



AJ & Will: 'WE HAVEN'T STOPPED CELEBRATING'

The duo are really quite excited to take on *Big Brother*

Big Brother's hiatus has finally come to an end, with the TV phenomenon returning to our screens this week. While the reality show is still our favourite, there are a few new twists to expect – including a new house, new housemates, and two new hosts. We sat down with AJ Odudu, 35, and Will Best, 38, to see how it feels to be taking on one of the most iconic gigs in TV history...

Where were you when you found out about presenting the show?
Will: I was crammed into a car on another job. I was so serious in my reaction that everyone thought I'd had a bereavement! It's big news to receive, especially when you're with a load of people who you can't tell.
AJ: I think I was in my dressing gown and slippers, with half an eyelash glued down. I didn't tell anyone until we got our contracts.

It just felt so unbelievable that I was like, "I'm not going to celebrate this until my name is on there."
W: And you don't always get to work with a really good mate. To do this alongside AJ, who is the funniest, loveliest person in the world... It's going to be fun.
AJ: We've had celebratory drinks, dinner, everything.
What's different on the show this time around?
W: One of the enduring things has always been that the show reflects the

reality of the country we live in. Nadia Almada, a trans woman, going on a reality show all those years ago and winning was a huge thing. Only *Big Brother* could have pushed an issue like that to the forefront. The new housemates are going to reflect the sensibilities of people in the UK in 2023.
AJ: The world has changed – TV 20 years ago is not the same as TV now. But it's a social experiment, so that's the thing that's going to remain true to *Big Brother*.
Does it feel daunting stepping into the shoes of previous hosts

Davina McCall and Emma Willis?
AJ: I certainly don't feel like I'm stepping into anyone's shoes. I hope everyone is ready to see someone who's never looked like me, never sounded like me, and never been like me hosting such an iconic show. I've got butterflies, but I can't wait.
Has anyone offered you advice?
AJ: Davina sent an amazing message of support, as well as Alison Hammond, Adele Roberts and Dermot O'Leary.
W: I also got a lovely message from Jedward, legends of the *Big Brother* house. They sent a congratulatory message where they sang a full duet and offered me huge Jepic energy. I'm looking forward to listening to that just before I go on.
Can you tell us anything about the new house?
AJ: I've not even seen pictures of a dining room chair – it's all top secret. The one thing that we do know is how accessible it'll be. It's going to be a house that will be for everyone. But in terms of how it

looks and feels, we've not got the keys to the castle yet.
Would you have ever applied for the show?
W: It's the sort of telly I love to watch, but I think I'd be too nervous to go in there. I'd be too eager to please. I'd embarrass myself by trying to make sure everyone liked me, and people would see straight through it. I'd be accused of being fake and get booted off.
AJ: [laughs] That's so brilliant, because it's so true. If I was an 18 year old back in Blackburn, doing what I used to do as a cleaner and a waitress, I would try and get in there for the cash prize alone. I think I'd initially go in with a game plan, but I'd become unstuck. I can't be Nasty Nick. Luckily, we get to just enjoy all the mayhem with everyone else. It's going to be magic. ■

Big Brother: The Launch airs Sunday 8 October at 9pm on ITV1, ITV2 and ITVX



Dream duo: presenting at the NTAs last month



Will: 'If I was in the house, I'd be accused of being fake and get booted off'

