

# I'M A CELEBRITY GET ME OUT OF HERE...

...THE MEN WHO HAVE BEEN BRAVE  
ENOUGH TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT THE  
TRIALS OF INFERTILITY.

Last year, Anthony McPartlin (more famously known as one half of Ant & Dec) was asked in an interview in the *Radio Times* whether he was waiting for Dec to settle down before he had kids himself. It wasn't necessarily a silly question. The two presenters, who have won the National Television Award for Best Entertainment Presenter 14 years running for shows such as *Britain's Got Talent* and *I'm a Celebrity...*, are inseparable. As well as working together they live next door to each other and revealed to *Radio 4's Desert Island Discs* at the end of last year that they often end up coming home and having supper together too. But Ant, who has been married to make-up artist Lisa Armstrong since 2006, replied candidly to the suggestion that the entertaining Geordie duo might be trying to have kids in sync: "I love that idea, but I'm afraid it's not true. Lisa and I would love to have kids, we're trying. It's tougher than you think when you get a bit older."

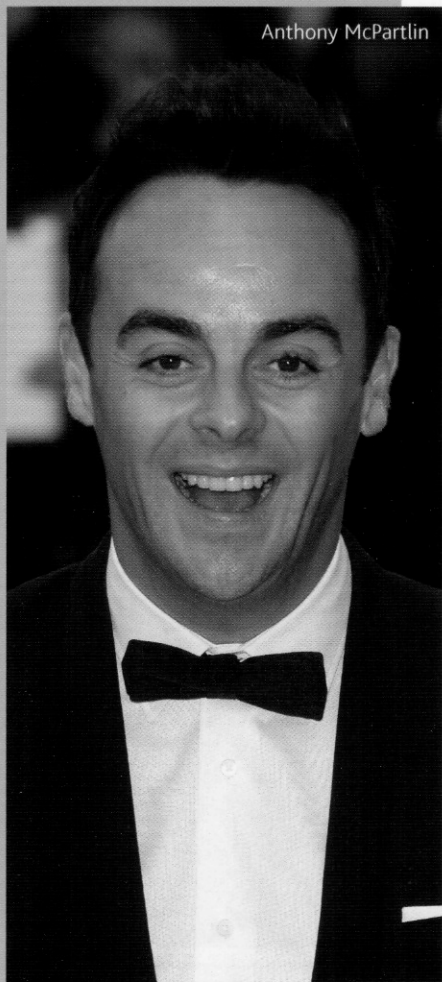
Although Ant didn't say for how long he and Lisa have been attempting to bring a new face into the world, nor offered clues as to whether they've sought help or attempted

assisted conception, it was good to see one of the UK's most famous primetime TV faces acknowledging that making babies doesn't necessarily come easily to everyone. Fertility issues are indiscriminate and invisible. Nobody, not even celebrities, are immune. No matter how much they might want to scream: "I'm a celebrity... get me out of here", this is one bushtucker trial they might not be able to succeed at.

Sadly Ant's honesty has only served to intensify the media's 'baby watch' with regular stories conjecturing that Lisa is finally pregnant. Only last month tabloids claimed that she had been spotted with a 'stomach bulge' and at a romantic dinner with Ant was seen toasting water rather than wine. Let's hope the tabloid press are right. However, this sort of public pressure can't help what, anybody who has been through it will know, is a very private struggle.

Matthew Wright, presenter of the Channel 5 breakfast show *The Wright Stuff* and, coincidentally, a contestant on the last series of *I'm a Celebrity...*, has also been very honest about his own attempts to conceive. In an interview that he and his wife, Amelia Gatte,

Anthony McPartlin



gave to the *Daily Star* just before going into the jungle in November 2013, he disclosed that they had to resort to IVF following an ectopic pregnancy which left them unable to conceive naturally.

Wright revealed that with the help of a private clinic in London's Harley Street they had already undergone three rounds of treatment which had all resulted in miscarriages. Highlighting the heartache that so many couples have to face, he said: "People think of IVF as a miracle that solves everything but the reality is it doesn't. It's very hard to go through it."

It's rare and refreshing to see a man opening up on the subject and, in particular, admitting how difficult it can be when treatment doesn't work out. The male experience is often eclipsed within the fertility journey but the feelings of inadequacy and shame are felt just as deeply by them too. Wright also confessed that even when treatment is unsuccessful it's hard to give up.

The couple had agreed they would undertake a maximum of three attempts and then consider other options, but on leaving the jungle they were going to embark on their fourth.

"Hopefully the next will be successful and we can celebrate two things in 2014," Amelia said, "Matthew being King of the Jungle, and a baby!" Wright was the fourth contestant to be eliminated in the competition and, as yet, there still has been no baby announcement.

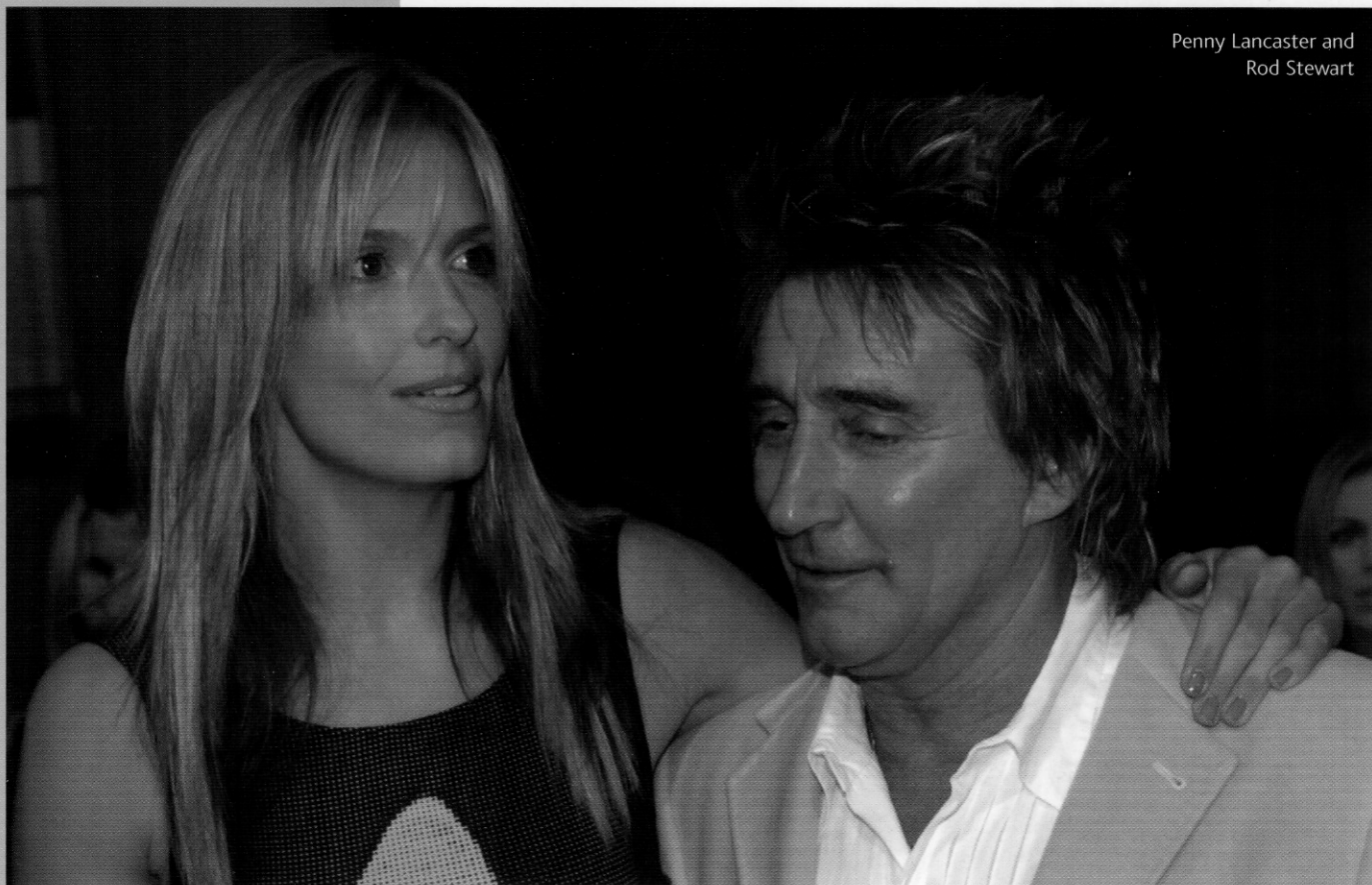
Behind the reports of struggle, there are, of course, also stories of success. It is arguably much easier for men to go public when they are giving a photoshoot for a glossy magazine with their new baby although these are still thin on the ground. Rod Stewart did this back in 2010 speaking in *Hello!* for the first time about his and Penny Lancaster's "IVF battle". After their first child, Alastair, was born the couple tried for several years to give him a brother or sister before seeking help from fertility

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Penny Lancaster and Rod Stewart





specialists in both the UK and America. They finally became pregnant on their third attempt.

The couple said they had been on "an emotional rollercoaster", but had not been prepared to give up. They were also at pains to state that it was not Rod's age that had been the cause of their fertility issues – he was 66 when their baby, Aiden, was born. It does seem unlikely that Rod, who had already fathered seven children, would be the only factor. And with so many older celebrity fathers gracing the pages of magazines and newspapers – including the recent addition to the Simon Cowell talent roster – it appears some men can go on producing children into their sixties or seventies without any issues.

However, according to Consultant Obstetrician Professor Susan Bewley, the accepted medical view is that men are around a decade behind women in the fertility age stakes. A woman's natural fertility decreases rapidly from age 40, and a man's does the same at 50 and beyond.

So although they might not say it, many older celebrity fathers have benefited from fertility treatment. The damage to a man's ego, and particularly the celebrity male ego, in admitting that they might be the cause of fertility issues can be massive so it is an especially brave thing when they do speak out. Statistics indicate that approximately 30 per cent of fertility problems are male factor, and another 30 per cent are likely to be combined male and female factor, yet there are far more stories in the press of famous women admitting to their struggles to conceive than there are men.

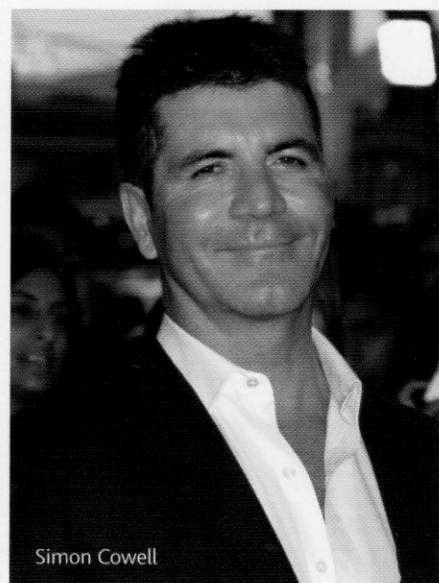
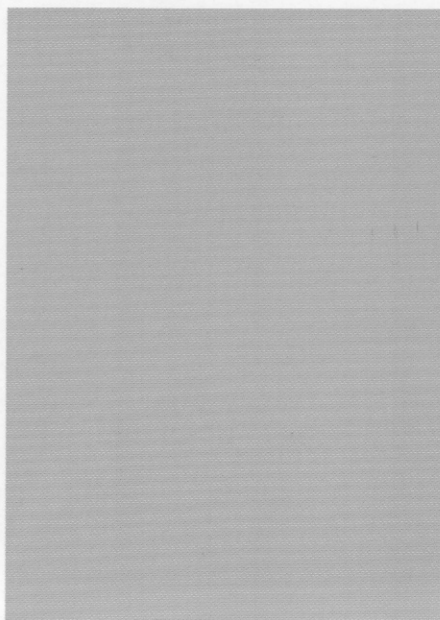
Another couple who have been open about this are chef Gordon Ramsay and his wife Tanya. They have four children, the first three of whom were conceived with IVF (the last was a surprise natural conception). In an article for the *Daily Mail*, Tanya openly admitted that their fertility issues had been a combination of male and female factors: "I suffer from polycystic ovaries and Gordon has a low sperm count, which is probably down to the kitchen - the hours, the stress, the heat," she said. Speaking on his TV programme, *The F-Word*, Gordon corroborated this.

He is certainly not alone. Scientists have been warning for several years that the average male's sperm count is decreasing and with it there has been a corresponding decline in male reproductive health. Both now and in the future many men, are likely to be diagnosed with the same problem. Gordon's openness was exceptional.

There is no doubt that fertility struggles are possibly the worst bushtucker trial of them all. Gordon has long been King of the Kitchen but his honesty on the subject of infertility definitely makes him a potential King of the Jungle.



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Simon Cowell