



The Daily Mirror Pride of Britain Awards

Ashley Banjo

What made you want to take part in Pride of Britain this year?

Well, I feel like I've been a part of Pride of Britain for a few years now but the chance to host it next to Carol, especially after the last couple of years, is a massive opportunity. It's also a really positive show to be involved in so there is no reason why I wouldn't want to do it. It's such a great opportunity.

What do you think makes the show so special?

I think it's the fact it's people being recognised that wouldn't normally get the recognition for doing amazing things. Doing things that really matter out there in the real world. Sometimes it's easier to look on Social Media, red carpets and television and see celebrities. But what I love about Pride of Britain is that everyone who is there is there to celebrate the incredible achievements of people out in the world doing amazing things. I think that's what's right at the very heart of it.

You're taking on a bigger role this year, what are you looking forward to most? Are there any nerves?

I think I'm looking forward to obviously working with Carol but also getting to meet everybody involved. Over the years, I still speak to or bump into a couple of people that I've met because they were winners. I still see some of them. Or I'll get a message on Instagram sometimes. I just have a ton of respect and admiration for all of the winners. So I think I'm most looking forward to meeting these amazing winners and seeing the look on their faces and to experience a really special night because they always have a great time. Even if it's for sad reasons, they generally seem to be having one of the best nights so I'm looking forward to seeing that.

What's it like working with Carol?

I've known Carol for such a long time. She's really good friends with my little brother and she knows my Mum. She knows my whole family. She's a legend and a pro and she looks incredible. I asked her for her little book of secrets and she's not giving it up.

Obviously everyone has had a tough 18 months and there wasn't a Pride of Britain physical event last year, do you think that will make it even more special this year?

Sometimes you don't know what you've got until it's gone and I feel like the Pride of Britain is just one of those events in the calendar that always sort of brings you down to earth, makes you realise what is important. And it's also a glamorous and glitzy night that is good fun. I think last year when we had no

audience, it was still incredibly meaningful of course but I'm looking forward to the energy of having everyone back in the room.

Have you got any standout moments from previous Pride of Britain Awards?

There are loads. I think it's when you get the kids on stage. They always bring out the unexpected line of the night. You know, we get great talent, big names, great stories. But there is always one kid on the night that just has a one liner that brings down the house. So I'm looking forward to the unexpected.

Is it hard to not get emotional during the awards show?

Absolutely. There's no doubt about it, it's always a massively emotional night. You hear stories, some of which just seem crazy, you don't know how the people have the strength to do what they do. And others you can relate to. It's just a hugely emotional and inspiring night.

Lots of children are awarded Pride of Britain Awards. As a father of two now, does it change how you feel or look at these children?

I always appreciated the kids who win the awards, kids who get on the phone to emergency services and save the life of a parent. I look at my two now and it blows my mind. Some of these children are looking after people so much older than them and making life-changing decisions. I think about it as a Dad completely differently now. It makes me even more impressed and even more inspired seeing these super young people. My kids are only two and one but if they can grow up and I can raise them enough to have those sort of instincts. In a way, if I can bring them up well enough to react like that, those little kids are heroes. It's always massively touching when you see a kid do something for a parent and I relate to that differently now I think.