

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, new Cheshire Life columnist
and wife to pop icon Noddy Holder



If you've turned to this page and started reading this – my very first column for Cheshire Life – and are wondering 'who is this person?' can I straight away say: Hi, nice to meet you, I'm Suzan and there is no one more surprised than me at the recent turn of events that has led me to this point in my life.

I have been a journalist, TV producer, drama teacher and theatre-maker, but the only time my photo usually appears in Cheshire Life is in my role as Mrs Noddy Holder when a charity event photographer has managed to capture me before I've had chance to duck.

Yes, you heard that right, I'm the life partner of a bona fide rock musician and all-round national treasure. I'm not deluded... he's not a figment of my imagination.

We have been together for more than 30 years and have a grown-up son, but hearing Noddy strumming his guitar while I'm making coffee never gets old, let me tell you.

Over the coming months I'll be able to tell you a few strange and peculiar tales to amuse and entertain, and not all of them have anything to do with my husband. I've been trapped in a lift with the notorious OJ Simpson and ridden an elephant in Africa with Amanda Holden. I've also watched my baby vomit all over Jane Asher on live TV. She was very lovely about it, I must say.

I have been involved in the media and showbiz world – television, music and theatre from the start of my career.

I began working as a newspaper reporter back in the days when hot-tempered editors would stub out cigarettes on your copy and throw typewriters the length of the office if they thought you needed motivating.

That's when I really learned to duck. I ended up as the boss of ITV's Loose Women, bringing in presenters like Coleen Nolan and



The story of my rock 'n' roll rom-com life

Carol McGiffin. In all that time I was also a mother to my son, stepmother to my two daughters, and more recently, Nana Suzan to Issy and Beau.

I was also desperate to write a book and become a published author, but despite years of writing articles, news reports and scripts I found the literary world a very hard nut to crack.

However, I am not a quitter. I wrote and rewrote and sent out my manuscript to agents and publishers again and again. Every time I received a polite rejection I found two new people to send it to. It was almost an addiction; I just couldn't stop. And then finally, wonderfully, I got the email I had been waiting years to receive.

My debut novel, *Shake It Up, Beverley*, is published this month by One More Chapter, an imprint of HarperCollins, in digital

format. The paperback version will be released in April and my follow-up book, *Rock 'n' Rose* (once I start something I really can't stop), will be out this summer.

Shake It Up, Beverley tells the story of Beatles Bev, a middle-aged Fab Four fan who gets herself into a whole heap of trouble when she goes looking for love on the internet. It's a romantic comedy with a backbeat of great music and I couldn't be more thrilled to step forward into my own little bit of the limelight to introduce it.

Just like Beverley, I may be an empty nester in my 50s, but life has just taken a very unexpected and exciting turn, and I can't wait to share my new adventures with you all. ♦

Suzan x

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SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist and wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Here's a question. Why is it so hard to find anything good to watch on TV?

How can it be that the more time goes on, the more television programmes are developed and made, but there seems to be less on the box than when I was young?

Admittedly, when I was little I was addicted to a TV diet of Happy Days, The Dukes Of Hazzard and Little House on the Prairie. And I'd still happily spend an afternoon with Laura Ingalls Wilder, Daisy Duke and the Fonz rather than endure the current output. Actually, doesn't that sound like an absolutely corking dream dinner party guest list? As the Fonz would no doubt say to Daisy... 'Heyyyyyyyyy!'

Just like so many others, our family Christmas plans were derailed this year, so we turned to the TV hoping for a cracker of a show or two to bring some festive cheer. Unfortunately, trying to find a sweet TV treat to feast on during the holidays was like hunting for the purple one in the Quality Street tin.

But then we found it – the televisual jewel in the crown – not one, not two, but eight glorious hours of viewing pleasure. Get Back offered astonishing footage of The Beatles in 1969, writing, recording and performing in such perfect technicolor and intimate detail it felt as if you were right there with them, just casually hanging out with the lads in Swinging Sixties London.

If you haven't watched it yet I promise you have a treat in store. What's that, you say? You're not really a fan of The Beatles? Hahahahahahaha. Sorry, have you never heard Let It Be?, Don't Let Me Down?, Help? Well, don't worry because if you watch Peter Jackson's Get Back (available on Disney+) I'm pretty sure you'll be a Beatles convert in no time. They are just so damn... impressive.

I won't spoil it for anyone who hasn't seen it yet, but the guys



Photo: The Portfolio People

Let It Be *me* – and eight hours with The Beatles

are under pressure; they need to write and record 14 songs in two weeks and then stage an event. The expectations and pressure on them are enormous.

Darkly handsome and emotionally sensitive, Paul McCartney seems to feel it the most; he's a man desperate to achieve the goals set and so possessed by pure musical ability it just erupts out of him. To watch him thrash at his bass, humming a new melody, experimenting with random lyrics and realise this is the birth of the track Get Back is so incredible to see I may never recover.

For me, watching Macca at his most magnificent wasn't only inspiring, it was also hugely reassuring as it just so happens Paul is featured quite heavily in my debut book, Shake It Up Beverley, which was published last month.

The book is a romantic comedy

and tells the story of Beatles Bev, a Liverpool mum who wants to find someone to hold her hand once her kids have grown up and left home. McCartney is Bev's dream man but she decides to shake her life up by trying internet dating in the hope she'll find someone to connect with romantically, and musically.

For me, those two things have always been intrinsically linked – love and music – both capable of touching your soul and filling your heart like nothing else in the world. That's how it is for Bev too and when she finds herself in times of trouble, Paul and the Beatles come to her rescue.

So if you find yourself hunting for something to do, I suggest watching Get Back to fill up an hour or eight. Alternatively, I know a really good book you could read. ♦

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ABOVE:
The Fab Five:
John, Paul,
George, Ringo
and Suzan

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One person's 'fun' can be another's idea of torture, don't you think? For instance, the thought of New Year's Eve always looms over me like a leering drunk at a party, nagging me to 'have fun' on their terms and not listening when I tell them I'd rather stick pins in my eyes than down sambuca shots or let them grope me on the dance floor. I'm not saying I'm against either of those activities, but I do object to being ordered to *have fun* at a set time and in a particular way.

I don't dislike New Year, I've had some fabulous ones in my time, but I don't trust it. I think it stems from spending my teenage New Year's Eves babysitting every kid on the estate where I grew up; followed by some horrific parties in my early 20s when I was forced to hide in toilet cubicles to avoid a lurking creep just waiting for Big Ben to bong so he could pounce for a snog. Thanks, but no.

My husband knows all about my New Year's Eve phobia. He is also very aware of my resistance to being ordered about.

Once when I was preparing to do a charity tandem skydive he gave me a very important piece of advice: 'Whatever happens just do what the instructor tells you to do. Don't question it, don't argue with him, just do it!' he bellowed. I'm joking, he didn't bellow, he just said it in his normal voice, but Noddy's normal voice is quite bellow-y.

I rolled my eyes at his instruction but he'd hit a nerve; my instinct is to question rather than obey. As it happened, his words came back to me at 10,000 feet when my instructor, an ex-SAS officer who I was strapped to as we plummeted to earth, told me to stand on his feet and 'jump off' while he loosened the straps holding us together. My mouth opened to question, but there really wasn't time. I did it. He was right. The strap cutting off the blood supply to my leg



Photo: Noddy Holder

Having fun – to the moon and back

was far more comfortable. We landed beautifully. Do I now do everything I am told to without question? Hahaha, of course not. But when my husband suggested we escape to the Lake District to welcome in the New Year he didn't get any arguments from me.

We've found this amazing hotel with its own private lake and it is the most wonderful place to get away from it all.

The Lake District was the setting for our very first mini-break more than 30 years ago and we've been many times since, although it's a wonder he ever tempted me back after our first trip. Weirdly, he thought it would be a good idea to take his brand-new girlfriend on a mystery drive to explore the western coastline nearby. So far, so romantic... until I realised his ultimate destination was Sellafield – the

nuclear processing plant. He still laughs about how fast I wound up my window.

On our latest trip we enjoyed lakeside walks, delicious food and several nightly cocktails, but I have to report my husband has never lost his ability to shock and surprise. Picture the scene – I'm enjoying a delightful evening dip in the hot tub when I suddenly get the feeling I am being watched. Yes, there is my beloved, in our bedroom window adding his very own 'moon' to my view and, of course, I howled with laughter.

Now that's what I call fun. ♦ Suzan Holder's debut novel, *Shake It Up, Beverley*, is available in digital format, or to pre-order in paperback

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ABOVE:
A mini-break in the Lakes with Noddy – always illuminating

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Do you remember 'dating'? You know, those heady, carefree days when you'd flit from one love interest to another, meeting for milkshakes, going for picnics, sharing chips?

You'd be riding on the back of one lad's motorcycle on Wednesday then cuddling up to a different guy in the back row of a cinema by Saturday.

No? That's not how you remember it? It certainly wasn't like that for me either. Probably because I didn't spend my youth in the middle of a 1950s American teen movie.

I mean, I went to see *Grease* a gazillion times in 1978 when I was an impressionable 13-year-old, but that didn't make me a Pink Lady.

I grew up in the Black Country, an area of the Midlands not known for ice-cream parlours, drive-in movies or John Travolta look-a-likes, but that wasn't even the main problem.

One snog at the youth club disco and I'd suddenly discover I was part of a boyfriend/girlfriend double act, immediately expected to forsake all others. Also, we never seemed to go... anywhere. As I remember there was a lot of hanging about the precinct and sitting on walls; it was nothing like the movies.

It always struck me as a rather hopeless system. Forced to become a 'pair' before you'd even got to know each other meant the relationship was invariably doomed. Another disco... another snog... and the whole pointless enterprise would begin again. But we were happy. Oh, wait a minute. No, we weren't. It was angst-ridden, tear-stained teenage hell.

Flash forward to today and I think I get why internet dating for all ages is so popular. You can peruse your options at a distance and weed out the ones with dodgy hobbies or serial killer eyes. It should make dating easier, more fun. Shouldn't it?

Gobby gal with messy hair and an endless supply of sarcasm. Tempted?

Of course, I have never, ever done it. The internet wasn't even a thing when I first met my husband-to-be. I have several friends who have though and their experiences gave me lots of material for my book, *Shake It Up, Beverley*.

Beverley is a 50-something empty-nester Beatles fan who decides it's time to stop waiting for Paul McCartney to rock up and tries to find a real man to love. Her dating disaster experiences are all based on encounters I or my friends had IRL (that's 'In Real Life' if you're not down with the kids).

Despite never uploading my profile or swiping on Tinder, I still managed to attract my share of nutters until I was

well into my 20s; I was like a magnet for them at one point. Now my book is launched I've been doing press interviews, so reporters have asked if I created a 'fake profile' on dating sites as part of my research.

I'm a journalist with a passion for accuracy and my book does indeed contain lots of well-researched information about The Beatles and the city of Liverpool itself, but as a happily married woman, I can't quite imagine how that conversation with my husband would have gone?

Also, I would have had to sell myself in some promotional blurb detailing my attractive qualities and amusing personality quirks. Aaaaarrggggghh.

'Gobby Black Country gal with messy hair and an endless supply of sarcasm.' Tempted?

I don't think selling anything – let alone myself – is really my forte; I'm a creative. Don't expect to see me battling to become Lord Sugar's apprentice anytime soon. But I'll give it a go, for Beverley's sake, so, whether you're single, coupled-up, or in between, my hilarious, heartfelt rom-com, *Shake It Up, Beverley*, is out now and is worth making a date with. ♦

Shake It Up, Beverley, published by One More Chapter, Harper Collins, is available in digital format and released in paperback on April 14

Suzan x

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BELOW: Suzan Holder as a tear-stained, angst-ridden teenager, who really didn't want to be one of a pair



Photo: Suzan Holder

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Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Landing a book publishing deal has put me in the spotlight for the first time. In many ways I think it's lucky this has happened to me in my mid-50s, it would have terrified me when I was younger.

I have never been all that keen on having my photo taken and I've always loved the fact that when I go anywhere with Noddy the attention is all on him. That suits me fine as I can happily soak up the atmosphere and people-watch from the sidelines (brilliant for a writer.)

However, now my first book is out the bosses at Harper Collins want to see me interacting on social media and doing press interviews. Fair enough.

The chatting to reporters and appearing on radio isn't a problem; if there's one thing I can do – it's talk. BBC Radio Manchester clearly agrees as I will be appearing now and then on Phil Trow's evening show talking about all sorts of stuff in the news – listen out weeknights between 10 and 11pm.

Pictures are another issue, but I'm old enough to know I have to be grown-up about it. I'm hyper-critical of photos of myself although my husband says it's the pained expression I often pull that ruins most snaps of me.

I've always been the same, although looking back at old photos now I have no clue what it was I was so worried about. Ok, the picture of myself as a moody teenager I shared in last month's column did make me look a little bit like Joey Ramone but hey – it's a look.

My 'look' isn't something I've ever given much thought to. I just like what I like and I consider myself pretty low maintenance. So it's been rather reassuring to have received several compliments on my 'rock chick' appearance lately and people saying my book is a 'rom-com for rock chicks'.



A rock star's wife's guide... to being a rock star's wife

ABOVE: Suzan is a paperback writer who likes to put on a hat on a bad hair day

Luckily the things I reach for most often when I'm getting ready to go anywhere all have a rock 'n' roll vibe. A leather or denim jacket, a cool pair of ankle boots, maybe a smattering of wild animal print and I feel ready to take on the world.

I favour a smoky eye and a nude lip and I love it if my hair looks all mussed up, as if I've just got out of bed. The picture of me on this page was taken at Waterstones bookshop in Liverpool just after I'd found out

they were planning to stock my book and I'll be honest, I wore the leopard print beret that day mainly because my hair was too messy... even for me.

In addition to unexpected compliments I've also been surprised by some things I've been asked to do – one of them was to write tips for wannabe rock wives – the Dos and Don'ts of life with a famous musician or rock star. I can't say I'd ever given much consideration to that either, but I thought you might be interested and amused by a few of my suggestions.

Be practical. This might not be what you were expecting to hear, but rock stars have busy and demanding lives. Efficiency and the ability to get things done will impress them, so be one of the team and get stuck in.

Be nice to fans. No one wants to see a glowering partner rolling their eyes or pulling a face in the background when they are getting a selfie with their rock star hero. (I can't name names, but I have seen wives of famous musicians be less than gracious.) Don't rain on a fan's parade.

Ignore rude people. It happens rarely but occasionally someone will be downright rude – usually just so they have something to say. Most times it's best to ignore but if that proves impossible then have a ruder response tucked away for emergency use – that usually shuts them up. For example, Sharon Osbourne can be sweet and lovely but if anyone insults Ozzy they get hit with both barrels... I wouldn't risk it if I were you!

Never ever touch the guitars. Pretty self-explanatory. Don't do it. Ever. It's just not worth it. ♦
Suzan x

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Suzan's novel, *Shake It Up*, Beverley, published by One More Chapter, Harper Collins is out in digital format and paperback

Photo: Suzan Holder

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You know that heart-stopping moment when you realise something precious is lost? There's no feeling quite like it. You feel sick, your hands are clammy and your mind fizzles with questions about how such a thing could have happened.

I had such a moment this month when I discovered my diamond solitaire ring was missing – on the day that just so happened to be our wedding anniversary. Yep, how's that for terrible timing?

We had travelled to London on the train as we both had work to do in the city. On the first night, we stayed with family, then we were due to move to a hotel for two nights before returning home to Cheshire.

It was going to be a fun few days as I was being filmed for my first Facebook Live by my publisher One More Chapter, HarperCollins, and we'd planned a romantic meal in a favourite little Italian restaurant in Soho.

We still did those things, of course, but once I knew my diamond ring was missing my stomach was churning, more than if I'd eaten too much cannelloni and tiramisu.

I made the awful discovery on the first morning, when I woke up to find the ring was not where I'd left it with my others on the bedside table. The horror. We made a thorough search but it simply could not be found. I couldn't understand it. Noddy wondered if I could have lost it on the journey but I was sure it had been on my finger until the moment I took all my rings off the last thing at night.

I have worn that ring every day for the 18 years since we got married and it fitted perfectly; there was no way it could just have dropped off.

With a packed schedule ahead of us we had no choice but to abandon the search and leave North London and head for Chelsea, where there was work to be done.



I think I've lost... my mind?

Two days of tears and torment followed, and then we found ourselves back at Euston station ready to head home, but I couldn't do it. I refused to get on the train and insisted on heading back to where we had stayed the very first night, intent on doing a fingertip search of the place.

I jumped in a taxi and within moments was confiding all in Bilal, the loveliest Uber driver I've ever met who had his very own lost and found story. Bilal was a hip young guy who described himself as a 'cheeky chap' but told me that losing his wallet in Portobello Market was the best thing that had ever happened to him. Confused? So was I, until he revealed that the wallet had been returned three

days later by a beautiful girl who had tracked him down via the address on his driving licence. 'I opened my door and saw her standing there,' Bilal said. 'We fell in love, she's the most wonderful girl in the whole world. We're getting married next year.'

As a writer of romantic comedies, this was pure gold, plus it was exactly the sort of thing I needed to hear while on my quest to find my precious ring.

Two hours later, after moving furniture, pulling up floorboards and going through rubbish bins, Bilal and his good fortune meant nothing to me. No diamond ring was to be found.

I summoned another Uber – a rather surly driver arrived this time, matching my mood perfectly. I was almost back at Euston when Nod called my mobile. 'Guess what?' he said.

Have you guessed? Have you? Yeah, my husband had gone home and found my diamond ring in my jewellery box where I had left it.

I have no explanation other than I am an idiot – although a hugely relieved idiot, deliriously happy to have my ring back.

The episode made me wonder about certainty. I can often be emphatic about things... but clearly, I'm not always right.

Other times even when I am right I can second-think the truth. I once had a bizarre conversation with comedian Lee Mack, who was so dumbfounded when I told him I was married to Noddy Holder that I began to question the fact of the matter myself.

I was rescued that day by Les Dennis – but that's a whole other story I may tell you another time.

So what have I learned this month? I think it's to keep my mind open, as well as my eyes. ♦

Suzan:

Suzan's novel, Shake It Up, Beverley, is out now in digital format and paper back

TOP:

Give me a ring, Noddy... And tell me you've found my solitaire

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Being invited to the Pride of Britain Awards is an absolute honour, both for the courageous, inspiring people who are recipients of the awards themselves and for the celebrities and others who are lucky enough to attend.

Noddy and I have been to a couple of the televised London dos and to one in Birmingham after he had the unenviable task of being on the judging panel listening to incredible tales of bravery, self-sacrifice and wonderful work from adults and children. This year was our first time at the Pride of Manchester Awards, held at the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel, and it was just as moving and glamorous as any we've been to before.

The ceremony is on YouTube and if you need reminding how amazing people can be (and I think we all need that right now), I heartily recommend you watch.

The event was hosted by Kym Marsh and an audience of TV stars, actors, musicians and local VIPs were brought to tears and cheers as extraordinary people received their awards.

Spice Girl Mel B was on our table and while she clearly is a firecracker, she quietly showed her sensitive side when I noticed her giving a tearful young girl on the next table a cuddle just when she needed it.

Noddy and I are pictured at the event with Terry Christian – another celeb with a fearsome reputation. I've worked with Terry many times and he always says I'm one of the best producers he's ever had. I don't know what I did to prompt that claim, but I don't remember ever having any problem with Terry and we definitely make each other laugh.

I've always got on with 'naughty boys' mind you. Whether I'm working in a newsroom or teaching drama in primary schools, the lads with a bad reputation for playing up always seem to gravitate to me. In fact,



Photo: Karen Morris

Piers, Simon, Gaddafi? We love a bad boy

they are often my favourite people to be around, maybe because I find them entertaining and like that they wear their heart on their sleeve.

One of the reasons they may like me is because I try not to pre-judge people on what others say about them. I make my own mind up. Take Piers Morgan and Simon Cowell, for instance. Now I know what a lot of you are thinking: two celebs most people just love to hate. But let me tell you, I've met them both several times and they have always been friendly, with beautiful manners and genuine warmth. (Simon also smells divine!)

I'm sure some of you are recoiling in horror, but I'm speaking my truth, which reminds me of a ridiculous episode from a few years ago when I was talking to my

95-year-old Great-Aunt Irene, a formidable woman who lived, shall we say, a colourful life. Auntie showed no mercy to anyone she took against (and there were many) but one day dropped into conversation the bombshell phrase '...as I said when I was talking to Colonel Gaddafi.'

'I'm sorry... what?' I spluttered.

Turns out Auntie had been a guest of the Libyan leader at a dinner back in the day and had found him 'utterly charming'.

Despite my protestations, Auntie held her ground: 'I speak as I find,' she told me firmly, before pointedly asking: 'Have you met him?' Suddenly, me being friendly with Piers Morgan doesn't seem quite so alarming, does it? ♦

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ABOVE:
Suzan with
husband
Noddy and
Terry Christian
at the Pride of
Manchester
Awards

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I won't lie, it's been an exciting few weeks at Holder Towers. First off, we headed to lovely Liverpool for my official book launch party for *Shake It Up, Beverley*. I was completely terrified beforehand and got myself in quite a tizz...

Would anyone show up? What should I wear? Was there going to be enough booze and cupcakes? My husband kept telling me not to worry and he was right, of course. It. Was. Incredible.

As my book is a rom-com about a Beatles fan I was thrilled to hold the event at the Liverpool Beatles Museum on Mathew Street – just down from The Cavern.

Owned by Roag Best, brother of original Beatles drummer Pete Best, it's four floors high and packed with amazing, original Beatles artefacts.

I had to pinch myself when the place started filling up with actors, writers, artists and musicians, and broadcaster Pete Price did a great job of hosting the night.

It was lovely to have support from famous friends, such as actor Ian Puleston-Davies and Royle Family creator Craig Cash and his wife, Steph.

My publishers brought along a huge bouquet of flowers for me and my speech made everyone laugh – phew!

If you check out my Instagram @SuzHolder15 you can see a little film about the night and even see the moment when Paul McCartney's brother, Mike, gave me a congratulatory cuddle.

A few of us ended up back at the Hard Day's Night Hotel (I mean, there's no such thing as too much Beatles) drinking vodka martinis until 3am. That's the way to do a book launch – Yeah Yeah Yeah!

However, it was soon time for the limelight to shine in a more usual direction – on my husband. Yes, I can confirm, Noddy Holder is now regarded as an official National Treasure by Her Majesty The Queen.



Photo: Suzan Holder

What a time! Boom. Boom

He was invited to take part in the Platinum Jubilee parade, travelling on the top of an open-top bus to celebrate the seven decades of the Queen's reign.

Being able to accompany him to such an event, where all eyes were on him, was an absolute treat for me, as always.

We all met early in the morning at a beautiful building just off Birdcage Walk, near to Horse Guards Parade in Central London. One by one, 'National Treasures' began arriving and falling into conversation with each other.

At one point I bumped into Cliff Richard, directed Joan Collins to the ladies and passed Tony Hadley from Spandau Ballet a Danish pastry – and that was just in the first 20 minutes.

We are pictured here with music mogul Pete Waterman, the lovely Debbie McGee, and

of course, Basil Brush. Excuse the weird angle but the snap was taken by Basil and he only has little paws. Boom! Boom!

When the 'Treasures' were led away to take their places on the buses, I hung out with Brian Conley's wife, Anne-Marie, and we had great fun watching the parade go right past our noses out on the street, waving and cheering like mad. We were watching on a huge screen when Noddy and Brian took their places on the stage in front of Buckingham Palace to sing the National Anthem, feeling so proud.

The gasp when the Queen suddenly appeared on the balcony was priceless. We cried. Not only our husbands but a day to treasure, always. ♦

Suzan x

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ABOVE: Suzan with some Great British National Treasures: Pete Waterman, Debbie McGee, Noddy and, of course, Basil Brush

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I had a bit of an epiphany in Edinburgh this summer. I expect I am not alone. The majestic city with its gothic architecture, cloistered passageways and towering castle could inspire anyone.

We were there during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, a time when every nook and cranny of the city is bursting with colourful characters and life-affirming talent with creative juices practically running down the Royal Mile.

If you've never been to Edinburgh it's a wonderful place to visit at any time: great shops, interesting history, wonderful food and welcoming locals. But to be there during the chaotic, riotous festival takes the whole experience to another, nerve-jangling level. It's an assault on the senses. It's not for the faint-hearted.

The Fringe Festival went dark for two years during the pandemic and last year it re-opened cautiously with limited numbers.

This year it was back with a bang. The entertainment on offer is too wide-ranging to list but there truly is something for everyone. One of my favourite things about the festival is the way every possible space is commandeered and transformed into a performance venue. I've seen shows in pubs, churches, hotel rooms, attic spaces, basements and even someone's living room.

Each venue is given a number, a sign is propped outside and as you wander the city you will spot some of the most unlikely places putting on a show. It always reminds me of those 1930s Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland movies when to save the theatrical day they'd move an entire MGM musical into a barn with a hearty call of 'Let's put on a show right here'.

Don't get me wrong, not everything you see in Edinburgh



Fringe benefits

is good. We've been to a few clunkers, let me tell you. But that's part of the fun. The good news is, ticket prices are low and sometimes non-existent – they simply rattle a bucket for donations as you leave.

Our son, Django, has worked the festival a few times. Last year he returned as director of a comedy play written by his talented writer/actress

girlfriend, Beth Fox. The fringe experience is not just prepping, performing and staging your show, you also have to sell it. Competition is fierce so you have to try to attract the attention of the crowds and get their bums on your seats. That's why you can see me pictured with him in a purple dinosaur costume, hard at work on the Royal Mile where it's always good to have a gimmick as you thrust your show flyers into passing hands.

This year my husband was starring in a show – he joined the amazing Cheshire-born musician Tom Seals for a brilliant blend of chat and boogie-woogie piano playing. Noddy tickled the audience with his hilarious stories while Tom tickled the ivories and the packed audience loved it.

Just as thrilling was seeing one of my drama students appearing in her self-written comedy show, *Girl Boss*, at the Gilded Balloon. I spotted Dulcie Whadcock's comedy talent when she was just eight years old and I ran a drama club at Prestbury Primary School. Now she's 22, getting five-star reviews and rubbing shoulders with Phoebe Waller-Bridge... Go Dulcie.

All in all, Edinburgh was a blast and solved a little problem I'd been wrestling with for a while. I've been looking for an exciting, romantic, inspirational setting for my next book. Well, Hello Edinburgh! I can't wait to create a new romantic comedy story in such a magical location.

Suzan x
Suzan's latest book *Rock 'n' Rose* is out now, published by *One More Chapter*, HarperCollins

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ABOVE:
Me and a giant
purple dinosaur,
aka my son
Django Holder

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, broadcaster, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



I recently hinted it was an incredible story from my own life that provided the inspiration for my book, *Rock 'n' Rose*. Well, this month I'm happy to tell you about the incident that gave me not only the idea for my latest rock 'n' roll rom-com but a genuine romantic hero too. Buckle up because it's quite the ride.

Rock 'n' Rose tells the tale of Daisy, a young woman unlucky in love who travels to Memphis, Tennessee, to solve a family mystery concerning Elvis Presley. While there, Daisy has many hilarious adventures and encounters a moody motorcycle cop who sweeps her off her feet.

Yes, that's me in the photograph, aged just 24 and in the arms of an American motorcycle cop who had just swooped to my rescue after I'd been left stranded at Elvis's birthplace in Tupelo, Mississippi.

I was on a sightseeing trip around the Southern States, taking in Elvis's Graceland home, Sun Recording Studios in downtown Memphis and the tiny two-room shack on the outskirts of Tupelo where the King of Rock 'n' Roll was born in 1935. It was an organised tour, full of Elvis fans just like me, but I was the only one travelling alone.

I'd set off from Birmingham airport to have an adventure. I loved soaking up all the sights and sounds, the food was incredible and the music right up my rockabilly street.

Tupelo is a few hours' drive from Memphis and we travelled there on a minibus. After viewing the birthplace shack we were taken into town to see the hardware store where Elvis bought his first guitar. There wasn't much else to see but as we had a bit of time to kill I went window shopping, spotted an amazing pair of cowboy boots and, on impulse, bought them. Stepping out onto the sidewalk I felt quite the Southern Belle in my new boots. Until I realised



All shook up

Tupelo Main Street was now completely deserted and the cloud of dust I could see in the distance was the bus I was meant to be on heading out of town.

I was stranded with no mobile phone and no clue how I could get back to Memphis. I shouted and waved and jumped up and down but the bus was now just a speck on the horizon.

Suddenly there was another engine roar and a motorcycle pulled up with a hunky cop in mirrored shades. He drawled: 'Can I help you, Miss?' and I gesticulated at where the bus had been and blathered on about my boots. He seemed to get what was going on and said 'hop on'.

Next thing I know, we were speeding out of town with me clinging on for dear life as we chased the bus. In a heart-stopping manoeuvre the bike swung in front of the bus and we, literally, stopped traffic. Everyone on the bus gawped at us as the cop told me his name was Officer Joe Cody but everyone called him 'Blue'

because of his eyes... Swoon. He then asked if he could see me again, gave me his number and saluted as I got back on the bus to cheers and a standing ovation. Walking back to my seat that day, wearing my new boots while everyone applauded was the most rock 'n' roll thing that had ever happened to me. (*And she's married to Noddy Holder - Ed.*)

I never saw Blue again but I treasure the photograph that proves I didn't imagine the whole thing. You see, I'd already met the man who would eventually become my husband.

Many years later my moment with Blue provided the flash of inspiration I needed for *Rock 'n' Rose*, which celebrates Elvis, taking readers behind the gates of Graceland. So huge thanks to Blue, both for rescuing me and being the perfect romantic hero. Sorry I never called. ♦

Suzan's latest book *Rock 'n' Rose* is out now published by One More Chapter, HarperCollins
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ABOVE:
 Suzan and Blue...
 It's now or never.
 It turned out to
 be never

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



I'm a Christmas baby. Born just a few days before the big day, I grew up thinking fairy lights and jingle bells were just for me. But never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I would end up married to a man as synonymous with Christmas (almost), as much as Santa himself. Can I start by reassuring you the picture here isn't a snap of us in regular loungewear at home. This is not our idea of 'dressing casual'. We were helping out at The Children's Adventure Farm Trust, a charity where we are patrons and where terminally ill, disabled and disadvantaged children are given experiences to remember.

It is a bit weird to know my husband is such a big part of everyone else's festivities. Slade's Merry Xmas Everybody will be 50 years old next year. 50 years! How on earth did that happen?

The track is now as much a part of Christmas as crackers and cranberry sauce. Trying to do my Christmas shopping is often a bizarre experience as my husband's voice follows me wherever I go. There I'll be, hunting for something suitable for him indoors and there he'll be blasting from a shop speaker singing about hanging up stockings, and grannies who think the old songs are the best. It's very distracting.

Spare a thought for the great man himself though (Noddy, that is, not Santa.) It's almost impossible for him to shop in peace and not only does he have to get his Christmas buying done... he needs to get my birthday present too. As soon as he enters any store it's as if the playlist senses his presence and immediately starts spinning his song. I remember him telling me about a particular occasion a few years ago when he was looking for my present with our son, Django, who was aged about four.

The shop tannoy started playing that song and Django decided to sing along at the top



Photo: Suzan Holder

It'ssssss Christmasssss

of his voice while shouting out 'It's your song Daddy! Daddy, it's YOU!' Noddy said he had to give up the search and scarper as Django's antics began to draw a crowd.

I also remember a confused Django coming home from primary school on the day they'd had their festive turkey lunch when he was in Year One. He'd been very excited about the roast potatoes (he still gets very excited about roast potatoes and he's almost 28 now), but he told me there had been Christmassy music while they ate, and just as he was tucking in Slade started to play.

When it came to the part when his dad gives his big 'It'ssssss Chriiiiiisssssstmaaaaaaasssss' shout, the whole school – kids, teachers and dinner ladies – turned to look at Django. 'What did they want me to do, Mum?' he asked. I wasn't sure what to tell him but the roast potatoes seemed to have got him through it.

Did you know that famous Noddy Holder shout heralding the start of everyone's Christmas was actually an ad-lib in the recording studio? The band's producer, Chas Chandler, thought it so cool he left it in.

A little fun fact there for you to use to amuse relatives around the table over your turkey lunch.

This year we don't care about the presents, like everyone else we just want to have our Christmas with family and friends. We have spent the past two Christmases with only each other after one Christmas got 'cancelled' and then last year all the family had Covid. Bah humbug to all that.

Although Christmas a deux with Noddy Holder has its moments and yes, he does wake me up on December 25 by bellowing... can you guess? If you think it's loud on the record, you have no idea...

So here's to families, friends, food and festivities. Look to the future now and enjoy a Christmas full of peace and luv. ♦

ABOVE:

Me and the great man himself. We don't dress like this for the whole of Christmas. Honestly

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Things nobody tells you when you land a publishing deal: promoting a book can be more time-consuming than writing a book... all that Tweeting!? Phew.

They want another book immediately. Luckily, it had taken me so long to land a publishing deal I already had a completed book up my writerly sleeve. Rock 'n' Rose, my second rock 'n' roll rom-com is out this month.

People can be equally outraged if they think they are in your book or if they think they are not. It's a minefield.

It can all get a little bit CRAZEEEE!

I knew my life as a debut author was becoming even more bonkers than usual when recently I found myself live on TV late one night sitting opposite a man dressed as an alien for UFO Day, while next to me a woman was describing her erotic experience with a ghost. I'm not even joking.

Things seemed to reach critical 'Crazeeee' point when I was invited to share a stage at a live gig with the female version of my husband, Noddy Holder. Sometimes I wonder why I bother writing fiction as the stuff that goes on in my real life is infinitely more ridiculous than anything I could ever make up. Let me explain.

There exists in the world an all-girl version of the rock band Slade. They are called Slady - see what they did there? It's a genius idea thought up by the lead singer, one Gobby Holder.

It turns out Gobby and I have the same birthday and it's also a bit weird that my name is Holder and I have been known to be a bit 'gobby'.

Gobby's real name is Danie Centric and she is actually a softly spoken Welsh girl who transforms into a raucous rock 'n' roller with a naughty sense of humour once she hits the stage. (Remind you of anyone?)

Well, it was certainly a weird



It's All Crazee Now!

experience for me to see this female version of my rock star husband in action, especially when she screamed 'BABY, BABY, BABY'. But I was thrilled to be asked to do a Q&A for Slade/Slady fans before the show and sign all the books they bought on the night.

I truly hope weird and wonderful things keep on happening to me, not least because I love to use those things to shape the stories in my books.

My new novel, Rock 'n' Rose, is a brilliant example of that. Believe it or not, a couple of the most outrageous and hilarious episodes I've written about are based on real events. The book tells the story of how a ticket to Memphis changes a young woman's life.

I first visited Memphis, Tennessee, more than 25 years ago. I was in my 20s and had only recently met Noddy Holder, the man who would become my husband. I was travelling alone, an Elvis Presley fan desperate to see where rock 'n' roll was born.

On arrival, I was horrified to discover my motel room had

been double-booked. It was an alarming start to the trip until the receptionist discovered the Russian Elvis impersonator, who had been hired to entertain us, had not shown up so I was given his room.

I wrote a postcard that night to my new boyfriend (Noddy) saying: 'Arrived safely, in the bed of a Russian Elvis impersonator, will explain all when I get home.' Ha! He's still got that postcard.

I always wondered what would have happened if he had turned up? Well, in Rock 'n' Rose... he does. But you'll have to wait until next month's Cheshire Life to hear about the rest of my Memphis adventures and how they inspired my new rock 'n' roll rom-com.

In the meantime, Rock 'n' Rose is out now in paperback and ebook so you could get a few hints there.

Rock 'n' Rose and Shake It Up, Beverley are published by One More Chapter, HarperCollins. ♦

Suzan x

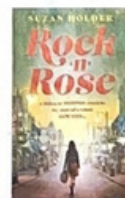
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ABOVE:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 times a Slady. Suzan with the all-female Slade tribute band, including Gobby Holder, her husband's alter ego

BELOW:
Out now - Suzan Holder's second novel, Rock 'n' Rose



SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



This column marks a full year since I became a contributor here at Cheshire Life.

It's been a significant 12 months for me with lots of other new experiences, meeting new people and making new friends, so if you want to know what I am hoping for from this New Year, then I would answer: more of the same, please.

My debut book, *Shake It Up, Beverley*, was published last January and my second romantic comedy with a musical twist – *Rock 'n' Rose* – followed in September. Landing a publishing deal with One More Chapter, HarperCollins was a dream come true, but the opportunities that have come my way as a result of being a published author have been the icing on the cake.

'You can keep your New Year's Eve shenanigans. But New Year's Day is a different matter. I like the feeling of a fresh start, getting stuck into a new project'

Writing this column, being invited onto radio shows and TV programmes, and being asked to speak at bookshops and other events, have made this year a bit of a manic whirlwind but hugely enjoyable. People have been so kind and the reaction to my books has been lovely.

Putting myself into the public eye to promote the books has been nerve-racking at times but when it all goes well the sense of satisfaction is enormous.

I can honestly say I am starting this year feeling pretty proud of myself. I've always hated having my photograph taken and appearing on TV used to send me into a bit of a panic.

Being married to Noddy Holder means I've been on the edge of those sorts of situations a



ABOVE: Two books opened up a year of new opportunities for this 50-something

Reservations v. resolutions

handful of times before, but I've always shied away from being in the spotlight.

I've been too self-critical and worried to relax and enjoy the experience. Noddy's *This Is Your Life* show was very stressful and I'll tell you about how we snatched victory from the jaws of defeat on ITV's *All Star Mr and Mrs* in another column very soon.

Maybe being older and wiser has made the difference in the last year? I'm now in my 50s but

rather than feeling 'invisible' like women of my age often say they feel, I have made myself more visible than ever.

I'm now a regular contributor on several radio shows, I've been asked to appear on national breakfast, daytime and late-night TV and I've stood in front of large and small gatherings to tell the funny stories from my real life that have inspired my rock 'n' roll rom-coms.

And do you know what? I really have enjoyed it all. So I fully intend to keep on accepting the invitations.

That's my New Year's resolution in a nutshell: stop worrying for no reason and just enjoy where life takes you.

I think I've told you before I have never been keen on New Year's Eve... too much pressure to have 'fun', too many places where people are packed in like sardines, too many times I've bought into the hype only to be thoroughly disappointed.

No, you can keep your New Year's Eve shenanigans. But New Year's Day is a different matter. I like the feeling of a fresh start, turning a new page and getting stuck into a new project or tackling a to-do list with gusto.

So if you are looking for a little inspiration for a New Year's resolution yourself, I have no reservation in saying feel free to share mine.

In fact, can we forget about reservations altogether? (Including for those fancy pants places that have been booked up on NYE for yonks.)

Stuff all that. And stuff being too reserved to throw yourself into life's opportunities.

Forget dismal diets, taking out costly gym memberships or making promises that soon prove impossible to keep.

Instead, let's all resolve to leave our comfort zones once in a while and dip a toe in the big wide world.

Come on now, who's with me? ♦

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



The newsrooms where I cut my writing teeth were noisy, crazy places full of clackety typewriters and shouty news editors. You could barely hear a thing among the incessant din: phones rang constantly, orders were barked loudly and if your copy contained even one small mistake you risked complete humiliation as a scathing review of your work would be given, complete with dripping sarcasm, in front of all your workmates.

It wasn't only your feelings at risk of being hurt – physical injury was often a very real possibility. On one occasion an actual typewriter was hurled in my direction by an editor frustrated by my inability to spell 'necessary' and the spikes where we speared carbon copies of our stories were often thrown, javelin style, around the office to attract the attention of exhausted reporters.

It was just like the 1980s satirical sitcom *Drop The Dead Donkey* but even more extreme... and I loved it. So it was with pride that I attended the annual Christmas lunch of the Birmingham Press Club in December as their guest speaker.

I was introduced by Central TV's legendary anchorman Bob Warman, a presenter I have watched host the nightly news since I was a child growing up in the Midlands. I entertained the gathering of journalists and broadcasters with stories of how I started as a teenage volunteer at the Black Country Bugle newspaper, through my years as a local and national reporter, in TV production, and as series producer of *Loose Women* and explained how all of my experiences led me to write books and land a publishing deal with HarperCollins.

It was a lovely event with lots of laughs and a delicious lunch but the icing on the Christmas cake was being presented with honorary life membership of the Birmingham Press Club. It was a huge surprise and they'd even



Photo: GB News

Here is the news....

had a tiny golden bugle inscribed for me to commemorate my first job in journalism.

From the moment I stepped into a busy newsroom – the Wolverhampton Express & Star for work experience when I was 16 – I was hooked. I loved being on the spot for breaking stories, enjoyed the banter of the newsroom hacks, and even revelled in the pressure of verifying facts and filing copy.

I never expected my new career as an author of romantic comedies to lead me back into news but after doing interviews about my books on radio and TV shows, I'm delighted to have been invited to regularly contribute to both GB News Breakfast, and The Jeremy Vine TV Show broadcast on Channel 5 weekday mornings.

Newsrooms today are much quieter places, with the tip-tapping of fingers on keyboards and ringing phones replaced by silent emails. Voices don't need to compete with the deafening background noise so speaking volume and tone is usually softer. But the atmosphere of expectation and urgency is the same. The dark humour is always

present when it's necessary to be able to find a way to lighten the mood, while the quick wit and wordplay in a newsroom can be sidesplittingly hilarious.

The camaraderie of journalists is something I have rediscovered. Anne Diamond and Stephen Dixon at GB News were supportive when I stepped into their studio to deliver my first newspaper review on the breakfast show they co-host. We struck up a rapport that made each appearance enjoyable for me and hopefully as entertaining as it is informative for the viewers.

At the Jeremy Vine TV studio the team are professional and helpful and I'm looking forward to sharpening my presenting skills as I work with those at the forefront of current affairs programming.

My return to news is unexpected but if my years as a reporter taught me anything it's that every story can have a surprising twist. ♦

Suzan's books *Shake It Up*, *Beverley and Rock 'n' Rose* are available in paperback and ebook published by One More Chapter, HarperCollins

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ABOVE: Suzan Holder enjoying breakfast with Anne Diamond and Stephen Dixon at GB News

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Photo: Suzan Holder

Spring is in the air and I have been spring cleaning. Now my husband has often remarked, during our three-decade relationship, that I can sometimes approach things in an over-zealous manner. Or as he puts it, 'you go at things like a bull at a gate'. Charming. But as I managed to crack a rib while sprucing up my home office, I suppose he may have a point. How very annoying – both the rib-cracking and the fact that I have, once again, proven him right.

What happened was this: in one corner of my tiny office is an enormous wooden chest of drawers. I was working my way around the room, ruthlessly chucking out old paperwork, sorting accumulated debris, clearing and cleaning in a way that was good for the soul. I'd got the bit between my teeth and decided to be completely thorough.

I needed to know if anything had ever fallen down the back of those drawers. Don't ask me why I needed to do that, I can't remember now, but it seemed important at the time.

Anyway, I hoisted myself up onto the top of the colossal cabinet and proceeded to dangle my body down the cavity at the back, reaching and wriggling to see what I could discover. There was a sudden crack and a sharp pain and that, dear reader, is when I cracked my own rib during my crackpot crusade.

You might laugh, but I can't. It still hurts.

I wish I could tell you it was the only time I inflicted injury upon myself doing something ridiculous but it does remind me of the whole hula hoop palaver that happened during Lockdown One. It's easy to forget how desperate for distraction we all were during those long sunny days of 2020 when we couldn't go anywhere or see anyone. I had the brilliant idea of passing some time by learning to hula hoop.



Spring cleaning and all that jazz

ABOVE:
Life is a juggling act. Stay safe...

I hadn't owned one as a child and so never mastered the art. My friend lent me her weighted hoop, dropping it off at our back door and waving encouragingly from a safe distance as she shouted something about the heaviness of the ring being great for core fitness.

I began my new hobby with gusto, throwing the hoop across my midriff and thrusting my hips back and forth in an attempt to keep it spinning.

It wasn't as easy as it looked. Again and again I tried but each time the heavy hoop would clatter to the floor. I refused to give in. For three days I practised, even though my tummy and sides were feeling increasingly sore. When I showed Noddy the severe purple bruises developing around my torso he rolled his eyes and showed little sympathy. I simply padded my middle and persevered and I'm happy to report my hula-hooping skills are now excellent.

Unfortunately, I wasn't as

successful with my next obsession. Juggling is tricky you know, and it wasn't made any easier when my husband began mocking me by repeatedly asking when would I be running away to join the circus? I told him he should be grateful I wasn't attempting to learn how to be fired out of a cannon.

Instead of becoming a human cannonball, I continued my lockdown diversion therapy by signing up for online dance classes. I chose a course that specialised in dance routines choreographed to show tunes and loved joining in via Zoom to all the high-kicking, chorus-line style numbers. If you ever need to lift your mood I'd highly recommend something that involves jitterbug and jazz hands. Try it, you can't stay down for long.

Once I'd learned a variety of numbers to tunes from Chicago, Bugsy Malone, Billy Elliot, Sweet Charity and several more, I felt ready to perform for an audience. (Well, I had alarmed the postman when he spotted me swiveling and shimmying through a cheeky Charleston but I wasn't going to count that.)

Step forward my long-suffering husband who was, by now, so bored with lockdown life he leaped at the chance to be entertained by his very own musical theatre showgirl. Well, maybe 'leaped at the chance' is exaggerating slightly but I managed to cajole him.

He tapped his foot and nodded approvingly as I demonstrated my new skills and it all went off without a hitch. No injuries were sustained (so long as we ignore the embarrassing encounter with the postman and the dent to my pride).

It makes me wonder if it might be time for me to learn another skill to add to my repertoire.

Hmm, does anyone know where I can get a unicycle? ♦
Suzan's books *Shake It Up*, *Beverley and Rock n' Rose* are available in paperback and ebook published by One More Chapter, HarperCollins

SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Imagine standing in front of an audience, having indecipherable questions fired at you by Phillip Schofield so your ridiculous answers can be broadcast into millions of homes for family entertainment. Does that sound like a fever dream to you? Well, that nightmare scenario happened to me for real a few years ago when Noddy and I were invited to take part in the *All Star Mr & Mrs Show* for ITV.

I found it a terrifying prospect but there was a chance to win £30,000 for charity; how could we say no?

My husband, of course, is a showbiz professional – nothing fazes him and he can perform on demand for microphones, cameras or stadiums of screaming fans. I prefer to sidle in sideways in most situations and then simply try not to make too much of a fool of myself. Unfortunately, the opportunities for me to look daft came thick and fast once filming began.

At one point I was asked to blow a kiss to the camera. I kid you not. I refused, obviously, I'm not Pamela Anderson for goodness sake.

I was so nervous of the looming competition I kept barking random questions at my husband. 'What was the name of your first pet?' 'What's your shirt collar size?' Nod, rather unhelpfully, told me to pull myself together.

'They're not going to ask you anything like that,' he said, but then fearing the maniacal look in my eye offered, '16 and a half' in the hope this piece of information would still my nerves. Fat chance.

In makeup, we were introduced to our fellow competitors, *Coronation Street's* Beverley Callard and her husband, John, and Mikey Graham from *Boyzone* and his wife, Karen.

Suddenly, I found myself at the top of a staircase, the show's introduction music began playing and a floor manager cued our entrance... we were on.

My legs were like jelly, my feet wouldn't move, but at that moment Noddy turned and looked me in the eye. 'Right,' he said with a wink, '...now remember, we want to win this... and be funny.' No lie, that's exactly what he said. He then set off down the steps leaving me no option but to follow him towards the hosts, Phillip Schofield and Fern Britton.

The questions were tricky and so wordy and complex it was a struggle to understand them let alone know what to give as an answer. At one point I corrected Phillip's grammar, remarking that he'd used 'a double negative'. What am I like?... It got a laugh though, so at least the audience was finding me funny after all.

During the paddle round, we did quite well. I'd figured out that on *Mr & Mrs* you have to



How we collared the Mr & Mrs jackpot

above: We present your *All Star Mr & Mrs*. Photo: ITV

predict what your partner will say, which is not always the same as the 'correct' answer. That's why I lifted my blue paddle when they asked: 'Who looks best in their underwear?' I knew very well Noddy would say him.

I survived the torture of sitting blindfolded in the glass booth while *I'm Horny, Horny, Horny* played at full volume in my headphones and emerged blinking into the studio lights.

To my amazement, we'd made it to the final round, but that's when it got really difficult. I now had to answer questions about my husband with no multiple-choice alternatives.

But then: 'Suzan, what is Noddy's collar size?' Bingo. I made it look like I was racking my brains but inside I was fist-pumping. I knew this one, of course I did: 'Ooh, I think it might be 16 and half,' I offered coyly.

My smugness was short-lived, however, as the next question floored me. 'Who was Noddy's childhood crush?' Huh? I hadn't a

clue. My palms sweated and my mind went blank. In desperation I lunged for the one movie star name I could recall: 'Err... Bette Davis,' I offered with no hope this was true. I was convinced we'd blown it. Our chance of the big money prize was over.

Noddy's answer needed to match mine for us to win big but I saw the confused expression on his face when it was his turn to name his 'childhood crush'. He hesitated. My heart sank further. But then he ventured: 'Well, I wouldn't call it a crush but I always liked films starring Bette Davis.'

My mouth fell open. Had we just performed some sort of telepathic miracle? Who knows? But against all odds we won the £30,000 jackpot, which we donated in full to our chosen charity, the NSPCC. Thanks to Bette. ●

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SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



We had an exciting family trip to the USA all planned way back in March 2020 but then, just like everyone else, instead of exploring pastures new we became intimately acquainted with our own back garden.

Swapping sightseeing for cupboard clearing was never gonna catch on but most of us gave it a good old go.

It might be considered therapeutic to 'sort your life out' Stacey Solomon style but in the end nothing beats stepping off a plane and into another way of life. So I was thrilled earlier this spring when Noddy and I were finally on our way to Las Vegas with our son Django and his fiancée, Beth. As the plane descended over the Nevada desert I could clearly see the neon lights of the famous strip sparkling and flashing like gaudy jewels beneath us. Vegas is a non-stop riot of noise and nerve jangling, eye-popping sights. It's a 24-hour party place and just like the giant rollercoaster that wraps itself around the New York New York Hotel, to enjoy it you need to strap yourself in, hold on tight and enjoy the ride.

But as the aeroplane wheels touched the Tarmac my stomach was a knot of anxiety and my face throbbed in pain as I realised the casinos and cocktails would have to wait. My very first task after checking into our gorgeous hotel was going to be finding an emergency dentist. Aarrggghhhhh.

I'd suspected all wasn't well with a recent root canal filling the day before our trip. I'd dashed to a London dentist who told me my back molar was cracked beyond repair and needed extracting. 'If you're careful though, it'll last the week,' he said. That sounded good to me. With enough dirty vodka martinis inside me, how bad could things get?

Halfway across the Atlantic the pain became so bad I cursed the missed opportunity to have the tooth taken out. What had I been thinking? Now I was faced with my long-awaited trip being blighted by raging toothache.

A kindly Bellagio Hotel receptionist wrote down the name of her personal dentist but I couldn't get a reply from that number. While all around me people hit the one-arm bandits and placed their bets on the throw of a dice or the spin of a roulette wheel, I hit Google, searching frantically for an emergency dentist in Las Vegas. I needed one who would accept walk-ins at very short notice, it was a gamble – what if I ended up in a Sweeney Todd-style butcher's chair? What if I came face to face with an untrained maniac wielding a blood-stained pair of pliers?

In the end Lady Luck was on my side. Through a fog of pain medication I stumbled



Viva Las VEGAaaaaarrggghhhs

above: Suzan and Noddy are all smiles in the city where finding an emergency dentist turned out to be a winning gamble. Photo: Suzan Holder

across the website for Emergency Dental Las Vegas. The woman who answered my call was helpful and sympathetic and offered me an appointment as soon as I could get there. A hotel concierge summoned me a taxi and told the driver 'Look after her, buddy,' and 20 minutes later I was stepping into a bright, clean surgery on the outskirts of Vegas with spectacular views of desert mountains from the large windows.

The treatment was amazing. If Americans know anything, it's teeth. They X-rayed my mouth from every angle and gave me a thorough examination. Then came the verdict: the dentist said he thought he could repair my cracked tooth, preserve the root canal that had caused it and thereby save me a fortune in extraction and dental implant fees. Oh and he could take away all the pain.

A few hours later I was back with the family and ready to start my holiday pain free. What a win. We breakfasted like kings, hung out in downtown Fremont, took in a glitzy show, explored the malls and quirky Arts Quarter. We ate in dodgy diners at 3am and sipped cocktails in fancy bars instead of eating lunch. The only rule in Vegas is... there are no rules.

We briefly escaped from the frenetic pace of the city for an awe-inspiring trip to the Grand Canyon where the sensational sight across the vast gorge made my knees tremble even more than they had in the dentist chair.

So Viva Las Vegas – you were an assault on all my senses but in the end I left feeling like a winner. ●

Suzan's books *Shake It Up*, *Beverley and Rock 'n' Rose* are available in paperback and ebook published by One More Chapter, HarperCollins

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SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



One of the absolute joys of life after lockdown was being able to go to the theatre; I really missed watching live plays and musicals.

Following a career in print journalism and TV producing I was thrilled to work in the theatre world, writing and directing youth and comedy shows, and then having my debut play, *Shake It Up, Baby*, performed at theatres in the North West. So I've seen my share of bad behaviour from behind the scenes as well as from a seat in the audience on several occasions, but stories of people conducting themselves appallingly in theatres are now hitting the headlines.

You may remember the recent episode at Manchester's Palace Theatre where a mother and daughter began caterwauling along to the actress performing Whitney Houston's soaring solo in *The Bodyguard*. They were actually trying to out-sing her. Not content with ruining the moment for the rest of the audience and distracting the actress herself, they refused to stop when asked and argued loudly with front-of-house staff. The show had to be abandoned and the police called. Disgraceful.

The incident became a topic for debate in newspapers and on radio and TV and was included for discussion when I was on the panel of the *Jeremy Vine* show on Channel 5.

Now let me be very, very clear, there is no debate to be had on this subject. No one should ever feel it is appropriate to do anything that impacts on the enjoyment of others in an audience. I will not be swayed on this. Chatting, filming, eating loudly, singing, texting... all no... NO!

Watching some TV presenters sniggering and giggling about these ridiculous antics really got my blood boiling. Have they any idea how hard it is to put on a show? How much talent, training, time, work and money goes into creating productions designed to enrich people's lives? Because that is what theatre can do. Just like any other art form it helps us understand and relate to the world around us a little better. It may not be brain surgery but it can nourish the heart and soul. It's hard for the magic to work though if you are sitting near to people who insist on nattering or munching their way through a show as though they were at home.

A performance of *Lennon: Through a Glass Onion* at Liverpool's Epstein Theatre was wrecked for me by a group of women who thought they could sing better than my actor friend Daniel Taylor. (They couldn't.)

For the sake of any wannabe singers, a theatre show – even a jukebox musical



Only fools act up at the theatre

above: The cast of *Only Fools and Horses the Musical* at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, with Suzan, far right, and Noddy Holder, centre, with their friend Les Dennis as Grandad. Photo: Theatre Royal

where you think you know all the words (you probably don't) – is not a gig. When Beyoncé or Robbie Williams holds out their mic inviting you to sing along, that is different. The sound system still blasts the band out and your voice joining in with thousands of others is briefly part of the shared experience. Once Beyoncé is back on the mic the warbling of the wannabes is drowned out and correct order restored.

I also wish everyone would put their damn phones down; I resent trying to watch a concert through the prism of a dozen mobile screens – and, by the way, the recordings always look and sound really dreadful when you post them on social media later.

At the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, I once politely asked the woman in front of me to stop holding her phone up to film the play, blocking my view. She had been warned in the interval by management but when she started again in the second act I whispered: 'Please could you stop?' To my

horror, she turned and started screaming at me. The actors on stage all froze and looked over. Mortifying. Mind you, when the lights came up at the end of the show she ran out. She obviously knew she was in the wrong.

A pantomime or sing-a-long performance is different. There are clear moments when the audience is actively encouraged to join in. It's not confusing at all.

Recently, I've been lucky enough to see several amazing West End shows: *Cabaret*, *Moulin Rouge*, *To Kill A Mockingbird* and the hilarious and touching *Only Fools and Horses the Musical* starring our mate Les Dennis (pictured with us and all the cast).

Theatre-folk have had a rough ride over the last few years – evidenced by the recent loss of the Oldham Coliseum.

Please support the theatre by going if you can and show your appreciation by letting the performers perform. And if you do have an overwhelming urge to join in, sign up for your local amateur dramatics society. ●

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We have a new king and I think that, along with his queen, this heralds a fascinating new era for our country.

I've listened to various criticisms, doubts and arguments against the monarchy, and been asked to give my own view on radio and TV discussion programmes – isn't it marvellous that we live in a country where everyone is entitled to their opinion? As a result, I've thought long and hard about why I personally value our constitutional monarchy so much. Firstly, I believe having an unelected head of state is a good thing. Would you really want yet more power-hungry politicians vying for the position?

As Billy Connolly once said: 'The desire to be a politician should bar you for life from ever becoming one. Don't vote, it just encourages them.'

Quite right. In our lifetime we have been lucky enough to have the sensible and solid Queen Elizabeth II who put her duty to the country above everything else. Now her sensitive son, Charles, with his passion for the environment, commitment to creating opportunities for young people through the Prince's Trust and a real love for all aspects of the arts, is a true king for our times. The royal family may live in palaces and wear fabulous jewels but by doing so they are the custodians of our history. Visit Buckingham or Kensington Palace, take a trip to Windsor or Sandringham, talk to the locals who live near the Balmoral Estate and you will see all these places benefit from being working establishments as well as bringing much-needed employment and revenue.

No matter how many affordable homes are needed in London (as they are all over the country), the site of Buckingham Palace would never be made available for that. No, it would be snapped up by a Russian oligarch and the crown jewels would disappear into the collection of some Saudi prince or other and that would be the last we'd see of the orb and sceptre. These things belong to all of us. (I mean, they won't let you borrow a tiara for your wedding but you can visit the Tower of London and be dazzled by the splendour.)

With politics becoming increasingly desperate and tribal, and in-fighting between members of the same party dominating the news, I am comforted by the knowledge that every week the prime minister (at the time of writing, Rishi Sunak) has an audience with the monarch. Queen Elizabeth's reign saw 15 PMs come and go, and everyone admitted she was a voice of calm reason and wisdom.

Charles has spent his life meeting people from all walks of life, he has served



Long may they reign over us

above: Suzan and Noddy Holder toast the new Great British monarchy. Photo: Suzan Holder

in the military; he understands farming, traditional crafts and new technological advances. His expertise on the environment, apprenticeships, religious faiths, society and history means he is better placed to represent the things I feel are more important than any politician currently vying for my vote.

The thousands of charities championed by the royals would never get the same attention without their patronage. By visiting, holding events and inviting representatives along to grand occasions, they shine a light into dark corners in a way nothing and no one else can.

If we got rid of the Windsors, what then? I don't want King Boris or Queen Nadine Dorries and that's exactly the sort who would be after the job.

The weight of responsibility that comes from being next in line to the throne appears to bring out the best in our royals – perhaps the 'spares' such as Andrew and Harry should look to Princess Anne as an example of how brilliant and hard-working a second-born can be. What a woman.

I'm always impressed by efficiency and attention to detail, and for me the royal family has set the standard for doing something well. When the whole world is watching, the grand British spectacle of a jubilee or a coronation is exactly the image we need to project.

My own brushes with royalty have been fleeting. I was inside Buckingham Palace in 2000 to see my husband receive his MBE from Charles and I attended the Queen's platinum jubilee last year when Noddy was asked to be a 'National Treasure' in the colourful procession that culminated in the last balcony appearance of the late Queen. Many *Cheshire Life* readers and contributors have also received various honours, I'm sure. These awards and experiences pay tribute to the brilliant work done by inspirational people in our community.

Congratulations to them, and for the rest of us, what a wonderful thing to aim to achieve. ●

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I've just got home after an uplifting and inspiring afternoon in Manchester watching a bunch of very talented young people in their graduation showcase.

All performing arts universities hold these sorts of events for their final-year acting students – it's a chance for them to perform short extracts from a variety of plays to an audience of potential agents and industry people. It's scary for them but, being excellent actors, they hide their nerves well.

We like to go along every year to the one held at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester by LIPA (Liverpool Institute For the Performing Arts) to show our support, laugh loudly and applaud in, hopefully, all the right places. Noddy is a Companion of LIPA and has delivered masterclasses to music students. Last year, I was delighted to be asked to deliver a lecture to media students about TV production and it's a place close to both our hearts.

The students this year were a great bunch and delivered a mixture of moving, entertaining and amusing scenes. I particularly enjoyed the performances of pieces written by Alan Ayckbourn and Neil Simon with razor-sharp, witty dialogue.

The best showcase performance I ever saw, however, was more than seven years ago and will take some beating. A young woman with a strong Yorkshire accent did a comedy monologue about an aspiring actress enduring a disastrous audition. Brilliantly observed with lots of facial expression and energetic physicality, it was hilarious.

Beth Fox was in the same year at LIPA as our son, Django; he was studying sound technology and she was on the acting course. When Beth stepped forward onto the bare stage in 2016 to perform her chosen scene, she instantly captured the audience. With natural comic talent, funny bones and an irrepressible personality, she had the crowd in the palm of her hand. I fell in love with her right there and then – maybe that's when Django did too as they've been together ever since and got engaged just before Christmas last year.

So you've heard all those mother-in-law jokes? Well, I'm about to gain a hilarious daughter-in-law, no joke... and it doesn't get any funnier, or lovelier than that.

As a rom-com writer myself I have huge respect for Beth's clever comedy writing; after all, I know just how tough it is to do. We occasionally run ideas past each other, I've lent her my Victoria Wood DVDs and she's introduced me to the world of live stand-up comedy. Yes, after years of living in London juggling auditions



This funny girl is standing up for comedy

above: Beth Fox: Flowering comedian

alongside a full-time job in theatre marketing, Beth has stepped up to the stand-up mic and is now appearing up to three or four times a week on the comedy club circuit.

I was at her very first gig one rainy Thursday night in Bethnal Green. Stand-up is dangerous, exposing and not for the faint-hearted. What if someone heckles? What if no one laughs? I could tell she was nervous beforehand. To be honest, I was terrified for her although I tried hard not to show it. Neither of us should have worried. As the spotlight hit her she calmly took the mic from its stand, fixed the audience with a cheeky smile and introduced herself: 'Hello there, I'm Beth,' and from that moment I knew she'd got what it takes.

Being a young woman in the comedy world is not easy, it's highly competitive of course, but can you believe there are still

downright nasty, misogynistic males who question whether a woman can ever be funny – sometimes to her face – I kid you not.

Thankfully, not everyone is so insecure. TV comedy favourite Roisin Conaty (*After Life/GameFace*) made a point of congratulating Beth following a storming set in a Crouch End pub, telling her she loved her work and would look out for her in future.

Everyone should look out for Beth Fox in the future. If you happen to be heading up to Edinburgh for the Fringe Festival this year, you can catch her appearing in a self-written comedy show alongside friend and fellow LIPA grad Oliver Burkill. It's *All Gravy* runs from August 3 to 13 at The Mash House. I wouldn't miss it, perhaps I'll see you there. ●

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SUZAN HOLDER

Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



What songs make up the soundtrack to your life? We all have one: a collection of tunes that mean something special to us at various points in time.

You don't think you have a personal soundtrack? Trust me, you do.

What was the song you sang along to as a kid, or maybe performed at family gatherings to entertain granny? I was eight years old in 1974 when I discovered I could do a killer version of little Lena Zavaroni's *Ma! (He's Making Eyes At Me)*. It would bring the house down. (Well, my Nana liked it.)

Surely everyone remembers the very first record they bought with their own pocket money? Mine was *See My Baby Jive* by Roy Wood and Wizzard. In my defence I had no idea when I was at primary school that I would end up married to the lead singer of rival glam band Slade... Whoops.

The list goes on... tunes from Tina Turner to ZZ Top can hurtle me back in time to my student days in Cardiff, my first home on my own, the craze nights spent with the guy who would become my husband. (I won't go into details about why Tina's *Steamy Windows* became 'our tune' when we were first dating.)

My dad's taste in music has been a huge influence on me. He was a teen in the fifties and when I was growing up I devoured his huge collection of vintage rock n' roll records: Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis. I loved them all.

When I got my first answer machine I created a message from the line 'I gotta gal, named Sue... she knows just what to do...' from *Tutti Frutti*. I'm sure that helped Noddy fall for me when he first called my flat. He adores Little Richard.

When I moved away from journalism and into creative writing I found myself weaving stories woven around music the characters loved. In *Shake It Up, Beverley*, which started as a play and became my first book, it was The Beatles; the title itself inspired by the song *Twist and Shout*. My second book, *Rock 'n' Rose*, is set in Memphis, famously home to Elvis Presley.

When I first attempted to write these stories I was helped enormously by my friend, the actor Ian Puleston Davies, who lives near Chester.

He encouraged me and made brilliant suggestions as I struggled to get down on the page all the ideas percolating in my brain. He understood immediately what I was attempting to achieve, volunteered to read a leading part at a script run-through when I was working on my play and also took



Songs that go round and round in life

above: Working in harmony with Ian Puleston Davies

time to come along to my book launch for *Shake It Up, Beverley* at the Liverpool Beatles Museum when I finally landed a publishing deal for the story with HarperCollins.

You may recognise Ian from his appearances in *Coronation Street*, *Vera*, *Marcella*, *Tin Man* and many many more TV and film hits. He is also a talented writer and director.

He has written and directed a new film, *Bolan's Shoes*, released into cinemas on September 15, and I was honoured to be invited to the Manchester premiere earlier this year.

The movie is about a couple of troubled kids from a children's home whose lives are never the same following an eventful trip to see glam rock idol Marc Bolan in his 1970s heyday. T-Rex's music is used so well in the film and the story captures the way their shared love for Bolan keeps a strong link between them right up until the present day.

The film is hugely entertaining, with surprising plot twists and a heart-warming message. It stars an almost unrecognisable Timothy Spall and the incredible Leanne Best who is fabulous in the leading role. Lovely Leanne is related to original Beatles drummer, Pete Best, and so the amazing parallels and connections continue. Her mum and dad – Leigh and Roag Best – own the Liverpool Beatles Museum, where I had my book launch... the one Ian came along to... music really does connect so many dots in my life.

Ian and I have both used our love for music in our writing and his film and my books show how the soundtrack of our lives can tell its very own story about us.

Has all this got you thinking? What are the special songs that make up the soundtrack of your life? ●

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I'll be honest, I haven't seen the blockbuster *Barbie* movie everyone is talking about. I can't work up the interest. I didn't own a Barbie doll as a child and I never, ever wanted one.

Barbie's bright blonde hair, perky bosom and penchant for gaudy pink never appealed to me as a little girl. I'm serious. Growing up in the Black Country in the 1970s the doll of choice around our way was actually Cindy, the UK's homegrown fashion doll. But I never had one of those either.

My doll was Action Girl, the female version of Action Man. She had blue eyes, ginger hair and limbs that could fully bend due to her rather ugly but properly working joints. Luckily I valued mobility far more than synthetic, aesthetic appeal. She wasn't as glam as booby Barbie but I loved her.

When the *Barbie* movie hoo-ha hit the media I went and dug out my old Action Girl... she must be almost 50 herself by now... and it got me thinking about why I never wanted any other doll. I could never do anything with her flaming locks of auburn hair so she always looked a little unkempt. Her flat little ankle boots were cute though, and Action Girl certainly knew how to rock a jumpsuit... Wait a minute... Have I based my entire adult image on this little doll who everyone else used to mock? Have I? Oh I hope so!

The *Barbie* movie is apparently full of feminist themes and strives to portray the ultimate fashion doll as a suitable role model for growing girls from all generations... Okaaaay. Bow to Barbie if you like but I'm happier than ever to find my role-playing partner and subliminal inspiration was a go-getting, all-action figure who didn't conform to unrealistic stereotypes.

Action Girl didn't have a given name so I would change what I called her depending on my mood and what game we were playing. I remember her being Chrissie, Angel and Dixie at one time or another.

During the Action Girl years I was gifted a strange assortment of unbranded clothes for my doll and my favourite outfit to dress her in was a bright blue tutu, over-the-knee red and yellow striped socks and a gold lamé jacket. Forget dressing as an astronaut or air hostess, it seemed obvious to me you could take on the whole world kitted up like that.

Despite what some people say, I think the 1970s were a great time for female role models. I adored the cartwheeling of Lynda Carter's gymnastic Wonder Woman and never missed an episode of *The Bionic Woman* when Jaime Sommers overcame a horrific accident and disability to pioneer medical science and use her new bionic powers for good.



Why I'm NOT a Barbie Girl

above: Me and the inspiration for Action Girls everywhere. Clue: she's not named Barbie. Photo: Suzan Holder

Straight after school, I'd rush home to see *Blue Peter*, not just for the reports from 'aunty' Valerie Singleton but I also loved to watch the end credits so I could spot the name 'Biddy Baxter' next to the word 'producer' – that sounded like an amazing job, being the boss of a TV show – wow. I ended up with my name scrolling up last as executive producer on a number of TV shows... Coincidence?

Blue Peter also introduced me to Anne Frank and the story of deafblind activist Helen Keller. I found books about them in the library and devoured their stories finding both motivation and inspiration in the pages.

There were some real rock 'n' roll rebel role models for us '70s girls too – saucy Sally James was great fun to watch on ITV's anarchic Saturday morning show *Tiswas* and for me *Happy Days* was never just about the

The Fonz – 'Heyyyyyyy'. I dreamed of living in a world of 1950s music, jukeboxes and cool dudes on motorbikes just like Joanie Cunningham (Richie's cute little sister) and motorbike-riding, guitar-swinging Leather Tuscadero (played by Suzi Quatro). Is it any wonder I eventually wrote a rock 'n' roll romcom book with a guitar-playing hero who straddles a gleaming mean machine?

The *Happy Days* spin-off, *Laverne & Shirley*, with two sassy, smart-talking female leads, was my favourite TV show and I can still sing every word of the theme tune: 'Give us any chance we'll take it, Read us any rule we'll break it, We're gonna make our dreams come true... Doin' it our way.'

Thanks girls, all of you, for the dreams, the goals and the fun... who needed Barbie anyway? ●

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SUZAN HOLDER

The rockstar's wife on her hero husband's courageous comeback



I saw a sight I thought I would never see again earlier this year... my incredible husband, back on stage, captivating an audience with hilarious, slightly naughty stories and singing his heart out with a voice still distinctive and powerful.

To watch him do what he does so brilliantly was thrilling, entertaining and profoundly moving. You see, five years ago we were given the devastating news that he had oesophageal cancer and only had six months to live.

I'm sorry if that comes as a bit of a shock; it came as a total bombshell to us too. We coped with it the only way we could, by hunkering down, sticking together and doing everything we could to survive it. We told only immediate close family and friends and I will never apologise to those we did not confide in, only to those who were forced to suffer pain and anguish alongside us as we attempted to navigate our way through this new and horrifying world. They held our hands and kept our confidence. We truly found out who our real friends are.

The prognosis was bleak but Noddy coped with amazing good humour and breath-taking bravery. He put himself in the hands of the experts at The Christie Hospital in Manchester and agreed to a gruelling course of experimental treatment as part of a brand-new trial of intense chemotherapy. There were no guarantees, no one knew if it would have any effect, let alone work miracles, but he responded well. As anyone who has received a cancer diagnosis will know, the experts never like to use the word 'cure', but here we are five years later and he's feeling good and looking great.

So when an opportunity to perform on stage arose this summer, Noddy was thrilled to be able to do it. He has never had any interest in attempting to recreate his Slade days, he's proud of the 25 years he spent in the band but that time is behind him. New challenges are what interests and excites him. He was tempted back on stage by an invitation from Cheshire musician Tom Seals. The wonderful young boogie-woogie piano player leads a swinging eight-piece jazz band that plays all over the world. The show they put together was like a live *Desert Island Discs*, with Noddy picking a few of his favourite songs for the band to play and telling stories about how those tunes linked to his life. They first played a beautiful theatre in Wimborne, Dorset, then a triumphant hometown gig in Noddy's beloved Walsall in the West Midlands. The short run ended with a spellbinding show at The Lowry theatre in Manchester. Every gig was a sell-out.

I watched each night as Noddy took to the stage in a leopard-print top hat, colourful



My Noddy's show of strength

above: Noddy and Suzan Holder, who stole the show together at the *Cheshire Life* and Creative Connecting in Cheshire charity evening for CAFT in May. Photo: Kirsty Thompson

left: The unmistakable, irrepressible Noddy Holder who got back on stage in concert with Tom Seals this summer.

Photo: Ron Milson Photography

clothes and snazzy shoes, and held the audience spellbound with tales of his rock 'n' roll antics that included references to The Beatles, Stevie Wonder, Muhammad Ali and Cliff Richard, among many others. He had fans roaring with laughter at his unique take on 60 years in the crazy showbiz world and then holding back tears as he talked for the first time about his cancer journey. The show-stopping surprise for the audience, however, was the finale when Noddy picked up the mic and belted out a couple of numbers to close the show.

I know so many people reading this will have experienced a cancer diagnosis for

themselves or a loved one. The only advice I can offer to anyone facing a similar battle right now is listen to your specialists and try to stay as positive as you can.

The care and expertise we experienced at The Christie was excellent. In addition, Noddy has always been great at living in the moment, not hankering for the past or worrying about the future. That attitude served him well and a lot of his recovery has been credited to his positive mental attitude. You need so much mental strength to get through something like this. I've always been impressed by my husband's focus and determination but now I am completely in awe.

There may be more shows with Tom in the future but for now I am simply grateful my husband continues to be his mischievous, irrepressible self whatever he is up to. *Look to the future now*, Noddy... *Coz I Luv You*... ●

Suzan x

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Author, columnist, wife of Slade's Noddy. She really rocks



Christmas is a time of traditions – family, cultural, some dating back centuries and some that have evolved in the more modern era.

But trying to spend Christmas with people who have different traditions to your own can result in arguments exploding with a bigger bang than a monster-sized cracker. For instance, opening presents on Christmas morning appears to be the most popular choice, but some families like to rip into the wrapping paper on Christmas Eve (Santa must do an early delivery at their houses).

Other folk apparently like to save the gift-giving until after lunch? Really? How does that work? Clearly, they can't be blessed with eager children who have been whipped up into a frenzy of expectation for weeks before the big day. As for those attempting delayed gift gratification... don't they know that 'after lunch' it's compulsory to slump so hard into a post-turkey stupor the entire vegetating family resembles a mound of leftover roast potatoes. What am I talking about? Leftover roast potatoes? Who in their right mind leaves a roast potato?

Last year I revealed in this column that my husband wakes me up every Christmas morning by bellowing 'It'sss Xmaaassssssss' into my sleepy ear. The media went berserk. Headlines screamed: 'Noddy Holder's Wife is Tortured by Slade Star's Shout.' To be clear, I wasn't complaining in the slightest, my husband's voice is a delight to me whenever and wherever I hear it. Obviously.

So what are some other traditions adhered to in the Holder household on Christmas Day, I hear you ask? Well, you didn't but I'll tell you anyway:

*Instead of cutesy matching pyjamas we all wear the most outrageously decorated PJs we can find and remain in them all day long. (Noddy favours a cowboy motif.)

*We breakfast on bacon sandwiches and buck's fizz with a side portion of Terry's Chocolate Orange. (Doesn't everyone?)

*Noddy calls Mariah Carey on the phone and congratulates her for singing his favourite Christmas song.

NB: Two of those facts are completely true and one may be a slight exaggeration.

Keeping to familiar routines and habits can create a cosy atmosphere and trigger nostalgic happy memories. But slavishly sticking to routines set in concrete can make the whole festive season seem like one long Groundhog Day. It's a tricky balance to get right. I favour a mash-up of tried and tested Christmassy traditions while embracing new ways to celebrate. There are some wild and wacky options on offer in other parts



Are you hanging up your stockings?

above: Last year, the headlines screamed: 'Noddy Holder's Wife is Tortured by Slade Star's Shout', but actually, I like it. Photo: Suzan Holder

of the world. Did you know that in Caracas the Venezuelans love to roller-skate to Christmas morning mass? So many of them take to the streets with wheels on their heels they have to shut the roads to other traffic. Mind-boggling.

In Norway, they believe Christmas Eve is the night witches take to the skies. So instead of popping a mince pie and glass of sherry out for Santa, the tradition is to hide all the brooms before bedtime, that way they foil any passing coven looking to swipe them for a joyride. Sensible, I suppose.

It's not a roast turkey dinner with all the trimmings that gets mouths watering in Japan. Would you believe the most popular feast for their festive meal is... drum roll please... a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken? Honestly, I tell no lie. Colonel Sanders is as popular as Santa out there (it must be

the snowy-white whiskers.) The Japanese are so keen to get their finger-lickin' fingers on some southern fried chicken they have to order way in advance for Christmas Day delivery.

Well, I hope that's given you food for thought about how you might ring the changes this year and introduce some new traditions to your festivities. I don't know about you but I reckon a Christmas spent roller-skating, eating KFC and hiding all the cleaning utensils sounds like a pretty good one.

Traditional, experimental or shut the door and wait for it all to be over, however you spend your holidays I hope you have a pleasant and peaceful one this year.

Merry Xmas Everybody. ●
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