

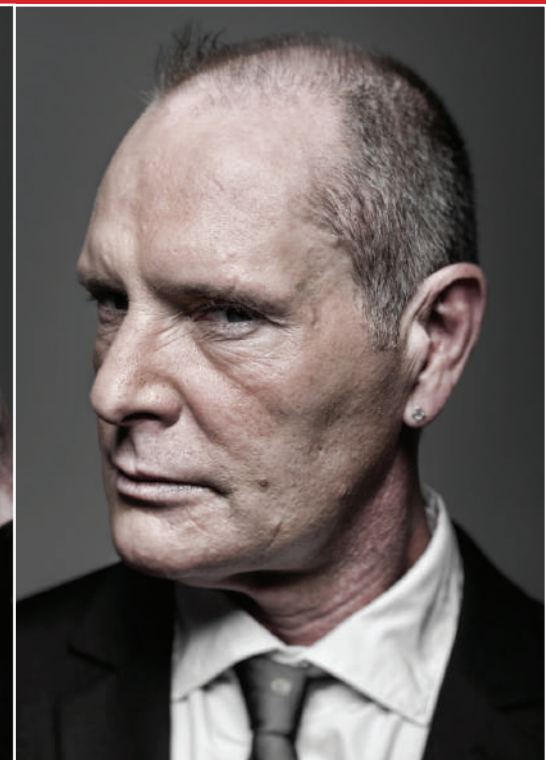
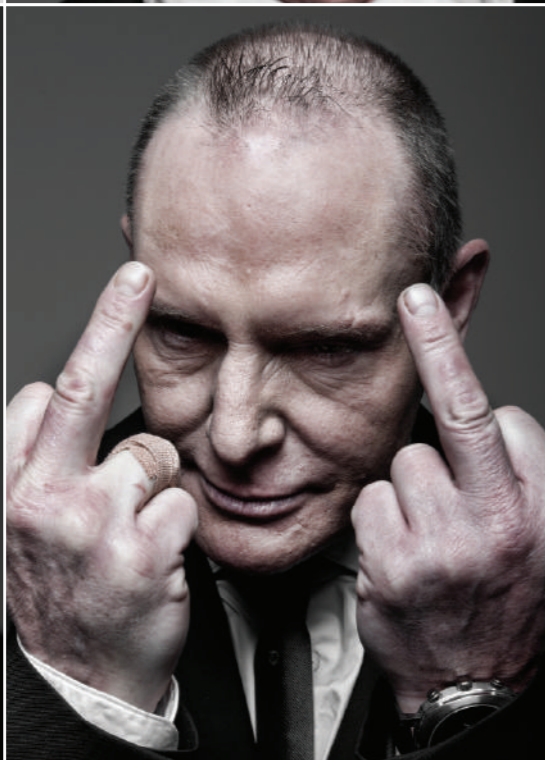
The many faces of

# GAZZA

features

CAN HE KICK IT? YES HE CAN Words ADAM THORN Photography JAMES CHEADLE

Forget the dentist's chair, the antics, the boozing, the horror stories and the relapses. Paul Gascoigne's back – and he's coming home to loaded



**“If I want a drink, I will go and do it, but afterwards you have to face the consequences. But there are more consequences now than there has ever been,”**

**Paul Gascoigne tells *loaded* as he slurps a piping-hot cuppa outside the London photography studio where we're shooting him. We're a bit apprehensive about raising the subject of his drinking days — but he surprises us with just how brutally blunt he is about the whole thing.**

“When I was drinking, I didn't give a fuck,” he continues casually. “I just put on the nearest T-shirt and jeans and looked for the closest wine bar. Now I like impressing, smartening myself up. People look up to us, so if someone comes up to me and says ‘You look well’, that's what gives me a buzz now. Life has gone great over the last two years, one blip [in that time] is not bad. I had a drink, I got over it, and I'm well again.”

That ‘blip’ is something we know about only too well, because it happened back in the summer, when *loaded* was originally meant to interview him. In August, he was admitted to The Priory for six days after another binge. It was a relapse that thrust him back into the limelight, as pictures emerged of him looking frail and weary. So when we arranged to meet at the Tower Hotel in London the night before the shoot, we were more than a little nervous about the state he'd be in.

### diamond geezer

But we shouldn't have worried. When Gazza comes bounding through the lobby, he doesn't just look healthy and immaculate — he looks, well, positively dapper. Wearing a smart blazer, designer shoes and a crisply-ironed shirt unbuttoned to his chest, he's sporting a crucifix, chunky gold watch and what look like diamond studs. A coat of hair wax has made his thinning locks stand to attention, and he's even applied a little manskara to his eyelashes. It's a look that should be more suited to a Rolling Stone than an ex-footballer, but somehow he pulls it off with a swagger. And while it's true his face, weather-beaten after years of drinking, barely resembles the Gazza of the '90s, that distinctive mischievous grin and lightning-quick Geordie wit are intact.

And when he talks, he doesn't stop, like some kind of anecdote machine. Even his old mate Jimmy ‘Five Bellies’ Gardner, trudging after him in a hoodie and shorts (despite it being a cold winter's day), barely gets a word in. Before the game against Switzerland at Euro 96, Gazza tells us, he was invited to meet the England women's team. “I went to see them in the dressing room but every one of them was bollock naked,” he laughs. “So I'm looking at all these boobs and tits and when I got on the pitch, all I could think about were these 20 naked women. I didn't play my best and I got taken off after 70 minutes.”

Then there's the time he launched himself into a lobster tank in a packed restaurant while

playing for Lazio. “It was New Year's Eve and I couldn't see which one I wanted. I had my new Versace suit on, but I pulled a chair up and just fucking dived in. I came out with the lobster and said, ‘Yeah, cook that bastard, that's what I want.’ Everyone was laughing their heads off, I got a round of applause. But it wasn't funny when I was eating my soup, freezing cold. I missed three days' training and the manager dropped me for the next match because I had the flu. That fucking lobster got me dropped!”

And as we take him to the hotel restaurant to buy him burger and chips, it's also clear he's every bit as eccentric as he's ever been. When we ask him why he's carrying around a five-litre bottle of milk, he explains it's so he can make protein shakes to support his super-human fitness regime. “I normally do 500 to 600 sit-ups a day,” he says, to our astonishment. “Then I'll get bored of that and I do sit-ups holding 20kg, before I get on the bench and do heavy weights for an hour and a half. Then I'll do some cardio to get me heart going. I do it in the morning at about eight o'clock and then I'm set for the day.”

It's a merciless regime that has not only left him with ripped abs (he lifts up his shirt at the dinner table to reveal an *unbelievable* six-pack) and bulging biceps, but one he maintains despite a hip injury so painful he can barely break into a jog. It seems that everything he does now — except the boozing — is done to excess. He chain-drinks coffee, chain-tells jokes and, well, chain smokes. At one point, he quips: “On the cigarette box it says ‘Smoking kills’, and I think to myself, ‘Well, I suppose I've tried everything else.’”

That's the thing about the Gazza we meet: one moment he's telling us about his battles with alcohol addiction, the next he's reeling off another bonkers tale, often switching between the two without warning. This is a man who now spends much of his time alone, exhausted by years of never-ending tabloid tales — yet can't resist becoming a showman in front of any audience he meets. It seems the new Gazza is, well, just like the one we all remember.

He now lives in Bournemouth, and it's there, far from his old crowd, that he's found the

freedom to knuckle down and sort himself out. Not only does the south-coast resort offer clean air and the beach, it's also the home of his treatment centre, his counsellor and his agent. He has built up a small group of trusted people who have helped him quietly go about the process of physically and mentally rebuilding himself. Back outside the studio, he explains how he has got to this point. “I was told I had to stay in Bournemouth for six months by the judge [following a drink-driving incident in Newcastle],” he explains. “People were saying it was lovely in the summer so I decided to stay — not that we get any sun here — but being an alcoholic, they tell you to change people, places and things.”

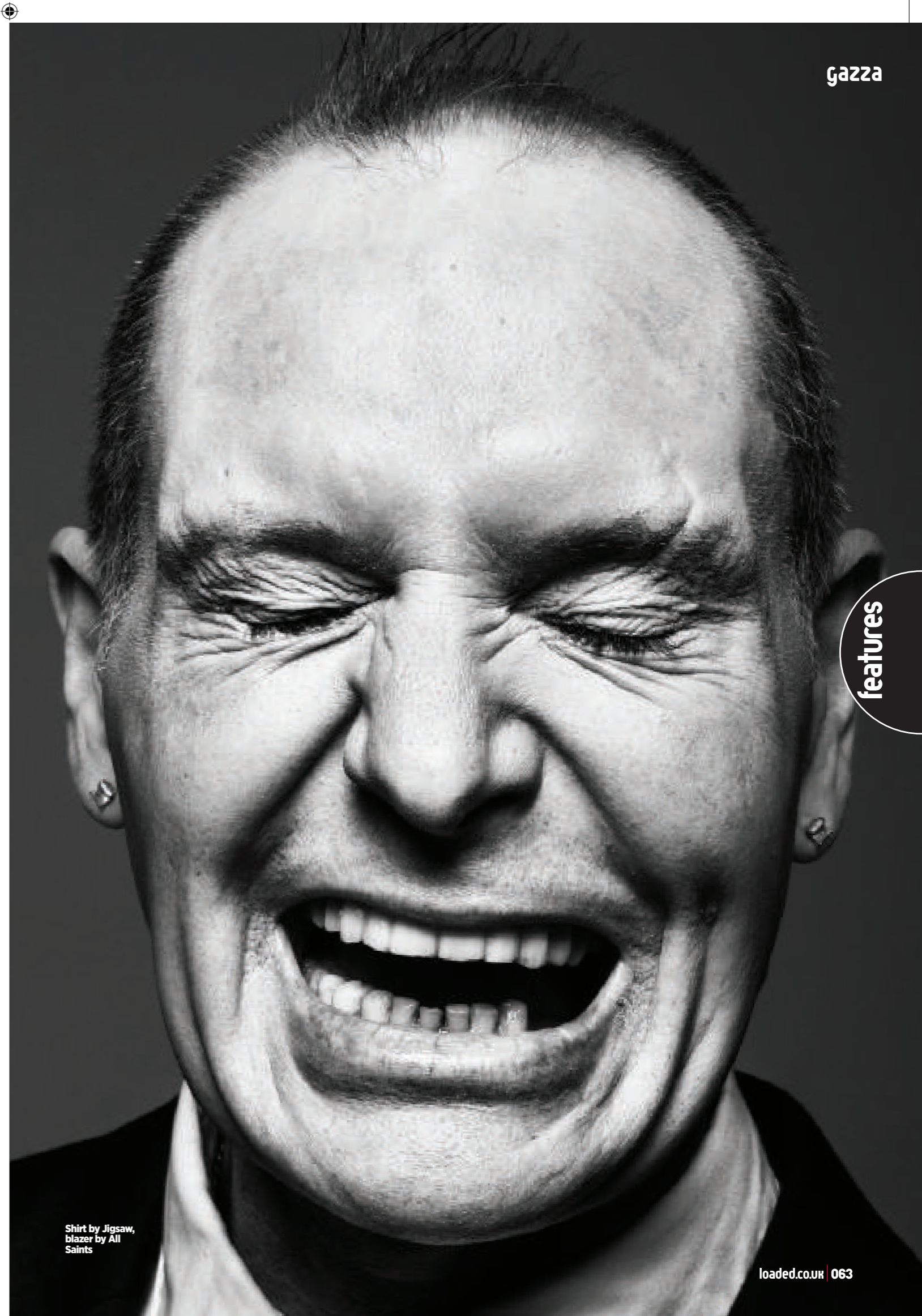
### taking the knocks

Gazza is incredibly frank about the day-to-day realities of being not just a recovering alcoholic, but a *famous* recovering alcoholic. “In America, when you're famous, you're famous for life. In England, it's great becoming famous, and once you get there you cannot get any higher so the only way you can go is down. Either you knock yourself down or you get knocked down. If someone is giving me stick, all I do is look at their forehead and imagine a bandage and think, ‘Bless him, he's not well!’”

In fact, you get the impression that all the years of abuse have made Gazza that bit wiser. He refuses to blame his friends in Newcastle, and talks about his problems without resorting to clichés or bullshit. “I had good times when I was drinking but it's not fun any more for me,” he says. “It doesn't bother me — if I want to drink, I'll do it. There are 50 pubs in Bournemouth, 50 in Newcastle, 50 in London, 50 in New York and 50 in Florida. A lot of people drink [for a reason]. They'll say ‘My grandma died, that's why I drink’ or ‘I was involved in a car crash’, but when I drank, it was because I wanted to. There are too many consequences for me now. I'm enjoying life, I choose what to do and what not to do. There were so many years where I was miserable and down, but now I am happy.”

Instead of seeking solace in booze, he ✈

**“I dived into the lobster tank in my Versace suit and got the flu. That lobster got me dropped”**



Shirt by Jigsaw,  
blazer by All  
Saints



Left  
Football shirt  
from JD Sports

Right  
shirt by Jigsaw,  
blazer by All Saints and  
tie from He by Mango

# 19

prefers working out, spending time with his family and, as the endless beer-and-chicken-and-fishing-rod jokes suggest, angling. An activity that doesn't quite square with the hell-raiser reputation. "I don't do carp fishing, where you sit on a bank for five hours waiting for some daft carp, I'm fly-fishing," he explains. "When you fly-fish, you're on the move all the time, changing flies all the time. It's the only sport that takes your mind off things. Once you've got a rod in your hand, all your problems disappear."

### still a rebel

He might live a quieter life these days, but deep down, he's still a prankster at heart. He jokes how, when sea fishing, he often gets distracted and throws alka seltzer tablets, wrapped in bread, into the water for the birds to munch on. "It makes them blow up really big," he chuckles, "before they go POP." That's nothing compared to his tales of lobbing fishing wire into the water with bait attached to either end. We're pretty sure he's joking - but he doesn't care.

And when a studio assistant comes over with a cup of tea, he can't resist taking the piss again. "That's got to be the best cup of tea I've had in my life," he declares in a sarcastic voice, realising that he's been given the last dregs of a long-since hot brew. "Mate, have you ever boiled a kettle? It's cold and it's tea hour!"

He recalls the time he encountered Princess Diana's ex, ginger cad James Hewitt, in a hotel bar. He was surrounded by girls and buying drinks for everyone in sight. "I called him Ewsy," explains Gazza. "He said 'Try this wine', so I bought a bottle for £300 and it was lovely. So he says 'I'll get you one', and he put his credit card behind the bar. I ordered six of them on his fucking card. I grabbed them and did a runner back to my room. I think I owe him £2,000."

It's his sense of humour that has saved Gazza from some dark places. He has been sectioned twice - the first time he was endlessly mistaken for Gary Lineker when his fellow residents caught wind that a famous England footballer was in the hospital. "Some guy was outside my

room saying 'It's Lineker, I know it is!' I said to my friend Gary Mabbutt, when you come tomorrow, bring some Walkers Crisps. I threw [the packets] outside and he said 'I knew it was Lineker!' Sometimes I miss the craic in the dressing room. I look for other things. It's nice sometimes to go home, shut the door and be on my own. That's when I'm at peace."

Football has taken its toll on his bones, as well as his well-being. It's more than two decades since he rampaged through Italia 90 with a number 19 on his back, before the tears in Turin. In a playing career that peaked with that goal against Scotland at Euro 96, Gazza endured more than 40 operations, spanning his head to his feet. He even grabs our hand and bangs it against his metal hip - which is solid.

"I'm like the Six Million Dollar Man" he recalls. "I did my ankle and broke my arm a couple of times. In my second game for Newcastle, I broke my nose, I did that twice. When I played for England I broke my cheekbone, then I came back from my ligament problems and [injured] my kneecap before I broke my tibia. When I went into coaching, I had a hernia, then a double hernia, then a double-double hernia."

"Then I did *Strictly Come Dancing On Ice* and on the first-ever session, the coach was late so I went on the ice on my own and broke my neck [it was actually his back]. I've never looked back since! I started getting head scans and then I broke my arm again. All that took its toll on my hip, and I had an operation on that. It's come out of place again and needs resetting."

After all that, *loaded* can't help wondering how he managed to reach his current level of fitness. "People say 'How did you get that fit training on your own?', but because I've had so many operations I had to try one-on-one with coaches, so I could learn how to train on my own. Mentally, when it comes to stuff like that, I'm tuned in already. I know how to push my body and how far it will go. A lot of people say, 'I

haven't got the will to do that' but anyone has got the will. But you have got to *want* to have the will. There's a massive difference. I had the want, to will to win. I had the will but I also had the want. If you have the want then you have a chance." In Gazza's world, at least, this means he is still up for it.

### training days

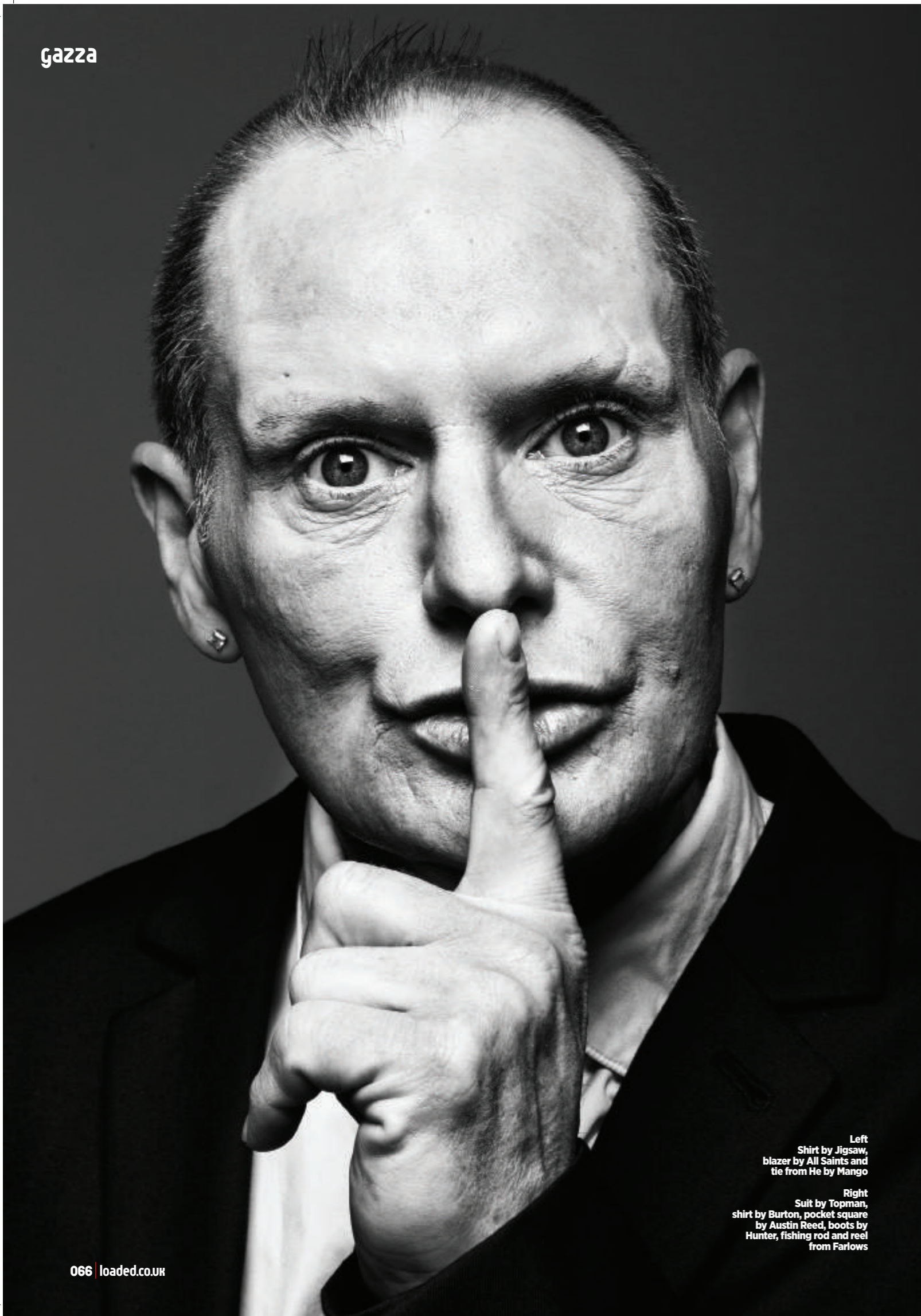
This obsession with working hard was drilled into him during his time in Serie A with Lazio. "I played in Italy for four years and the training there is five times harder than any training in England," he says. "Italians are so professional, it's unbelievable. I stopped playing nine years ago and I still go to the gym every morning. It didn't bother me, I loved it. I enjoyed it more than matches because in training you can relax and enjoy yourself. Once you got yourself fit, it was a doddle. I remember a couple of coaches [from England] coming over to Lazio and going 'Fucking hell Gazza, that was tough.' I said, 'That's my warm-up!'"



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**"I wouldn't want to be a part of today's England team"**





Left  
Shirt by Jigsaw,  
blazer by All Saints and  
tie from He by Mango

Right  
Suit by Topman,  
shirt by Burton, pocket square  
by Austin Reed, boots by  
Hunter, fishing rod and reel  
from Farlows

# 19

So what does Gazza make of the modern generation of football talent? Without prompting, he mentions Wayne Rooney as a player he admires – largely because he sees a bit of himself in the tireless Manchester United striker. “When Rooney is on form, he’s fucking unbelievable – he reminds me of me. Not just the way he plays, but he wants to win every game, he wants to win every tackle, he wants to play left-back, right-back, centre-half and centre-forward.”

For Gazza, though, the United number 10 is an exception among modern footballers. The new breed don’t seem to care about the supporters, he says. “I was at Lazio on £100,000 a month, which is the equivalent to £300,000 now. I wonder, if I was playing now, how much I would be earning a week? I could retire in a year. What upsets me more than anything is from a fan’s point of view: some guy has three kids, it costs him a fortune to get to the game, he has to buy three strips, lunch for them and then players act like prima donnas. It’s not on and I don’t like that.”

Gazza isn’t impressed by the present-day England team, either. Despite their 5-0 victory, he watched their performance against San Marino, then ranked the second-worst team in the world, in despair at their cautious attitude. “Against San Marino, and we’re 3-0 or 4-0 up, and I’m saying to the midfielders, ‘Have a go at them.’ If you lose the ball, don’t worry about it, you’re still 4-0 up. But no, we’re passing the ball sideways.”

In a career that took him to big clubs like

Spurs, Rangers and Lazio, Gazza always saved his best for England. He remains as passionate as ever about the national team – but, incredibly, he wouldn’t want to play for them now. “A lot of players want to concentrate on club football, which is a shame. For me, playing for England was the best thing since sliced bread – I loved it. I would play with a broken leg for my country but I cannot blame the players. With Bobby Robson, when you got in the England team and you played well, it didn’t matter how fucking bad you played for your club, if you played well for England he would always pick you for the next game. Now they start a game and in the second half there is six fucking players out.

“In today’s England team, I wouldn’t want to be a part of it. It doesn’t matter if you play well and score a hat-trick, you’re not sure if you are going to play for the next game for England. I don’t really agree. Fabio Capello started it and now a lot of managers don’t want their players playing for England because the Premier League is so intense nowadays.”

## gunner gazza

The Tottenham fans who idolised Gazza back in the late ’80s and ’90s might not want to read the next bit, but Gazza prefers to watch their North London rivals these days. “I like the way Arsenal play football, I really do,” he says. “It’s a shame about Harry [Redknapp] leaving Spurs, and they lost [Luka] Modric too.

“I see United [winning the Premier League this season]. Even when they are struggling, they go top of the league. Sometimes I think, ‘Fuck me, I wish I had a chance to play for him [Sir Alex Ferguson].’ The same with Arsene Wenger and his style of play. But I think Man City will be up there again and it will be between City and United.”

During the 24 hours *loaded* spends with Gazza, he gets mobbed again and ✈️



“Once you’ve got a rod in your hands, all your troubles vanish”

## WHO IS GAZZA?

We chart the performances and the headlines that gave us an insight into one of the most charismatic footballers



Already a talented footballer by the age of 16, Gazza signed with Newcastle United where he made his mark during the 1986/87 season proving himself a wily midfielder – strong in defence but inspired on the attack.

In 1988 he moved to Spurs for a then-record fee of £2 million and played a major role in the World Cup 1990 squad, scoring an unforgettable goal against Czechoslovakia. But it was all to end in tears – literally. During the semi-final against Germany Gazza was given his second yellow card of the tournament, meaning he would miss the final if England qualified (they didn’t, predictably). Gazza’s teary response promoted a massive boost in public popularity – even granting him a No.2 single with ‘Fog on the Tyne’.

Gazza went to Lazio in 1992 for £5.5 million and continued his tradition for hellraising, telling Norway to “fuck off” and being fined £9,000 for belching on Italian TV. Returning in 1995, he transferred to Rangers for a league-winning season and became ‘loaded for life’ when he spoke to us for the first time that same year. “Top magazine, that. Fucking great laugh,” he said.

But Gascoigne’s greatest moment came in the Euro ’96 England squad when he scored his most famous goal – a beautifully timed volley to send the Scots home and England into the semi-finals against Germany.

In 1998 Gazza made headlines again, this time playing a pretend flute (the instrument of the Protestant Orange Army) to Celtic’s Catholic fans. He left Rangers to join Middlesbrough, helping them into the Premier League. And despite helping England qualify for the ’98 World Cup he didn’t make the cut for the squad, before later retiring in 2004.



features

again, despite our best efforts to keep him to ourselves. For every person who comes over and asks for an autograph or a photo, there is another five staring, goggle-eyed. But you can't help but notice the way that he signs every shirt, stands for ages having his photo taken or just takes the time to chat about his England days. "The fans have been brilliant to me and I have said to many players - always appreciate the fans. You never know, when you pack in the game, when you'll need them." And the fans have helped him earn his keep too.

Over the last year, he's spent his time touring the country speaking to crowds of adoring fans. "When you start doing them, you think 'Oh God, I hope it goes well' but I'm all right with the fans, I'm like one of them. If there are 600 people there, I'll talk to them as if I'm in the pub with them, like they are my mates. If I look at it that way, I find it quite easy."

It's ironic then, that it's well-meaning fans who often get him into trouble. "I can have as many friends as I want - I'm Paul Gascoigne, I can have loads of friends mate," he explains to *loaded* when we ask him about his circle of pals

back in Newcastle. "It's not like I say, 'I'll have you as a friend', it just happens. I just try and have a bit of faith in life and if I make a friend and think he is all right, that's fine, but you've got to be so careful. Just recently, I had a bad blip where this kid tried to be my friend and the next thing I know I'm back drinking again. That was two months ago and I was in a bad way. I cut my head and that, and I thought, 'fucking hell'. One minute I'm fly fishing and happy, the next, I'm in a room with two counsellors. I was thinking, 'God what happened there?'"

"[Now] I'm close to my family, my mam and dad and my brothers, and sisters. I don't go around going, 'Do you want to be my friend?' I just get on with everybody. If someone has got a problem with me it doesn't bother us. I haven't got time to be around snotty people, that's what winds me up. People that sulk all the time, I can't hack it. There are so many people out there who are struggling but we blank it. I dread getting old, our government doesn't look after pensioners, leaving them rotting

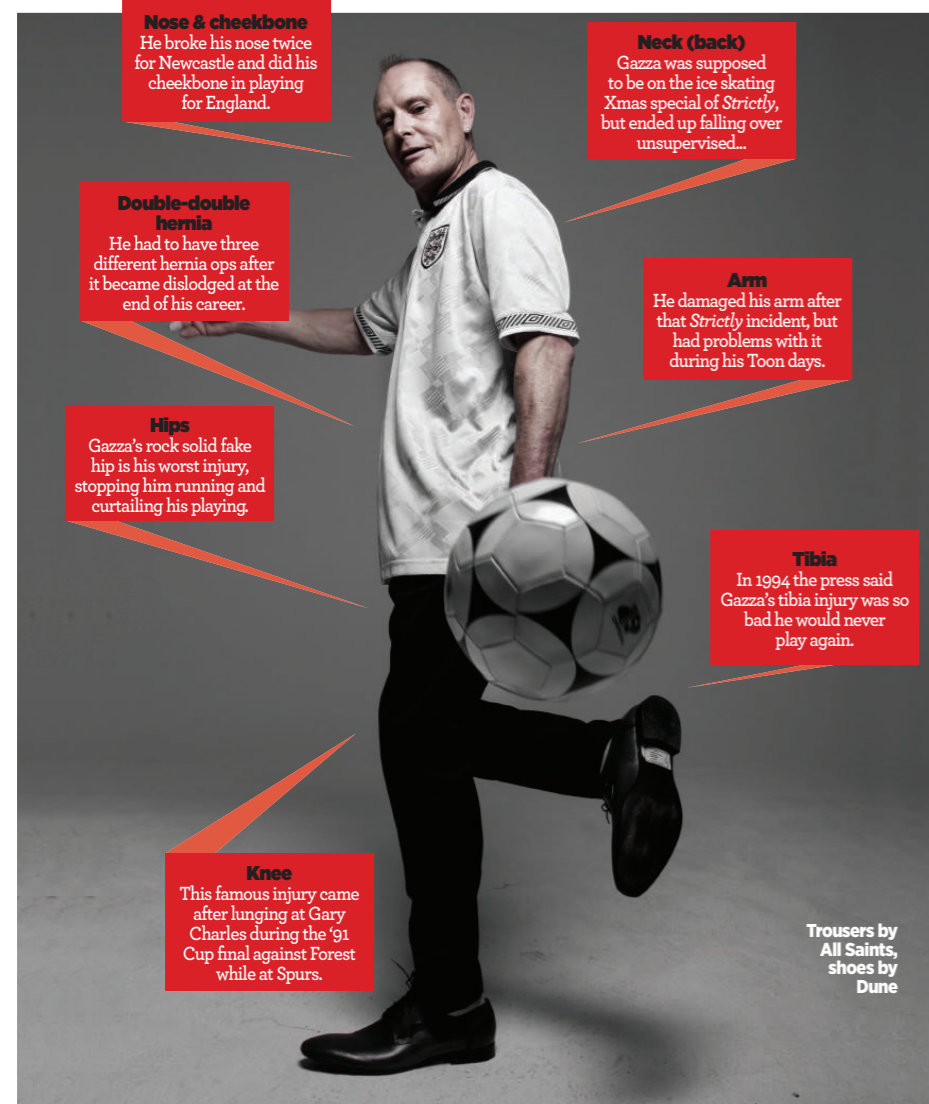
in the cold, you put up the heating, turn up the gas bills. It's not fair."

He's also helping to train the next Gazza - his little nephew Cameron. "Cameron plays for Newcastle United, he's nine. I'm proud of him, long may it continue. I watch him and his mates train and have a little laugh with them. It's nice seeing them progress. If I'm bored I nip out of the house and see them and have a little kickabout. Today I just enjoy life. If I'm having a bad day, I just want to get through it, and if I am having a good day I make the most of it because tomorrow might not be a good day. I cannot pick my days when I want to be happy. Years ago, if I was sad I used to have a few drinks. I can't do that now - well I could, if I wanted to, but I choose not too."

As we reach the end of our 24 hours with him, we can't help feeling the new Gazza has a chance. He



## "If I was playing today, I'd earn enough to retire in a year"



**Nose & cheekbone**  
He broke his nose twice for Newcastle and did his cheekbone in playing for England.

**Neck (back)**  
Gazza was supposed to be on the ice skating Xmas special of *Strictly*, but ended up falling over unsupervised...

**Double-double hernia**  
He had to have three different hernia ops after it became dislodged at the end of his career.

**Arm**  
He damaged his arm after that *Strictly* incident, but had problems with it during his *Toon* days.

**Hips**  
Gazza's rock solid fake hip is his worst injury, stopping him running and curtailing his playing.

**Tibia**  
In 1994 the press said Gazza's tibia injury was so bad he would never play again.

**Knee**  
This famous injury came after lunging at Gary Charles during the '91 Cup final against Forest while at Spurs.

Trousers by All Saints, shoes by Dune

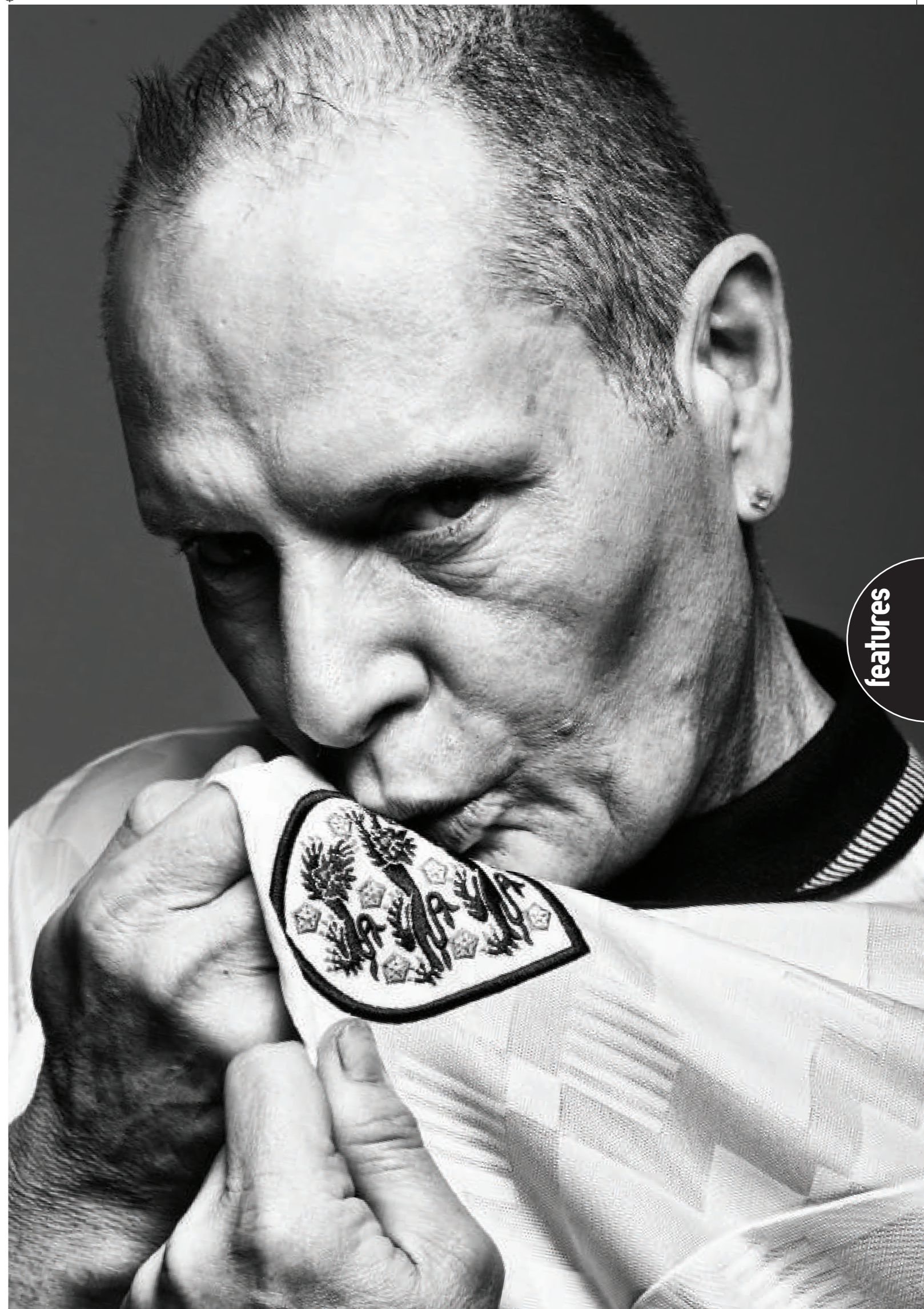
started off by talking about how the consequences of drinking are worse now than they've ever been - so *loaded* asks him what those consequences are? "It's when I'm doing it alone indoors, that's when it gets sad. That time in Dubai, this guy got me a pint so I gave it to my friend, and as I gave it to Jimmy I got all the headlines. But people in Afghanistan are getting killed, people are getting stabbed, families are getting killed and I'm on the front page because I had a pint.

"The country must be bored of seeing Gazza drunk? But if I drink in the next two hours, it's got nothing to do with anyone else. When I drink, the whole country or the press want to get involved. I feel like my life is better without a drink, I am more focused and there for everybody. I've never let anyone down, never not turned up anywhere, I've always been there - drink or no drink."

So with our time in his company nearly over, it seems that maybe, this time, Gazza is on the right track. But before we finish, we're keen to ask about the first time he appeared in *loaded*, back in September 1995. A time when Gazza, along with this very mag, defined the coolest decade in history. "I remember doing *loaded* when I was with Glasgow Rangers. My deal, and it was brilliant, was a lifetime subscription. And I never got one of them, like. I was meant to get magazines for life. That's why you're called *loaded* - you're not giving them away."

Well Mr Gascoigne, consider this a formal apology. *loaded* will now be landing on your doormat - for a very long time to come. ■ **loaded**

STYLING BY LUCAS ARMITAGE GROOMING BY JOHANNA DALEMO



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