

# ELLEguestlist

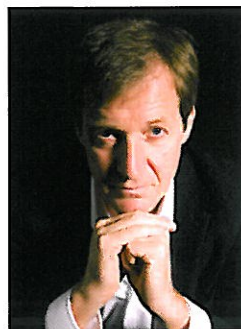
## ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

Alastair Campbell, the brash New Labour spin doctor, is an unlikely ELLE contributor. He writes about love and relationships – yes, really – on page 175. Author of *The Blair Years*, his new novel, *Maya*, is about celebrity and obsession. He lives in London with his partner, writer Fiona Millar, and has three children.

**Q** Who did you most enjoy meeting during your time in politics?

**A** Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana and Bill Clinton.

**TOP TIP** Watch the 1972 film *Lady Sings the Blues* with Diana Ross as Billie Holiday.



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## LUCY MANGAN

The *Guardian* columnist and author Lucy Mangan trained as a solicitor before turning to writing. Her novel, *The Reluctant Bride: One Woman's Journey (Kicking and Screaming) Down the Aisle*, is out in May. Lucy writes about equality in *ELLE vs Sexism* on page 158.

**Q** What's your guilty pleasure?

**A** Searching property websites for the Manhattan apartment I would live in, in another life.

**TOP TIP** Carry flat shoes with you. It saves time and anguish.

## SHIRLEY MANSON

Shirley Manson is best known as the lead singer of Scottish/American rock band Garbage, which formed in the early 1990s. A fan of her music and style, designer Todd Lynn picks out the perfect pieces for Shirley to wear to this year's ELLE Style Awards. ELLE brought these stars of music and fashion together in *Super Vixen* on page 252.

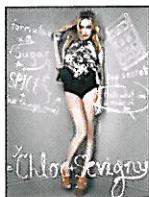
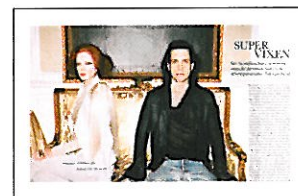
**Q** What did you want to be when you were growing up?

**A** A prima ballerina.

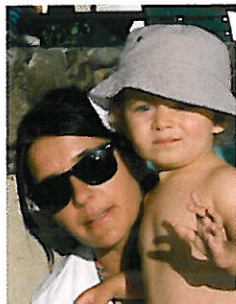
**TOP TIP** Use Eagle Creek travelling accessories: they will change your life.



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## HEATHERMARY JACKSON

New Zealand-born stylist Heathermary Jackson started her career as an assistant in London, rising to fashion director at *The Face*. She moved to New York and styles for *Arena Homme Plus*, *Flair* and *Purple*, as well as Salvatore Ferragamo and Karen Walker. She joined the ELLE team for our cover shoot with Chloë Sevigny, on page 242.

**Q** Whose wardrobe would you most like to raid?

**A** Lou Doolan's.

**TOP TIP** Don't hold grudges. It uses up too much energy.

## SARAH RAYNER

Sarah Rayner moved to London in the late 1980s to work in fashion PR and briefly at ELLE, before becoming an advertising copywriter. She now lives in Brighton and is a freelance copywriter and author. Her novel, *One Moment, One Morning*, hits stores this month. She writes about life with an alcoholic boyfriend on page 165.

**Q** What are your memories of working at ELLE?

**A** It was in 1986, after its launch, and I was awestruck.

**TOP TIP** Add heated balsamic vinegar and brown sugar to sauces, soups and stews, for added zing.



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# WHEN LOVE ISN'T ENOUGH

*It's over. Done. The DRINK won. One woman describes why she LOVED, but had to LEAVE, her alcoholic partner*

Words by SARAH RAYNER

We'd been watching TV, snuggled up together on the sofa. Then, at almost 11pm, my boyfriend said he was going out 'to get some cigarettes', which I knew was a ruse for buying vodka before the off-licence closed. Minutes later he was back. There was no evidence – he must have drunk a bottle on the street, so I didn't see. 'How seedy,' I thought, but I knew. There were telltale signs, familiar to me by now: the smell of Red Bull on his breath, the slurred speech, the swaying. And, above all, the temper. I knew I had to ask him to leave when he threatened to push me out of the bedroom window.

Many years ago, I went to an AA meeting to support a recovering alcoholic friend. They said that while the common perception of an alcoholic is someone who drinks every day, it's not the most useful benchmark, and I had always wondered about that. My mother likes a small glass of



Madeira at 6.45 each evening, but I'd hardly say she has a problem with alcohol. Rather, it's a ritual, a marker that it's relaxation time. Instead, the speaker at AA suggested an alcoholic is someone whose personality is transformed by drink.

Certainly with Nick, that was true. Sober, he was witty, intelligent, sparky and handsome in a Heathcliff kind of way. Drunk, he was irritating, truculent and aggressive. He even became ugly as his face became contorted with anger.

I first met him when I was a student. Nick was 22 and in a local band. The sex was great, the connection electric. We had a similar sense of humour and were both strong, extrovert characters. We shared a passion for art, literature and music... and fast living. Nick was something of a drinker, but as he was a budding rock star, it seemed pretty normal. I believed we were fated to be together, and I'd be the one to tame him. I fell headlong, and when he finished with me for a different girl, I was heartbroken.

I never really got over Nick, so when he rang me out of the blue many years later, I had that whole 'unfinished business' thing going on. Even though I was in a relationship, I was intrigued to find out whether he was still so attractive and charming, so we arranged to meet. He was just as I remembered. What's more, after one brief encounter, he was 100 per cent smitten by me. This time, I was in the ➤

driving seat, or so I thought. He told he was cutting right down on alcohol, and had pretty much stopped. Unbeknown to me, he'd been drinking heavily for nearly two decades. Still, blinded once again by lust, I split up with my long-term partner and, almost at once, Nick moved into my home. I should have been wary – he was too quick to leave his life and move 200 miles to be with me. But I was captivated.

Gradually, his drinking started to increase. He'd open another bottle at a dinner party when others were ready for coffee; he'd want a beer at lunchtime when no one else was bothered. I began to find his conduct embarrassing – intoxicated, he'd debate any subject vociferously, his manner bullish.

I recall the evening his behaviour first truly alarmed me. We'd finished eating, and I tried to prevent him drinking more wine. He – we – had had enough already.

'You can't stop me,' Nick said.

Swiftly, I grabbed his glass from the kitchen table. Nick – reactions slowed – carried on pouring. Wine went everywhere.

Nick went ballistic, snatching the glass from me, throwing it on the floor and stamping the pieces into the tiles.

'There,' he snarled. 'Satisfied?'

By then I was too involved to act on my concerns. I'd given up too much, leaving a man I loved to be with him, and he promised he wouldn't behave like that again.

He got worse. He began to turn his aggression on me and soon I came to know the pattern. I'd witness him drink too much, then I'd wait, every muscle braced. I knew what I was in for: verbal abuse, fierce, vitriolic, self-righteous. The theme he'd return to again and again was my ex, the man I'd left to be with him. He was consumed by jealousy. One evening I found him tearing up pictures of us together he'd found in a trunk in my office. With hindsight, maybe it was insensitive of me to keep them, but this was typical of our rows: somehow Nick's state of mind was my fault, my responsibility.

After nights like this, I'd wake in the morning and his drunken behaviour would seem almost unreal. His moods were so extreme, it was as if I couldn't find a place for them in my day-to-day existence. I knew that if I were to judge him by the same criteria I judged myself and others, he

would fall far short, yet I made an exception. Perhaps it was because his conduct was often at its worst outside of normal waking hours, that it created a sense the two of us occupied somewhere utterly foreign, where usual standards did not apply.

He was growing increasingly violent. While Nick never actually hit me, he would thump and kick things with frightening force. There's still a dent in my bedroom wall from where he repeatedly slammed the door wide. And he would yell at me, grabbing my face, squeezing my cheeks.

There's nothing like being with an angry person to bring out anger in someone else, and during one argument my rage was such that I ended up smashing a glass on his back. The next day

I was shaken that I was behaving exactly like him. Far from saving him, I seemed to be sinking to his level.

Eventually it became impossible for me to disregard the black moods and drunkenness. The morning after he threatened to push me out of the upstairs window, I packed his clothes into bin liners and threw them – and Nick – out of the house. We lived on the coast, and his response was to walk down to the sea, sit on the beach and drink vodka. The next day, I discovered he'd walked into the sea and attempted to drown himself. Helicopters had to be called out to rescue him. But by this point I'd hardened: I realised I couldn't have him living in my home any longer, for my own sanity.

Nick moved to a different town and began to tackle his problem. Still hopeful he might change, I carried on seeing him at weekends, and the distance helped the relationship. He was sober for long stretches, and then he was as bright, loving and gregarious as when we first met. But he kept relapsing.

The crunch came one Christmas. We were staying with my mother and stepfather. I was exceptionally close to my stepfather, and over this period he was undergoing tests for cancer – he has since, sadly, died. Between Christmas and New Year, he and my mother had to go for the results. We were all upset, but Nick made the whole incident about him, in my eyes, by

secretly drinking throughout. He'd get my stepfather's whisky bottle on the sly, drink from it and top it up with water. I had to make excuses for his behaviour to my family, but my tolerance was pushed to the limit. One final fight – again over a bottle of alcohol – saw me drive away from Nick. The last sight I had was of him standing in the drive, surrounded by smashed glass and red wine, first shouting, then pleading with me not to go. I never turned back.

I realise now I did a lot of my grieving for our relationship when I was in it; I'd been

*I realise I did a lot of grieving for our*  
**RELATIONSHIP** *when I was*  
*in it. I'd been struggling for a while'*

struggling with conflicting feelings for a long while. I'd heard Nick promise he'd stop drinking countless times and then fail, and I'd berated myself for not being able to help him, until I came to see my bad-boy-made-good fantasy for what it was: a fantasy.

Shortly after we split, I started writing my novel, *One Moment, One Morning*. It is not the story of Nick and me – it's about much more than that – but writing it was cathartic. The relationship also forced me to re-evaluate what I wanted and – hopefully – choose more wisely the next time I picked a boyfriend. Perhaps I could have become cynical, but either my optimism is too deep-seated or I'm still just a touch naïve. Whatever the reasons, I was lucky to meet my partner soon afterwards, and we are very happy.

Last I heard, Nick was sober and studying for a degree, which I hope will have given him the reason for living and sense of self-worth he was seeking. In the end I realised I couldn't save him; no one, other than Nick himself, could do that. I can't imagine ever falling in love with someone like Nick again. But I don't regret that I did so. I'd rather go to my grave knowing I'd lived life to the full, than be left wondering, 'What if?'. That's not my way, and I don't think it ever will be. ■

*One Moment, One Morning (Picador) by Sarah Rayner is out now.*

*Al Anon: al-anonuk.org.uk. Alcoholics Anonymous: 0845 769 7555; alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk*