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Gary Barlow's Wine Tour: South Africa **Press Pack**

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***Gary Barlow's Wine Tour: South Africa* airs Monday 11th - Friday 15th November at 2pm on ITV1 and IT VX. (Five episodes)**

Images available via itvpicturedesk@itv.com

- **Gary on the new series:** 'I've not really done anything like this on TV before... but I've absolutely loved it and I've literally been pushing everything else aside to try and do more'
- **Gary on his career:** 'Every day I still enjoy what I do and when you realise you're making a living from it, it's a great, great place to be'
- **Gary of some friends joining him on his travels:** 'When Ben [Shephard] arrived I was thinking 'Ah, a real host!' and it meant I didn't have to try so hard!'
- **Gary on things he misses most when travelling:** 'I really do miss England and the UK when I'm away - rain and all!'
- **Gary on his packing skills:** 'My wife reckons I underpack. I'm ambitious apparently with a pair of undies!'



- **Welcome back to ITV! Tell us about this new series and why you chose South Africa?**

It's a pleasure to be back! I've not really done anything like this on TV before, so in terms of where the idea came from, I wanted it to be something new. I was fortunately already travelling around the world a bit for my own wine business and getting to see these amazing estates, and just having these brand new experiences I felt people should know about all this and the process too! So I had a call with ITV and suggested this very simple idea of me travelling with friends, wine, food, and having good times and they were like, 'We love it!' and before I knew it we got together with the production company and came up with the ideas about what the series could be.

I suggested South Africa because I had recently been there and said, 'If there's a place to start that has the 'wow' factor, South Africa is it'... It just looks incredible, it's such an interesting place. I feel like I see a lot of shows about Italy for example, so this felt like a really good choice.

The series also inspired me to write some original pieces of music to accompany it too! They are very hidden in there as it's not a show about music, but that's not to say I've slipped a few of our classics in there as well.

- **It looks like you had the best adventure, what were your most favourite moments?**

Honestly? The whole trip from start to finish! I mean you can have a rough plan of what you're going to do, but until you're there things can and often did change. I already said to the team that I didn't want to come across as any kind of wine expert, because I'm not. I just

wanted to approach this as someone who is trying to learn about it all and hopefully show the audience that they don't need to feel too daunted by wine or knowing what to choose when they next order in a restaurant. I didn't want it to be too 'snooty' because sometimes wine can have that reputation and I feel that's what we have done. I got really into it, it was a lot of fun.

- **You met up with a host of friends during your travels, how did you choose who to take?**

For this it was a case of who was around during that time, who wasn't on tour or away doing things and I had been looking for something to do with my good friend Ben [Shephard] for ages so I was thrilled he could make this work. I had recently done some music things with the wonderful Mica [Paris] so that was an easy one, and lovely Jane [McDonald] came to see Take That whilst we were on tour so we sorted that then, and my songwriting friend Eliot [Kennedy] was the one who first got me into wine, so it all just naturally came together. The only one we didn't have until very late - and only because I never realised she actually lived there - was Michaela [Strachan]. It was brilliant to be reunited with her because she fronted the very first TV show that Take That ever performed on called *The Hitman and Her* back in 1991 so with that incredible history we shared, it all just felt perfect.

Did Ben [Shephard] give me any hosting or presenting tips? It was funny because the first few days when I had my friend Eliot [Kennedy] with me, who obviously isn't a host - he does what I do - so when Ben arrived I was thinking 'Ah, a real host!' and it meant I didn't have to try so hard! It was really nice to have him there and help me hold it all together!

- **Did you discover something surprising or learn something new whilst you were in South Africa? Any firsts for you?**

I think most things we all got up to were 'firsts' for me because, although I have been in the region and country before, when you're touring or doing flying visits for business, you don't tend to actually see much of the countries during a visit like that. You go from an airport, go down a road, get to where you're going to, see a hotel, and go off again... So, this felt like the first time in ages that I'd actually been somewhere that wasn't home, if that makes sense? I could stop and spend time talking to people and learn about their lives and get a real feel for somewhere. It was just wonderful.

- **What will you take away with you from the trip?**

The first thing I would say is you can often judge a country by the people and the whole community in South Africa, I found to be so warm and lovely. It's also a country that's been a complicated country over the years but it's a country really moving forward. They welcome tourism and tourists with open arms - if it wasn't a wonderful place to visit, I wouldn't be on TV saying it! It really is a superb place, and despite this series having five episodes, we've only scratched the surface really of somewhere that's incredibly diverse. It's a big continent, you could easily be there for months! Would I go back again? Without a doubt. It's somewhere I've been to a lot over the years, I love South Africa, it's such a wonderful place. It has the best sunsets, the best star-filled skies... There are a lot of things that I will always remember it for.

- **Has the success of your own wine taken you by surprise? Are there any other countries you'd like to explore more of?**

There are so many countries I'd like to see more of so watch this space! And yes, I'm thrilled and very proud of the accessible and sustainable Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Blush, Malbec, Pinot Grigio, and Shiraz we currently have available. Someone told me recently that we have sold the equivalent of 10 million glasses since Gary Barlow wines were launched which is an incredible milestone.

- **Your *This Life* tour looked pretty gruelling with all the stairs and dancing as well as moments of you pretending to be a TV host on stage - did this South African trek help with your fitness and preparation for this?**

I actually filmed this before the Take That tour started! But by then I knew what the show was when I was out in South Africa, so during the days when you're travelling for three hours, I'd be listening to my tapes and things, so I knew what I was doing [on tour]. Touring is on my mind a lot when we're about to start one.

- **You're a singer, songwriter, record producer, wine entrepreneur, you have an OBE, you do podcasts, you've been hosting shows down under, you're still touring, getting number one records... Do you still have any other burning ambitions?**

I think music is still always at the heart of everything I do. I'm definitely not a budding host but, if I'm interested in something I like to see what I can add to that and share it with an audience maybe. My job on this particular show, it's not about me being a host, it's about spending time with people that I know very well in a slightly alien but brilliant environment and sharing the wonders of what we experience. I definitely don't read off an autocue, it's all very natural and non-scripted in a 'come on this journey with me and let's experience it together' way.

- **Do you think your children will follow in your footsteps?**

I don't think any of my children are following in my footsteps at this point. The two oldest ones [Daniel and Emily] have kind of gone into medicine and physiology - studying strength and conditioning - and my youngest one, Daisy, I'm not too sure what she's heading for but again, she's very studious... unlike me and my wife! I don't think they will follow in my music footsteps but I wouldn't have discouraged them though if they did want to, it's been a good business for me. Every day I still enjoy what I do and when you realise you're making a living from it, it's a great, great place to be. Many roles in 'showbiz' are just wonderful, there's definitely a much harder world out there than the one I'm in I think.

- **Loved ones aside, what do you miss most about home and the UK when you are away travelling and touring?**

I've been very lucky to have travelled all over the world but there really is no place like home. I love England - rain and all! You know what you're going to get and it's a good place. My

heart is here. People often ask me about moving, or if I will live in America, but it's not for me. I'm very happy here and I really do miss England and the UK when I'm away.

- **Where has been the strangest place you've been recognised?**

You know what, there was this little place we went to in this series, literally in the middle of nowhere, between Steinbach and Franschhoek, and there was this little cafe. It was a tiny little place that made coffee and chicken pies, and these people in there wanted their photos taken with me - it was crazy but brilliant! I don't mind it at all.

- **With all the travelling you do you must be an expert at packing before a trip - what things are essential and that you never travel without?**

My wife Dawn reckons I underpack. I'm ambitious apparently with a pair of undies! I just don't tend to take much. I'm lucky because when I'm heading to something for work, sometimes [my] clothes are sent [ahead] or they are already there with a stylist or something so I don't usually need to take that much.

But I don't go anywhere without my [own photographic] cameras and I must have my laptop with me for all kinds of work and music - we've got two films on the go at the moment - so most days I'm being asked for a file of something, so my laptop - or as I call it 'my studio' - with me at all times! I think I'm a good traveller, I make sure I've always got my earplugs for the plane. I'm getting better at relaxing and switching off when I need to. I'm less hard on myself about working these days. In the past I'd be, 'I'm on tour for a year, how will I finish this or get to do that?' but I don't do that so much anymore and really try to enjoy what's happening at that moment.

As a band, we [Take That] are about to tour Australia and it's going to be amazing, so I don't want to be running off all the time doing bits of jobs for something else. When we travelled lots during the 90s, I think we were all guilty of not fully enjoying it because of the packed schedules and now I think, in general, I only sign up for something I really want to do.

- **You must know exactly what the Take That lads like after all these years, so if you could choose a destination for them to visit - where would you take them and what would you do?**

Ooh, anywhere in the world? They are very different, Mark and Howard. But knowing them as I do, I would say New York for Mark, definitely. He loves NYC! And he loves a good coffee, so I'd take him to a good place for coffee in New York. There's a place called Blank Street Coffee, who do really good coffee and he would love that.

Now, Howard is the complete opposite and I think I'd take him for a bit of breakfast at a golf course, so he can be fed and then go out and have a play. He'd have a great day and it would have to be somewhere in Scotland or Ireland I think. I'll quote him by saying, 'The best golf courses in the world are in Ireland and Scotland'. So, either of those places would make Howard very happy.

For me - when I'm not touring or visiting places for my wine - I'd be with my wife and we are big fans of Paris, France. We find it very romantic and there's a hotel called Hotel Costes

that we always enjoy having dinner in when we are there. It's very Parisian and you can have a nice cocktail, a nice glass of wine, and good food. It's very cool.

- **Do you still enjoy everything you do? Any regrets?**

I love everything I do and I try to never have regrets. It's funny because, if someone said to me a few years ago that I'd be doing a travel show, I would've been like, 'Why do I wanna do that?' but I've absolutely loved it and I've literally been pushing everything else aside to try and do more. I've really really enjoyed it and I just hope people enjoy watching it too!

-ENDS-

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