

# HELLO!

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**WORLD  
EXCLUSIVE**

**FRANK AND  
FEARLESS**

**GERI  
HALLIWELL**

**REVEALS THE  
TRUTH ABOUT  
HER SHOCK  
PREGNANCY**

**'The baby is a  
happy accident  
and I am going it  
alone by choice'**



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# GERI HALLIWELL

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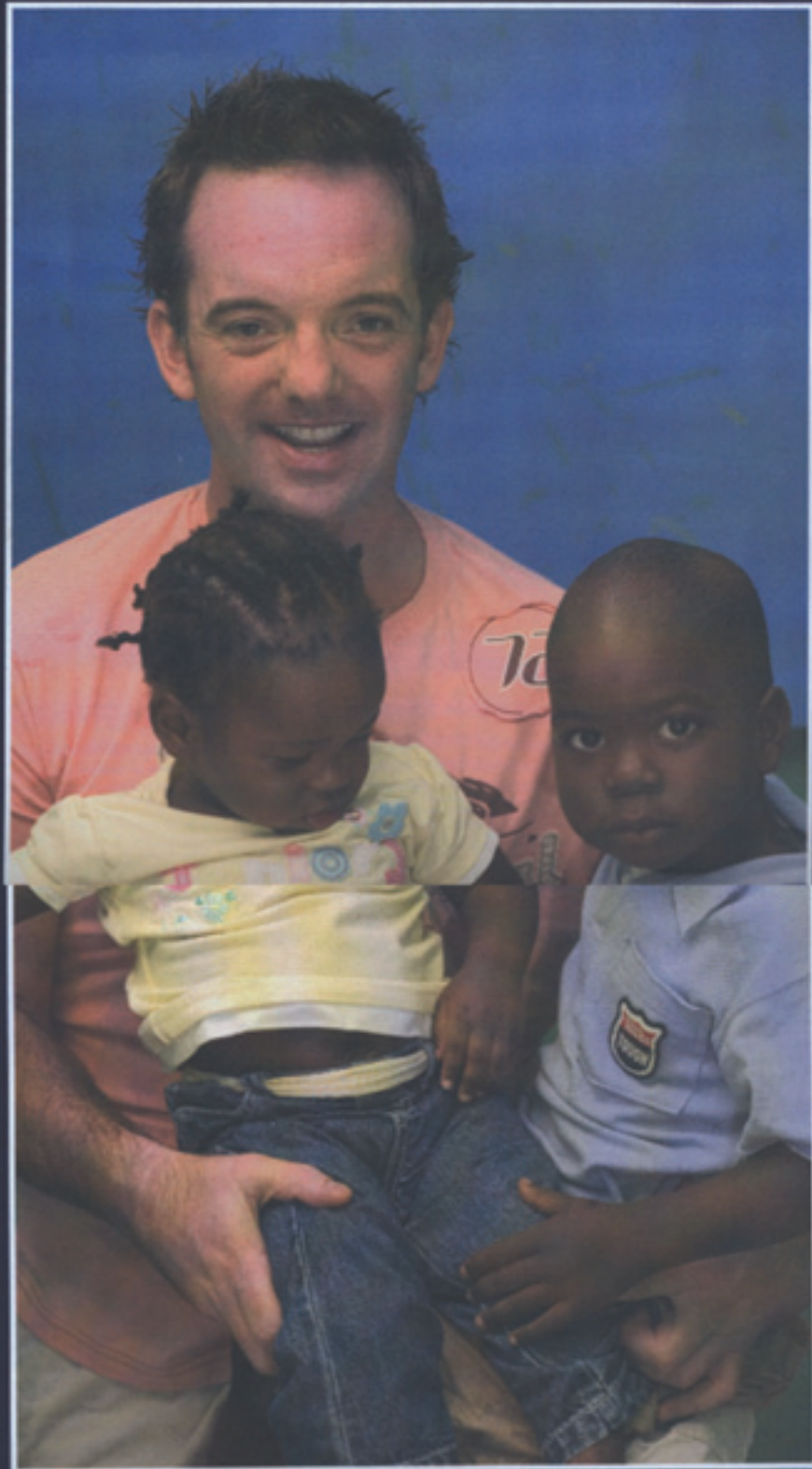
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**DUBAI FATHER**  
**MATTHEW**  
**MORGAN-JONES**  
**AND HIS AFRICAN ADOPTION PLIGHT**



When Matthew Morgan-Jones decided to adopt from Africa, little did he know he would feel such an affinity to the children of Sierra Leone and their ongoing crisis. Now a father of two, Matthew also works tirelessly to raise funding and awareness for the plight of orphans from our neighbouring African continent. He tells his story to HELLO!



**W**hen Matthew returned home to Dubai with three-year-old Dauda and one-year-old Magda, whom he's adopted from Sierra Leone in Africa, his focus was on his family. He described the two years spent making the adoption happen, that included two months in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, as one of the most emotionally and mentally draining of his life.

"When you ask people in Sierra Leone, 'How are you?' you can never prepare yourself for their response," he says. "After a few weeks there, I soon learnt to switch off from what was around me."

"The orphans of Sierra Leone have witnessed atrocities that no child should ever have to experience. Thrice ranked poorest in the world, Sierra Leone has lived through brutal civil wars that have left hundreds of thousands of children orphaned. Three out of five children do not survive past their fifth birthday."

During his travels, Matthew had the support of his mother and was focused

on the adoption process. But once back at home in Dubai with Dauda and Magda he began to think a lot more about his experiences.

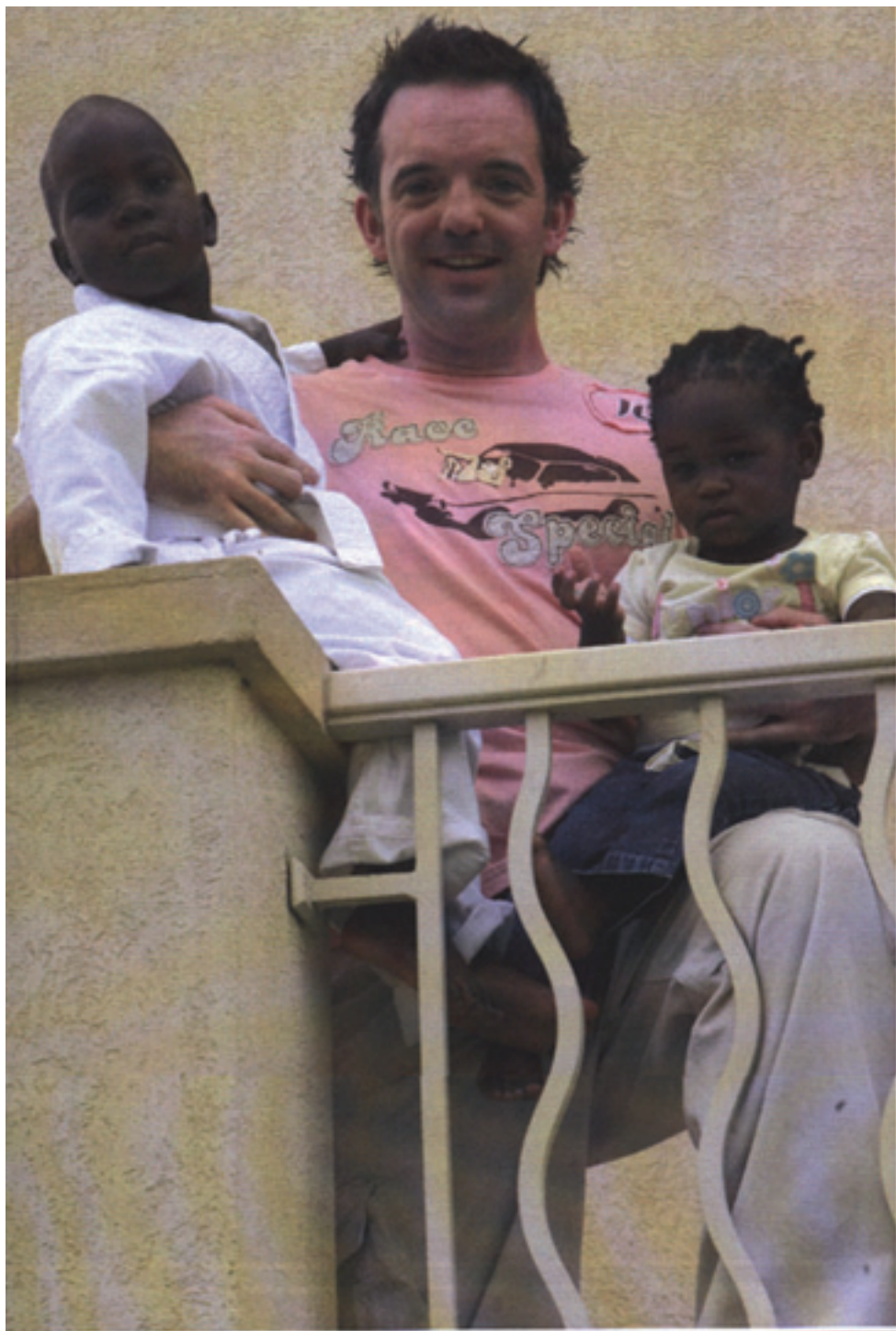
"I remember talking to one of the hotel staff in Freetown one day, she was a mother who six months earlier had two sick children and did not have the money to pay for medicine for both of them. She had to make a choice – a choice that meant one of her children died. She told me I was lucky. Suddenly back in Dubai with my two children, I realised that yes, I was."

"I had blocked this conversation from my mind during the rest of the time in Sierra Leone, but on returning, as the weeks turned into months, I started to connect with my experience a lot more – I think mentally and emotionally I was in a much better place to process it and to do something. Also, my children are African – one day they might ask me what I have done to help their birth country."

It was during this time that Matthew heard from All As One, ►

Above: Matthew has developed a flair for African interiors from his travels. Below: Some of the children from the All As One orphanage in Sierra Leone. Dauda is front right sitting next to best friend David whom Matthew also hopes to adopt





**"The idea that the orphanage would close was just too scary to imagine, I just knew I had to do something. Now I see myself as an ambassador for Africa"**

"I think of all the children still at the orphanage, especially David, Dauda's best friend. Through fate one was adopted and now has this lifestyle of a nursery, swimming, karate, music lessons and a loving home and the other is stuck in an orphanage with two rooms, one to sleep in and one to play in. Dauda is a different child to when he was in the orphanage. The Aunties used to say what a serious child he was and most of the time all the toddlers would sleep and have naps - largely I think due to the lack of stimulation. Now he is full of life and energy, he has the most infectious laugh and an incredible sense of mischief. It makes me think of David and the others still in the toddler room and their potential slipping away."

"My heart melts when I hear Magda or Dauda say 'Papa'. Parenthood completely changes your perception of what's important and the world as a whole. A few years ago I was falling into a trap of being a little selfish - as with most single people you only have yourself to think about. This obviously changes when you have two kids. It's given my life so much more meaning and by forming an 'international' family I've embarked on a lifelong journey of discovery."

Matthew is working with All As One to ensure that adoptions from Sierra Leone reopen as soon as possible while looking forward to family life in Dubai. For more information on the charity ball to be held at the Shangri-La hotel on Thursday March 30, contact [matthew@morgan-jones.net](mailto:matthew@morgan-jones.net).

For information on All As One visit [www.allasone.org](http://www.allasone.org) or the Dubai Adoption Support Group, [pwholmes@emirates.net.ae](mailto:pwholmes@emirates.net.ae)

INTERVIEW BY KELLY ARMSTRONG  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FAROOQ SALIK

Left: Magda and Dauda now enjoy activities like drawing and karate that they would never have had the opportunity to enjoy



the organisation he'd adopted Dauda and Magda from. Due to funding issues they were concerned that they might have to close the orphanage. He was in shock.

"The orphanage provides food, clothing and love to children in their care. The conditions at the orphanage are basic for Western standards, like running water for only two hours per day, but for Sierra Leone it's luxury. I witnessed emergency cases being admitted into the orphanage. A two-year-old girl was found near dead in a local graveyard - unable to walk or hold her head up for long periods, she survived due to intervention. Simply, All As One saves lives.

"The idea that the orphanage would close was just too scary to imagine. I just knew I had to do something. Now I see myself as a representative or ambassador for Africa because it is the continent that desperately needs help.

"My initial response was to organise donations for the immediate items they required like children's clothing, shoes, cloth nappies, medicines and sheets. For fundraising I went into

overdrive and started organising a charity dinner. It was approaching Christmas and I had never organised anything like that before, but it was a success with over 110 people attending and raising over US\$15,000."

Unfortunately, three months later All As One remains in desperate need for funds. And once again Matthew is arranging a charity dinner to be held in Dubai on March 30. "The ultimate goal is to secure funding from corporate or private sponsors that could commit to supporting the overheads on an annual basis. This would mean that they could plan and not worry at the end of each month how they will pay the bills and take in more children.

"Long term I'm focused on setting up a foundation in Dubai for African children. The need is so huge and the great thing about Dubai is that people are so generous with time and donations. For grass roots organisations like All As One fundraising is a constant struggle and I think this is where Dubai and elsewhere in the Middle East could really help.