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magazine



TOM
GRENNAN

BRITISH
HITMAKER
TOM GRENNAN
SOARS TO NEW
HEIGHTS WITH
HIS THIRD ALBUM,
WHAT IF'S & MAYBE'S,
OUT NOW.

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PHOTOGRAPHY JACK ALEXANDER STYLING ELLIE WITT

Grennan is fast becoming a household name, his catchy and relatable songs combined with his down-to-earth attitude make him the type of guy many want to know. The Bedford-born artist's upcoming third release is a collection of tracks combining positive lyrics, catchy choruses, and anthemic builds. It has been billed as the story of him living his best creative life and shows a brand new side to the songwriter, he's believing in his abilities and you can hear it in every track.

For Tom, music seemed never to be on the cards, growing up dreaming of being a professional footballer, he didn't discover his talent (and love) for music until he was 18. From there he grafted away playing in pubs and clubs to further his craft until Chase & Status heard one of his tracks and knew immediately they had to work with him. All Goes Wrong by Chase & Status was the first track to push Grennan into the spotlight and not only features his vocals but was also co-written by him. The collaboration saw Grennan open their Wireless Festival slot just a stone's throw from a pub he had once played to only 20 or 30 people some six months earlier, making it an unforgettable moment.



Fast forward two years and Tom released his debut album, *Lighting Matches* peaking at number five on the UK charts, home to the single *Found What I've Been Looking For*, it became one of the 10 best-selling debut albums of 2018. His second release, *Evering Road* was the one that really catapulted him to new heights achieving a UK number-one album and featuring arguably one of his biggest hits, *A Little Bit Of Love* – The record was very well-received, cementing Grennan as being someone who time after time releases relatable, honest tracks known for their soaring choruses and catchy lyrics.

Tom is already enjoying a great year after taking on his first headline arena tour selling over 180,000 tickets across the UK and Europe and showing no signs of slowing down. Ensuring to use his platform for good, Tom wanted to prove his ticket prices need never be too prohibitive by dismissing all platinum and VIP options across the tour in the hope fans will never have to feel a sense of guilt in choosing to see him perform live when there are bills to pay.

1883 Magazine caught up with Tom Grennan ahead of playing in 2023's Soccer Aid for UNICEF to speak about his new album, why live music is so important, and how fitness plays a major part when touring.



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Hi Tom! Thanks so much for taking the time out of your no doubt busy schedule to speak with 1883 Magazine. Your third album *What If's & Maybe's* was released on June 16th. The album is a collection of tracks combining positive lyrics, catchy choruses, and party anthems. It's been described as the story of you living your best creative life. Can you talk us through your initial wave of thoughts regarding what you intended to create with this record, please? How did it all sort of, come together? I was already starting it when my second album came out. It's such a long process finishing an album and then putting another one out but it all happened last year or the year before. I was just ready, I felt creative and I was in a place where I was like "Right, I know what I want to do and say and I kind of know what I want it to sound like" so I went away to the countryside in England for two and a half weeks. When we started it there wasn't any pressure, there was no "We need to make a song like this" it was just a case of seeing what happens and where it was going. It's all about spontaneity, it's about being in a place where you might feel uncomfortable but being able to swim in those uncomfortable waters. When starting the album, I knew I was happy and what I wanted to say but I didn't know where it was going. It was quite a scary pace but a good place to be, you know? It's a colourful, exciting, happy, uplifting album. It's where I was at that point in my life and where I still am now.

A previous single from your upcoming album, *You Are Not Alone*, was released last year and was your most personal song to date, seeing you open up in ways you never have before. You mentioned how writing helped you and you hope it can do the same for others. What has been the reaction since its release? Have people resonated with it in the way you initially hoped? I think so, definitely. *You Are Not Alone* was more of a cuddle, do you know what I mean? It's one of them ones where, when you listen to it and when I was writing it, it made me feel like "You can feel the way you need to feel and somebody is going to be there for you" and the song was there for me. It was actually originally meant to be for a film, that's where the influence came from but unfortunately, it didn't happen with the timings and whatnot but it definitely came out at a point where there was a lot of uncertainty and a lot of different things going on, especially in the winter period where things can get dark for a lot of people. I just thought, "This song needs to be heard" and there was something really special about it so I hope it's helped a lot of people but I'm not too sure, I've had a few messages about it but think it's a song which will just keep gradually being passed on. Whoever needs to hear it, will hear it.

What other tracks are you excited for people to hear from your upcoming album?

There's a song on there called This Side Of The Room which I really think is probably the best writing I've ever done. It's got a lot of imagery in it and tells a true story but honestly, the whole album. Each song has its own little unique thing and I think there's a whole different side of me with this album from Evering Road and Lighting Matches. I think I've opened up and found myself believing in the artist I am. I've learned a lot on the way and now what I want to do is write good, big anthemic songs. I hope it resonates with a lot of people.

Your worldwide smash-hit, Little Bit Of Love from your second album Evering Road – which topped the UK charts in 2021 – catapulted your career and further boosted your platform. You mentioned that writing it probably only took around three hours and the melody essentially poured out of you. How does your creative method typically take shape? As you have progressed as an artist, how do you feel it has changed and evolved? I can't really explain my creative process, it just happens. There's not much thought goes into it, I just allow it to happen and whatever happens, happens. Some days it's there, some days it isn't. When I'm in the studio, for example, we'll be on to a song and I'll think "Yeah, that sounds good, but what else can we get out of it?"

I think it's about putting in more hours, more hard work, and more thought into lyrics than anything. If I want these songs to really sit with people and be heard then they need to be as true and relatable as possible. I think that's what I learned from last time but honestly, the creative process is just going into a room to make some crazy, weird noises. If something then becomes a song, it's more like a puzzle. You're building a house and starting brick by brick then all of a sudden you have the foundation of a song so you put some interior in it, make it your own and do all sorts of crazy shit to make it you.

Something interesting you said in another interview as a Music Venue Trust patron about the importance of grass-roots venues was "There's so much more talent than TikTok" urging people to get off their phones, go out, and watch live music. It's clear that TikTok is fast becoming one of the best ways to be discovered but not always for the right reasons, do you think video-sharing apps like that – and the internet in general – have had a negative impact on the way we view music and how we discover new artists these days? Do I think it's a negative thing? I think there are pros and cons to it.



Shirt, tie and trousers **denzilpatricak** Shoes **Manolo Blahnik**

It's positive for the artist if their song blows up on TikTok and they then have a minute of fame, but I actually saw an artist whose song blew up on TikTok, they were at a festival and nobody knew who they were, so that's a negative. I think for me, I came from doing it in pubs and clubs which I loved because it was interactive, you're there in person and people can see what you're about. But with TikTok, it's a hard one for me because as I say, there are pros and cons to it. Of course, the kids love it and it's how they consume music and hear your songs but for a live aspect, you might have millions of views and millions of people who listen to your songs but you can't sell a ticket. What would I rather do? I'd rather sell tickets if I'm honest. The problem is, it might be a shit song that just fits some weird arse trend people are getting on and then it becomes this monster hit. Are people actually listening to that in their headphones walking or driving to work? I don't think so...

Growing up, your passion was to be a professional footballer but after sadly being let go you got drunk at a house party where you sang a Kooks song on karaoke but despite not remembering it, your friends did and encouraged you to perform more. Before that night, was music never on the cards? No, it wasn't. I think music was just something that needed to come into my life, I needed to find it and I did, thankfully. I love it, I love the aspect of performing and being in the studio writing.

I love your ethos of using your platform to help inform and encourage people via various means, you're an advocate for mental health and also strive to keep ticket prices low and affordable. On your recent sold-out arena tour, you did just that alongside dismissing all VIP and platinum ticket options. I'm noticing similar issues when it comes to football as well actually, some fans are struggling to see their teams live because of too-expensive ticket prices so with gestures like yours, I am hopeful that many more will follow suit and we will be in a world where ticket prices aren't an extortionate spend. I really do applaud your effort and want to thank you on all their behalf. How important is it for you to be a voice in keeping live music accessible to the masses in times like these? What can – or should – other artists do to follow suit? I think it's important that we all have a look at what actually is going on in the world with the cost of living crisis for example. There are artists with fans who have been investing money, time and all the above into you, so being able to still make money and then still have people come to your shows is key.

I don't believe a ticket should be more than £80. I've worked out with my team that we could put a ticket as £40 and still put on an amazing show. Still walk away happy and still have people leaving happily and not feeling like they've been robbed or they can't afford to pay a bill because they've gone and seen their favourite artist.



You have previously played for UNICEF's Soccer Aid, being awarded Player Of The Match last year. It must feel great to be able to combine something you love with such an important cause. Are you looking forward to playing again this year and now you have shown yourself, the cats out of the bag how good you are so do you think the opposition may especially target you to keep you quiet? I just love Soccer Aid because it's an amazing, amazing cause and the amount of money that's raised is unbelievable. And you get to play football with some of your heroes. The whole week, the whole build-up, everything about it is just like living in a dream. Hopefully, I'll play well again this year but we'll see.

You're also big on fitness and health, doing PT sessions and ice baths every day while on the road. Fitness helps so much with a lot of things, especially mental health. It must be so important when touring to stay healthy physically and mentally. Does keeping fit help you navigate life on the road? For me, fitness just works. It's so good for me mentally more than anything. I've got a lot of energy most of the time, especially being on the road so I need to have a bit of a release somewhere other than the stage. I also believe being an athlete in this game is key to success. I want to be able to put on the best show possible and my way of doing that is to be fit and healthy and just on it. I'm a lot sharper when I've done a workout or have been eating well, like everybody, so yeah, it's important.

This summer is set to be an exciting one for you, you have recently played Radio 1's Big Weekend in Dundee and have a series of other shows and festival performances lined up in the coming months. I know performing live is what you love the most so where are you particularly looking forward to playing this year, any dream venues? For me, the one thing I'm looking at right now is getting this album out and then hitting festivals. I haven't really thought about the next six months if I'm honest, it's just week-by-week, head-on, how do we make this album perform the best it can? And how do we get into festivals and smash the shows? I take every opportunity as it comes and hopefully, they just keep coming but in terms of venue, I'd be happy to play anywhere.

New album, *What If's & Maybe's* is out now

Interview Gabrielle Oates
Photography Jack Alexander
Styling Ellie Witt at The Only Agency
Grooming Sandra Hahnel
Barber Harry The Barber
Styling Assistant Karolinadorau

