

CAN WE PULL YOU FOR A CHAT?

THE SIBLINGS ON WORKING WITH FAMILY (AND FRIENDS)

STEPHEN & ANITA MANGAN

You may know brother and sister duo Stephen and Anita Mangan from cracking us up on *Celebrity Gogglebox*. But now, they've got another joint project – writing and illustrating children's books, the third of which is published this week.

Stephen, 56, who wrote the story, and Anita, 55, who did the illustrations, sat down with *heat* to discuss working together and being starstruck by a certain *Friends* star...

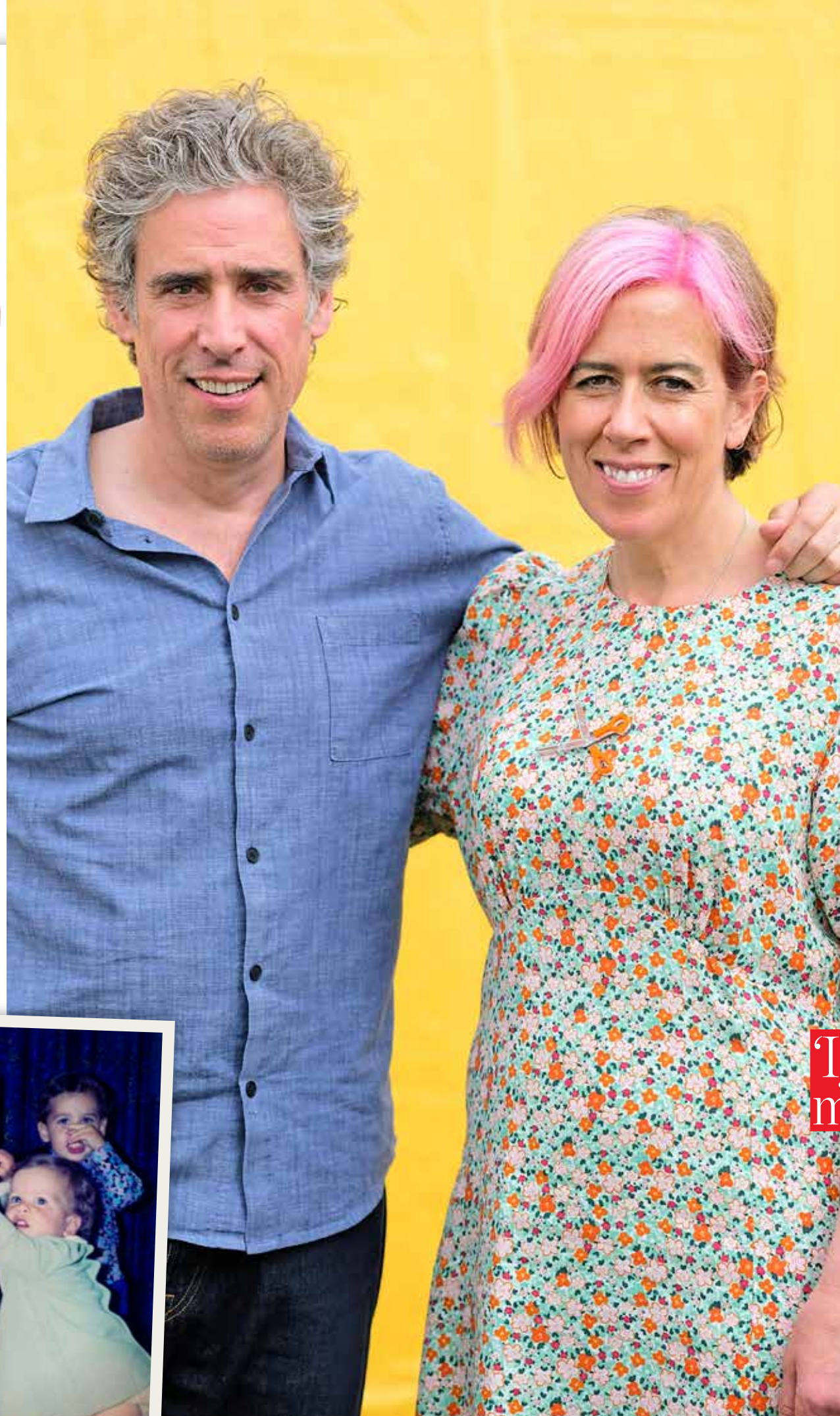
How is it working with your sibling?

S: We sort of work together, but we also don't, because we do such separate jobs. I write the

words, and then I hand them over to Anita for her brilliant illustrations. I think if we were trying to write the story or do the drawings together, then there'd be fireworks.

A: Nudging each other out the way.

S: There'd be much more



How you doin'? Stephen with Matt LeBlanc in *Episodes*

friction. But we don't have that problem. We're collaborating, but we have our own separate spaces. It makes for a very happy and harmonious working relationship.

A: We've had the same sense of humour since childhood, so we get each other.

What were you like as children?

A: Stephen's the oldest, so I looked up to him. We were very inventive – you had to be. There wasn't even daytime TV, the TV kind of started at 6pm.

S: You had to wind up the telly, put two farthings in the top and then crank it.

A: Get the water from the well down the road in our bare feet... We would do a lot of making up plays and

skills of loading a car boot with suitcases. Unbeatable ability to maximise the space available. If that's not the sexiest answer, I don't know what is.

In your book, there's an alien called Doll E Pardon – which celeb would you want on your spaceship?

S: Probably Cher, because we could...

A: *Turn Back Time*?

S: Yes, but we'd also share hair are products. **A:** I'd pick someone like Elvis Presley. He could just sing, 'Uh-huh-huh' all the way up there. Actually, it might get a bit annoying...

Do you like to include in-jokes for parents – like calling a character Doll E Pardon?

S: It partly came from thinking, 'What's the strangest type of character these kids could meet in space? A very short,

bee-hived alien called Doll E Pardon who sings country songs'. It's funny even if you don't know who Dolly Parton is. I read to my nine year old every night, and you can always tell when a writer is throwing a little bone to the older reader. I know I look very young for my age, but I am not an eight-year-old boy, I have to write what makes me laugh.

Then I read it to my kids and go, 'Does that make you laugh?' Frank, my 14 year old, has been my plot consultant for several years now. I'll explain the corner I've worked myself into and throw some ideas out, and he'll have his input. I definitely use them as unpaid help. They haven't unionised yet!

Anita, do you have a favourite show of Stephen's?

A: *Green Wing*, 100%, because it was just so innovative and funny. And *The Split*, I just got so engrossed.

Anyone who you thought, 'Oh, my God, I can't believe my brother is working with them?'

A: Obviously, Matt LeBlanc [who Stephen starred with in *Episodes*]. I did offer to come round whenever Matt was in town to babysit the kids and hang out, but I wasn't allowed.

S: I kept trying to get Matt to come see Tottenham Hotspur play, but he wouldn't have it. He called them Chutney Hooplas. He couldn't get his head round the name Tottenham Hotspur, so they were Chutney Hooplas. ■

The Fart That Saved The Universe (Scholastic, £7.99) is out 8 May

I just write what makes me laugh

dance routines, and perform them to the babysitters.

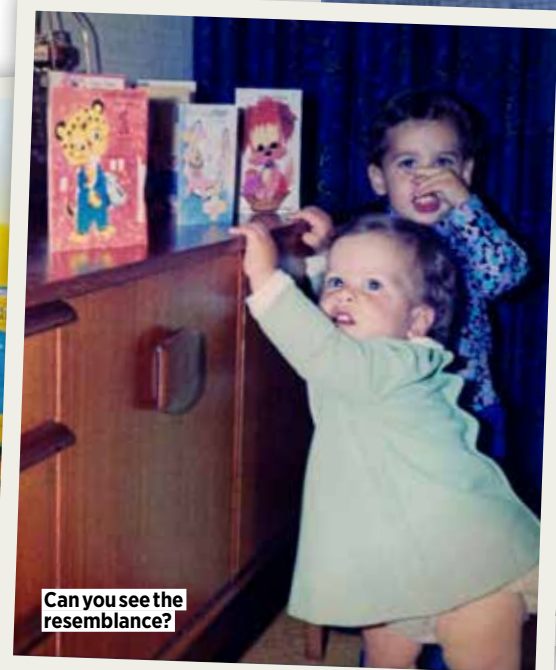
In your new book, the aliens kidnap the heroine Saskia because she's an amazing farter. What ability would aliens want you for?

A: Well, there's the obvious answer of drawing, but I can also make a good lasagne.

S: I think my incredible



Let it rip: their last book was about farts, too



Can you see the resemblance?