

Greg put the rest of the DJ'ing world to shame by landing Radio One's graveyard shift when he was just 21

HEY, MR DEEJAY

THE AFTERNOON RADIO HOST DISHES THE DIRT ON DATING A POPSTAR, DRESSING TO IMPRESS AND THE ROCKY (OR NOT SO) ROAD TO **RADIO ONE**

INTERVIEW & WORDS RICHARD LENTON

I gave radio DJ'ing a shot once. It didn't take. Sitting in a dark, dank studio, staring blankly at an array of screens, multi-coloured buttons and a weathered microphone that appeared to be suffering from a strange form of alopecia, I quickly found myself questioning my choice of career move. Two hours of unbearable solitude (and a succession of tunes that rubber-stamped the 1980s as the decade that taste forgot) later, I decided that life as a radio DJ could only lead to one thing for me: being force-fed mind-numbing drugs in an asylum filled with other once-happy folk who've spent too

much time talking to themselves in small rooms. No, radio DJs are a very unique breed...

But one man who's avoided any of these potential pitfalls and established himself as a thoroughbred in this business is Radio One's Greg James. Four years ago, the lofty 6ft 4in self-confessed radio geek was at university in Norwich [insert Alan Partridge gag here] before being plucked from the obscurity of the student airwaves to present Radio One's pre-breakfast graveyard shift. His conversational, self-deprecating style immediately appealed to an increasingly loyal ❖❖❖



band of dawn-rising truckers and commuters, and within 18 months he was promoted to the weekday afternoon show.

ALL WORK, SOME PLAY

And not only has Greg been fast-tracked from student radio to a primetime slot on the nation's leading station with obscene haste, but the 25-year old is also 12 months into a relationship with gorgeous, über-talented singer-songwriter, Ellie Goulding. Maybe I should've stuck to radio after all...

"I was actually a fan of Ellie before we started dating," he tells me as he winds down after a Thursday afternoon shift at Radio One HQ on London's Great Portland Street. "My advice would be never meet your idol... just sleep with them instead!"

For a passing second I wonder if he's ready to divulge the innermost secrets of his nocturnal activities with the delightful Miss Goulding, but then I remember that this is the clean-cut Greg James; the epitome of chivalry and gentlemanliness.

"It's coming up to a year," he adds, exuding obvious affection for his other half. "We're quite soppy, but it's nice – we're both losers basically."

There's not a rational person in the land who would agree with his self-

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assessment. However, when Greg goes on to talk about clothes shopping with his famous other half, the infamous *Inbetweeners* double-dating episode springs to mind – the one which saw Simon being dressed by his girlfriend Tara in an outfit that made him look like a cross between a 19th-century public schoolboy and a gay stripper.

"I think every bloke who watched that episode thought 'I've been there,'" he adds. "But Ellie's not like that – she bought me a couple of T-shirts this week actually, since T-shirts and jeans are the standard attire of the DJ."

STYLE PROFILE

It was once said that fashion is like a shadow: fly from it and it follows you; follow it and it flies from you. This certainly applies to Greg. He doesn't worship at the altar of the latest trends, but his look is bang-on on the money: Adidas boots, fitted Diesel jeans and a Firetrap lumberjack shirt worn open to reveal what can only be a Goulding-inspired 70's punk T-shirt. So far, so good in the cool stakes, but then the conversation drifts to his specialist subject, music...

"I'm not one of these weirdy-beardy-type music nerds, I like loads of different stuff. But the first record I ever bought was by Mr Blobby. I was a huge fan of *Noel's House Party*... that's not very cool is it?"

DISC JOCKEY DREAMS

But this is Greg James in a nutshell: he likes what he likes. And refreshingly, he's anything but a lame

Below: Greg steps out with gorgeous girlfriend of 12 months, Ellie Goulding



while studying the best practitioners in the business. In 2005, he was voted Best Male DJ at the Student Radio Awards; an accolade which brought him to the attention of Radio One's programme controller, Ben Cooper.

"I always wanted to be a DJ," he adds. "Chris Evans is the ultimate pro for me. I used to listen to him and think, 'Wow, what a great job. He does that for a living.' From that moment I thought 'Yes, that's what I want'.

"I also really liked Chris Tarrant and Richard Bacon, I've always been a fan of Chris Moyles, and I listened to Scott Mills in the afternoons when I was driving around delivering pizzas [during his student years]. When I did the early morning show I handed over to Chris and now I'm on in the afternoons I hand over to Scott. It's mental. There's not a day that goes by when I don't think about that."

But it must have been a seriously scary leap into the unknown when he was suddenly thrust from a drama degree and student radio to the nation's number one station?

"When I first started doing early breakfast the thing I was most scared of was finishing my show because I knew that Chris would listen to the last 10 minutes. But he was really kind to me and now I feel like part of the family. I used to worry a lot, but now I really enjoy it."

And what are the chances of one day replacing Moyles in the blue ribbon Breakfast Show slot?

"I think everyone should want to get the *Breakfast Show* on Radio One, it's the biggest show there is. I'm naturally very ambitious, but I'm getting better at lying back and thinking 'There's no rush, I'm doing okay.' Even for someone as unassuming as Greg James, that's a pretty big understatement. ■

follower. When most teenagers were drinking cider and copping off with girls on park benches, Greg was quietly learning his craft on hospital radio

Images: BBC/Ray Burmiston, xxxxxx



QUICK-FIRE FIVE

FAVOURITE INTERVIEWEE?

Ricky Gervais. I've interviewed him four times and he's exactly as I imagined him to be.

WORST INTERVIEWEE?

Aaron Johnson. He's a nice guy, but he wouldn't play along. I mentioned that Fearne (Cotton) fancied him, and instead of having a laugh about it he was saying "What do you mean, what are you saying? Why are you bringing that up?" It's a joke, chill out!

HOT ACTS TO FOLLOW?

Jessie J is great. She could be the British Rihanna. Noah and the Whale – their new album is going to be huge. There's also a singer/songwriter called Benjamin Francis from Yorkshire who's written some really great tracks, and another guy called James Vincent McMorrow.

FAVOURITE ALBUM?

The first album that I can really remember loving was *Parachutes* by Coldplay, and I still love it. I also remember being fascinated by Kanye West; I think because it was quite cool to like him at school when his first album came out.

"I used to worry a lot, but now I really enjoy it" – Greg kicks back after a hard day at Radio One HQ