

Sugar - November 1997

On the couch with Robbie Williams

The past two years have been tough on our Robbie. It's no secret that he's had some serious problems. Now then, Mr Williams, lie down on that couch, and tell us about it...

You've been in a right old pickle recently, young Robbie, and a few times over at that! Are you sorting yourself out?

Well, it's taking time. I've been in rehab for the past eight weeks - I was in a real mess before I went in and I knew that to be OK, I had to stop drinking. The thing was, I didn't know how to do it. I needed to be doused in cold water and told not to be silly, so that's what I did in rehab - I doused myself in cold water and told myself not to be silly! Ha ha! And I'm also quite spiritual, which helps me look after myself. I meditate every day and I pray every morning and evening.

Who d'you pray for?

Well, to God as I understand God to be. It's not a religious thing - my God's just some bloke, or some woman, or a collective that looks after me from up there (he points up to the ceiling). They decide things like, "Right Robbie, in order for you to have a productive life, you're going to have a big problem, for two years!" I reckon I was destined to get messed up.

Are you in control of your life now?

Only as much as anyone is. The thing is, drinking let me escape from my feelings straight away. And whereas I thought it would be a huge struggle not having a drink, it wasn't - the struggle for me was, "Uh-oh, here comes a feeling I don't like" and sitting there and dealing with it, rather than drinking to make the feeling go away. And I'm managing now.

But are you happy, young fella?

Hmmm, I don't know. I'm still a bit fazed. When people come out of rehab, they usually go to secondary rehab for another six months and then enter back into society gradually. But I came out and did Top Of The Pops straight away! I thought everything'd be great, but I've just had to realise that I'm back in the real world again and some days I'm going to be happy and some days I'm going to be sad. There are always going to be bad things as well as good ones.

So was leaving Take That behind a good thing?

The thing is, I'm sort of in the same place as I was in two years ago. I've spent a lot of time going mad, going round in circles and now I seem to have the same view about things as I did when I left Take That. You know, that everything's all, erm, quite scary and lonely, because it's a huge responsibility being a solo act. That was part of my problem, because when I left I was like "I want my freedom!", but I didn't really know what came with the freedom, so then when I got it I was like, "S**t, I've got my freedom!" I have to be careful what I ask for in life, 'cause I always seem to get it! The good thing is, I've got a purpose now, whereas before my purpose was to go out and party.

Yes, the partying. We've all seen the paparazzi pics in the papers. It must be hard, having such a public social life...

If I hadn't looked like I was about 17 stone and really out of shape I wouldn't have minded... but I did. But y'know,

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when I was having my picture taken all the time it wasn't 'cause I wanted everyone to see what I was doing. I just happened to be doing things where there were cameras.

Why didn't you go where there weren't cameras?

I guess I'm a people pleaser. I s'pose I thought that by giving myself away to people I'd make them like me. But it's different now, I know I don't have to give anything away and people will still like me, which is great.

So how do you feel about the gossip - like the two- timing Anna Friel rumour?

That was unbelievable! Me and Anna had only known each other for a couple of weeks! There were pictures of me with another girl and people were branding me a love cheat and all that, but I wasn't going out with anyone at the time.

It must be difficult to have a relationship in the spotlight. Would you like to meet someone now?

Yes, I would, actually. The problem is, I don't think I've got too much to offer at the minute. I'm busy working on myself. This sounds like real therapy talk, but it's like, you've got to be happy with yourself before you can go out and get yourself a girl.

What are you like as a boyfriend?

If I'm scared I put a front up. I might tell a girl that we don't get on, and she'll say, "You've been acting like a prat, no wonder we don't get on!" And I'm, like, "Well, I'm acting like that 'cause I'm scared!"

So who has stuck by you through all your 'scary' times?

My management, my sister and Elton John - he's been really supportive. And my mum - she's a counsellor and I talk to her a lot, but at the end of the day your mum's your mum, there's only so much you can tell her, isn't there? I still find trusting people quite hard. I've got a couple of mates that I do let in, but that's it. It's something I've got to sort out - I cut people off, but I don't want to be like that 'cause at the end of the day, I just end up being in the flat by myself.

What kind of person would you like as a mate?

I don't know, actually. I'm not sure I'd look for the same qualities that I've got - I do like myself but I think I'm far too needy! I'd just like a bloke like me to get on with.

Would you like you if you met you at a party?

Yeah, I'd think I was a really good guy - a bit insecure, sensitive, not malicious. But if you'd asked me that before I went to rehab, God, I wouldn't have liked to be at the party, never mind meeting myself!