

Is he the most crass, cocky and irritating Apprentice reject ever?



Selling himself:
Stuart Baggs
didn't impress
Lord Sugar (Inset)



because I want what's next. In five years time, I want to be head of a huge telecoms company — bigger than Alan Sugar.

'When I was little I remember watching Time Team and they were excavating some skeletons and it gave me this horrible feeling that once you're dead, you're dead.'

'And let's face it, I'm reasonably fat. The average life expectancy is say, 73, so with a bit of money, I may make it to 75, which only gives me 53 more years left on the planet. I don't have much time, so why waste it? On my gravestone I want it to say: "Stuart Baggs — he changed the world... somehow".'

He has what one must assume is an incredibly patient girlfriend of four years, Alison Alder, 22, a law student who lives in Chelsea, West London.

'She's the total opposite of me,' he says. 'She's really clever. I would love kids one day. I'd really love a little Stuart that I could go and play football with. But I've got to find a woman who would be willing. Alison is definitely "The One" but I'm not sure she'd be willing for me to get her pregnant. She's not up for having kids until she's 30. But maybe I could do an Arnold Schwarzenegger and have a lovechild?'

Any business sense Stuart does have is inherited from his parents Rosemary and Stephen, who used to run a pub in the Isle of Man. Along with Stuart's older sister Charlotte, 26, they now run one of the largest eBay companies in the country, importing leisure goods from China.

'When I was younger I'd see all this cash being exchanged and think it was really exciting,' he says.

'At the Isle of Man TT festival I used to run a stall outside the pub selling sweets. I decided to expand into selling hot drinks but my dad wouldn't let me have a kettle because he's not stupid and I was only eight, so I used to rob the pre-made cups from another stall and make up the drinks from the hot tap at the pub toilets. I didn't get much repeat custom.'

Today, he spends most of his week doing media work such as panel shows, video blogs for the Radio Times, interviews for Radio Five

**I am like a
magic candle.
Lord Sugar blew
me out, but I've
ignited again**

Live and photoshoots for celebrity magazines. He's recently appeared naked in Cosmopolitan and lost weight for a shoot where he posed in Daniel Craig's famous blue swimming trunks. He jets back once a week to the Isle of Man to keep his hand in with his telecoms business.

'My staff don't like me tarding around in London,' he says. 'But I don't want to be in the back room reconciling invoices. That's boring. I want to be the public face of it. I love being infamous. I want to be like Duncan Bannatyne but with a chat show. He's got the best of both worlds. He's the richest man in Scotland but he's also got his media career.'

Stuart is equally sure as to what he doesn't want.

'I don't want to be a media sell-out. Other Apprentice contestants see the show as a platform on to a media career and that's not me. I've got my own business. I hate going to parties with people who were on X Factor 20 years ago. I'd hate to be that person dancing on ice or making money out of reality TV shows where you go on holiday with lots of Z-listers.'

Strange, considering his current project is Celebrity 5 Go to South Africa, in which he goes on holiday with actor Christopher Biggins, singer Sheila Ferguson of the Three Degrees, ex-model Paula Hamilton and disgraced cricketer Ed Giddins.

'Erm yes... but Biggins is A-list,' he laughs. 'As in: "Ay? Who is he?"' But I admit, everything I say is either ironic or self-contradictory. That's why I could never go into politics — I'd be a spin doctor's nightmare.'

What about The Apprentice? Can he see himself on the other side of the big glass desk one day? 'I'd love to,' he says. 'I'd like to be in Nick's shoes. I'm still under contract with Talkback (the makers of the programme), which is the first time they've ever extended a contestant's contract — which I think annoyed Lord Sugar. So they obviously see potential in me. But sometimes a gem comes out of that show... and here I am, talking to you.'

to admit. Does he think he was unfairly edited in the programme — surely no one can be quite that irritating in real life?

'No, I probably am,' he says, without hesitation. 'I mean, obviously, The Apprentice makes you a caricature of the person you really are, but if you're a bit of an idiot to begin with, it's going to make you look more of an idiot — which is definitely what happened with me.'

'But I don't care. At least I'm provoking a reaction and getting people talking. If people say to me: "You must cringe when you see yourself", I think: "No, what have YOU done in your life? When was the last time I read about YOU in the papers?"'

'People shout abuse on a daily basis. I've had

people threaten to knife me, a couple of people have tried to hit me, but people say nice things too. Someone stopped me outside Sainsbury's today and said: "Hi, you're Stuart, can I shake your hand?"'

Has he learned to brush off the criticism — or does it still sting?

'It does hurt. If I was an actor, that would be fine because I would think they hated my character, but they actually hate me. It's never anyone intelligent having a pop at me, it's always some kid from a council house with a can of cider saying: "I hate you." That's how I cope with it.'

'Besides, I've got a purpose on this planet. I'm a bit like Jesus Christ. You know when he died, people hated him and killed him and he for-

gave them, so when I die, I'll forgive them too.' A rather gobsmacking comparison, but let that pass. Despite the childish arrogance, Stuart is actually rather likeable in the flesh. He doesn't take himself too seriously and, despite his best business idea on the show being a GPS system for cats — 'in case your cat gets lost in Bermuda' — he's also successful.

Already a company director with his own telecoms business, he bought his first flat when he was 18 and paid off the mortgage three years later. He's just moved to London where he rents a flat with a friend, owns a £30,000 sports car and reckons that he's worth £1 million. 'But that's nothing in the grand scheme of things,' he says. 'I constantly feel unfulfilled. Even if I had £100 million, I'd still feel poor

Picture: DAN GOLDSMITH