

CHATTY CHAPPY

BECOMING A DAD AT 53? TO BE HONEST I'M..

Wright

scared!

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW



MATTHEW WRIGHT

TV & RADIO PRESENTER

AT 53, Matthew Wright is about to become a dad for the first time.

It's probably not my place to say this, but couldn't he sound a bit more chuffed?

"I've never wanted kids, Mike," he insists. "I'm not joking. I've never had even a flicker of interest. "I look at friends with children and I feel sorry for them, the way their lives are ruined by the miserable demands of their little consumers and polluters. I've no idea how I'm going to cope."

It's certainly a bold standpoint, and all the more surprising when you bear in mind the background to all this.

When Matthew's wife Amelia gives birth - they already know it's a girl, by the way, due to be delivered by C-section on Valentine's Day - it'll mark the end of a living nightmare for the couple, who married in 2010.

Years of trying desperately for a baby, several miscarriages, repeated rounds of IVF, the anguish, the fear, not to mention the cost ("our savings had virtually gone") - they had pretty much given up hope.

So hasn't Matthew's ambivalent attitude made things harder? "No," he assures me, "because I'm nuts about Amelia. This sounds naff and cheesy but I just want her to be happy."

"If having a baby makes her happy, then great. My biggest fear has been, 'What if it makes her happy and she can't have one? What then...?'"

It's an outlook largely shaped, it seems, by what Matthew calls his "odd childhood".

Heavy

"I don't want to go into too much detail but I never really found what made me happy until my mid-to-late-30s. Therapy helped me figure it out. I had to come to terms with some very heavy things."

So then I met Amelia and everything was fantastic. Actually, one of the reasons I didn't want children is I'd finally found happiness. Why risk screwing it up?"

Of course, one aspect of fatherhood Matthew should be able to handle is the disturbed sleep.

For 18 years he'd crawl out of bed each weekday at 3.30am, heading to work at stupid o'clock for his Channel 5 current affairs show. The Wright Stuff.

Matthew quit that in May, under less

than happy circumstances. A major production overhaul and a raft of changes meant "it just wasn't fun any more, it was time to go."

He'd always wanted to leave on a high, however. And for that, oddly enough, he has ex-Ukip leader Nigel Farage to thank.

"It was the day Farage came on the show and said, 'I'm minded for a second EU referendum... That was a pivotal moment in history. There was a huge response around the world.'"

"As he said it, I thought, 'I'll never get another line like this out of a TV show, so let's move on.'"

Scares

Moving on has brought him to talkRADIO, where he now hosts an engaging three-hour show each weekday afternoon alongside his long-time friend Kevin O'Sullivan. ("I didn't want to be on my own any more. It's lovely when you get all the praise, but horrible when you get all the s***...").

For a while, mind you, he'd considered quitting broadcasting for good.

After leaving Channel 5 he actually disappeared to the Caribbean for six weeks.

"Amelia was still really unwell, having permanent day sickness, plus bloods and other scares. But she said, 'Go off and sort your head out.'"

"I'll be honest, if she hadn't been pregnant I'm not sure I'd have come back on air, even for the joys of talkRADIO."

"I'm glad I have. It's great to be getting such a brilliant response, to be told the bosses love you, and the listeners, that everybody's happy. You get your mojo back."

"You think, 'This is all right again. I'm not dripping in sweat and fearful and terrified. I'm having a lovely time.'"

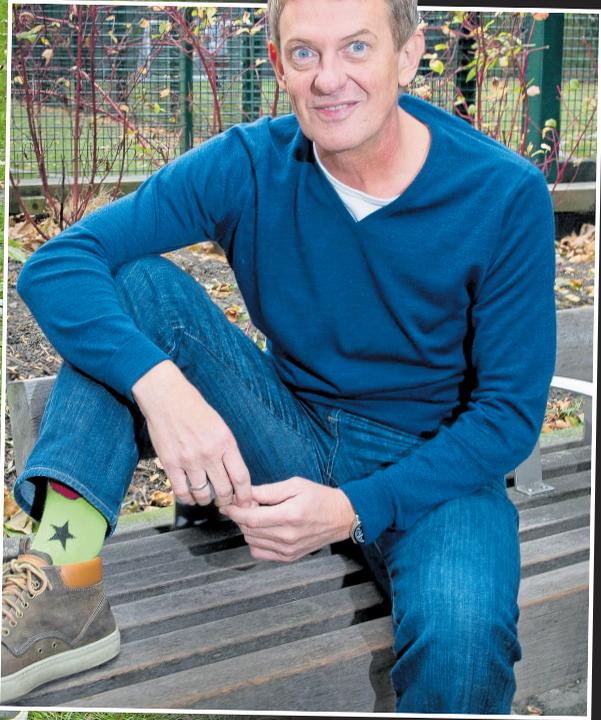
And if he'd opted instead for a radical lifestyle change? "I quite fancied living on a remote tropical island, running a fly-fishing business. I still might some day."

So for now, might 50-something fatherhood have advantages? Wisdom, life experience, etc? "I haven't really thought about it," he says.

Well, he hasn't got long. I remind him. "Yeah, well, Amelia wanted the Lamborghini!"

"No, seriously, I find the prospect terrifying. All that responsibility. It's hard enough having a dog."

● **The Matthew Wright Show is on talkRADIO, weekdays from 1pm-4pm.**



Photos: L. TIM MEHRY

'I feel sorry for pals with kids'

MATTHEW'S FAVOURITES

- FILM:** Rosemary's Baby.
- TV SHOW:** Still Game.
- ACTOR:** Con O'Neill.
- COMEDIAN:** Stewart Lee, below.
- BOOK:** The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, by Tom Wolfe.
- SPORTSPERSON:** Alastair Cook.
- SONG:** Anarchy In The UK.
- BAND:** Hawkwind. I'm introducing them on stage at the London Palladium next month.
- DRINK:** Pale ale or fine Burgundy, depends who's paying.
- CITY:** Glasgow.
- HOLIDAY:** India.
- SCHOOL SUBJECT:** English.
- GADGET:** Leatherman.
- APP:** Vivino.
- ANIMAL:** Wiggy, my mini Schnauzer.

