

FREE

Issue 30 Summer / Autumn 2020



London Mums



**The Brand
New Heavies**



Gil Junger

**Star
dad!**

Joe Wicks

**The Body Coach and
the world's most
beloved PE teacher
opens his heart about
lockdown, his weaning
book & future plans**

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What a year! Little did I know that I would be spending four months locked at home during the Covid-19 pandemic when I produced the Spring magazine back in February. Self-isolating has taught me that real human relationships are vital to live well. Thanks to technology, I have still managed to remotely interview very interesting people. You'll agree that Joe Wicks aka The Body Coach and the world's most beloved PE teacher has been crucial to keep us all fit and motivated during lockdown. I was delighted to virtually meet him. With his super approachable, friendly and affable demeanour he made me feel immediately at ease. Enjoy our chat including his views about parenting, his weaning book and his plans for the future.

During the quarantine we couldn't have survived the loneliness without music, movies and art in general. Luckily, I virtually went behind the scenes of *Think Like a Dog*, a fast-paced family comedy in which anything seems paw-sible, with director and writer Gil Junger best known for *10 Things I Hate About You* starring Heath Ledger. Don't miss his exclusive anecdote about the iconic Australian actor.

In a fun zoom chat, single dad Simon Bartholomew, the undisputed Funk Guitar master and member of multi-platinum UK soul legends The Brand New Heavies, talked about single parenting, home-schooling during lockdown, and his new 30th Anniversary Funk EP going back to the band's roots.

For mums with young children in need of a relaxing break after a tough year stuck at home, I've checked in the most welcoming locations in central Italy: Villa Pia in Umbria and La Radicata in Tuscany, where you can learn how to cook Italian dishes while enjoying *la Dolce Vita*.

Happy reading, London Mums!

Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!

Monica

Monica Costa
Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum
of 14-year-old Diego

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**THE
BIG
INTERVIEWS**



JOE WICKS

Editorial

London Mums magazine is produced by London Mums Limited

Editor and publisher: Monica Costa
monica@londonmums.org.uk

Editorial Assistant: Carolina Kon

Illustrators: Irene Gomez Granados (chief)

Head of Partnerships: Laura Castelli
info@londonmumsmagazine.com

Illustrators: Irene Gomez Granados (chief)

Contributors: Monika Butkute,
Laura Castelli, Rosalba Costantini,
Emma Hammett, Rita Kobrak, Diego Scintu

POST: London Mums Limited,
74 Dowdeswell Close – London SW15 5RL

CALL: 07900088123

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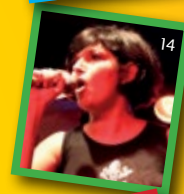
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JOE WICKS

AKA THE BODY COACH

THE WORLD'S MOST BELOVED PE TEACHER OPENS HIS HEART ABOUT PARENTING DURING LOCKDOWN, HIS WEANING BOOK AND FUTURE PLANS

By Monica Costa

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I was delighted to virtually meet the nation's official PE teacher Joe Wicks through a zoom call during the covid-19 lockdown. With his super approachable, friendly and affable demeanour he made me feel immediately at ease. Joe Wicks is loved not only in Britain but has a huge number of fans worldwide and deservedly so.

Monica: Joe, if it hadn't been for your PE lessons every day I would be so unfit now.

Everybody looks at you as an inspiration and a role model for parents right now.

I have felt always so motivated to follow your classes in the morning, I was eager to start the day knowing you would be there to give me a much-needed boost to get through another day in lockdown. Thank you so much for doing that.

Your authentic approach on your Live YouTube coaching sessions is wonderful.

You show your unique weaknesses and imperfections, you often puff and say that you are tired during and after the workout. This makes people feel that they can relate, especially during the tough lockdown.

How do you manage to keep up with such high energy and motivation all the time?

Joe: I try to show people that this is real, as much as I can, I try to inspire them to get as much of the workout as possible.

Monica: You have been sharing insights of your personal life with your wife Rosie, your adorable children. You are a truly lovely couple. A strong partnership has shone through.

How have you and Rosie managed the kids during the forced isolation?

Joe: A lot gets crunched down through team work, taking turns and understanding that it's really difficult otherwise for me to do my workouts, do the emails and run the business.

It is equally challenging for Rosie to stimulate, engage and motivate two children all day long so we've got a real mutual respect for that. Being a parent is a full-time role and especially when you've got to do activities, including craft to keep them away from the TV.

She is very patient and I learn from her every day. We can be a team, we can be patient, we can respond really well, instead of the approach of being frustrated.

She understands that I need to get to work on time and at the same time I am there to cook dinner, lunch and sitting together. We've always lived together like this at home from the start, when Rosie had our first child Indie. Nothing really feels different to us in that respect.

Monica: Yes, I totally get you as I have been working from home for the past 15 years. It has been quite tough for some families, though.

Joe: Some people had a big social life, prior to lockdown. With regards to my family, it's just me and Rosie. We take turns: she does her workout and I then do mine. It's about giving your partner the time and the space. Rosie would go out for one hour for a walk on her own so I take the kids. It's a little breather, away from the kids.

Monica: You have recently written a new cookery book called *Wean in 15*.

Joe: I'm really proud of this book and I've been amazed by the support, the pre-orders have been so high, even higher than my last previous book. I have more followers now but I think people wanted to support it and they are excited about a book that is going to really help them get the kids eating well. It's the first time that I've addressed this as I've become a parent and I'm so passionate about seeing children eat healthily. You need to start young so that you can start with healthy habits.

Monica: Absolutely! As an Italian for me food is at the essence of everything!

Joe: I love it.

Monica: This is a mum and child friendly book, with a lovely layout and pictures of you and Indie.

On your YouTube channel, during the PE lessons, you mentioned travelling a lot.

What countries and food cultures have inspired your recipes?

Joe: I try to introduce food that I also like. I weaned very quickly on food like pasta, Risotto, orzo, linguine and spaghetti to the kids so you can have these lovely meals. My grandmother was Italian. If I had to spend the rest of my life in one place it would be Italy for the food. I really believe that.

Then there's Asian vegetable curry, dahls and lentil stews.

The book is not just about one culture, really. It's more about the food I love. ▶

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I wanted to try Indian food with Indra and I noticed that she has become an adventurous eater so I constantly challenge her with new spices, flavours. I want to push the boundaries so children can eat real food, not always baby food. We can give them a broad variety of food, also roasted vegetables.

Indie is definitely a good eater as I have been persistent in my approach, which is what I am trying to show in my book.

Monica: Joe, you definitely look like an Italian.

Joe: My grandmother is Italian and my grandfather was Spanish.

Monica: You look very Mediterranean.

What's your favourite recipe from this book?

Joe: My favourite meal, I would say in terms of simplicity, is the Caribbean spicy curry, a good one for both adults and kids. It has a lovely flavour. You can remove the chicken and add peppers or other veggies to turn it into a vegetarian dish.

Monica: When I came to London 22 years ago, I did not think that I would fall in love with curry recipes. Coming back to weaning Indie, I've seen her eating snacks very independently.

How did you manage her to become so confident?

Joe: She just likes food and I make a point in the book that it is important for the kids to see you preparing the food, cooking it and stay together. I talk about creating a calm environment. Sitting down together and demonstrating how you eat with the fork and knife makes a huge difference to your children.

Monica: Many children, like my son, although they've been brought up with healthy food, they seem to be fussy eaters.

Would you maybe suggest that some of the recipes in your book are for older children to learn how to enjoy themselves?

Joe: Fussy eating happens because it is easy to give in and offer alternatives, so you do that and children respond to that by pushing the food away and say no until you bring what they really like. We never offer alternatives, we really stick to what we have prepared, we stick to our guns and we say: "Look, I know you don't want to eat it now, I'll bring it back in one hour's time".

Then we try again and nine times out of ten she would take her food.

In the book there is a section which is 12-month plus and there are lovely recipes like lamb and lentils, shepherd's pie with potato mash, chicken and mushroom burgers, lovely chicken curry, Thai green curry, falafel black beans.

All these are very good for anyone as they have lots of veggies and it's a great way of getting the children to eat them with their family. Lamb kofta with cous-cous is another one of my favourites. That's really good for a barbecue.

The book is mainly for babies but also for families. Look at this one, the chicken and mushroom burgers.

Monica: What is your parenting style? You seem like a super fun dad!

Joe: I like to be involved and I like to have fun and take my kid on bike rides.

I want to be present! Although I am an entrepreneur and I work really hard, I still put my phone down and I spend time with my children and my favourite time of the day is night time to do the bath and bed routine. I love reading to Indie. We read so many small books every day, two or three, like the short Gruffalo's. It really has a massive impact and I've never had that as a kid so I want to be a good patient dad and I'm learning to do that every day.

Monica: I love watching Indie coming to do the ballerina moves during the PE with Joe classes online. You have entered all these homes every day and become part of our families. I never even liked online classes before but during lockdown we have been forced to do everything online.

I am thinking, what are we going to do in the future when this is going to be finished? You should continue.

Joe: Oh, thank you. To do it forever!

Monica: People love you so much now that I am sure they want you to continue.

Joe: I haven't thought about when to stop it all together and I want to keep doing it.

Monica: Great news! It's good to know that you have been enjoying it as much as the public.

What's your main motivation to stay fit and healthy?

How can teenagers, who tend to lose interest quickly, regain it?

Joe: I think it is important to keep doing it together, modelling, trying to have fun. I am trying to make kids having fun with quizzes and fancy dresses. It's about engaging rather than forcing it. It's about showing how it makes you feel, it's all about mental health. When you are a teenager you are very emotional, you are up and down. With exercise you can really control to feel more positive on the day. When Indie will be a bit older, I will try to keep exercising with her and hopefully she will get in to that and hopefully she'll continue on her own and she'll enjoy it.

Monica: Now that you are the officially most beloved PE teacher in the world, what are you up to next? I am sure brands will fight to have you on board to be their ambassador but at the core, what do you want to do? What is in your heart? What is your passion?

Joe: This school project has been a four-year journey. I've been trying so hard, visiting schools, getting TV and radio to support me but nothing did it so quickly like these daily PE lessons. Now I have really achieved what I knew I was going to achieve. I dreamt about this, I manifested it. I thought it would have taken me ten years, it's taken me seven weeks, as it has just been exploding online through YouTube. But my ambition is to continue this legacy. How can I make sure that families like yourself, keep this up and want to continue? I need to generate content, on my free online platform. There could be an online platform including regular workouts. I don't want to give up on this dream.

It has got potential to live beyond me. There could be a platform where you can tap in and have a lot of content and workouts, a resource for parents and schools to keep their kids active. All my energy, effort and passion is going to young people's fitness. This is really the next step for PE with Joe, I suppose.

Monica: I'm very pleased because I will continue doing it every day even beyond my other social sporting commitments. ▶



WEAN IN 15

up-to-date advice and 100 quick recipes

by Joe Wicks

Hardback – £16.99

The all-you-need-to-know weaning guide for modern parents from Joe Wicks, Britain's favourite healthy cook

Joe Wicks is Britain's favourite healthy cook. He is also the author of *Lean in 15 – The Shift Plan* and several other cookery books. He is also the BBC Children in Need Schools' Ambassador. Throughout this journey, Joe has worked with Charlotte Stirling-Reed, a Registered Nutritionist specialising in maternal and infant nutrition, to ensure that every piece of advice he gives his readers is evidence based and safe. Charlotte has helped Joe to find confidence in the weaning process and explore new flavours and textures with Indie to make the food as exciting and nutritious as possible. In this book with Joe, she shares all the up to date research and NHS guidelines on weaning, so that parents can be armed with what they need to set their child up for a lifetime of healthy eating.

Wean in 15 includes everything you need to take your baby from breastfeeding, through first foods, to enjoying family mealtimes. Joe draws from his experience of weaning his daughter Indie and working with a leading registered nutritionist to create the most comprehensive baby bible for modern parents. Weaning can be a daunting prospect, but Joe cuts through all of the confusing information and shares the simple trustworthy knowledge that he's found so helpful.



Whether you're a first-time parent or not, this book guides you towards getting the best for your little one, from figuring out when to start weaning and how much food your child needs, to adapting your own meals into purées and finger foods. Joe knows how difficult it can be to manage your time, so he also shows you how to prep like a boss with shopping lists and freezable items.

With one hundred tasty recipes split into age stages, expert help with nutrients, allergies, supplements and fussy eaters, as well as knowing how to understand your child's signals, this is the only weaning guide you will ever need to lay the foundation for a lifetime of healthy, happy eating.



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**FREE
CAKES**

FOR KIDS GROUP – FULHAM

"We make a difference,
one cake at a time"

By Monika Butkute

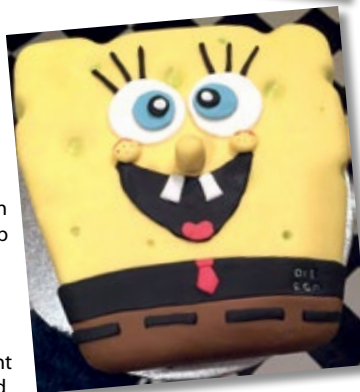
Free Cakes for Kids Fulham is a new group that was set up in May. We are part of the Free Cakes for Kids UK organization which was founded in 2008 by Henriette Lundgren in Oxford and has since grown to nearly 60 volunteer groups around the country. It is a movement of local volunteers and community groups, who share the simple belief that every child deserves a birthday cake no matter what their circumstances. So we bake birthday and celebration cakes for families who find it difficult to provide a birthday cake for their child for reasons such as financial hardship or illness.

All cakes are baked 100% by volunteers, who operate locally and independently in their own private kitchens. Our cakes are homemade and delicious, usually featuring the child's favourite theme and colours such as their favourite football team, Disney princesses or Cartoon character. We do this because we love baking and are passionate about our communities.

"We bake cakes for families in need. A single birthday cake may not end poverty or hunger, but it will make a huge difference to the birthday child and their families. We believe in a caring community built on trust, compassion, and support" - Free Cakes For Kids UK shared value.

Free Cakes for Kids Fulham is a growing community. We are working to secure more referral partners and are looking to recruit some more enthusiastic and talented volunteer bakers to bake the cakes for children in the area who might not otherwise have a birthday cake to celebrate their birthday.

In the first month on setting up the group we have agreed a referral partnership with Hammersmith and Fulham Foodbank, Crosslight advice and recruited four volunteers, but this is just a beginning of our group and we are working to connect with more organizations and generous bakers in Fulham.



For all enquiries please contact the
Administrator Monika Butkute
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Planet Mermaid Supports WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation



Planet Mermaid, the UK's number one market leader in children's and adults 100% swimmable mermaid tails has joined forces with WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, the leading global charity dedicated to the protection of whales, dolphins and porpoises, to launch a 2021 calendar and "The Mermaid Challenge" Big Splash swim.

"The Mermaid Challenge, launched by WDC as part of its Big Splash Swim programme, is open to all ages. All you have to do is swim as far as you can in your mermaid/merboy tail – if you haven't got one, go to www.planetmermaid.com and quote WDC10 to receive a 10% discount when you buy one. You can do your BIG Splash Swim challenge anywhere and when it suits you – even on holiday! Swim on your own or your pod (friends, family, colleagues or swimming club). To find your nearest swim school or for any other information on "The Mermaid Challenge", contact events@planetmermaid.com.

WDC defends these remarkable creatures against the many threats they face through campaigns, lobbying, advising governments, conservation projects, field research and rescue all over the world. Their vision is a world where every whale, dolphin and porpoise is safe and free.

Planet Mermaid's founder Magdalena Jovanovic comments "we are so excited to be working with such a wonderful charity and contribute towards the fantastic work they do globally to ensure these amazing creatures are protected for generations to come".

Planet Mermaid are also running a 2021 calendar completion open to any mermaid or merboy from 3 – 14 years and Planet Mermaid are donating a % of calendar sales to this fantastic cause. The entry closing

date is 4pm on the 20th August and full terms and conditions can be found at www.planetmermaid.com

"This is such an exciting project for Planet Mermaid" Magdalena comments "It is the first calendar of its kind and a must for any mermaid or shark lover! To any fan having the opportunity to be part of its making is a dream come true and for us to produce a calendar full of mermaid and shark fans is just mermaizing. We have already had such an overwhelming entry response and cannot wait to sit down and judge them all!"

Community and Events Fundraising Manager, Sharon Stevenson said "We are honoured that Planet Mermaid has chosen to support WDC's work through the sale of what promises to be a colourful and eye-catching calendar and for offering one of WDC's young supporters the chance to appear on it too." Never has it been such an important time to appreciate what our amazing planet has to offer and having fun in the process only makes it more amazing!

Planet Mermaid design and create mermaid swimwear, accessories and 100% swimmable mermaid tails in multiple sizes and suitable for ages 3 to 103! All tails are designed and manufactured within the UK. Planet Mermaid has also expanded with the recent launch of "Mermaid Wave Swim School" where classes, located nationwide, are designed to give you water confidence and an understanding of how to use your mermaid tail safely in water.



Planet
Mermaid



MY ROCK STAR ADVENTURE

How music therapy gets me through middle-life crisis

By Monica Costa

During the pandemic lockdown this year, the ONE thing I have missed the most was rehearsing with my band and performing at live gigs. Over the past three months, I have written a few songs (a first for me!), I have created the London Mums choir thanks to the advice of the wonderful vocal coach to the stars Cece Sammy and I have performed my own song with musicians at the park. I even sung my own song Love is easy for BBC London.

My rock star adventure started with 'dream maker' Richard Coulson from The Rock & Roll Recruits who put together the band Devil Soul so I could tick 'singing in a rock band' off my bucket list of things to do before I die. Making music gives me great energy and bond time with friends, fans and fellow rockers. I am living the dream! Judging from the fun I have singing and playing with talented musicians, I should have been a rock star instead of a writer.

I am loving every second of this musical adventure and I won't stop! I enjoy hanging out in the dressing room at The Half Moon Putney – where we usually perform live – thinking of The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Slade and David Bowie who were there before me! I never want the gigs to finish. When I am on stage, time flies.

My vocal coaches have helped me a lot through my journey. I have also received lots of support from my friends who really believed in me and kept motivating me throughout even when I had self-doubts. My friend Vincenzo Albano has become my personal rock photographer who has professionally immortalised those precious moments.



I am not a rock star, of course, but simply someone who really enjoys music and uses rock as therapy. Apparently being in a rock band has the same neurological effect to our brain of meditation. I just have a blast singing rock music with super gifted musicians in front of a friendly crowd. Every time I am on stage anywhere I cannot get enough of the adrenaline flowing through my body and always wish we had more songs to play to make it last longer.

I can say it has been the best experience in my life so far in terms of enrichment, excitement, fulfilment. I would recommend it to anybody who feels demotivated, depressed and lonely.

Honestly, I did not know I was going to be a natural until I was on that stage last July 2019. It's been a discovery for me too.

Life's too short to miss out on the good stuff. Making live music is certainly one of the most exciting things I have ever done in my entire life. I'll keep going. It's too nice to stop now. I'll rock my way to my senior years to beat middle life crisis.

Check out these brilliant videos created by vocal coach Cece Sammy, who has helped me with my confidence through a video call and her brilliant book called If you can speak you can sing.

Having used music to overcome her personal adversity, CeCe Sammy (celebrity vocal coach seen of The X Factor and The Voice) has partnered with psychologist Kaiaren Cullen to create tips on how families can use music to tackle the stress that can come with isolation. She has created free workshops

for anyone to follow on YouTube to help de-stress families across the country.

CeCe has long advocated the use of musical therapy techniques to help people overcome adversity, stemming from her personal recovery from a brain aneurysm, which left her unable to speak or breathe independently. She believes music played a vital role in her recovery, as whilst recuperating in the hospital, she saw a direct correlation between music and an increase in her mental and physical stimulation.

CeCe carries out a school and charity programme where she uses music to improve wellbeing and confidence in teachers, children and young adults. She now wants to share this with the nation via workshops that will cover a range of topics, expertly crafted to improve your mood. This will include:

- The power of breath exercises – rehabilitation through breathing
- Song and stretch – stick on your favourite song and get moving by stretching and singing along
- Music as inspiration

London Mums followed Cece's tips and went on to sing Imagine by John Lennon on a virtual collaboration choir which was recently covered by BBC London. Check this out on the London Mums YouTube channel!



Vocal Coach Cece Sammy

Photos of Devil Soul band by Vincenzo Albano



THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES

CHATting TO THE UK'S SOUL LEGENDS WHO ARE BACK WITH A 30TH ANNIVERSARY FUNK EP

By Monica Costa

Summer/Autumn 2020 londonmumsmagazine.com

In a fun zoom chat, single dad Simon Bartholomew, the undisputed Funk Guitar master and member of multi-platinum UK soul legends The Brand New Heavies, talks about single parenting, home-schooling during lockdown, and his new 30th Anniversary Funk EP going back to the band's roots.

Can it really be 30 years since The Brand New Heavies' debut album first strutted its way into the public eye with a romantic's heart, a hedonist's spirit and a Superfly sensibility? May 1990 The Brand New Heavies released 'that blue album' and with it came a winning formula which would go on to earn them 16 top 40 hits and three million worldwide album sales not to mention two UK Platinum albums. Emerging at the heart of the Acid Jazz scene, their self-titled 1990 debut made an instant impact with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic and over the last three decades the band have not let up releasing enduring classics such as You Are The Universe, Midnight At The Oasis & Dream Come True to name but a few.

To celebrate these 30 years The Brand New Heavies have released a limited edition 7-inch vinyl, the first 7-inch since Stay This Way came out in 1992. The 7-inch contains the vocal performances of both Beverley Knight and N'Dea Davenport on Beautiful and Getaway respectively and as well as this they've put together a digital only extended player featured unreleased tracks from TBNH plus some wonderful 'club ready' remixes.

Not only that but The Brand New Heavies have unleashed a new digital EP The Funk going back to their roots with three tracks recorded at the sessions for the TBNH album.

I don't think I have ever laughed so much during a Zoom interview before. Simon Bartholomew, co-founder of The Brand New Heavies, is the funniest and most charming musician on the planet. Not only he seems to be the one who keeps up the mood within the band, but even discussing parenting he jokes around. Such a lovely guy!

Q: How have you spent your lockdown?

Simon: I've been writing music and done media interviews. It's been a nice time to think about life without having to be somewhere all the time, without hectic schedules and hard deadlines. I am a single dad with two kids (8 and 10) with me 50% of the time. I'm self-employed, so I either work at home or I'm on the road with the band. I'm working very hard all the time. I have had the kids a lot during the

lockdown and handling their routine was intense. You make breakfast. Then you wash up. You do some home-schooling and then, with two kids, it's pretty much lunchtime and outdoor entertainment. In no time it's dinner again. By the end of the week, it's really tiring.

Q: What have you missed the most during lockdown?

Simon: I missed going to the pub down the road and have a beer and a chat or just sitting around other people. It's the simplest things, at the end of the day, that I missed the most. I got quite depressed one week and I didn't see anyone on the screen either. I was getting on with work at my house and I was always busy, but it's just the not being near other people that upset me. It's not really natural. I've missed the shows and live concerts.

Monica: We needed some sort of going back to basics to start realising and appreciating important things such as meeting people in the park, playing the guitar with friends and doing stuff that we've given for granted. Now we're starting appreciating the basics again, like when we used to live in the Seventies and Eighties when we just didn't have phones.

Q: What inspires your music writing?

Simon: I write songs in many different ways. Sometimes I get together with the band and just jam as a funky group. It doesn't always start with the lyrics. Other times you might write something on your own and bring it to the band. Everyone plays their style on it. What you find is instead of getting someone else to arrange the songs, you just take your songs to the band and jam together.

Our fans' feedback from fans is very positive. Most of them said that our songs have helped them get through really tough times. Our classic songs are especially uplifting as Funk can be. Our general energy or message is one of positivity. ▶





Q: What is your favourite song of all the tracks you've written?

Simon: I'm going to ask you that question when you've written like 30 songs. Cause it's very hard to say.

Q: Fair enough. I take that, but there must be a song that audiences always like more.

Simon: I see a gig as a show. We will slow the pace down and build it up again. It's like going to the theatre. You need the whole play to tell the full story. What's your favourite bit of a book? You know what? Let's take the rest of the book out and just read that chapter.

Q: How has the music scene changed for you over your 30 years career?

Simon: The early days of the Nineties had been a time of the big record deal. Then you used to tour to sell a record, but now you tour to make money, and the record is there to get you on the road.

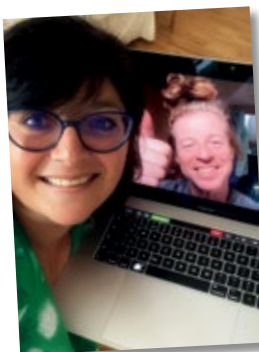
It's good to see all these big record companies rendered powerless now, because once upon a time they controlled everything. Now anyone can put a record out and get a deal, if they're good.

These days if you have GarageBand on your computer, you can make a

record in five minutes, and anyone can write words down. So, it's a revolution in that way. There's so much stuff out there now.

We reached the peak of our popularity with our album 'Brother Sister', released in 1994, along with 'Shelter', our 1997 release. We did not want to be cool or sound like American funk acts at that time. Our priority was to come up with true Funk. I want to believe that we did that.

Three decades after it all started, I believe that we are not only in our best shape again, but with this new album entitled 'TBNH', we are getting ready for our 'The Funk is Back' tour which will hopefully commence soon.




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AUTUMN IN TUSCANY

At Villa Radicata

By Rita Kobrak

Villa Radicata – your perfect, private Italian holiday home immersed in nature and the ideal place to tickle your tastebuds this Autumn and sample some genuine Italian cuisine. Tuscany in Autumn is a kaleidoscope of colours, emotions and flavours. If you haven't managed to go abroad this year, Autumn is the perfect time to visit Tuscany, as the weather is still good and most towns have food festivals at this time of the year with tastings and stalls where you can taste and buy good quality local products to bring home. This is the time of cold-pressed olive oils, wines, chestnuts, mushrooms, honey and truffles.

The last two weeks of October hold the chestnut festival in Caprese Michelangelo, birthplace of artist Michelangelo Buonarroti. This medieval town and castle form the backdrop of stalls selling all sorts of crafts and local food and drink such as mulled wine, the famous castagnaccio (a delicious chestnut cake), doughnuts, cheeses (try the pear pecorino which you can only find in Tuscany), chestnuts in grappa, local honey and handmade chocolates. There are also locally produced olive oils and olive oil face creams and soaps plus wooden crafts and furniture. Close by the hilltop town of Anghiari, voted one of the most beautiful towns in Tuscany, hosts the "centogusti" festival (100 flavours festival) whereby the whole town becomes a food and wine tasting set with the backdrop of medieval towers and magnificent hills.

www.holiday-villa-in-tuscany.com

For Villa Radicata rentals

Tel 0778 5571292 or 0039 3495018679

Closest airport Perugia or Florence.



Villa Radicata is a family friendly villa and hosts cooking and yoga breaks and self-catering stays throughout the year and can also organise wine tastings, visits to olive mills, catering and tours in the area.



Castagnaccio Recipe – Tuscan Chestnut cake









Ingredients

Doses for 30 x 20 centimetre (12 x 8 inch) baking pan

Soak the raisins and toast the pine nuts in a pan.

Sift the chestnut flour and add a pinch of salt and the sugar. As chestnut flour is already sweet, very little sugar is needed. Add 2 tbsp of good quality olive oil and the water slowly, stirring or whisking all the time so that the mix is smooth. Add half the nuts and raisins. Pour into the baking tin and top with the rest of the nuts, raisins and some rosemary.

Bake at 180 degrees for 35 minutes. Let it cool down and Enjoy with a glass of Tuscan red wine.

-  300 g (10,5 oz) of chestnut flour
-  380 g (13,5 oz) of cold water
-  2 tablespoons of sugar (optional)
-  2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
-  40 g (1,5 oz) of raisins
-  40 g (1,5 oz) of pine nuts
-  40 g (1,5 oz) of walnut kernels
-  2 sprigs of rosemary
-  1 pinch of salt



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MUMS AND BABIES LOVE VILLA PIA IN TUSCANY

Our all-inclusive family villa offers a home away from home and a proper break for mums!

Villa Pia is a spacious 17-bedroom residence, formerly a 15th century manor house with converted barn, that provides an idyllic escape for families. The award-winning villa is in Lippiano, a charming village right on the border of Umbria and Tuscany (closest airport Perugia). Described as 'heaven on earth' by guests who return year after year, Villa Pia boasts sun-soaked communal courtyards, five acres of grounds to explore, and breath-taking views of the Italian landscape.

On site, you'll find adult and child swimming pools (heated year-round), tennis courts, table tennis, trampoline, kids' playroom with books and toys, children's play area with swings, rides and slides, and soft play. You can leave excess baby equipment at home as Villa Pia provides baby monitors, high chairs, cots, baby food and bottle-warming, plus on-site babysitting.

Villa Pia was named one of the Top 20 Family Summer Holidays in Europe by *The Guardian newspaper* in February 2018, especially recommended for their 'epic feasts of pasta and Tuscan fare'. You will never run out of food or drink as the villa provides all-inclusive catering, for all tastes including vegan, organic, gluten-free and other 'free from' diets. The food at Villa Pia has been described as 'out of this world'.

The complimentary breakfasts, delicious lunches, afternoon cakes and fantastic 4-course dinners are all cooked from scratch with fresh ingredients by Villa Pia's beloved chefs. Enjoy communal dining in the courtyard or the dining room. Guests also have free access to the fridge for yoghurt, juices and milk, as well as to the bar for a refreshing beer, wine or aperitif.

At Villa Pia, you can book cookery classes for kids to make their own pasta, pizza and sweet treats. Adults

can also learn from the chefs to whip up fresh pasta dishes, tiramisu and other Italian delicacies. Spoil yourself after with a massage or beauty treatment. Or why not try one of their art classes? Villa Pia hosts regular retreats with various companies offering anything from yoga to writing to philosophy lectures. The villa's popular Wildflower/ Gardening and Escape Painting Holidays retreats inspire guests to hone their creative talents, in the home of the Renaissance. This is also a wonderful location for family celebrations including anniversaries, birthdays and weddings.

You will never want to leave the villa! However, if you wish to venture further afield, it's easy to take a day trip to nearby historic sites and influential cities like Pisa, Siena and Florence.

Testimonials

'Remember my ever-thwarted-by-children dream of lying on a sun lounger with a book and a G and T? Well, sorry-not-sorry but it actually happened, and I didn't have to abandon my kids or enrol them in a kids club to achieve it.' – Rebecca Schiller (Charlotte Philby blog)

Coronavirus advice for travellers: In these unprecedented times, Villa Pia would like to assure our guests that we are taking extra measures to ensure you feel safe and comfortable throughout your stay. Our renewed commitment to the wellbeing of our visitors includes an enhanced deep cleaning regime and a reduced intake of guests to comply with social distancing guidelines. Please visit the website at villapia.com/coronavirus for our latest health and travel statement.



'...the idyllic 15th-century Villa Pia's two swimming pools, sand pit, trampoline and indoor soft play, plus kids' cookery and art classes, mean the nippers will barely notice you're MIA, snoozing on the terrace with an Aperol spritz.' – The Guardian

'Every evening we enjoy a fantastic five-course feast along a long table with a wood burner blazing in the corner. The beer and wine flow freely, the sun shines every day and there is no washing up to do. Truly we have found the big rock candy mountains – but with a lot of culture thrown in.' – Tom Hodgkinson, (The Idler magazine)

'When I told a friend I was going to 'some kiddie-friendly place in Umbria', she said: 'You're not going to Villa Pia are you?' in the sort of hushed, reverential tone normally reserved for religious idolatry. This is the effect the hotel has on in-the-know breeders. Its online testimonials heave with grateful parents proclaiming: 'I actually had a holiday!' – Absolutely Kensington Magazine

Discount offer

Set on the Umbria/Tuscany border, Villa Pia is a spacious 17-bedroom converted barn that offers an idyllic break for families with young children. Sun-soaked courtyards, five acres of grounds to explore, heated adult and child swimming pools, and stunning views of the Italian landscape.

There's on-site babysitting, baby monitors, high chairs, baby food, tennis courts, trampoline, children's indoor and outdoor play areas, plus art and cookery classes for kids (and parents), massage and beauty treatments. Made with love by their Italian cooks, the food at Villa Pia has been described as 'out of this world'.

The villa provides all-inclusive catering (including vegan and other 'free from' diets) with food, beer and wines on tap! To discover more about Villa Pia and snap up one of their fabulous early-bird holiday offers, visit www.villapia.com for further details and booking enquiries.

Quote discount code **LONDONMUMS** for a £100 discount from off-peak bookings.
For bookings contact us at
+39 075 850 2027 or villapia@villapia.com



Everything is paw-sible in family movie *Think Like a Dog*

By Monica Costa

*Editor Monica Costa goes behind the scenes of **Think Like a Dog**, the perfect summer holiday treat for the whole family, with director and writer Gil Junger (who made **10 Things I Hate About You** starring Heath Ledger).*



Have you ever wished you could talk to your pet? I have. Well, anything is paw-sible this summer as Josh Duhamel and Megan Fox star in *Think Like a Dog*, the whimsical fast-paced family comedy about a boy, his dog, paw-some pups and the science project that will change all their lives forever.

Twelve-year-old whizz-kid Oliver is a tech prodigy who accidentally creates a telepathic connection between him and his furry best friend Henry when his middle school science fair experiment goes awry. The new bond brings Oliver and Henry even closer together, as they join forces to solve problems at school and begin to rekindle his parents (Josh Duhamel, Megan Fox) marriage, with hilarious consequences.

But when a cyber-businessman (Kunal Nayyar) arrives on the scene who will stop at nothing to get hold of the breakthrough technology, Oliver and Henry are going to need the help of a crack team of adorable pooches to save the day...

Q: When you put animals in a film crew mix, something unexpected always happens. Can you tell me some behind-the-scenes on the filming of *Think like a dog*?

Gil: After auditioning at least 200 dogs, I met the dog who is now in the movie and as soon as he walked up to me I thought "ok, that's the dog". As soon as Gabriel met the dog, I knew we were in good hands because he is very loving. He immediately responded to the dog and the dog immediately responded to him. The dogs were so impeccably trained by animal trainer Sarah Clifford that I knew exactly where I needed the dogs to be sit and move in the house. I started giving guidance and instructions three months before we started shooting. Not only was the dog just incredibly trained. When I approached this movie, I did not really want to make a kid's or a dog's movie. I wanted to make an emotionally satisfying movie that would entertain kids and speak to adults. That's why the parents saw their issues and problems and relationships were portrayed very realistically. The emotional message of the movie is to take your time, slow down, simplify your life. And if you come from a place of gratitude, you'll recognise actually how much love there is in your world. I told the trainers, I didn't want this to look like a typical dog movie. I really wanted to illustrate a connection between this boy and his dog. What they did, which was really smart, is the instant Gabriel Bateman who played the ball, was onset and he

arrived for rehearsals. They had him spend every free moment with that dog. I don't mean 15 minutes here, 20 minutes there. I mean, if he was not on set rehearsing, he needed to be with that dog. He even took the dog home and was with that dog 24/7 for the first, entire month of the movie. The dog genuinely created a bond with Gabriel. When you see some of the scenes, when they sleep together so cuddly, you feel there's a real bond. That was a beautiful scene. It's tricky to keep a dog in that position to shoot because the camera was mounted directly above them. That's just how they were. Behind the scenes, there really wasn't any crazy shenanigans. Josh Duhamel and Megan Fox agreed to be part of this because they genuinely loved the message of the film.

The message that the key to happiness in life can be found in love and family is so topical especially after spending four months isolated in quarantine. We've learned to live more simplistic lifestyles, less complicated. As the dog in the movie says, humans create and use all this technology, but then they haven't learned the secret to be happy.

I wrote this film long before this pandemic hit and I was going through divorce.

Q: To cope with the divorce, was making this movie a bit cathartic for you? ►





Gil: A couple of things happened at the same time, which caused me to write the movie. And then writing the movie of course was somewhat cathartic. Three years ago shortly after the divorce, I started seeing a spiritual psychologist and I've been to plenty of therapy. I am a happier man now than I've ever been in my life by four.

The core reason is that I stopped running from myself and trying to prove to myself that I was a good father, that I was smart and successful. I was always looking for the answers outside of myself. Now I appreciate who I am and the man that I am. It's a little thing called self-love. My life has changed in every regard. My relationship with my children flourished, my relationship with myself and with my girlfriend flourished. It was just all of a sudden and I was looking at life through a different lens. I'm just grateful and it has impacted everything in my life.

It is part of this journey that I used to tell this story because I believe it. It also started from a real thing, which my divorce. I was in my bedroom crying, without making any noise. Just my eyes were watering. And I was just brutally sad. At the time I had a Golden Retriever and he was snapping on the bed. What a dog! He was sleeping on the bedroom floor

and I was putting on my sneakers with tears in my eyes. All of a sudden, he looked at me, he jumped onto the bed and licked my tears. It was so sweet. It was so powerful. There was such an obvious emotional connection based on purity. When I looked at him and his tail was wagging, I realised that this dog was happy every single day. That is when I came up with the idea for the film, because literally what makes them happy is love.

Monica: German philosopher Schopenhauer once said that people who have never experienced the love of a dog, they've never experienced love at all.



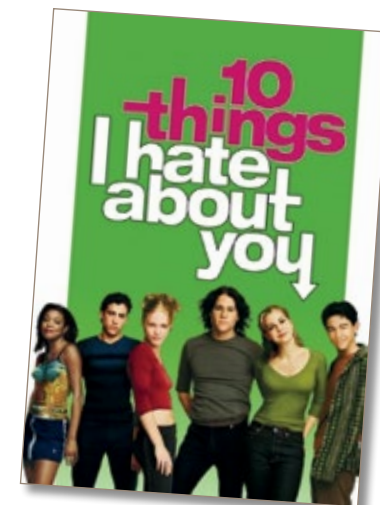
Gil: I just love dogs for their purity. They are just simple, loving animals. They just want to be close to you, they want to please you. They want adoration – they want to be loved. For me, during times in my life when I've suffered sadness, it is incredible how a dog I find is so comforting. I'm proud of the film that I made. It's a very sweet family film. I have used the device of a dog to portray an emotionally resonant message so that kids wouldn't even realise they're getting a message. Kids would just think they're being entertained. It is the perfect movie for families in this complicated upside-down world, we're living in.

Monica: I am a huge fan of Heath Ledger and you are the director who discovered him at 17 and offered him the lead in your movie '10 things I hate about you'. You seem to have a great talent for finding rising stars because you have also found 13-year-old Gabriel Bateman who is extraordinary in 'Think like a dog'.

Gil: I'm going to tell you an anecdote that links Heath with Gabriel. When casting for the main male teenager in '10 things I hate about you', three weeks before starting shooting I still had no male lead and it was a terrifying moment because I could not start filming without the perfect kid. I remember being in one room with Disney casting people reading all these teenagers when an executive introduced the next kid from Australia, who had not done much. As soon as I saw him I literally thought 'If this kid can read, this is it!'. That kid was Heath Ledger who had such energy and confidence. He was a very sexy calm old soul with an incredible presence. He had come from Australia just for my audition. He sat down and we started reading 8 pages. By the end of the first page I asked him to stop because it was clear to me that he could read. Then we did a 30 seconds improv to see if he could follow my lead and when I told him that we were done, he

looked at me but he was shaking. I told him 'You are a very talented young man'. I stood up as he left, the door closed behind him, and I told the casting staff that I had never wanted to sleep with a man in my life, but if I had to that would be him. At just 17 Heath Ledger had an overwhelming sexuality and talent that are rare to find.

Similarly, three weeks away from shooting 'Think like a dog' I still had not found the child male lead although 100 boys already auditioned for the part. When Gabriel came to my house to read he showed such emotional intelligence, star quality and raw talent that I said to our casting director 'I think we have found the next Heath Ledger'.



Think Like a Dog is on Digital Download & DVD from Lionsgate UK NOW!



CLEANIN' UP THE TOWN REMEMBERING GHOSTBUSTERS

By Monica Costa



Cleanin' up the town: Remembering Ghostbusters is the ultimate behind-the-scenes documentary that showcases the making of the original 1984 Ghostbusters and pays a lovely tribute to the whole creative team and cast behind today's global phenomenon. *Cleanin' up the town: Remembering Ghostbusters* blu-ray is released in UK by Screenbound (RRP £14.99) and available on Amazon and Zavvi. It's a MUST-HAVE Blu-Ray for fans and cinema goers as well as for curious children and teenagers who want to find out how special effects were made in the '80s – which were much more mechanical than these days. *Cleanin' up the town: Remembering Ghostbusters* is THE documentary that will bring families together to remember a franchise that has changed the world of filmmaking.

With the original film having made a lasting impact since childhood, director Anthony Bueno has assembled a comprehensive documentary featuring interviews with director Ivan Reitman, and lead cast Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis and Ernie Hudson. Additionally, it hallmarks the extraordinary achievements made by cast and crew working in visual effects era before the game-changing Jurassic Park.

The whole Ghostbusters' franchise is funny, scary at times, and has excellent lead actors. This documentary is perfectly timed, just ahead of the release of *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* – the 4th movie – on 5 March 2021 starring Paul Rudd among the brilliant cast including Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd who will reprise their roles from the original films.

Cleanin' up the town: Remembering Ghostbusters has been 12 years in the making. To retain creative control the Buenos self-financed the documentary. Eight years into the project they launched a Kickstarter campaign to help boost funding. The crowd funder succeeded, and unexpectedly allowed for the Ghostbusters community to have greater inclusivity to the beloved franchise.

This documentary is clearly a labour of love and has high production values. Capturing all these details and anecdotes about how a successful ghost comedy series was made, is a precious testament to the world of filmmaking to be treasured like the movies themselves. Any child watching this now would want to go and binge-watch the movies over and over again for years to come.



**London Mums'
Full 5 star rating**

"Simply Superb!"



Certificate: E, UK, 2019, running time 128 mins

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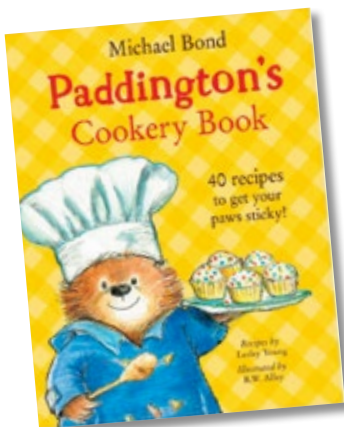
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Cleanin' up the town: Remembering Ghostbusters Blu-Ray

The ultimate behind-the-scenes documentary that showcases the making of the original 1984 Ghostbusters and pays a lovely tribute to the whole creative team and cast behind today's global phenomenon. It's a MUST-HAVE Blu-Ray for Ghostbusters fans and for curious children and teenagers who want to find out how special effects were made in the '80s.

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