



# Starstruck

**Saturday 18 February at 8.30pm on ITV1 & ITVX**

Starstruck returns to our screen in 2023 and sees the Queen of Country Pop, Shania Twain joining the panel of judges for this season.

The Canadian Grammy winning singer-songwriter will join the Saturday night entertainment format, which sees members of the public transformed into music icons. Shania will sit on the show's judging panel alongside returning stars Adam Lambert, Beverley Knight and Jason Manford. Olly Murs will once again host the show.

Starstruck launched on ITV in February 2022, with a consolidated 4.7 million tuning into its first episode, making the show one of the biggest new entertainment commissions of the year.

In each episode, viewers will see contestants undergo the ultimate 'superstar experience', shedding their normal personas to become global icons, all courtesy of an elite team of glam and stylists overseeing an extraordinary on screen transformation. Series one featured performers impersonating stars including Harry Styles, Barbra Streisand, Elton John and Cher.

Starstruck is commissioned by ITV Head of Entertainment Commissioning Katie Rawcliffe and Commissioning Editor, Lily Wilson and Commissioner David Smyth. Cat Lawson is executive producer for Remarkable Entertainment (a Banijay UK company).

**HOST: OLLY MURS**

**How would you describe Starstruck to someone who has never watched it before?**

I would describe it as people leaving their 9 to 5's behind and being their music idols for one night!

**How are you feeling ahead of the new series? Do you have less nerves this time around?**

I've definitely 100% got less nerves because now I know the format and the show and what to expect. What I would say to people who didn't watch series one is that series two is more fun, even bigger with loads of surprises in store. It's gone up a notch with the audience, the judges, with the banter, the performances and obviously with some surprise performances.

**We have a new judge in this series - Shania Twain. How has it been having Shania join the show?**

It's definitely a pinch yourself moment for me. I've been very lucky in my career to meet so many amazing people and have been blessed. To hear that Shania Twain was doing the show was like 'Wow. That's another picture to put on the wall.' It's one off the bucket list to meet Shania and be in her company - someone that I've admired from afar for so many years. It's awesome.

**Last year we saw you and the panel perform together. Can we expect another performance in this series?**

100%. It just works and ultimately I can switch it up - one minute I'm a performer, one minute I'm an artist and the next I'm a coach on The Voice UK. Jack of all trades and master of none! It's so cool and that's one thing that my friends and family and people on the street say when they talk about Starstruck. We've listened to the fans of the show so be prepared for the unexpected this year.

**Why do you think Starstruck really captured the public last year?**

I think it captured the public because it's such a fun show. The contestants can come out and give it a go and have a chance of winning £50,000 but they know it's just a once in a lifetime opportunity. A guy the other day had been waiting 60 years for a moment like this and he's been given a chance on this show to do that. I think people at home can see that normal people are getting the chance to sing as their idol, have fun, the whole crowd loves it and people at home love it - it's a really easy watch for people! It's happy, feel good, Saturday night television. Starstruck is like going to a bar with all your mates and you find a bar that plays all the big hits and you just have the best night! Where can you find a show where you'd have so many different acts for all the eras and all the songs are absolute bangers - the best hour and a half of your life!

**Is presenting something that you would like to continue doing?**

100%. I think this format works for me because I love music. I love performing for people and I love entertaining. If the right show comes along and it's the right show then I'll do it. I'm trying to juggle a lot of things at the moment but hosting is definitely something I'd like to do more of.

**Is there a standout act from this series that has really blown you away?**

Yes and they didn't go through. I have to be impartial as the host and it's hard when you're used to being on a show like The Voice UK where you can be critical. But as the host, the hardest bit for me is being impartial.

**Do you agree with the panel's decision?**

Not all the time, no. The other day there were two judges who wanted one team and the other judges wanted another team. I believe there should be a rule in the book that says Olly has the final decision!

**JUDGE: SHANIA TWAIN****What kind of judge would you say you are?**

I would say I'm an inspired judge - I'm inspired by the personalities of the talent and their life stories really move me. I'm always considering how inspired I am, that's really where I'm coming from when I'm giving them any commentary or any feedback.

**Have you been inspired by the contestants you've seen so far?**

Very much so! For example, there is a singer who is a janitor at a school and he sings to his mop - this inspires me to the fullest! This is the spirit of the show in my opinion so my responses all come from that inspiration and less so from a competitive sense of who is technically better. I'm definitely looking more at how I'm moved. Paul the janitor is the essence of why I'm enjoying it so much.

**Last series, three contestants impersonated our host Olly Murs. How would you feel if this series had Team Shania?**

We did have Team Shania! It was so exciting. I was really flattered - it was like a career highlight. And especially to have three women who have day jobs and they are obviously fans - they put their heart and soul into doing the best Shania they could do. It was entirely flattering and I was really touched.

**Have you been surprised by the level of talent you've seen so far?**

I'm so impressed! There have been a lot of really great vocalists and there have been some great impersonations as well - there are two sides to the coin in this show. They are taking on the persona of a particular artist so their mannerisms and the way they deliver the character of the artist is part of the performance. I've been pleasantly surprised over and over again.

**Do you enjoy coming to the UK? If so, are there any British traits you pick up?**

I love being in the UK - it's very much a sister culture for me coming from Canada. It doesn't feel foreign in many ways. I would drink tea in Canada! There is a much more relaxed sense of humour. We swear more in Canada so I curb that a little bit when I'm over here! I always feel very at home when I'm here.

**What do the contestants have to do to impress you when they take to the stage?**

The thing that impresses me the most about any of the contestants is when they can maintain their composure. It's petrifying and they're not professionals. When they really keep it together vocally and they're not distracted by being overwhelmed then that's impressive. Nobody's perfect and even as professionals we hit bad notes and we don't always hold a note the way we want. If you can get up there and own it then you've already won over the audience and they're on your side right away.

**Have the rest of the judges and Olly Murs been welcoming? Do you feel like you have bonded with everyone?**

The panel and Olly are all so great - I love them! I wasn't worried about it but you never know with personalities but everyone is so lovely. They're very welcoming, complementary and there is such a great mutual respect among all of us - a real immediate camaraderie.

**The panel has the ultimate say on who goes through to the finale. Have you all agreed on the winner or have there been any disagreements on who should go through?**

We don't always agree. We have different criteria on what we think are the most impressive elements. Again, I'm coming from the inspirational side of things and I'm not necessarily judging on sheer vocal prowess - I'm more objective in that sense.

**If you were a contestant on Starstruck, who would you like to transform into?**

I could probably try Pat Benatar. I like to rock and she's such a fierce woman. It brings me back to my teens and thinking of being starstruck. If I would have met Pat Benatar when I was a teenager, I would have been speechless.

**How did you find performing with the other judges and Olly?**

We had so much fun! I'd love to do more of that because they're all so talented. The energy was high and those moments are highlights for us as a team. We're up there and we're joining in the spirit of the performance.

**Have there been any standout moments from making the show?**

Adam's wardrobe - he is so stunning! I look forward to that everyday. Jason has this fabulous humour and I enjoy having a laugh and bantering back and forth with him. Beverley is just very sisterly and warm. I look forward to that camaraderie we have. As far the music goes, just bring on the hits - I'm always looking forward to the hits. I live for music so I'm just the biggest fan in the audience.

**JUDGE: BEVERLEY KNIGHT**

**How would you describe Starstruck to someone who's never seen it?**

Its members of the public living out their ultimate fantasy by dressing up and then singing and taking on the persona of their favourite singing idol.

**What can viewers expect from series 2?**

I think the standards have gone up because everyone has seen series one and thought, 'I could do that'. So of course the pool of people that we've drawn from is even wider with even more people coming along to give it a go. I think you're going to see from really old school artists, bang up to date artists and everybody in between. So the current, the classic, the iconic from absolutely every genre.

**Can you tease some of the acts on this series?**

From Frank Sinatra and Tom Jones all the way through to Dua Lipa and Taylor Swift.

**We have a new panellist this series, how is it having Shania Twain join the Starstruck family?**

I love her. Every artist on the show she has hung out with. She knows everyone, I would love to be that person, the anecdotes, it's so lovely. I know a couple of the people who the public are emulating but she'll get out her phone and flick through and knows everyone! It's wonderful. It's a joy for us to have someone who is so iconic and so revered as an artist, as a songwriter, as a singer on our show. I do miss Sheridan, I particularly miss her always offering the contestants a hug. She was so lovely.

**Last series Olly and the panel all performed together during the series, will we see more of that this time?**

In a word, yes. You shall see us together on that stage. You'll see us all perform together and if you're really nice to us you might see us doing our own thing as well.

**Is it nice doing duets when you are a solo artist or is it tough as you're used to performing on your own?**

It's so nice when you sing as a group because it's a sharing of the joy. I am really used to performing as a solo artist but it's so nice and that blend of totally different voices coming together and different styles of singers coming together is great. You've got country, soul, rock, pop and then you've got classic cabaret. Every singer on that stage stands up in their own right.

**What is it about Starstruck that really captured the viewers attention?**

I think the public saw themselves, 'I'd love to be that'. For one day I'd love to have someone dress me, give me the makeover then stand on a stage in front of a supportive audience and just sing my heart out. I think there's so much that's relatable, I think also we're not watching people who are finely tuned tribute acts who do this all time and this is their time to get some face time on the telly, this really is ordinary people who are doing something completely outside of their realms of what they'd ordinarily do. It's a celebration. Not that it's not without critique, you can still critique people and tell them how you can improve. That's lovely because then you become something of a mentor and I like that, that appeals to me. I also think a lot of us spend time on the panel why the chosen icon has the characteristics that makes them so iconic, whether it be the vocals and we can explain it in layman's terms or we can explain their physicality or the things that the public know but don't necessarily know how to articulate and that's what we can do and we can all have this shared conversations as to why someone is brilliant and successful as they are and that's really joyous too.

**If you were a contestant on Starstruck who would you be?**

Prince! I would sound nothing like him but I just want to stand on stage and sing Prince songs and just pretend that I'm an absolute genius just one time.

**What song would you do?**

I don't know I'd want to sing something that the public didn't necessarily know, like a Kiss or Purple Rain, I'd want something a bit more off the beaten track. I think Alphabet Street which I have sung before it was the one and only time I sang a Prince in public. I wanna Be Your Lover because I sang that on my wedding night with my band to my husband.

**Do you find it tough to critique the contestants?**

I like words. I like finding the right words to suit the situation. I'm such a nerd and it appeals to me. So to find a way of telling someone that they haven't quite emulated the tone of the person that they want to emulate, but then you can always find things that they have done. I will say, I'm not sure you've captured that specific aspect of blah blah, however what you did do was this. There are so many facets to a performer and what makes them iconic and what we as the public see when we look at them. I think at home people can look at someone and say that they don't sound like them. Myself, Adam, Shania and Jason can go into the details. Maybe on first listen they don't have their tone but guess what they've got their intonation, they've got their cadence, they've got their physicality, they've actually executed this line that they do in exactly the same way, they've got their mouth around the vowel sounds in the right way. There's so much to say about each performance.

**The panel has the ultimate decision as which team should go through and compete for a place in the final. Have there been any disagreements on who should go through?**

I'd say there's been some controversy, there was one episode where we were two against two and it was the head judge for that show, Adam who had to make the final call. That was tough but that's what makes it good. It happened last year as well and on any other week

team Rag n Bone man, from series one, would have got through. I still think about it now. I really hope the guys in that team know how good they were.

## **JUDGE: JASON MANFORD**

### **How would you describe Starstruck to someone who's never seen it before?**

I would say imagine Stars In Your Eyes but with an incredible budget. Instead of one act you get three, you're getting dancers and pyros and lighting and lasers and judges and it's just like everything times one hundred.

### **What can viewers expect from series 2?**

Well we've definitely stepped up a gear for series 2. The quality of the acts has definitely stepped up, we've got some absolutely brilliant performances. Really lovely to see some modern acts which can be harder to do as they haven't been around as long and won't have as many hooks or sounds to grab onto. So that's been really great and Shania Twain of course as one of the judges, it's incredible.

### **Can you tease some of the acts that we have this series?**

Well we've gone from Tom Jones to Ed Sheeran, Usher to Sam Cook, Dua Lipa to Dolly Parton. It's the kind of show where you can sit down with your parents and grandparents and your children. In every episode there is someone from your era and that you know.

### **How's Shania fitting in on the panel?**

Brilliant. Such a laugh, seems to know everybody, so everyone who comes on, 'yes i've had tea with Tom Jones' and ate cheese with Taylor Swift. It's just brilliant because it's all genuine, it's not like crowbarring in a name drop, this is just her world so it feels like a real privilege to get behind this incredible woman and get to know her. She's just so generous and fun and we've got on really well.

### **You and Shania sit next to each other on the panel.**

Yes we're just having a laugh in the corner and I've sort of walked her through but she doesn't need anything, she knows what she's doing, she knows what she's saying, she enjoys the fun of it.

### **Have you changed your judging style?**

A little bit. There's times when I'm on the panel and I'm thinking to myself oh gosh, if people are sitting at home now thinking, 'what's he doing judging a singing show?' In between filming I've had meetings to do a new musical, I've sang at the Royal Albert Hall recently with a 50 piece orchestra and I was the Hedgehog on The Masked Singer, so I've actually been on an ITV singing show. Gradually I've sort of started to feel worthy of my seat in this second series. I do know what I'm talking about and also I'm a fan of these shows, these are the shows I sit down on Saturday night and watch with my kids. We love The Masked Singer and The Masked Dancer, we love The Voice, Strictly Come Dancing, Britain's Got Talent, they're the shows we watch and love as a family. I also feel a real connection with the audience at home as well, watching the show and trying to sort of say what I think they're probably thinking.

### **Last series the panel and Olly all performed together on the show, are we going to see some more of that?**

We do that a couple of times.

### **How is it performing all together?**

Good. It's hard because obviously if you are singing with Adam Lambert, Beverley Knight, Shania Twain and Olly Murs that's a lot of voices to fit into a song. There's no real egos on this show which makes it a joy. We've all worked hard to get to where we are in different ways so we have that respect for everybody, nobody thinks that they are better than anyone else. You are sitting with someone who has won five grammys, or someone who's the lead singer of Queen, Beverley who has toured the world and won awards. They all work hard and it's been a joy.

**The first series was really well received with viewers, what do you think it was about this show that really captured them?**

The pressure is not there to ignite someone's career, that's not why someone's come on the show. Maybe that's in some of their heads but the experience of being on the show is the prize because that's fun and it harps back to what TV used to be like. Now, there is such a pressure and instant gratification that if you start a show on Friday, five million people know who you are by Monday, that's a lot to deal with. The people on Starstruck are all back in the local supermarket, behind their desk or working in the hospital on Monday morning. There's something about that, that's quite heartwarming and fun. It just takes a little pressure off of all of us, even as judges because then you're not sitting there thinking, I'm going to crush this person's dreams now.

I know some of the criticisms last time, because I got a few of these on twitter was that it was too positive, that's an oxymoron, how can you be too positive? The contestants don't all come back so there's no point in us going through it and saying, 'that could be better, you could work on that', because when are they going to work on it? Nobody is a bad singer on this show. They had a great time, we all enjoyed watching them, that will do.

**If you could be a contestant on Starstruck who would you be?**

Neil Diamond, although I did listen to Tom Jones recently and I thought to myself, 'have I got a bit of Tom in me?' I'd enjoy the fake tan and gold that would be fun. Also now, as I'm sat next to Shania, I feel like I could go a bit more country, maybe I've got a Glen Campbell in me or Willie Nelson. Maybe I'd go for country this time.

**Do you find it tough to critique the contestants?**

No, not really. I feel like I've got my feet a bit more under the desk in this series and I just listen to the other judges and decide which way I'm going to go as in how I'm going to critique. If they've gone hard on voice and performance there's not a lot of room for me to add to it so I'll have more of a laugh. I'm interested in people rather than vibrato and melisma and all these other latin words that are being bandied around. I like the thought that someone has worked hard all week in their 9-5 or if they are an ambulance driver, a teacher or a financier and this is their night. I like the real people stories. I watch the VT packages as hard as I watch their performances because that's my interest and also as a comic that's where I'm going to find the most humour. If you're a fisherman and you're on stage I'm going to say you've held a tuna! We can have some fun with that. So for me that's where some silliness can be had.

**What kind of judge would you say you are?**

I enjoy every performance and I just appreciate they are up there trying their best. I can hear things within the performance that the others may disagree with. Maybe my ear is a bit more generic, but I'm just like the audience at home!

**Has there been any disagreements amongst the panel on who should go through each week?**

Yes loads. I'd say pretty much every episode, there's rarely one team that runs away with that. There was one that was 50/50, two of us went one way and two of us went the other

and it was the head judge who got the deciding vote. This changes every show so we all get the chance to be head judge.

**Is there a team that has gone out that you were sad to see go?**

There've been a couple of episodes where I thought two or three of them could have won on another night. I sort of wish in a way at the end of the series, that we could give one extra place in the final. So the panel gets to pick an act that didn't get through and give them a place in the final. What we've learnt over the years is that the public don't always vote what you think they're going to vote. That's happened on this show so many times. We put a trio through thinking we know which one will be picked by the audience but instead they chose someone else. Fundamentally it doesn't matter, that's what's nice about the show. Don't get me wrong £50,000 is an amazing amount of money but nobody comes on this show thinking, £50,000. Even if it's a deposit for a house or it means going on a nice holiday, I've not met one contestant who says that they're doing this for the money. If there was no prize you'd still get these people wanting to take part in the show.

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