

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.

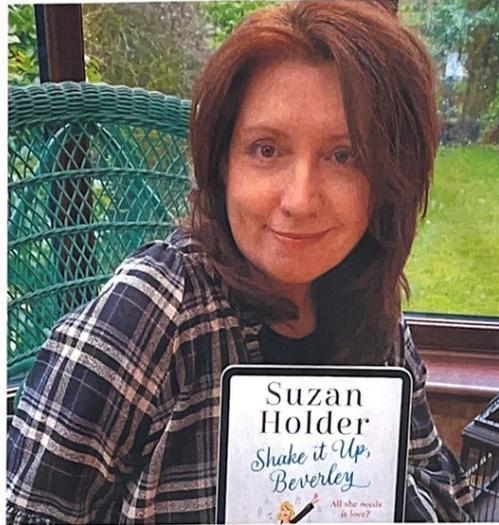
We have been together for more than 30 years and have a grown-up son, but hearing Noddy strumming his guitar while I'm making coffee never gets old, let me tell you.

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. ♦
Suzan x

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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?

Photo: Suzan Holder

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



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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

Photos: Suzan Holder

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



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 fizzes 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'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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SUZAN HOLDER

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



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 Hoops

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.

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

Despite my protestations, Aunty 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.

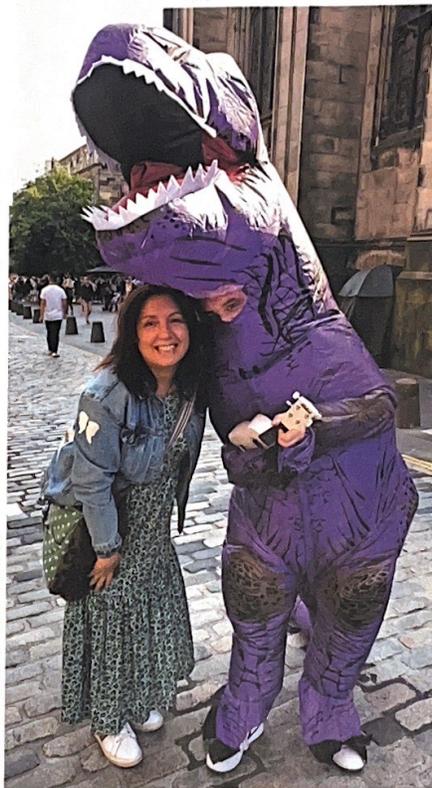
If you've never been to Edinburgh it's a wonderful place to visit at any time: great shops, interesting history, wonderful food and welcoming locals. But to be there during the chaotic, riotous festival takes the whole experience to another, nerve-jangling level. It's an assault on the senses. It's not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

Photo: Suzan 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 Chriiiiiiiissssstmaaaaaaasssss' 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



Photo: Suzan Holder

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*

