



UP and at 'em

He's the PARTY-MAD cool kid who's become a CELEBRITY MAGNET and tomorrow, NICK GRIMSHAW takes over RADIO 1's Breakfast Show. Excited? Terrified more like...

BY **ANTONIA HOYLE**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARK HAYMAN**

Some cover stars relish the prospect of playing up to the camera. Nick Grimshaw isn't one of them.

"I'm dreading it," he says before his *Fabulous* shoot. "I hate seeing pictures of myself. Nobody likes photo shoots unless they're insane."

The truth is though, that Nick – or Grimmy as he is better known – had better get used to life in the spotlight. He's just landed the biggest gig of his life and, from tomorrow, at the eye-wateringly early time of 6.30am, 7 million odd listeners will tune in to hear him succeed Chris Moyles as the new host of Radio 1's Breakfast Show.

To put it frankly, he's bricking it.

"It's a massive job and I guess there is a responsibility," he says. "I go through waves of being incredibly nervous, of over-thinking things and wondering *how* I'm going to do it. I'm not scared by the amount of listeners. It's more the fact that my mum or someone I know will be listening that scares me."

Finding FAME

Over lunch (steak, salad and black coffee – he's on a health kick) at east London private members' club Shoreditch House after the shoot, Nick admits he's not fully comfortable becoming a household name.

"It does freak me out. I don't think I'd like it if I was famous for being on a reality show, or a Kardashian. But if people recognise me because I'm good at my job, then that's nice."

He might not have reached Kardashian levels of fame just yet, but it's fair to say that until now, Nick, 28, has been →



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STYLES'*

Nick wears: suit, shirt, both River Island; tie, Peckham Rye; bracelets, Nick's own; shoes, T.J. Maxx

better known for his showbiz lifestyle than his broadcasting talents. His circle of friends reads like a *Who's Who* of the coolest stars in town. BFFs include Kate Moss, Sadie Frost, Agyness Deyn, Lily Allen and Pixie Geldof. And recently One Direction heart-throb Harry Styles appears to have become surgically attached to his side.

He attracts celebrity mates so easily that Channel 4 sketch show *Very Important People* labelled him "presenter-slash-dj-slash-celebrity-hanger-on".

He shrugs off the criticism: "They take the p**s out of everyone. I don't exclusively hang out with pop stars. I've got loads of friends who do all sorts of things.

"I have a friend who's a policewoman, one who's a window cleaner and another works in a bank. But it's only commented on if I'm with a pop star. They're not going to write a story about me and my accountant friend are they? And I don't think anyone would give me a job just because I know Harry Styles."

Nevertheless, his friendship with the 18-year-old Romeo, has raised eyebrows. At 10 years his junior, Hazza is not an obvious companion. So what's the deal with these two?

Private LIFE

Nick's not keen to explain. "We met at the Teen Awards last year and we're doing it again this year. We've got the same sense of humour..." he says before tailing off. "He's smart and we're both northern, I dunno..."

How often do they see each other?

"He's really busy. Whenever, really. I see him at work."

So what do they do together in their downtime?

"There is no downtime."

His disarming smile gets bigger and the subject of Harry seems closed. Grimmy's a charmer and adept at dodging questions he doesn't want to answer, which must be a useful skill to have when you're a presenter-slash-DJ-slash-celebrity-hanger-on and (surely) the keeper of many a showbiz secret. Nick claims he can't pinpoint what it is that makes him a celeb magnet, but within minutes of meeting him the answer's clear.

He's naturally witty and genuinely engaging, with not only the gift of the gab but also a first-class degree in discretion.

He will admit, for example, that Harry and Caroline Flack are good friends: "They didn't fall out. It was like: 'I'm never here and you're being harassed'," but won't elaborate further.

He says of Lily Allen: "Being a mum is the best thing she's done. She's such a natural with Ethel." Henry Holland is "hard-working", Alexa Chung is "funny" and Pixie Geldof - trying to launch a singing career - is just "Pix", one of his closest mates.

"There was a worry that if her music was awful I'd have to go against everything I stand for and play it anyway, but it's really good actually," he says.

Nick hasn't built up such a rapport with Pixie's dad, however.

"I saw Bob after Pixie's gig. He told me my radio show was s**t, that the music was utter s**t and that I talk s**t. He said he knows more about music than I do because he is a legendary pop star."

He pauses while he texts Pixie, 22, to check these were Bob's exact words, then adds: "I love the way he is all shouty though. I'd hate it if Bob Geldof was friendly and easy."

He talks about a female pop star who smashed up her dressing room and flew back to New York because she'd been

'GAGA
stripped off
in front of
MY DAD'



given the wrong brand of vodka. But he never lets names slip.

"Friends tell me things and beg me not to repeat them on the radio," he says. "I wind people like Henry and Alexa up, but I don't think I ever have."

More than anything, he reckons his celebrity friendships are unremarkable. He recently spent a very ordinary day with Lily, 27, and baby Ethel in the countryside, and says a BBQ he threw for Pixie and his former flatmate Henry Holland, 29, at his new Primrose Hill pad this summer was an understated affair.

"It's not glamorous," he insists. "We talk s**t and *X Factor* nonsense. I don't do anything showbiz. When everyone was round on Saturday we had a BBQ and I was in bed at 11pm."

That will have been good practice for the early mornings ahead. Now he has to be up at 5.30am for work, Nick's cutting back on his legendary late nights out.

"I haven't had time to celebrate," he says. "I saw [fellow Radio 1 DJ] Annie Nightingale at work and she was outraged I wasn't going out getting wasted every night before I started."

"But it's been done. Some switch has happened. I used to love drinking more than anything, but now I see it as poison."

He's spent the past three months going to the gym four times a week to develop "guns" and a flat stomach and even has a personal trainer to help him out.

"I've never done any exercise in my life before," he says.

"It gives me energy but I'm erratic. I'll go for two weeks →

thinking my body is a temple then I'll want a McDonald's."

Today he's dressed casually in skinny jeans and a shirt with rolled-up sleeves. He recently had a triangle tattooed on his inner arm, which apparently stands for someone focused but easily distracted. This seems fair. He's ambitious but scatty with it and has a tendency to ramble, albeit very entertainingly so.

It's been six years since he upped sticks from Oldham, near Manchester, and moved to London, aged 22, after landing an internship at MTV. It wasn't what his strait-laced dad, Peter, 70, a marketing executive and mum, Eileen, 67, an insurance broker expected of him, but growing up with two older siblings – his brother Andy, 41, is a band manager and sister Jane, 39, an accountant – he had to fight to get himself noticed.

"When Mum and Dad had dinner parties I'd tap dance or get my trumpet out," he says. "I was always showing off. I liked to make people laugh."

Breakfast AMBITIONS

Back then, his idol was Sara Cox who hosted the Radio 1 Breakfast Show for nearly four years from 2000. In fact, she helped sow the seeds of his ambition.

"I didn't want to get out of the car in the mornings cos I wanted to listen to her," he says. "Everyone at school would talk about what she talked about. I don't want to sound arrogant, but there was never another plan – I always pictured myself doing the Radio 1 Breakfast Show."

But his parents had other plans, and he ended up taking business and communication studies at Liverpool University instead. He didn't particularly enjoy the uni years, but after moving to London and MTV in 2006, life became a whirl of partying and networking and he soon discovered his calling.

"I'd never experienced free drinks and couldn't get my head round it. Every night I'd get wasted, get home at 4am and go to work still drunk with a toothbrush at my desk. It was fresh and exciting," he says. His parents inevitably worried.

"Dad thought that if you were successful you were a doctor or a lawyer. He didn't get the concept of MTV and was a bit like: 'Are you going to get a job yet?'" he admits.

When, after nine months, his placement came to an end, he scrimped a living with sporadic DJ jobs and handing out flyers, wondering if he should swallow his pride and get on the train back to Oldham. "It was stressful," he says. "I was earning £150 a week and living off 10p chocolate bars."

Close friend Mairead Nash, one half of DJ duo Queens Of Noize, ran a club night where he met Pixie and up-and-coming models Daisy Lowe, 23, and Agyness Deyn, 29. Agyness introduced him to fashion designer Henry Holland. He befriended Caroline Flack, 32, in a Camden pub. Suddenly, his social life was glittering, even if his career prospects weren't.

Then his work life started looking up, too. In 2007, he met someone working for Channel 4 through a DJ gig and they asked him to do a screen test. "I'd never wanted to do television. I thought you had to look perfect. But I didn't have a job so thought I should give it a go," he says.

It resulted in Nick landing a presenting job on Channel 4 breakfast show *Freshly Squeezed* alongside Alexa Chung, 28. Stints on Radio 1's teen show *Switch* and on *Big Brother's Big Mouth* on E4 followed. From June 2009 he presented the 10pm-to-midnight slot on Radio 1 and Sunday night with Annie Mac.

NICK'S CELEB PALS



At a Burberry party with Agyness Deyn in September 2009



Partying with Kate Moss in February 2012



Hanging with Alexa Chung at a party in June this year



With Harry Styles at London Fashion Week in February



At Coachella festival with Kelly Osbourne last April



Strolling with Caroline Flack in March this year



In north London with BFF Pixie Geldof last July



At this year's V Festival with Henry Holland



With Sadie Frost at an exhibition launch last November

And this July, he was summoned to Radio 1 controller Ben Cooper's office and offered the one he'd been waiting for.

"I was shocked. I thought Greg [James] or Fearnie [Cotton] would get it as they were already on in the daytime," he says. But he insists it wasn't awkward. "They were excited for me."

As, apparently, was Chris Moyles, despite gossip that he wasn't best pleased about being booted out after nine years.

"He was one of the first to text me," Nick remembers. He checks his iPhone. "It says: 'You must be very giddy. Enjoy today. Let's go for a pint.' So we did."

His show will be different. There will be more music, less chat and – blessed relief – no posse laughing at his jokes. "But I'm not *too* different from Chris," he counters. "We're warm, northern and can talk about anything. My friend Hannah →

asked if I'm going to speak properly. I said probably not. I'm not going to change the way I speak."

Why should he? Sara Cox – who he's still besotted with – didn't. "I've asked her to take me for a brew and tell me how to do a breakfast show. I get more nervous around her than I do around Lady Gaga. All I want to do is make her laugh. I told her at the Brits when I was drunk that I loved her. She said: 'Okaaay.'"

Luckily, he's more level-headed around other stars. He did Gaga's first interview outside the States in 2008 while at *T4*. She was wearing a rubber swimming costume and stripped off in the dressing room they were sharing in front of Nick's parents.

"My parents were down in London and at work with me that day," he explains. "Dad found it terrifying that she had her nipples out in front of him. But she was real and smart."

Forever SINGLE

Grimmy is reluctant to make a big deal of or be defined by his sexuality, but he doesn't hide the fact that he is gay.

Given his relentless schedule, it's perhaps understandable he's "forever" single, as he puts it, although that's as much to do with him being picky as anything else.

He explains: "I'm quite fickle. I obsess over people for a week then find them irritating. Plus, people think I'm lying if I say I can't go out because I have to work, but I do."

"I'd have to go out with someone who works the same shifts as me. I'd have to go out with my producer Matt."

He's finished his steak and has guests waiting downstairs. As the waiter clears his plate, he asks Nick's name so he can let them in. He probably won't need to do that next time. **T**

● Nick hosts *Radio 1's Breakfast Show* from 6.30am tomorrow, and will present *Radio 1's Teen Awards* on October 7.

Tell us what you think on Twitter #FabMagGrimmy

THE GRIM TRUTH

Who are your dream dinner party guests?

Beth Ditto, Alan Carr, Rihanna, Eminem and Snoop. I'd cook Jamie Oliver's sea bass with pancetta.

What's your most treasured possession?

A naked picture of Eminem. He's holding a firework that looks like his willy.

Biggest regret?

Not being confident when I was at uni.

What superpower would you like?

The ability to

always have a stocked fridge without getting fat or ever going shopping.

The closest you've come to death?

In Egypt on holiday. I was parasailing on a shoddy old boat.

Last snog?

Last week. I'm not telling you who with!

What's your guilty pleasure?

Brucie's *The Price Is Right*.

Worst habit?

Not paying attention.

What would your last

supper be?

McDonald's quarter pounder with cheese, large fries, large Diet Coke and sweet-and-sour dip, with a cheeseburger for a starter.

What makes you angry?

When I'm hungry or slightly too hot.

What does love feel like?

I don't think I've been in love. I guess it must be really nice.

Friends would describe you as...

Annoying, loud, forgetful and loyal.

Grooming: Sara Bowden Styling: Tindie Le Marie Stylist's assistant: Tobi Milward Additional photography: Wenn, Getty Images, WireImage, Pacific Coast News One Direction photography: Hamish Brown

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