

STUART'S FAVOURITES

FILM: Gregory's Girl
BOOK: Oxford Book Of Twentieth Century English Verse
TV SHOW: Whatever Happened To The Likely Lads?/Fleabag
ACTOR: Jodie Comer/Albert Finney
COMEDIAN: Norm Macdonald
SPORTSPERSON: Billy Bremner, inset
SONG: Wichita Lineman by Glen Campbell
SINGER: Scott Walker



BAND: Chic
FOOD: Curry
COLOUR: Magenta
DRINK: Whisky
CITY: Reykjavik/Venice
HOLIDAY DESTINATION: Shetland
GADGET: Xbox
APP: Dark Skies
SUBJECT AT SCHOOL: English
FIGURE FROM HISTORY: Nye Bevan
ANIMAL: Red squirrel

MARK'S FAVOURITES

FILM: Amelie
BOOK: The Return Of The Native by Thomas Hardy
TV SHOW: Frasier, inset
ACTOR: Frances McDormand
COMEDIAN: Billy Connolly, Rhod Gilbert
SPORTSPERSON: Sergio Agüero
SONG: Heroes by David Bowie
SINGER: David Bowie
BAND: The Spiders from Mars
FOOD: Welsh Rarebit

COLOUR: Green, Purple
DRINK: Tea
CITY: Rome
HOLIDAY DESTINATION: India
GADGET: Gibson ES125 Semi acoustic guitar
APP: I only have one and that's for my bank account
SUBJECT AT SCHOOL: English, Art
FIGURE FROM HISTORY: Roman emperors seemed to have a good time, so Vespasian
ANIMAL: Owl



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NEAR the end of last year, as part of a shake-up at BBC Radio 6 Music, Mark Radcliffe and Stuart Maconie were told their long-running afternoon show was being dropped.

Instead, from January, they would have the weekend breakfast slot, 7-10am. Up at the crack of dawn, etc. Precious types might have thrown a hissy. But that's not their style. "At Radio 1," recalls Mark, "I'd see people - mentioning no names - making a massive stand on air, complaining about changes that were being made, and I'd think, 'Blimey, you thought you'd keep your show forever, did you...?'"

"I vowed I'd never be like that." Fellow Lancastrian Stuart shares his positivity. "I quite like change," he tells me. "I like things being mixed up a bit. I didn't know this was going to happen, but I soon began looking forward to it. We feel completely settled into it now."

Even so, the new show faced a challenging start. Back in October, 60-year-old Mark revealed he had "cancerous tongue and lymph node issues". It meant starting treatment at once with no idea when he would be back. So Stuart had to launch on his own. In the end, Mark was away for four months. "It's been a long, dark winter, Mike, I don't mind telling you," he says.

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW
RADCLIFFE AND MACONIE

"There were times when I felt like a hulk of a man, and quite useless." So did he ever doubt he'd return? "I had to sign a waiver in case my voice was destroyed by the operation and things. But once I knew I had a voice, I knew I'd come back." Staying upbeat, however, wasn't always easy.

"When you get the diagnosis, it's obviously a shock. I remember sitting by the duck pond at the hospital, thinking, 'This is unexpected...' "But the chances of recovery were always good." "The worst time was once Christmas and New Year were done and the treatment was over."

"You become semi-institutionalised, going to the hospital every day for radio-therapy, etc." "When I was just at home recuperating, those were very dark, cold days." "You start to question who you are. You feel life's a bit hopeless." "But it's almost worth going through it for the feeling you get when they tell you you're in the clear." "It really is like the weight lifts from your shoulders. It's literally a physical

We both agreed we wanted to carry on... it works



DUO: Mark and Stuart, main; Mark's other partner Ziggy, above

thing." Has it changed his perspective on life? "Of course," says Mark. "Little things that used to bother you, like rain or roadworks, they just don't any more, because life is good." Stuart and Mark did consider an amicable parting when their afternoon show was dropped after nearly eight years. "We both went away and thought about it," Stuart admits, "and we both agreed we wanted to carry on. It works. We enjoy it." Their passion for all kinds of music, and for a certain style of broadcasting (no "affected slickness"), is crucial. "We don't try to be best friends," says Mark. "We get on very well but we've never massively socialised. So from we do see each other, there's something left to give. It's like, 'What have you been up to?'" What Mark's mostly been up to, of course, is getting better. "It's only recently I got the all-clear," he says. "I've been reluctant to make too many

plans in case I needed more treatment." "I've got a new dog, a cavapoo called Ziggy, and I'm spending a lot of time with him. And I've written the draft for a new book. That's out in September." Stuart, among other projects, is learning to drive, aged 58. "I've passed my theory. And I had a really encouraging session this week. Reversing into a parking bay at Tesco, I thought, 'I'm getting the hang of this.'" As it happens, the pair can put their new early-rising routine on hold during this weekend's BBC 6 Music Festival in Liverpool, starting today. They're on tomorrow and Sunday from 12 till 3, almost like the old days. ● **Mark and Stuart's regular show is Saturdays and Sundays, 7-10am. This weekend's 6 Music Festival is on BBC Radio 6 Music, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. Tickets at bbc.co.uk/6music**

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