

the press conference with VIC REEVES

I show Vic Reeves a back issue of Press Gazette, so he knows what this interview is about, and he looks surprised. “Why am I on the cover?” he asks. Quickly taking a closer look, he adds: “Er, no. He’s got a wider face, but he’s a dead ringer. Who is it?” “Andy Coulson,” I reply. “Oh, right. Who’s he then?”

I’ve clearly been suckered by Reeves’ press because I naturally assumed he would be in the media loop. As one of the country’s most popular comic performers (notwithstanding that excruciating appearance in *I’m A Celebrity*), he has certainly gathered enough column inches and ligged at enough showbiz parties to be on nodding terms with newspaper figures. Alas, no.

Reeves has also had his share of scandal publicity, principally when his ex-wife, Sarah, dumped him for their builder, then came back, only to leave him again — for a woman. Cue ménage à trois headlines. Ooh là là. And only last year, he got a Mickey Finn from The Sun to help get him busted for drink-driving.

I take Reeves for lunch at The Heights panoramic restaurant at London’s Saint George’s Hotel. He’s talked out from promoting his autobiography and has a stinking cold, caught from one of his twin girls, who arrived last month, thanks to IVF with second wife, Nancy Sorrell. Reeves, 47, has two other children from his first marriage.

His real name is Jim Moir and Vic is Jim to everyone he knows well. He says I can call him Jim, but then I have to constantly correct myself. It should be easy because you don’t get wacky Vic in an interview, you get Jim, who is low-key, a touch short of hard work to interview. Reeves is a Darlington lad who says it straight, without the need for protracted exchanges or showbiz fakery.

Vic, I mean, Jim, what image would you say people have of you from the press you get? And is a press profile important to you?

Well, yeah, it is important — you have to do it. But I am too old and withered to be really bothered any more. When I first started doing interviews, I was a bit flash. I would talk a load of bollocks, ham it up. Now I am just me and I am quite happy being me. The image I might portray these days is what I am like in real life to a certain degree.

People used to assume that I live a more showbizzy life than I do, that it’s all pink Cadillacs and glittery suits, or that I have a house full of jukeboxes. I am not showbiz at all. I get invited to premieres, but I don’t go to many of them. I would rather go to the pictures locally. You don’t have to go to a champagne reception and listen to speeches. You can just get

your popcorn and wine gums and see the film. But if you go out once to a do and you get photographed and written about, then it is assumed you do that every day, but it might be once a year. People want you to live that luxury life, even though I don’t. I think it is dull. I live in more of an Arran sweater world.

You seem to get followed by the paparazzi a fair bit and there’s always a lot of gossip about you in the papers. Is any of that a problem?

They [the papers] tend to completely invent things. When somebody invents a story, it gets taken on by someone else and it doesn’t matter how many times you say “no, that didn’t happen” — it sticks. If the paparazzi are nice, I am nice back. It’s a bit like being a goldfish when you are followed, but as long as they put a decent photo in, it’s all right. But when they start being rude or papers make things up, I don’t think there is any need for it.

A photographer hung around outside the house for

about a week a few years ago. He had loads of pictures, but would not go away. I said: “You’re being intrusive, why don’t you clear off?” But he wouldn’t. It was very hot, so I got some rice pudding and chucked it into his car. I thought it would start stinking and he would have to go and clean it. As I threw the tin, he put his hand up and got a tiny nick from it. He squeezed the blood out and took a picture of himself and told the coppers I had attacked him with a bit of steel.

In effect, it *was* an attack, but it was just after Diana was killed, so the paparazzi were not that favoured. I explained the situation to the coppers and they were quite happy and said I could go home, but they kept him in overnight. I know he was just doing his job and, with the line of work I am in, you expect it, but there should be limits. You do me a favour and I will do you a favour. I like a nice, peaceful world where everyone gets on. Nancy got five grand once to have pictures taken on a beach with a long lens to look like it was a paparazzi shot, so you can work with them.

Portrait
Becky Nixon





VIC'S NEWS SCHEDULE



Newspapers

We get two papers delivered — *The Independent* for me and *The Sun* for Nancy. I don't know why she gets that, to be honest, but she whips through it in about 30 seconds. *The Independent* is a nice easy read, nicely put together. I am a big obituaries fan. Is that morbid? They are little biographies of someone you would never have thought about before, like some major who was in India or a record producer. I also like the comment pieces, the Pandora diary, and Will Self. I had dinner with Simon Kelner for a piece in *Q&Q*. I sent him a short story for the paper, but have not heard back. Maybe he didn't like it and has binned it. On Sundays, we get *The Independent on Sunday* and *The Sunday Times*. AA Gill is always good for a laugh because he's quite bitter, he doesn't like a lot, but is clever with it. Sometimes we get *The Observer* and the *News of the World* ends up on the pile — for Nancy, of course.

Magazines

I don't go out of my way to buy magazines, but if I'm at a railway station I'll get *Mojo* or *The Word*. *BBC History* mag is great, but you can't buy it everywhere.



Television

I tend to watch TV in the morning and it's *BBC News* for me, but Nancy prefers *GMTV*. You get the pattern here? I like both and I'm quite easily swayed, so I often go along with her.



Radio

I am a Radio 4 man and Nancy is Invicta FM — our local [Kent] station, which has a good bit of chat and records. I will listen to absolutely anything on Radio 4, but as soon as the *Money Programme* comes on, it's off. I also like Radio 2 — Wogan is still great.

Web

I look at shopping sites for rubbish I don't really need. I bought a clothes rail for three quid and they promised overnight delivery. I'm still waiting five weeks later — I'm furious. I collect first editions of books and look at various sites such as eBay to see what's about. I have every first edition of George Orwell's books.



No interview would be complete without some discreet product placement. We aim to be a bit more up front, so feel free to pull **The Blatant Plug**

Vic's autobiography *Me:Moir* is published by Virgin at £18.99. Also, Vic, I mean, Jim, would like a column in a broadsheet, a music mag and a tabloid! Any takers?

'Playgirl offered me £250,000 to appear starkers years ago, but I said no. It's not the sort of thing I would like my mum to see'

The papers dissected your marriage when Sarah left. What was it like having such private matters exposed?

Well, it's not very nice, but, you know, I am very forgiving. It is their job and a tabloid will make people's lives look like a soap opera. I am thick-skinned and I have got more thick-skinned over the years. Michael Caine once said: "Never read your good reviews because then you will start reading your bad reviews and then it will hurt." I don't bother reading the papers when stuff like that is in, but I get told by other people later on.

When Sarah cleared off with the builder, they [reporters] kept coming round knocking on the door. I never bothered answering it. Then they went round to Bob's [Mortimer, his sidekick] — I think it was actually Matthew Wright who went — and Bob ran out with a cleaver. The only time it got really upsetting was when the press went to my parents' house. They can do it to me, but I don't think they should do that.

After the first time, Sarah knew she had made an error and we got back together. Then she went off with her girlfriend. She is living her life and is doing what she feels is right and what she wants to do, which is fair enough, that's her business. The papers said that I lived in the house with her and her girlfriend, in a ménage à trois. That was ridiculous, I didn't. She lived in Folkestone and I lived in Rye. That story was maximum titillation. Things like that will keep appearing because it makes my life seem more adventurous than maybe someone who lives on a council estate in Barnsley.

Things have been better, press-wise, with Nancy but you got some stick at the beginning.

I actually made the error of ringing up *Heat* magazine when they said: "We give it two weeks". I think I spoke to the editor. I said: "Look, that is just not very nice, why did you put that in?" And they completely stopped writing about us. They decided they did not like us after that. They said Nancy was a lap dancer, when she wasn't, and they were being generally nasty. I said: "Look, we have not done anything nasty to you. We will be a nice little showbiz couple if you want, but just stop being nasty about us". He said: "I am sorry, we will rectify that," but they didn't and they don't bother with us at all now. But they did give my book a good review, so maybe we are back in favour.

You have just done a deal with *Hello!* for pictures of the twins. Do you view that as selling out?

We have just had the house painted with wall shield — it's like a plastic paint which means you don't get any wet coming through. You will never have to paint your house again. We got a good deal on it, but it still cost £35,000. When the taxman has been paid, it will have all been covered by *Hello!*

As long as *Hello!* do nice pictures, it doesn't do any harm, and they are always nice — it's for women who like to look at babies and wedding dresses, isn't it? I think those days of selling out are gone — everyone sells out. Is there such a thing as selling out now? I don't care, really I don't. Is it uncool? I know how cool I am. I am very cool — extraordinarily cool.

Playgirl offered me £250,000 to appear starkers — full frontal — years ago, but I said no. It's not the sort of thing I would like my mum to see, but I probably would do it now. They could have a picture of my speckled arse, with me looking cheekily over my shoulder.

You had a fling with Emilia Fox while making (that stiff) Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased) and got engaged.

Well, we were kind of thinking about getting engaged — maybe, sort of considering it, but I didn't propose to her. I think we mentioned one night that we might do it and someone spilled the beans to the papers and now it is down as fact.

There are loads of stories out there that are not true, but as time passes by, it gets less and less bothersome. The fact that I might have been in some ménage à trois is one. Loads of people believe that happened. Or that I went out with Ulrika [Jonsson]. I love her, she's a really good friend, but that's it. And when I got done for drink-driving, they said Nancy had left me — that was a complete fabrication. I think all the papers ran that, but we've never had a row in our lives together.

You got no end of bad headlines during the drink-driving story. What happened there?

That was the neighbours ringing up the papers, knowing they could get a bit of cash from flogging me, which is quite hurtful. I think it is odd that money is offered directly in the papers — you know: "If you ring up with some gossip we will give you money". If it were not offered, no one would bother — but then there wouldn't be anything in the tabloids.

They [the courts] spanked me because I was in the public eye. I shouldn't have done it, there's no way I can defend myself. I live in the country, it was down a little lane. I went to get a pack of fags — a quarter of a mile down a road no one ever goes down. I was in a new Jag which I couldn't control, went round a corner a bit quick and I clipped a couple of cars, went back to say "sorry", hands up, but they had got me by then. The neighbours rang *The Sun* before the police.

From all the stories about the drink-driving, I admit I have you down as a boozier. Are you? And, if not, does it bother you that millions might have the same impression?

It's just one of those misconceptions because of the way the story was portrayed. I think tabloids would like me to appear like that, but it is not true. I know myself well enough and my friends and family know me enough not to be swayed by gossip like that. I am not an Ollie Reed or anything. I might probably booze a couple of times a week. I will have a bottle and a half of wine — not on my own — and that will be a big session for me. I like a booze, like anyone else, but I have not got the capability to drink loads — I fall asleep first. I haven't got a huge tolerance, so it doesn't do me any good. I am naturally not a boozier and I do not booze every day. I haven't got the time.

What are some of the dafter stories written about you that are not true?

I was working at Virgin Radio last year and I would flick through the papers in-between records. I saw a story in the *Star* about me trying to ride a dog and it bit me. I have never tried to ride a dog and no dog has bitten me since I was five. The thing that was really annoying was they made up a quote from me: "The poor old doggie was probably trying to chill out." That is so crass and like I was making a joke that is not funny. You can say that I was riding a dog and it bit me, fine, but don't make me come up with a bad punchline. I wouldn't normally look through all the papers, but as soon as I did, I saw that, so I presume there are untrue things all the time. I have got better things to do than check up on what I haven't been doing.

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Vic Reeves's

FANTASY FLYERS

What would be the Fantasy Headline of the story you would most like to read?

Something quite ridiculous like "Oscar Wilde Lives" on the front of *The Times*, saying he had been cryogenically preserved. I love him, he's great.

What would be the Fantasy Headline involving yourself?

"Vic Reeves Digs Tunnel to the Centre of the Earth, financed by *The Mirror*"

What would be the headline you most dread?

"Vic Reeves Dies By Drowning In Salacious Gossip"

Who would you most like to interview and what question would you ask?

Someone like Peter Ackroyd. He is brilliant, my favourite author and I would ask him: "How do you drink so much and still manage to write such fantastic books?" I mean, when does he get time to sober up and be such a genius? I would also ask him: "How do you get rid of those red wine stains from your shirt?"

What would you like the headline to be on your obituary?

It would have to be something really childish that a kid would say, such as: "He's no good, he's no good, chop him up for fire wood". That would look great above my obit in *The Times*.