

IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
**SIMON COWELL**  
AND GIRLFRIEND LAUREN  
TELL WHY BABY ERIC HAS THE  
X FACTOR AS THEY MEET SAM  
BAILEY FOR THE FIRST TIME



**T**he arrival of his son Eric has changed Simon Cowell in many ways, a fact shown last week when he attended a special tea party in support of one of his favourite charities.

Always a poignant occasion, the Easter Afternoon Tea fundraiser for Shooting Star CHASE – the hospice charity that cares for children with life-limiting conditions and their families – tugged at the 54-year-old’s heartstrings even more this year.

“I felt very different when I arrived today,” Simon, who’s patron of the charity, told **HELLO!**, the only publication invited to the event.

Accompanied by girlfriend Lauren Silverman, 36, mother of his two-month-old son, the new dad explained: “It has always been an emotional day, but you forget that it’s not just about the kids, but also their families. It’s so hard on them and what the charity does so brilliantly is it puts the kids in a secure place and looks after the parents too.”

Asked if the day made him feel grateful that his son arrived safe and well, he said: “Of course. You feel blessed and luckily he’s in good health. It did put things into a different perspective.

“It’s hard for Lauren, too, because it’s a happy event but sad too and it affected her today, you could see that,” he added. “But I want her to get more involved – to see it first hand.”

When asked how she and Simon were settling into their new life with their son, US-born Lauren smiled and told **HELLO!**: “We’re getting there. But now I have to leave to go back to New York. Just as I’ve gotten settled and comfy, it’s time to go back. But we’ll be back and forth.”

Simon and Lauren spent time chatting to the children and their families, including 18-year-old Sian Tolfree, who has a serious heart condition and who has become so close to Simon in the years he’s been involved with the organisation, he is now her godfather.

“It isn’t a faceless charity, so over time you get to know the kids and they do become part of your life,” said Simon. “She is a sweetheart and her family have come to stay with me in America.”

Adding to the testimonies that being a dad has mellowed the former Mr Nasty, Sian told **HELLO!**: “I bet you, on *Britain’s Got Talent* this year he’ll be softer and nicer. I bet you.”



Arriving at the Easter Afternoon Tea fundraiser for Shooting Star CHASE, new dad Simon is greeted with a homemade card (above). As patron, he has long been involved with the children’s hospice charity, so much so that he’s godfather to one of the children it helps, Sian Tolfree (below, with Simon and his girlfriend Lauren Silverman). Keen for a first-time meeting with Simon was last year’s *The X Factor* winner Sam Bailey (left, singing at the event). “She did good,” said Simon of her performance





**'Now I'm a father, I felt very different when I arrived here today. It put things into a different perspective'**

"Hmm, we'll see," replied Simon with a smile, before adding: "But probably not."

The show is bound to feature some cute children desperate to impress the head judge. "We've always looked after the kids," says Simon. "We have kids who are six years old turning up and you're not going to tell them that they're horrible. I couldn't do that – that would be pretty bad. We're very careful that they can handle the pressure. But I think it's going to be a good year. I'm really looking forward to it."

#### **A TALENT FOR BUSYNESS**

Despite becoming a father, self-confessed workaholic Simon is getting back to business, with *Britain's Got Talent* returning to our screens later this month.

"Even when I was in America when Eric was born and we decided to stay over there for a couple of weeks, I was having meetings pretty much every day," Simon said.

"People were flying in to do certain things and I just have to do that. I like doing that."

For the moment, though, the business in hand was supporting Shooting Star CHASE, which is aiming to raise £9.5million a year.

"It is a really good cause and I will do whatever I can to help raise them money and awareness," said Simon. "I'm there for life."

Also supporting the charity was the winner of last year's *The X Factor*, Sam Bailey. As well as performing on the day, the event also gave Sam the chance finally to meet the man whose show shot her to fame.

"Really cool," was how the 36-year-old singer, who's pregnant with her third child, described meeting Simon, who was quick to congratulate her on the success of her debut album *The Power Of Love*, which went straight to No. 1 on Mother's Day.

"I've been waiting ages to meet him, so now I have it's almost like this is real," she said. "I was a bit nervous, but I've spoken to some of the children and they've been saying how nice Simon is, so they really helped me by putting me at ease before meeting the boss."

"It's really sweet; he was making sure everyone's looking after me at the label. He asked me what I did to celebrate my album and about my children and how everyone's coping, so I told him they're all fine."

Earlier, Simon had explained how Eric had intensified his instinct to take care of people. "The second he was born I felt this very protective urge towards him to make sure he was safe and looked after," he told **HELLO!**. "I've always had that nature though. With friends and family and with animals. It's something I have."

Asked how his mother Julie reacted when she met her new grandson recently, Simon replied: "It was fantastic. I was really looking forward to that moment, because of all her sons I was the one who she was convinced would never have kids."

"I'm not sure she even believed it until I actually said, 'This is your grandson.' But it was a great moment. She's hilarious, my mum – a real character," he added fondly. "It was a big day for her."

Simon is back on the panel for this year's UK version of *The X Factor*, along ►



**It was Lauren's first time at one of the charity's events and Simon told HELLO! how it was a day of mixed emotions for her. "It affected her today, you could see that," he said. "But I want her to get more involved"**





Also at the tea party are reality TV star Amy Childs and Abbey Clancy (together, above); Nicky Clarke (right, with Arlene Phillips); and Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and his wife Jackie (together, far right). Also enjoying the day are people helped by the charity, including Ceri and Beth Astill (together, below, with Luisa Zissman)



Though Sam had the jitters before being introduced to Simon (together, above), she took comfort from others at the event. "I've spoken to some of the children and they've been saying how nice Simon is," she said. "They really helped me by putting me at ease before meeting the boss"

## 'It isn't a faceless charity, so over time you get to know the kids and they do become part of your life' Simon

with his old sparring partner Cheryl Cole. What will they be looking for?

"If we can go back to where we were when we left the show in 2010, that was probably my favourite ever series of any show I've ever been on," said Simon.

"It was just a brilliant year with Matt Cardle, Rebecca Ferguson, One Direction, Cher Lloyd. Great talent and they all went on to be successful.

"When I spoke to Cheryl about doing the show again the only thing we actually spoke about was, 'Do we believe we can do it again? Are there still talented people in this country? Can we attract people to the show who we normally wouldn't?' And we decided that we could.

"And she's a good judge, Cheryl," he added.

Though it's yet to be formally confirmed, it seems Louis Walsh will be joining them on the panel. But what about that elusive fourth judge?

"It's so not decided yet," said Simon. "As always with us, everything is up in the air, but we have to find

four people by the time we start filming.

"There is a tendency to hire what I call 'celebrity judges' and actually what I'm looking for is someone who really can do the job.

"If you're mentoring an artist for ten or 11 weeks, you have to turn that person from a good artist to a great artist by the end of the year.

"Something is slightly out of kilter at the moment – it's almost like all these judges are out promoting their own records and forgetting what they're there for, which is to discover more talent.

"So I have to find people who actually want to do the job rather than, 'I've got a record coming out.'"

We're intrigued to find out who it will be.

"So am I," said Simon, with a wink.

INTERVIEW: RACHEL CORCORAN  
PHOTOS: JAMES ROBINSON

To make a donation or to find out more about Shooting Star CHASE, visit [shootingstarchase.org.uk](http://shootingstarchase.org.uk).

