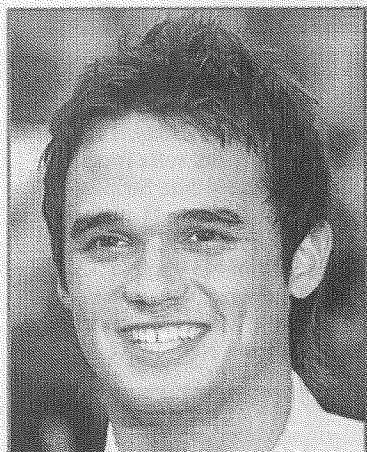


18.06.07

www.metro.co.uk

60 SECOND INTERVIEW



Picture: Getty

■ Gareth Gates came second to Will Young in 2002's Pop Idol then launched a successful career with a cover of Unchained Melody. But Gareth's hits dried up and he lost his record deal. Now he's making a comeback, helped by stammer-free TV appearances, with new album Pictures Of The Other Side out next week. His new single, Angel On My Shoulder, is out today.

Gareth Gates

■ What's the new single about?

It's a song I wrote about my mum. It's about a figure in your life who is there when things go wrong and picks up the pieces. It's about unconditional love.

■ She must be thrilled.

She is, bless her. It's not just about people's mums; it could be about anybody – a partner, a friend.

■ Your last single got to No.14. Were you disappointed?

No. We saw the first single as a way of introducing me again because I'd had a fair amount of time away. We didn't expect too much.

■ You're more involved in writing your songs now. Do you take disappointing chart positions more personally?

No, if I get a bad review I don't take it personally because everyone is entitled to their opinion. I had very little input into what I recorded in the past, so it feels a lot more personal this time.

warm-ups and exercises each morning before I speak. The minute you become complacent is the time when you have difficulties.

■ Do you have to do the exercises every day?

You certainly need to do them every day when you start the course. A few years into the programme, you can enjoy speech more. I achieved a certain level of fluency, so it's hard not to become complacent but that's when you start to have troubles. I need to remind myself that I need to put the work in.

■ Do you know how your stammering started?

I don't know. Often when I'm tired or if I haven't been thinking about my speech it'll catch me off guard. If you're hungover that doesn't help either.

■ Who are you listening to at the moment?

My favourite bands are from the 1970s and '80s – such as Foreigner, bands that used electric drums and big '80s synths. They're the bands I draw my inspiration from. I was born in 1984, so I don't remember them from when I was a kid. My parents listened to that sort of music, so I was brought up with it.

■ Are you and Simon Cowell pals now?

We've never not been friends. We were very close at the beginning. He's a nice guy really. The way that he is on TV is exactly the way he is in real life. There's no falseness about him at all.

[Gareth has been stuttering throughout the interview. It gets so bad he has to take a 15-minute break to practise his breathing exercises so he can talk.]

■ What's the problem with your speech? You've appeared on TV shows recently and seemed to be cured of your stammer.

I'm taking part in a speech therapy course called the McGuire Programme. It isn't a cure, it's something you need to maintain and work on. I get days where I find things more difficult than others. Recently, I've been having days when I'm finding things harder and find myself slipping backwards. It's like an athlete training before he runs, I need to train and do breathing

Dealing with a stammer is like being an athlete in training. I need to do exercises each morning

■ Were you on the booze last night then?

Definitely not, I'm never hungover (laughs).

■ Have you ever said 'Don't you know who I am?' to get into nightclubs?

I've never used that phrase and I never would. I've been with celebrities who have – I'm not going to mention their names – and it comes across as being so arrogant. I'd never do it myself.

■ Do you ever watch Katie And Peter: The Next Chapter and think 'That could have been me?'

(Laughs) No, I've never had those thoughts.

■ Did losing your virginity to Jordan leave you mentally scarred?

No. She's a lovely girl. I got to know her over the course of three months and when you get to know her you learn that she's a nice girl. I don't have a bad word to say about her.

What does Gareth think of The X Factor?
See www.metro.co.uk



Interview: ANDREW WILLIAMS