London Mums

FREE – Issue 49 • Winter 2026- 2027

STAR CHAT!

Dancing on Ice Winner Molly Lanaghan on playing the Pink Tink in *Peter Pan on Ice* and life beyond the rink!

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Dear London Mums,

Ho, Ho, HELP!

It's almost Christmas, fasten your bra,
Hide the mince pies and pour yourself a glass of Chardonnay!
The shopping list's missing, the turkey's gone cold,
And someone's put tinsel on the dog, bless his soul!

But fear not, my lovelies, your Editor's on duty,
With festive-sized chaos and magazine beauty.
This issue's so packed, you'll laugh till you cry,
And forget there are 47 presents left to buy!

First, Molly Lanaghan's Tinker Bell takes flight,
With dazzling spins and fairy-tale delight!
She's tiny but mighty, with sass by the ton,
Like mums at Christmas, she gets the job done!

Then Tom Bailey's back with those eighties tunes,
For bedroom-mirror divas and nostalgic loonies.
Hold Me Now plays, we're back in our prime,
Though bending to dance is a crime against time!

Star Mum Jenni Falconer runs marathons for fun,
While I need a lie-down just watching someone run.
Thirty-six years without crisps? Is that even legal?
I'd last thirty-six minutes and that's being regal!

Our bookworms meet giants, with magic galore,
While little ones beg, "Just one chapter more!"
Then comes our Gift Guide to rescue your hide,
From panic-buying candles and socks you can't hide.

So grab a cuppa, put your feet up high,
And tell your Christmas to-do list goodbye!
May your prosecco stay bubbly, your family behave,
And may Santa bring gifts you won't secretly regift!

From all of us here, have a fabulous Christmas,
With laughter, love, joy and absolutely no business
Of cooking for twenty while nobody helps out...

Monica Costa

Editor in chief, Founder of *London Mums*
& mum of 20-year-old Diego
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Molly Lanaghan

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STAR CHAT! Molly Lanaghan: The Pink Tink bringing sparkle to *Peter Pan on Ice*

Dancing on Ice champion and figure skating star headlines this Christmas's most magical family show

By Monica Costa

This Christmas, forget the same old panto - there's a new sprinkle of magic in town. ***Peter Pan on Ice*** is gliding into the Bath Forum and Theatre Severn Shrewsbury, and it's promising to whisk audiences from the cosy Darlings nursery straight into the wild, untamed wonder of Neverland. Think flying children, swashbuckling pirates, and a crocodile that just won't quit.

Running from **23 December 2026 to 3 January 2027** in Bath, and **20 to 24 January** in Shrewsbury, this is a full-scale theatrical spectacular on real ice. Yes, actual ice. On stage. Prepare to be dazzled.

Headlining the production is **Dancing on Ice professional and 2025 champion Molly Lanaghan**, bringing sparkle, sass and a whole lot of personality to the role of Tinker Bell. She's joined by **Olympic German figure skating champion Joti Polizoakis**, delivering a fearless, fast-moving performance that pushes the boundaries of live ice entertainment.

And the stage? Transformed into a shimmering sheet of real ice, where Neverland comes to life right before your eyes. Expect edge-of-your-seat excitement as pirates clash, Lost Boys cause chaos, and Captain Hook battles in dazzling, razor-sharp duels. There's world-class ensemble skating, jaw-dropping aerial flight, and the ever-present tick-tock of that lurking crocodile. It's not just an ice show - it's packed with humour, heart and unforgettable moments for all ages.

I caught up with Molly ahead of rehearsals to talk Tinker Bell, Neverland, and what Christmas means to her.

You're playing Tinker Bell on ice this Christmas - what can you tell us about your version of this famously feisty little fairy?

We haven't started rehearsals yet, we don't start until mid-November, but I'm someone who loves characterisation. Even when I competed and on Dancing on Ice, I love getting a character and putting my own twist on it while staying authentic. I love acting and playing with the audience. Tinker Bell is very centre of attention - it's all about me - so even when I'm at the back of the stage, I plan on being like, "It's all about me back here."

Tinker Bell is usually portrayed as tiny but mighty. How much of your own personality do you see in her?

I'm only five foot two myself, so I'm not the tallest one walking around. But everyone always thinks I'm taller until I stand beside someone and they look down and say, "Oh my god, you're so tiny!" I just have big energy and big posture - I elevate myself so I don't seem as small. That's literally me. That's how I live life. I work a room very well. It's an easy job being Tinker Bell.

Peter Pan is a story about never growing up. What does Neverland mean to you personally?

There's a beautiful innocence with children - such an open idea of the world being a good, safe place. I try to live with that mindset. You never know what other people are going through, so you can only control the controllable - your own emotions. Neverland and the whole "never growing up" thing is a fun way to tap into your inner child. Figure skating is my first love - I've done it since I was seven. When I skate and truly let go, it's always for that little seven-year-old Molly who started out in Sheffield. It's a nice way to connect all that together and give it to

"When I skate and truly let go, it's always for that little seven-year-old Molly who started out in Sheffield."

"Figure skating is my first love"

the audience. When you see people laugh and clap and smile and cry with you as you skate - there's nothing like it.

What did Dancing on Ice teach you about yourself that you didn't know before taking part?

Figure skaters do it for 20 years. You start as a child, fall in love with it, and then it becomes your job. We get wrapped up in the competitive world and almost lose the fun. By the time I finished competing, I didn't have the best relationship with the sport - I was like, "I don't want to put my skates on." Then I went back to the UK and was approached very fast about Dancing on Ice. I started skating after watching that show as a child, so it was full circle. I expected it to be like the competitive world, but working with Sam one-on-one for two hours a day, I re-fell in love with the sport through him. I discovered things I didn't know - like how talented I actually am. That sounds big-headed, but skating is really hard. I have so much respect for every celebrity who put themselves in that vulnerable position. It gave me a whole new respect for myself and I re-fell in love with it. It was the best job ever.

Away from the ice and the costumes, who is Molly? What do you love doing when you're not performing?

Since I came back to Canada in February, I've been coaching at the school where I trained. When I stopped competing, I didn't think I wanted to coach, but through the show I've fallen in love with skating again and now I have this whole new passion for coaching. I'm at the rink at 6:30am six days a week, working with kids until 10:30 or 11. We have a little school of ice dancers - teams from seven years old up to 24. I coach side by side with my two coaches who coached me, and the guy I competed with for seven years. It's so exciting to share the love of the sport and pass down my knowledge. When I'm not at the rink, I love spending time with friends - spa days, shopping, making social media posts. I love reading and bedazzling things. I crystal everything!

Christmas is such a huge part of Peter Pan on Ice. What does Christmas look like in your own family?

My family is all in the UK and we're very close-knit. On Christmas Eve, my dad puts on a feast - sometimes grandparents come over - and we all snack, have a few drinks, and watch Christmas movies. We always watch Gavin and Stacey Christmas specials, the Royal Family Christmas, Mrs Brown's Boys - our old-school Christmas TV shows. On Christmas Day, we wake up, do breakfast together, presents together, grandparents come over for dinner. It's a pretty chill Christmas - no big party. By about five o'clock we're all showered and in our new PJs having some drinks and watching more Christmas movies. It's my favourite day of the year. I love it.

If you could give your younger self one Christmas present - something that wasn't a physical gift - what would it be?

I would go for younger, more like pre-10, and I would tell her to spend as much time with family as possible. Because she doesn't know it, but at 18 she's moving to Canada and she won't see her family apart from one or two weeks a year. There are going to be Christmases... I moved away and was gone for seven or eight Christmases. I was only home on Christmas Day for two because I had nationals two weeks after Christmas. For the love of my sport, I sacrificed my favourite day of the year with my favourite people. I would just tell her: when you turn 18, your whole life is going to flip to the other side of the world. So spend as much time with them as possible. Even if you're tired or bored, just sit with them. Do things with them.

If you could spend one day in Neverland, who would you take with you and what would you do?

I have two answers. One: I'd take my besties so we can have it together, make memories, and explore all the crazy things. A bunch of my closest friends are also figure skaters, so I've travelled the world with them - it would be fitting to take them to Neverland. I'm a girl's girl. But then, selfish side: I'd take a good few books and get cosy by the water. I love being by water with green around me, just sitting and reading all day with a cup of coffee. Actually, I could do both - take my girls and we can sit and do that together.

Peter Pan on Ice runs at Bath Forum from 23 December 2026 to 3 January 2027, and Theatre Severn Shrewsbury from 20 to 24 January 2027.

For more information and tickets, visit **www.peterpanonice.co.uk**

Photographer: Anthony Fascione (AFPhotography)

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How to Cry in a House Full of Children: The play every mother needs to see this November

It's 7am. One child refuses to wear socks. Another asks existential questions about the universe. A work email pings with "just circling back." You haven't had a hot cup of tea since 2019. Somewhere in the chaos, you catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror and think: Who even am I anymore?

If that sounds familiar, there's a play coming to London this November that you need to know about.

How to Cry in a House Full of Children (*Cómo Llorar en una Casa Llena de Niños*) is a one-woman play by Uruguayan writer Victoria Vera, arriving in London after sold-out performances in Uruguay. Brought to the UK by True Life Productions and part of the Voila! Theatre Festival, it's a raw, poetic, darkly funny and deeply human piece about motherhood, identity, work and the relentless pressure of being everything to everyone.

Performed in both English and Spanish, the play follows a mother through her "day of rage" — an awkward encounter with a colleague, a flood of WhatsApp confessions, a tow truck taking her car — events that spiral beyond her control and lead to temporary separation from her children, exposing her mental health to public scrutiny and an unsympathetic judicial system.

Through minimalist staging, humour, dance and screen-based storytelling, Vera's text is performed, danced and read. The creators' own experiences blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, creating an intimate yet universal work that invites audiences to recognise themselves within its contradictions and absurdities.

This is a fierce plea about the incompatibilities between motherhood and work-life balance. It leaves no room for indifference and London audiences will find it deeply resonant.

The Details:

When: Friday 6 November, 7pm
Where: The Space Theatre, 269 Westferry Rd, London E14 3RS
Tickets: space.org.uk or voilafestival.co.uk
Performed in: English and Spanish
Credits: Playwright and Director: Victoria Vera. Actress and Choreographer: Carolina Piñeyro Duarte. Assistant Director: Valeria de Souza. Theatrical Design: Malena Paz. Translation for video and audio: Graciana Albertoni. Graphic Design: Natalia Vera. UK Producer: Rosina Piovani (True Life Productions).

WIN TICKETS!

We're giving away two free tickets to the 6 November performance. Email monica@londonmums.org.uk with subject "CRY" and tell us in one sentence: what's the funniest thing your child has done to push you to the edge? **Entries close Friday 30 October.**

Find Out More: truelifeproductions.co.uk | @true_life_productions_cic

How to Cry in a House Full of Children is brought to London from Uruguay by True Life Productions, as part of the Voila! Theatre Festival 2026.

STAR MUM CHAT!

Jenni Falconer: Still running, still radiant

By Monica Costa

Back in 2012, Jenni Falconer graced the cover of London Mums Magazine for our Winter issue, a beautiful, beaming mum to baby Ella, talking about swishing, tube improvements, and the joys and juggles of new motherhood.

Fourteen years later, she's still one of Britain's most recognisable broadcasters, waking up the nation on Smooth Radio's breakfast show, completing marathons for charity, and building her own wellness brand, Kollo Health. And somehow, she's even more inspiring.

We caught up with Jenni, a fellow South West London mum, about running home from work, turning 50, collagen, and why she hasn't eaten a crisp in 36 years.

We're both London mums living in SW London. What's a simple, local "win" for you?

A simple local win for me is running home from work. I'm on air very early every morning, so when I get the chance to run back from central London to South West London, it honestly feels like such a treat.

It's about eight miles, and on a perfect day it's absolutely stunning. I love running by the river, through Richmond Park, across Wimbledon Common, down towards Barnes Bridge, along the riverside path in Chiswick and around Fulham Reach. We live in such a beautiful part of London, and running through it makes me appreciate it all over again.

It's my commute, my exercise, my thinking time and my local win all rolled into one.

You've said before that you don't fear 50 and feel more empowered now. What do you no longer worry about, and what unexpected joy has your 50s brought so far?

I turned 50 in February, so I'm only a few months in, but I can honestly say I've never feared it.

In my 30s and 40s, I was like a hamster on a wheel. I worked hard, said yes to everything and never wanted to miss an opportunity. I didn't want to be unavailable or be the person who said no.

Now, I think there's a bit more wisdom and experience. I've realised you don't have to do everything. You can say no, not because you don't care, but because something else matters more, family time, seeing friends, an early night, a round of golf or simply protecting your energy.

I'm more considered with my choices now. It's not about chasing every pay cheque or opportunity. It's about quality, enjoyment, health, wellbeing and time with the people I love.

The unexpected joy of my 50s so far is feeling more comfortable with who I am.

You were due to run the London Marathon for Marie Curie. How has preparing felt different this time?

I was due to run the London Marathon for Marie Curie this year, which would have been my 11th marathon, but unfortunately after my final training run I developed runner's knee. An MRI showed bruising behind my patella, and the specialist told me that if I pushed it, it could potentially lead to a fracture. So sadly, I had to pull out of the marathon.

It was really disappointing, especially because running for charity gives you such a strong sense of purpose. I've run 10 London Marathons, mainly for charities, and every one has been special.

In some ways, the first marathon was the easiest mentally because I had no idea what to expect. Now I know exactly what lies ahead, which can make it more daunting. But I still love the challenge. Starting a four-month training plan on 1 January is a brilliant way to get through the dark winter months and emerge in spring feeling fit, strong and proud.

I'm back running again now and can do half marathons, which feels like a joy in itself.

At what point did collagen go from "this works for me" to "I need to build my own company around this"?

It started in 2009 when I was training for my first marathon. A TV doctor I was working with found out I was running and said, "You'd better be taking collagen - it's amazing for supporting your joints."

So I did.

I originally took it for my joints, muscles and recovery, but I noticed other benefits too. My skin looked clearer, my hair felt amazing and I just felt great.

"The unexpected joy of my 50s so far is feeling more comfortable with who I am."

For years I took collagen personally, but I never imagined I'd start a collagen company. Then one day I came back from work after running home, and my husband James and my friend Tash were in the kitchen, I'd run out of collagen and they both said, "Why don't you just make your own?"

It was a real lightbulb moment.

The three of us then worked for over a year to create our brand Kollo and develop what we felt was the ultimate liquid collagen.

For a busy mum, the liquid sachet is incredibly easy. You don't need to mix it, blend it or make a drink. I often take it straight from the sachet. It tastes delicious and fruity, it's done in seconds, and it fits into real life.

Kollo uses marine collagen. Is that personal preference or genuinely a better choice?

For me, marine collagen started as a personal preference because I don't eat red meat, so I wouldn't go near bovine collagen.

But we also chose marine collagen because it's premium and is highly bioavailable, what's

more it works beautifully in our products - and by the way it does not remotely taste of fish! Kollo uses high-quality marine collagen, and we include 10g per liquid sachet, which is the amount used in clinical studies.

We originally focused on liquid because we wanted something easy, effective and more readily absorbed but as we also know lots of people love powder now, we've introduced tasteless marine collagen powder sachets and a larger pouch format too.

Some people want to put collagen in smoothies, yoghurt, cereal or coffee, and that's absolutely fine. The important thing is consistency.

Ella is choosing her GCSE subjects. What values do you most want to teach her about work and ambition?

Ella is 14 now and has chosen her GCSE subjects, so Year 10 has started this September. It's an exciting time.

To her, I'm not really the marathon runner, business owner or breakfast radio host. I'm just Mum.

The values I really want to teach her are certainly not that it's all about likes and followers - it's more important to teach her values like ambition, encourage her to be interested, to be curious, to be kind, take chances, embrace opportunities and, above all, be herself. She's an amazing, kind, confident, fun, funny, truly lovely person, and long may that continue.

I think it's so important not to compare yourself to others or let yourself be led so far astray that you change who you are. Be yourself, stay kind, stay curious, have a sense of adventure and the rest will fall into place.

How do you navigate the guilt of missing bedtime or weekend time because of work?

There's so much guilt placed on parents and I think every one of us feels it in some way.

I've worked early mornings since Ella was a baby. I'm live on the radio from 6am and have been for many years so I've never done the morning school run. But I have done school pick-up, and that became 'our time'. My husband did the mornings, I did the afternoons, and both parts of the day are lovely in different ways.

I think it's important not to dwell on what you've missed. Focus on what you have and have had - they are all precious moments, experiences, conversations and rituals that you share.

For us, the low-stakes ritual has always been those everyday moments. Pick-up, chatting in the car, being together after school, now it's fun to do girly shopping trips and we love our trips to the theatre. They may not look dramatic from the outside, but they mean everything.

Kollo is Informed Sport certified. From a mum's perspective, why should we care?

Informed Sport certification is brilliant because it gives reassurance.

Athletes want to know exactly what they're putting into their bodies, but I think mums do too. It means the product has been tested, there are no nasties, and what we say is in the product is what's actually in the product.

There are so many cheap options online now, especially on places like TikTok Shop but you don't always know what's in them. Some may contain artificial fillers or impurities - be careful with them as you don't always

even really know how much collagen you're actually getting. With ours, you do.

For me, Informed Sport is about trust, purity and quality. And if you're giving a supplement to a teenager or encouraging your child to take something, that reassurance really matters.

You've never eaten a crisp or chip in 36 years because of a £1 bet with your mum. Do you ever feel tempted?

It's ridiculous, isn't it?

My mum bet me £1 when I was 14 that I couldn't go a week without eating a chip or crisp. I'm quite stubborn and I love a challenge, so I did the week. Then I thought, "Let's see how long I can keep going."

And here I am, 36 years later. No chip nor crisp has passed my lips.

I don't look at a pile of chips and feel longing, but I will admit that walking past a fish and chip shop and smelling salt and vinegar on hot chips is lovely.

And my mum still owes me that pound....

Is Kollo a good daily insurance policy against less-than-perfect diets?

I wouldn't say collagen is an insurance policy that cancels out a king-size Mars bar or a terrible diet but I do believe in consistency.

I take my collagen every day. I take my vitamins every day. I take my creatine every day. That consistency is what makes the difference.

We all have treats. I love cake and pizza and I enjoy a glass of wine. Everything in moderation. A less-than-perfect day isn't a disaster. The key is what you do most of the time, not what you do occasionally.

Favourite way to de-stress after a tough week?

Exercise. Always.

It might be a run, a walk or the gym, but movement is my meditation. It clears the fog, lifts my mood and makes me feel like the weight has come off my shoulders.

Even if I'm tired, exercise re-energises me.

Go-to quick family meal when you're shattered after a 4am shift?

I am not a great cook. I would never win MasterChef.

My meals are simple: salmon with teriyaki sauce, rice and veg; butterfly chicken with soy sauce, salad or potatoes; a chicken stir-fry with lots of peppers; or a baked potato with tuna mayo.

Simple, comforting, healthy food is absolutely fine by me.

A small daily habit that makes you feel put together?

I always wash my face, morning and night, no matter how tired I am but my real non-negotiable is moisturising my whole body. I've done it since I was about 15. Morning, evening, and again if I shower in between.

At the moment I'm using Palmer's Cocoa Butter but I also use L'Occitane's almond moisturiser and their ultra rich cream, Nivea, The Body Shop are all great options too. I just love a good body moisturiser.

If you could convince every London mum to try one thing for their wellbeing, what would it be?

Move. Get outside, get fresh air and move your body.

You don't have to run. You don't have to sprint. Walk to the shop. Walk around the block.

Movement is magical. It can change your mood, your health and your whole day.

We live in a beautiful part of London, so go and spend time in it. Walk around, be present, notice things you'd miss from the car or train, smile at people. Sometimes one smile encourages another one back. Try it.

Jenni Falconer first appeared on the cover of London Mums Magazine in our Winter 2012/2013 issue and you can read that original interview in our archive. She remains one of our favourite cover stars https://www.londonmumsmagazine.com/magazine/magazine-back-issues

Critical new advice and a change in the law concerning anaphylaxis

After the tragic death of five-year-old Benedict Blythe in 2021, the law changed (Section 34, Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026). Since September 2026, all maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England must publish an allergy safety policy and follow new DfE statutory guidance on Allergy Safety in Schools (staff training, spare adrenaline devices and incident recording).

Schools must now:

- Name a senior leader responsible for allergy safety.
- Train all staff in allergy awareness yearly, covering all 12 DfE learning outcomes (first aid anaphylaxis training alone is no longer enough).
- Put Individual Healthcare Plans in place.
- Provide emergency adrenaline devices.
- The guidance favours "nut aware" over "nut free", which can give false security.

Why everyone needs training

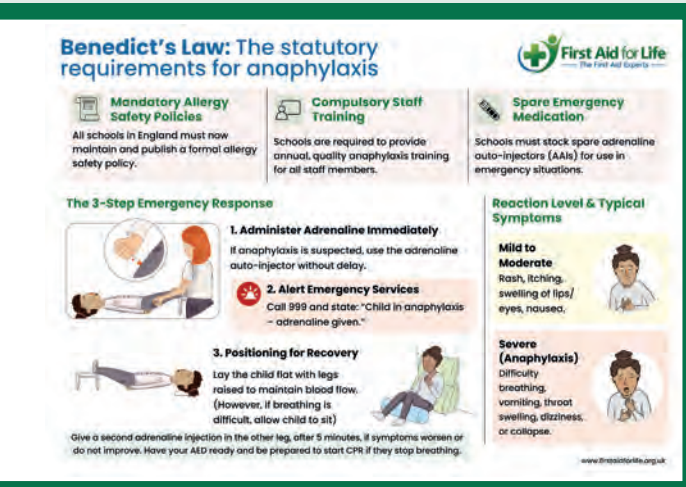
- Up to 30% of anaphylaxis cases have no obvious trigger.
- Up to 20% of school reactions happen in children with no known allergy.
- Around one in five allergic children first react at school, college or an Early Years setting.
- One in five UK anaphylaxis deaths in school-aged children happen at school.
- With a first reaction, there's no healthcare plan or prescribed device: whoever is present must help fast.

Coroner's key lessons

- Vomiting can be an early sign; anaphylaxis can occur without a rash.
- Never move a child who may be reacting: bring help and adrenaline to them.
- Follow allergy plans every time.
- Use earlier incidents and near misses to review procedures.
- Communicate clearly, especially at handovers and breaks.
- If you suspect anaphylaxis give adrenaline immediately and call 999: delay is the most dangerous factor.
- Position the casualty to suit their symptoms.
- No improvement after five minutes or worsening? Give a second autoinjector in the other leg (neffy nasal spray: second dose, same nostril).
- Antihistamines and reliever inhalers won't treat anaphylaxis: never delay adrenaline.
- Update the call handler; be ready for CPR.
- Children at risk should carry two prescribed adrenaline devices; schools should keep spare emergency autoinjectors.

Free training for your school

First Aid for Life offers all staff free access* to our **Allergy Awareness and First Aid for Anaphylaxis online course**, covering all 12 DfE learning outcomes and Benedict's Law requirements.
Email emma@firstaidforlife.org.uk to arrange.



*T&Cs apply: free to schools booking us for regular staff and pupil training.

Further reading

Benedict's Law findings

30% of anaphylaxis cases have no obvious trigger

13 myths about anaphylaxis

We strongly recommend an online or practical first aid course to know what to do in an emergency. Visit FirstAidforLife.org.uk or OnlineFirstAid.com, or call 02086754036.

First Aid for Life provides this information for guidance, and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information.

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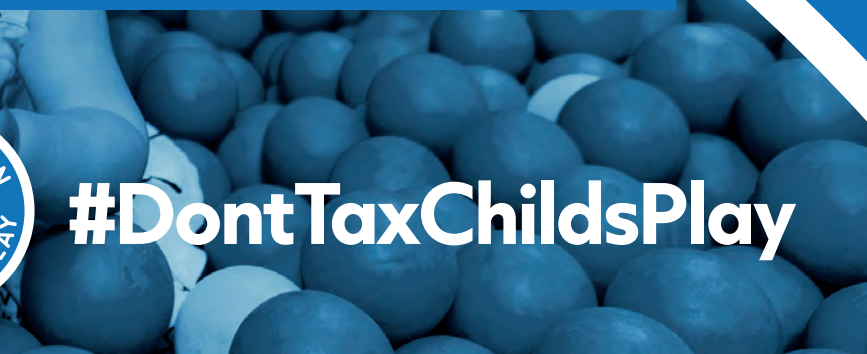

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#DontTaxChildsPlay

music star chat! thompson twins icon tom bailey

By Monica Costa

When I was offered the chance to interview Tom Bailey, the voice and creative force behind Thompson Twins, I'll admit I had a moment of pure 80s nostalgia. This is the man whose synth-pop anthems provided the soundtrack to so many of our teenage years. Hold Me Now, Doctor Doctor, Love On Your Side: these were the backdrop to first crushes, school discos, and countless hours spent perfecting our dance moves in front of the bedroom mirror.

As I discovered during our chat, Tom Bailey was approaching his September's UK tour with the same creative energy and collaborative spirit that made Thompson Twins one of the most iconic bands of the 1980s, just with a very different line-up and a refreshingly honest perspective on fame, balance, and what really matters.

Now performing as **Thompson Twins' Tom Bailey**, he brought his greatest hits back to UK audiences with special guests Blancmange.

Tom's current band is entirely female: Charlotte Raven on vocals, keyboards and cello, Paulina Szczepaniak on vocals and drums, and Alice Offley on vocals, bass and keyboards, a line-up he describes with genuine enthusiasm. "It's a fantastic thing these days that there's such a big pool of talent amongst female musicians," he tells me. "The days when bands have to be four guys, those days are over."

He's also remarkably candid about the lessons learned during those heady years of global fame. From the experimental post-punk underground to sharing a stage with Madonna and Nile Rodgers at Live Aid, Tom reflects on the rollercoaster ride with wisdom and humour, including the moment he and Nile ended up playing Scrabble in a hotel room to avoid the temptations of the road.

Whether you're a lifelong fan or discovering Thompson Twins' music for the first time, this interview offers a rare glimpse into the mind of one of Britain's premier songwriters, a man who's found his balance, his voice, and his joy in performing.

What does the Thompson Twins show look and feel like this year? How does it compare to the 80s tours?

tom bailey: Well, I'm the same, but a lot older! But my band is completely different. And I have an amazing band, all female musicians. It's a fantastic thing these days that there's such a big pool of talent amongst female musicians. And I keep saying, the days when bands have to be four guys, those days are over. Thankfully.

Some people still think so. But I think it's a great energy working with really clever women. And we've got a big tour. We've got 16 concerts to do in three weeks, basically. So we're going to be working hard, living on a bus and travelling around the UK.

You started as quite an unusual, rebellious post-punk band and became one of the biggest pop acts on the planet. When you look back at that journey from the early days to breaking America, from artistic

"I have an amazing band, all female musicians"

freedom to label pressure, what were the moments that truly defined who you became?

tom: You're right that we started out in a very experimental kind of underground world of music. And after a couple of albums doing that, I have to partly blame technology because I finally got my hands on the things that would become prominent in the way that I made records like synthesizers and drum machines and what have you. So when I got hold of those, everything changed.

But it was also a kind of determination to finally get a record in the charts, get on Top of the Pops or something, because when you're a pop group, that's what you have to do, you have to somehow have a mainstream of attention. And that was the big deal. And at that point, we became a three-piece band, the one that everyone knows well.

And looking back, I think I now realise that we stopped being a band and started being more designers of the whole experience. We very, very carefully sat around the table and thought, "OK, how can we make this work? How can we divide the job into not just music, but the visuals and the performance and all those kinds of things?" And it was fun and it worked.

You played in Philadelphia with Nile Rodgers on guitar and Madonna on backing vocals. Is that right?

tom: Right, yes. So we did a backstage deal with her that we would sing on each other's sets. So that's what we did.

When you walked off that stage, what was going through your head, and what was really happening behind the scenes with all those egos crammed into a very hot tent?

tom: I met a lot of people that day that were heroes of mine. Which is interesting. But I was also looking after Nile at the time. He had a tendency to alcohol and drugs, which he's now thankfully recovered from. So the funny story is we ended up going

back to the hotel and playing a game of Scrabble. All together with all these people. Nile and me, we did that in order to stop him partying too hard.

Fans have a very romanticised, neon-coloured idea of the 80s synth scene. What was the day-to-day reality of being in a successful band back then that would shock a 20-year-old musician today?

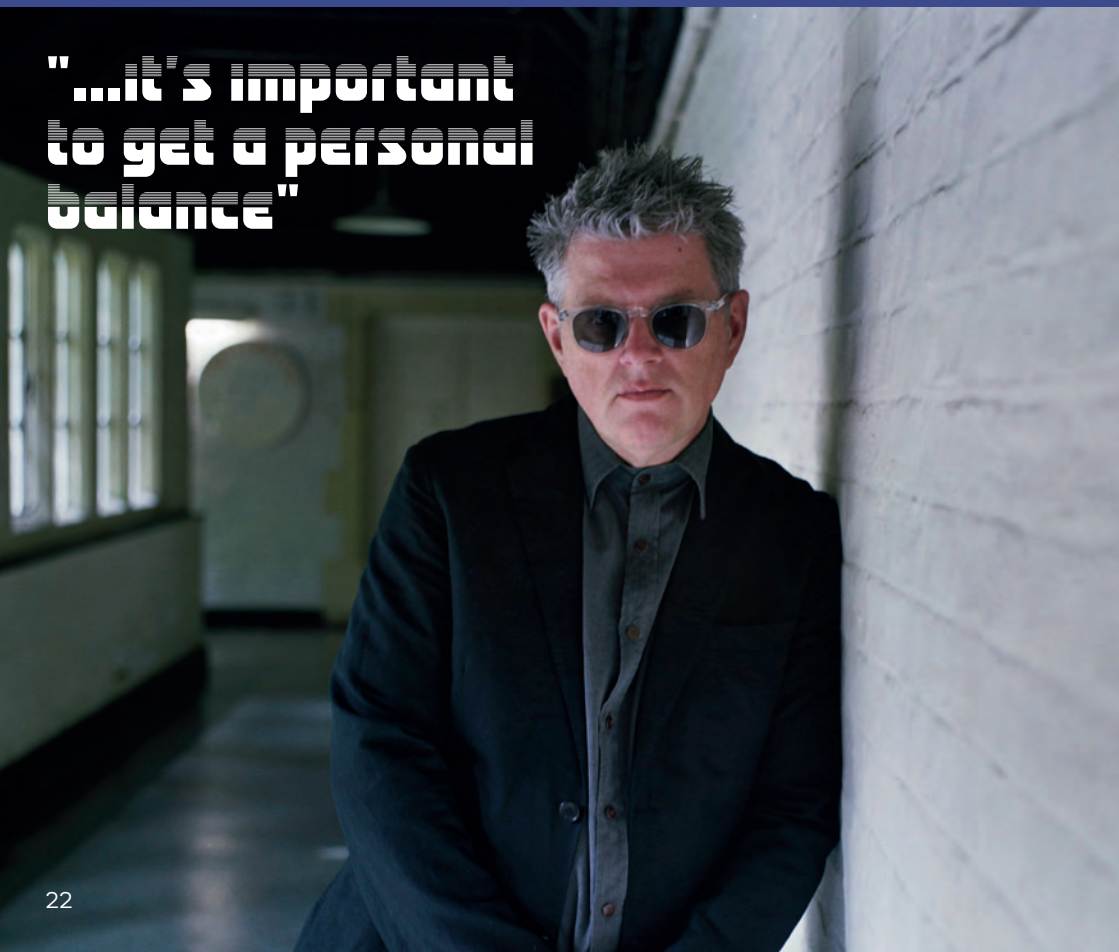
tom: We were always travelling with truckloads of equipment. Now I mostly travel with a laptop and a pair of headphones. But in the day, it was almost a military operation getting a band around the world. And we did a lot of travelling, a lot of touring, especially in the States. So I think life on the road characterised everything that we did. And you become a strange kind of person who lives in hotel rooms. Most of the time while on tour I feel most at home here in the UK or in New Zealand.

In terms of your songs, people tend to gravitate to the big hits. Is there a deep cut, a song you're particularly proud of that you wish people talked more about?

tom: There are lots, in fact. But the one that I always think of is a song called *If You Were Here*, which for some reason captured the attention of a filmmaker in America. So it got shown in some kind of high school movie, which I've never seen. But it became a big non-hit in America. In other words, it was never released as a single, but everyone loves this song. And so that's the one that I always feel obliged to play, regardless of the fact that it never charted.

If you could sit down with the 1983 version of yourself, just before the explosion of fame, what would you warn him about? And do you think he would actually listen?

tom: Probably he wouldn't listen. Too caught up in the excitement. But my advice



"...it's important to get a personal balance"

"we started out in a very experimental kind of underground world of music"

would be to enjoy the rollercoaster ride for a short while and then realise that actually you have to look after yourself as well. You can't party every night of the year. And it's important to get a personal balance. It sounds boring, but it's so true.

So you were partying every night?

tom: Of necessity, yes. But you find ways of avoiding the damage. But yeah, I can imagine a 20-year-old wouldn't really listen.

If you could recreate one Thompson Twins moment exactly as it happened, not necessarily the biggest one, which moment would you choose and why?

tom: There are probably several that I could pick from. From the early days, rehearsing in an attic and thinking, "Wow, this is what I want to do." To concerts with that early version of the band, where we had crazy concerts, where we got like seven encores or something. "Oh, seven encores. It can't get better than this."

But also that moment, the moment that I discovered the technology of music and sound engineering, which would allow me to make hit records. I think that was the moment for me.

A personal journey through psychosis: one woman's story of healing, hope and the simulation theory

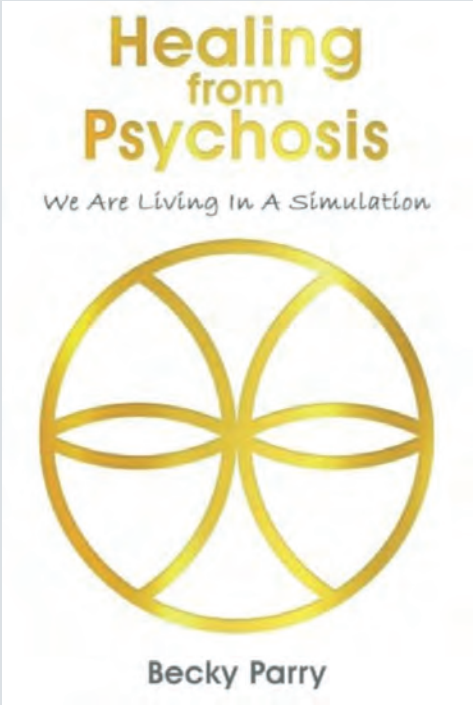
When Becky Parry was sectioned for the fourth time, she could not have imagined that her darkest days would lead her to write a book. But that is exactly what happened. *Healing from Psychosis - We are Living in a Simulation* is her extraordinary account of living through psychosis, challenging everything we think we know about the condition.

Becky is a coach, alternative therapist and mentor from Cheltenham. After being diagnosed with psychosis, she found herself trapped in a system that labelled her experiences as symptoms of illness. But Becky began to see things differently. What if the voices, visions and spiritual encounters were not signs of a broken mind? What if they were glimpses of something deeper?

In her book, Becky argues that we are living in a simulation. This is not a new idea: modern scientists have explored simulation theory for years. What is new is hearing it from someone who has been sectioned, medicated and told she was unwell. Becky writes from deep personal experience. She details conversations with a clairvoyant whose predictions have come true. She describes realities that exist alongside our own, invisible to most people but vivid to her.

She explains that the average person sees less than 5 per cent of what is actually out there. Becky believes she can access the other 95 per cent. Her message is bold and unapologetic: "I'm not crazy, we are living in a simulation."

For any parent who has watched a loved one struggle with mental health, this book offers a radical new perspective. It does not dismiss psychosis as mere illness. Instead, it asks whether some experiences



labelled as psychotic might actually be valid perceptions of a stranger reality than we dare to admit.

Becky's goal is not to convince everyone. It is to shine a light on her healing journey and to encourage families to listen differently. She hopes that by sharing her truth, she can help others support their own relatives with more compassion and open mindedness.

This is not an easy read. It is raw, challenging and unflinching. But it is also hopeful. Becky has been to very difficult places and found her way back. Her book is a testament to the power of personal truth and the courage it takes to speak it.

***Healing from Psychosis – We are Living in a Simulation* is available now in ebook, paperback, hardback and audiobook. If you are ready to question everything, this is the book for you**.

Mixtapes, misadventures and a campervan named Ken: Is Trip '89 the ultimate Gen X novel?

Some books transport you to a time; others evoke a feeling. Trip '89, the debut novel by Chris Foster Tolley, pulls off both.

It's 1989, and twenty-two-year-old Cea needs to find a life – or at least some life. Suffering from what the author dubs 'SOMO' (a Sense of Missing Out), Cea buys a campervan, does it up, christens it Ken (in honour of Mrs Thatcher's nemesis, 'Red' Ken Livingstone), and hits the road. What follows is a picaresque odyssey: equal parts road trip and love letter to freedom, and also the most engaging social history lesson you'll ever encounter.

The trip eventually steers Cea toward the sleepy Devon coastal town of Sidmouth – such a 'pensioners' paradise' seems an improbable place for a young lad to seek meaning, but it turns out to be the ideal backdrop for connection and self-discovery. Along the way, the protagonist wrestles with the heartbreak of unattainable crushes, survives a cascade of late-night mishaps, and crosses paths with a vivid cast of characters, including eccentric locals and philosophical wanderers.

It would be easy for this sort of tale to slip unchecked into rose-tinted nostalgia. Yet alongside the raves and festivals, Foster Tolley captures the sharper edges of a tough decade nearing its conclusion. Although superbly written, the narrative feels less like a conventional novel and more like propping up a bar with a witty, self-deprecating friend as they recount their most off-the-wall adventures.

Above all, music is the narrative's beating heart. Conceived as an immersive experience – and what has been called 'possibly the world's first multimedia novel' – *Trip '89* features an 'essential' 20-track mixtape from the year 1989 itself as well as a 'definitive' 89-track companion playlist. Spanning the rave, hip-hop, and indie music of the era, the soundtrack is much more than background noise; it actively drives the story.

Foster Tolley – the pen name of educator and historian Chris Walklett – writes with an exceptional ear for dialogue and period vernacular. Drawing on his historical expertise, he enriches the story with insightful explanatory notes on the people, politics, and subcultures of the times. The novel also includes chapter-by-chapter book group prompts designed to spark lively debate on a range of interpersonal and socio-cultural themes.

Blending the warmth and romantic yearning of a Nick Hornby or a David Nicholls with a style and energy entirely its own, *Trip '89* has been hailed the 'Ultimate Gen X novel.' For those who lived through it, it is an ultra-visual step back into youth; for everyone else, it is a thought-provoking and engrossing ride, proving that the best part of a trip is the journey it takes you on.

Trip '89 is the ideal present for you or any eighties lovers that you know. So... pack your bags, cue the music, and join Cea, Ken, and a huge array of vibrant and unforgettable individuals for the trip of a lifetime!

Available from: Waterstones, Foyles and select independent bookshops (RRP £12.99) and on Amazon Kindle.

Connect with the author: https://chrisfostertolley.wordpress.com/

Spotify playlists:
20-track mixtape: https://tinyurl.com/2a9j54r4
89-track companion playlist: https://tinyurl.com/57ec8m3w

How to Grow Magic: The Giant Mystery: The book that helps every child fall in love with reading

The bestselling duo Rachel Morrisroe and Steven Lenton behind the beloved How to Grow a Unicorn picture book series have expanded their magical world into short chapter books. And the first of these longer adventures, *How to Grow Magic: The Giant Mystery*, is a delight.

Set on Enchantment Street, where a magical world has grown up around Mr Pottifer's Parlour of Plants, the story follows Sarah and her friends as they navigate school, friendship, and an out-of-control giant beanstalk that brings a crop of giants into town.

This book has been designed to support children in the early stages of independent reading. Short, pacey chapters with plenty of cliff-hangers encourage the classic "one more chapter!" plea. The font is accessible, printed on cream paper making it inclusive for dyslexic readers. Vibrant illustrations leap from every page.

As a mother of two dyslexic sons, Rachel knows first-hand how hard it can be to support children who find reading challenging. "I've tried to think really carefully about my language choices so it feels truly accessible," she says. "We so hope all readers, including those who find reading harder work, will love this world."

What inspired the world of Enchantment Street?

It started in my garden, growing pumpkins with my boys. One day I thought, "What would I grow if I could grow anything?" My brain went to a unicorn immediately; I kept picturing one growing next to the tomatoes and causing magical havoc. As the picture books published, Steven and I saw the opportunity to create a richer world, with a high street and more characters popping up.

How did you make the book accessible to all readers?

Creating it as a dyslexia-friendly title was incredibly important to both Steven and I. I've kept the chapters short but with lots of cliff-hangers. The font is accessible and on cream paper, which is great for dyslexic readers. Steven has created stunning illustrations for each page.

What role does humour play in building reading enthusiasm?

A little giggle goes a long way! In the marrow of my very bones, I am extremely silly! Steven is prone to a pun or ten! Together we enjoy creating this kind of whimsical anarchy.

What can parents do to support children who find reading a challenge?

It's about giving children choice and helping them find books where their interests lie. Librarians and booksellers are excellent guides. One of my sons loves Manga, lots of pictures, few words. My other son prefers non-fiction, so we find books on palaeontology and he dips in and out.

We have How to Grow a Dinosaur coming in the Spring, and some pesky pirates in the next chapter book!

***How to Grow Magic: The Giant Mystery* by Rachel Morrisroe and Steven Lenton is published by Puffin Books, £6.99. Perfect for ages 5-8.**

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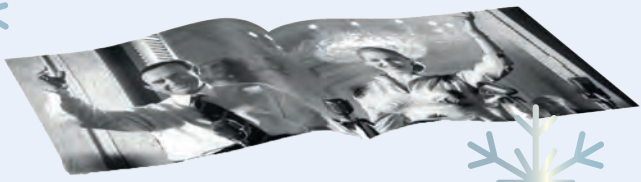

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