-eyed attentiveness of a child listening to stories from their favourite uncle.

"About five," replies Sir Tom, who at 72 is 48 years Jessie's senior.

"I was three," says Jessie. "I sang *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* in a competition, with my

### WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

...FOR 2015'S VOICE UK FINALISTS?



**LEANNE MITCHELL** Winner's first single flopped at No. 45 in UK charts. Debut album out in May.



**TYLER JAMES** His debut hit reached No. 25 in Britain. Has a second single out now.



**BO BRUCE** Has worked with Snow Patrol's Johnny McDaid on her album, out next month.



**VINCE KIDD** Signed a deal with Island Records and is working on his debut album.

WHEN IT COMES TO UK NO.1 SINGLES, SIR TOM CURRENTLY EDGES IT WITH THREE TO JESSIE'S TWO



"TOM'S A GENTLEMAN... I'M LEARNING FROM THE MASTER"



Close shave: Jessie's new look

### COVER STORY

sister on the recorder. We got beaten by a six year old who sang *Lady In Red*. I was gutted."

Success hasn't come easily for either Sir Tom or Jessie. Both battled serious illnesses during their childhood. Aged 12, Sir Tom was struck down with tuberculosis, while Jessie had a heart condition at 11 that resulted in a stroke when she was just 18.

"I realised that just because you're good at something, it doesn't make you immune," says Jessie. "You have to put your health first. I've had to cancel shows, and you know there's a kid who spent all their cash on a ticket and thinks that you cancelling the show is aimed at them. But it's not."

"Singers are fragile," says Sir Tom. "I 150 per cent sympathise with him, it is to be followed by cameras, and having people shouting abuse at you and winding you up from the moment you step out of your house."

They've both witnessed first-hand casualties like Elvis Presley and Amy Winehouse. Sir Tom spent a lot of time hanging out with The King until his death in 1977, and both Amy and Jessie were graduates from the BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology.

"Elvis used to ask me how I dealt with fame," says Sir Tom. "I said to him that I had fun with it. Elvis would say: 'I can't do that. I'd say: "You could if you wanted to, but not with a white suit on and dark glasses and six fellas walking in front of you saying: "Elvis is coming."'"

"The way the world works now is to kick people when they're down, when in actual fact they need a hand to hold," says Jessie. "The most important thing is that the people who are with you and represent you behind the scenes are really there for you. If they're in it for the wrong reasons, that's dangerous."

### PRIVATE LIVES

It's perhaps for that reason that for all the much-documented infidelities over the years, Sir Tom is still married to his one true love, Linda. And if stories are to be believed, Jessie has been seeing a dancer, Genesis, who she has known since she appeared in her very

first video, *Do It Like A Dude*, in 2010.

So how does a marriage survive 50 years in showbusiness?

"Well, first of all you've got to be in love," says Sir Tom. "And for me, it's someone I knew before all this happened. We were kids together. She didn't marry 'Sir Tom Jones' [he was born Thomas John Woodward]."

"It's important to understand there are things for me that are personal and private," says Jessie. "It can drive you insane if you don't have something that people don't know about."

Is that why the superstar singer is so protective of her relationships?

"I'm Jessie J," she says. "My mum isn't, my dad isn't. Anyone I'm in a relationship with isn't. They don't want to be famous. The light is on me. That is why I keep it private."

"Knowing all of this is what we bring to *The Voice UK*," says Sir Tom.

He looks at Jessie. "You've said this to the contestants more than any of us coaches, haven't you? Are you ready for this?"

It's an important question, as Jessie knows more than most just how bright a spotlight can shine on you once you've become a big name in the music business.

"I never used to have any issues with the way I look because I was brought up to just be proud of who I am. Then everyone else started having an opinion," she explains.

"My insecurities come from other people. That's why I don't read anything about me."

She puts on a catty voice.

"She's got a huge jaw! 'She's so skinny! I Instagrammed a picture the other day saying: 'I don't care what you think of me because I don't think of you at all.' That's how I feel. Now I'm happy with myself again. You've got to just let your inhibitions go and dream and fly."

For Sir Tom, the only time he's really insecure in himself is when he loses the one thing that he cherishes most.

"My voice gave me strength a long time ago," says Sir Tom. "Without that voice I wouldn't be the same person. I knew I could sing and that spills over into your personality. I feel vulnerable if I have laryngitis or something. If I can sing, I'm OK."

**WATCH IT!** *The Voice UK* Saturday 7pm BBC1

### GOING THROUGH CHANGES WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE VOICE UK?

Ratings slumped towards the end of the first series, so to improve the show, the blind auditions have been extended.

"British people hadn't seen that before with the spinning chairs," says Sir Tom.

"What people said to me was they could shut their eyes and join in at home," says Jessie. "My friends are really happy there are more blind auditions this year."

A new Steal round has been added, which will give coaches the chance to nab a contestant that a rival coach is about to discard.

"It's more of a Save rather than a Steal," says Jessie. "It's exciting as we're interacting with

the other judges. I'm not being a bighead but, during filming, they all stole from my team!"

Jessie and Tom don't want this year's winner to experience the same expectations that Leanne Mitchell endured – for immediate success.

"It's just the first step," says Tom. "You win a recording contract, but not a hit record."

"The show's a platform, not the route to overnight success," agrees Jessie. "There are other shows that have that aim but I think this show understands that art can't be rushed. Just because people liked you on TV doesn't mean they're going to like anything else you do. You have to test it."



Coach trip: (l-r) Sir Tom, Jessie, Will.i.am and Danny