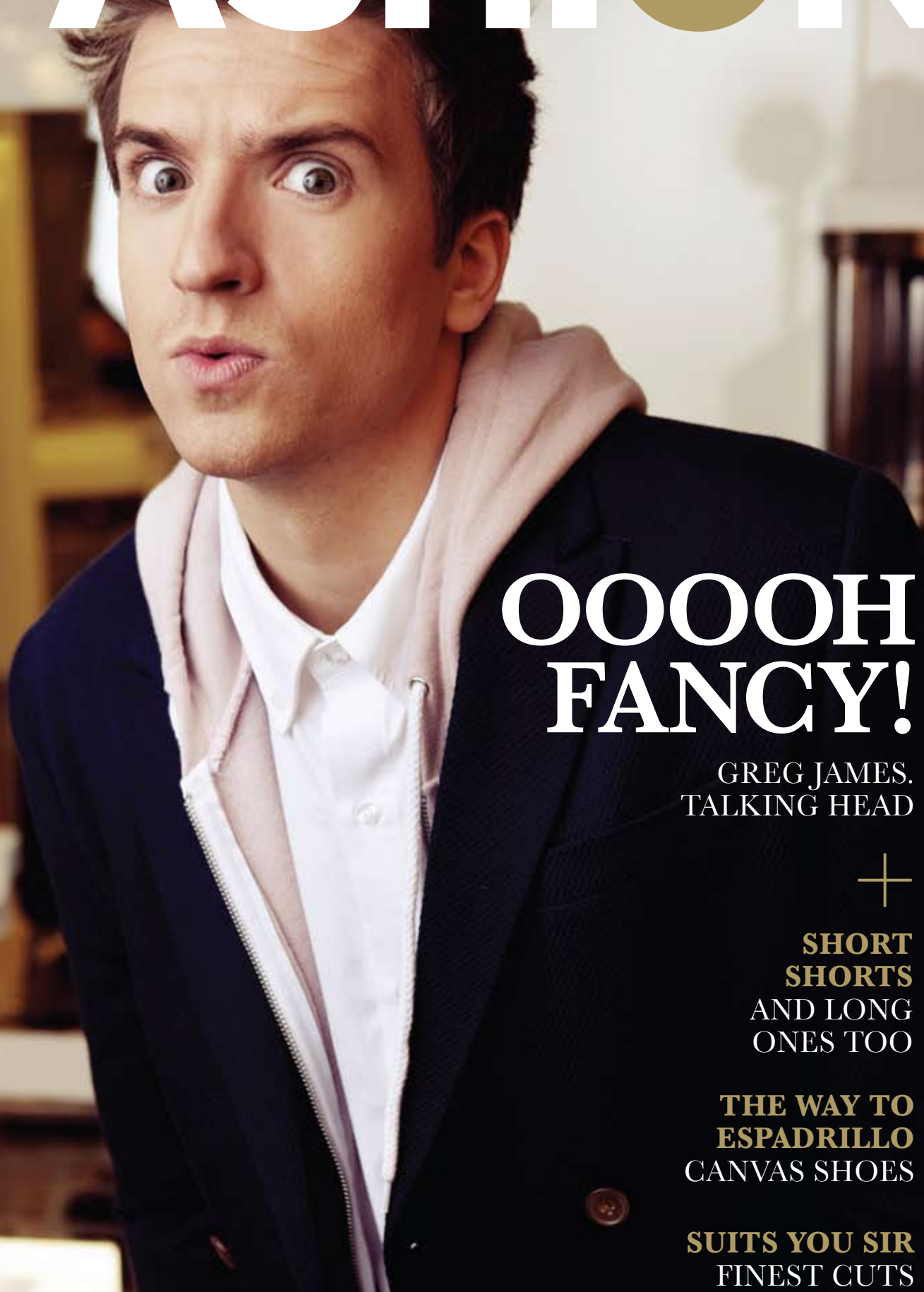


loaded **FASHION**



**OOOOH
FANCY!**

GREG JAMES.
TALKING HEAD



**SHORT
SHORTS
AND LONG
ONES TOO**

**THE WAY TO
ESPADRILLO
CANVAS SHOES**

**SUITS YOU SIR
FINEST CUTS**




“I TOLD PEOPLE OFF FOR SMOKING WEED IN THE STUDIOS”

GREG JAMES Words ADAM THORN Photography TOM BARNES Styling LUCAS ARMITAGE

MEET THE GEEK WHO WENT FROM
STUDENT RADIO TO AN AUDIENCE OF
SIX MILLION ON RADIO 1 DRIVETIME.
VIA A FEW CRACKPOT 4AM LISTENERS

“**T**hey are delirious, and/or drunk, and/or unemployed. Basically, nutters,” explains Radio 1’s drivetime host Greg James when *loaded* asks him to describe the sort of reprobates that listened to his first show on the station, the dreaded 4am to 6.30am slot. But before we get a chance to probe him on another topic, he leans in and interrupts us in a giddy rush of excitement.

“But they are brilliant, they were a great bunch,” he stresses, going into full-on rant mode now. “I miss them because we had a real special little club. I had a great time with those nutters. I still remember the regulars. We had Gav The Pie Man, Mr. Wolfsberg, The Brummie Trucker, Jason at the *Herald* newspaper in Plymouth and Graham the Woodhall Spa newsagent. All these people were on every day. Oh, and there was Sarah Oaty Biscuit Lady who worked in the Oaty Biscuit factory. All these people were characters and I’ll never forget them.” 

Shirt and belt by American Apparel, tie (just seen) and chinos by Superdry, socks by ASOS, shoes by Bertie

greg james





And that's a pretty good analysis of the man. Because when we first meet him in the Wild West-themed salon in the Superdry store on London's Regent Street, the first thing that strikes us is that - while being perfectly polite and chatty - you can tell he feels a little awkward. Maybe it's because he's, for want of a better term, a lanky, gangly fucker, despite his good looks. Maybe it's the stylist and photographer bossing him around into all manner of uncomfortable positions and quick-fire clothes changes.

SWOON SWOON

In fact, it's probably the gaggle of girls who are swooning over him, including loaded fashion editor Lucas's new 'assistant' Emma. A girl, who it transpires, has actually taken the day off work from her regular job just to meet the man she has a long-term obsession with (she even cleared it with her boss, who had seen the picture of Greg she put on the office wall). Away from his home turf of the studio, Greg James seems unsure of how to embrace the attention. But on the radio, or at least talking about it, he's bristling with confidence and enthusiasm. "They were a fascinating little club," dissects Greg after we've given up on trying to move the conversation on

from his favourite topic, "because they were waiting for you to come on air at four o'clock. As soon as you're there, they're like 'morning!' and that was really lovely to hear when you get in. You see, the hardest thing is getting in, so when you arrive, it's great. There is a special

"HANDING OVER TO MOYLES WAS TERRIFYING. I KNEW HE'D BE THINKING, 'WHO IS THIS KNOB?'"

atmosphere at that time of the morning and you have got a captive audience. They need a friend, and I was that friend for a couple of years. You get a loyal fan base and they follow you, so every now and then you'll get a message and it'll be 'Hey Greg, it's Gav The Pie Man from

Early Breakfast, I've been following your progress and want to say 'well done'. They see you as mates and it's a personal thing. You don't get that with TV."

When Radio 1 first plucked Greg from obscurity, Early Breakfast was seen as a place to learn the ropes before getting unleashed on a slot with a more, um, sane audience. The plan meant Greg got the chance to work with the best staff in the business, but at a time when even the most shocking fuck-up could go unnoticed. However, it did mean that he had the unenviable task of handing over to Chris Moyles, a man he counts as something of an idol.

bloody students

"Handing over to him was terrifying. I was very conscious he would be listening to the last few links of my show and judging, thinking 'Who is this guy, who is this new studenty knob?' I knew he would pick up on the fact I was well spoken or, in his words, posh. I listened to him when I was at school and then suddenly to be on before him, was horrific at times. You think 'shit' but then you think, I shouldn't care because I am doing the show for my listeners not Moyles. But I so wanted him to be impressed."

And no doubt he was. Because the rapid rise of that 'studenty knob' has seen him

Shirt by 11 Paris available at Urban Outfitters, coat by Acne available at Selfridges



I did it whenever I had a spare moment. I did my show and then worked on someone else's, like making a demo or a jingle."

But while being the hard-nosed bastard running the society may not have suited him, he excelled at doing his own show. The station is located on the top floor of the student's union, and wily Greg would often grab artists performing at campus events to interview on his show. He also

"I LOVE LIVE STUFF. THE SPONTANEITY OF RADIO IS THE REASON WHY I WANT TO DO IT FOREVER"

go from a graduate with an obsession for the wireless to becoming someone the BBC are clearly carefully priming to be their future one-man Ant and Dec. His desire to get into broadcasting started when he was eight, and his mother – then working as a special needs teacher – took him to Television Centre to see the set of *Noel's House Party*. He later learned the mechanics of radio after messing about with the equipment and listening to the presenters on Stortford Radio at Herts and Essex Hospital.

But it wasn't until he turned up at the University of East Anglia that he got on the air on their Livewire radio station. He started his own show, before quickly moving on to become station manager. Something which involved handing out

the bollockings and keeping the shows on air. It's also the place where he dreamt up his 'DJ name' Greg James (his birth name being Gregory James Alan Milward, which doesn't have quite the same ring to it).

just about managing

"I hated being station manager," he confesses. "I used to tell people off for smoking weed in the studios and I was terrible at being authoritative. It was awful, I can't do admin. I never wanted to be a boss, ever. I was never strong enough, I was too soft. And I didn't care. I just wanted to do a good show and for other people's shows to be good. But I worked way harder on that than I did on my degree. I never saw it as hard work,

dreamed up a series of ridiculous features and competitions to keep his handful of listeners loyal. When he was offered tickets to see The Kooks, for example, he had students on campus bring him their best home-cooked meals in a feature he dubbed 'Can't Kook, Won't Kook'. He also roped in a mate to walk around town and randomly ask girls out, with Greg giving him a fiver to buy her a drink.

And while the station may not have had many listeners, he won Best Male DJ at the Student Radio Awards. The prize was a one off show on Radio 1, and from there he attracted the attention of Radio 1 controller Ben Cooper who, in 2007, asked him to stand in on Sara Cox's weekend show. The call came in on the night of his grad ball. Not long afterwards, Greg was offered the Early Breakfast gig, entertaining the cast of misfits and wrong'uns up at that ungodly hour.

"We used to do a thing called Free For All Friday where we would just take calls straight to air, about 4.10 in the morning and we had months of brilliant calls, people being mad and mental and loud and whatever, it was perfect. Then suddenly some guy phoned up and said the C-word and then we couldn't do it

Left: varsity jacket by ASOS, T-shirt by American Apparel, jeans by Burton, trainers by H&M
Right: shirt by Oliver Spencer, blazer by Tiger of Sweden both available at Selfridges





anymore. I was really upset about that because I loved that feature. I love live stuff, the spontaneity of radio is the reason I want to do it forever.”

Some muppet shouting “cunt” on Radio 1 aside, he did the almost impossible job of growing his audience of early morning nutjobs by 120,000 listeners to 1.3 million. Not bad for 4am in the morning. “Greg has something I haven’t heard in a demo for a year and a half,” said Radio 1 boss Ben Cooper back in 2008. “It’s not just about good voice, humour or intelligence, but it’s a combination of all of those.” It all led to promotion to first early afternoon and then drivetime – and an audience of six million people.

a really nice bloke

“That’s why I like him,” squeals Emma before she literally runs to the other end of the salon to compose herself. Her cover story about helping Lucas is fooling no one now, and when she is not looking at Greg dreamily, she is throwing filthy glances at the other girls that just screams “get the fuck away from my man”. “I think it’s because he is so attainable,” she tells us later when we ask just what we have to do to have that effect on women, a statement we still don’t really understand.

But that’s his way. Whereas Chris Moyles played the broadcasting maverick, raising hell and causing as much mischief as possible, Greg’s radio style sees him present himself as a likeable bloke who you could have a pint with, safe in the knowledge he would never try it on with your sister. No matter how short her skirt.

“You’ve got to gain the trust of your listeners, you can’t turn up [on your first show] and go ‘waaaay it’s me’ because they’ll go, ‘who is this wanker?’” says Greg. “It’s like making a new friend, when you meet someone for the first time you don’t tell them everything about you, or how mental you really are, you do a real sort of glossy version of yourself. As the months go on you open up and they trust you, and it works nicely. Over the last 12 months I’ve noticed that change, people understanding what I’m like as a person.”

And that gaining trust thing is something that is clearly important to him. Despite being one of radio’s biggest names, he is rarely seen out on the Z-list celeb circuit making a twat of himself. An 18-month relationship with Ellie Goulding aside, he keeps things pretty low-profile, choosing instead to get pissed with his mates on a typical messy Saturday night.

“I’m not averse to going to nice parties and getting hammered and doing silly

stuff,” he argues. “But my best mates from school are still my best mates. The only difference now is that I can take them to incredible parties. But yeah, I don’t like turning up to every party just to be seen. My 15-year-old self would kill me if I was watching. I love being on the radio and for me that’s like, goal achieved.”

Well, one goal achieved anyway. Because when Chris Moyles finished his stint on the breakfast show last year, the gig went to rival DJ Nick Grimshaw. It must surely have been a blow to Greg, who was considered a shoo-in for the job. Or at least, that’s how it was perceived, with every hack in town asking him how he coped with losing out on The Big One.

“I want to get a big banner, that says ‘I’m OK,’” he told *The Independent* last December. “I don’t know how many more times I can parade it to people... I don’t see how things could go much better for me at the moment. There’s some guy on

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Beacon FM who’s gutted he’s not on Radio 1. But for me... how dare I sit here and say, ‘Oh, I’m so unlucky, I only got drivetime.’ What sort of twat would I be?”

But while Grimmy is regularly seen out getting hammered with his best mate Harry Styles, Greg is more than happy to relentless analyse and hone his craft as a DJ. When we tell him that he’s the biggest geek on the BBC, it’s an accusation he revels in.

“You’ve got to love radio. You’ve got to be a nerd. You’ve got to know who does breakfast on Capital Yorkshire. You’ve got to know the heritage of Radio 1, who did the breakfast show in the ’80s. You’ve got to know the history but not get overawed by it. Style-wise, the hardest thing is to be yourself. If you’re playing a character and people say you’re shit, it doesn’t matter, but if you are true to yourself it wounds you, it’s a personal attack. You’ve got to be

thick skinned and not worry about what people say about you, and that’s when you are the most comfortable and probably do your best stuff.”

Perhaps missing out on the breakfast gig will help him with his next big career goal, getting his own big-budget Saturday night show. We helpfully suggest that he could rebuild Noel’s Great House, scout a Little Greg James to do interviews or even dust down John Virgo for another series of this loaded writer’s favourite ’90s show, *Big Break*.

“I grew up with Noel’s *House Party*, *TFI Friday* and *The Big Breakfast*,” he says. “Those were my favourite shows when I was a kid. I don’t think I should have been watching *TFI Friday* but I loved it. It was exciting and live and felt naughty – like I shouldn’t be watching it. That’s why I like doing *Unzipped* on BBC Three because it’s a bit naughty but teenagers watch it. I like being mischievous.”

Unzipped sees Greg and co-presenter Russell Kane attempt to discover what people do in secret, with embarrassing revelations from celebrity guests and the audience. The pair make a good partnership, with Kane playing the class clown and Greg the straight man. Much like that 4am slot, BBC Three gives Greg the chance to hone his TV skills while knowing that the audience will be pretty forgiving. We’re more keen though, to find out exactly how his dream Saturday night gig would pan out.

“It would be like *Unzipped*, but live, with some outside broadcasts and big guests and silly stuff. Reality needs to stop for an hour or so. It would be big and loud, a *Noel’s House Party*-type show. Or maybe *The Crystal Maze*.”

naked ambition

Despite his everyman attitude, Greg is clearly bullish about the future, and never hides his raw ambition. “The BBC took a risk by putting me on, I was a nobody. And they knew I would work bloody hard, cheaply. And it’s paid off for them, because I have worked hard. If someone gives me an opportunity I have a duty to not fuck it up. I never want to not be on the radio. If I wasn’t on Radio 1, I’d be trying to get on Radio 1.”

All this means *loaded* can sign off with this special message. Sarah Oaty Biscuit Lady, if you’re reading, good news: Greg James is going to be around for a very long time. ■ **loaded**

With thanks to Salon @ Superdry, Lower Ground, 103 Regent Street, London W1.

Visit superdry.com for more. Greg James is on Radio 1 weekdays between 4pm-7pm