

SUGGS TAKES A STEP BEYOND MUSIC

WORLD IN TV HUNT FOR WAR TREASURES



Baggy trousers? it's Madness!

SUGGS and I have been chatting for 20 minutes or so when suddenly he goes: "You're worrying me, Mike."

I'm a wee bit taken aback. "What do you mean?" I ask, slightly nervously. "You've been thoroughly complimentary about everything," he says, seemingly unused to being interviewed this way. "You're meant to be cynical and horrible."

Oh, blimey, is that right? Guess that explains why I never got the Newsnight job. Trouble is, it's rare you get to talk to one of your musical heroes. So when the chance does come along, what's a bloke to do?

I'm hardly likely to go: "Right, now that I've finally got your attention, pal, what the hell was all that Baggy Trousers crap?"

Also, I've seen what Suggs is like when he's riled. Or kind of. Back for a second run tonight is the show he co-hosts on the History channel, WW2 Treasure Hunters, where he and historian Stephen Taylor root around for relics at old wartime sites.

And in one scene from the opener, a World War One special, Suggs gets handed a typical weapon from back then - a rifle with a bayonet attached - and is then told to imagine that he's charging at the enemy.

It's quite a roar he lets out.

And the sandbag that is dangling in front of him

does not stand a chance. "It's the closest I'll ever get to knowing what that must have been like," he tells me. "It was a pretty visceral experience."

So would he have made a good soldier for real? Surely he's a peace-loving guy at heart?

"Yeah, that's what my wife says. It's hard to get me angry, but once you do..."

Seeing the Madness star fronting a history show might seem weird but it has clearly become a real passion for him.

"I've always liked presenting television shows, but you get offered so much rubbish."

"It is rare that something really excites you, but this came along a

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW



SUGGS
MUSICIAN & TV CELEBRITY

couple of years ago and it has been a joy." Also still a joy, it seems, is performing with his band, even 40-plus years on.

National treasure status was secured some while back, then reinforced in 2012 by two particularly memorable performances.

For the first, at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Concert, Madness famously performed on the roof of Buckingham Palace.

"It was suggested as a joke at first," Suggs chuckles. "but it became an iconic moment in our career. It was amazing. I have a big fear of heights but I held my nerve for Queen and country!"

The second, at the London Olympics closing ceremony, almost became memorable for the wrong reasons.

"We'd been hanging about on the back of a lorry for two hours in a shed," he recalls, "being slowly asphyxiated by diesel fumes. So when the door was opened to the stadium I was slightly bewildered."

"Also, I realised the mic stand wasn't attached to anything. I grabbed

naff off the lot of you' etc. But all is soon forgiven.

"And as much as I slag them off, the moment anyone else does I get all defensive. In that sense it's like family."

Or like Madness, I suggest.

"Well, yeah. We're crazy and dysfunctional but we've known each other 40-odd years and tolerance is what's kept us going."

"So many of our contemporaries fell out over such trivial things, which then turned nasty."

"Luckily, we've always been able to talk things through, or take time off."

"These days we only do it when we want to - and when we do, we do it with all our hearts."

● WW2 Treasure Hunters returns tonight at 8pm on History, starting with a special to mark the 100th anniversary of the World War One Armistice. History is on Sky 130 / Virgin 270 / BT and TalkTalk 327.

my guitarist, realised he wasn't attached to anything either, and nearly fell off the back."

When he's not busy touring, making telly or trying not to tumble off lorries, Suggs still likes to amble down to Stamford Bridge to watch Chelsea. Is he still nuts about the club he's supported since he was a kid?

"I still really enjoy going," he says. "It's just different."

"These days you are paying to watch high-end entertainment, rather than blokes clogging each other in the mud."

"My kids and nephews love it, but they wouldn't have wanted to hang about in the old ground, with the toilets overflowing and people peeing down your back."

"Every now and then I'll still have a go at the players. 'Overpaid ponces,



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