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Culture shock The actor Mark Wingett drops his 14-year-old daughter, Jamila, in at the deep end for a scuba diving lesson, then joins her for a Larrikin Love gig

'My biggest worry was that I could relate to the music'

Mark Wingett: I started diving in 1984 with a sub-aqua club for London cabbies. A couple of mates persuaded me to go to a swimming pool in Westbourne Grove with them one Tuesday night. It wasn't something I'd longed to do, but as soon as they strapped an aqualung to me and pushed me underwater, I was hooked. My mates didn't take to it, though, so I was left with the cabbies.

I was on *The Bill* [as Jim Carver] for 21 years. I loved it, but it was very demanding. Diving was the perfect antidote, especially being with a bunch of blokes who had their feet on the ground.

I've dived all round Britain and abroad. Diving's similar to meditating. You get away from things and live in the moment. And you see extraordinary stuff, like shipwrecks, and amazing flora and fauna.

I haven't wanted to push Jamila into it, but I'd love to go on diving holidays with her when she's older. She's a water baby and we've often snorkelled together, so I wasn't surprised she enjoyed it. She took it in her stride.

We've always been close and done a lot together. Her mum's a makeup artist and she's away a lot, so when I'm not working, it's me who picks Jamila up from school and cooks the tea.

My dad was in the navy and was away for months at a time. We lived in a village near Portsmouth and I went to the local comprehensive. Jamila goes to a private school in London and mixes with a very privileged social group. I'm glad we're able to do that for her, but she knows she's lucky and that money isn't the solution to everything.

She's 14 and hasn't rebelled – yet. She works hard and hates drugs and smoking. She doesn't even like drink. But she has started going out at weekends with her friends, mainly to see bands.



I try not to be overprotective, but it's hard. I know I have to let go, but as she reaches another stage, there's sadness at what you've left behind. I've always felt like that. I was delighted when she took her first steps, but also sad that she wouldn't be crashing into the dishwasher anymore.

We have our moments, of course. It's not *Little House on the Prairie*. Most of the friction right now is over picking her up from parties. I say I'll collect her at midnight and she goes, "Daaaad, I want to stay the night," and I say, "You're 14 years old, Jamila. I'm picking you up."

I enjoyed going to the Larrikin Love gig with her – it was interesting to see what she's into. One of the driving influences for me when I was 15 or 16 was the Clash. I was a classic punk, and most weekends I'd get a minibus from

Petersfield to London with my mates and see punk bands. My dad was very conventional, so I'd leave the house in normal gear and spike up my hair and get the safety pins on in the bus.

Back then the gigs were overtly political and there was a lot of anger. But there was a lot to be angry about. That anger wasn't there at this gig. It was a different kind of music – a lot softer, and people just wanted to have a good time. There was more melody, but less energy. It was a little bit tame.

Afterwards, we jumped in the car and went down Brick Lane for a bagel and a cup of tea, just like I used to. We got home around 2.30am. The girls were exhausted but said they'd had the best night ever. My only worry was that I could relate to the music. I don't think parents should be able to relate to their kids' music like that.

'It wouldn't be cool to be spotted with your dad'

Jamila Martin-Wingett: My dad's always told me how much he loves diving, so I was intrigued to know what it involves.

At the London School of Diving they gave me a really good talk first and explained the basics, then I put on the equipment and went in the pool.

I was amazed how much everything weighed, but I wasn't scared going underwater. I've been snorkelling a lot with my dad and I've always loved

Scuba do ... Jamila and Mark at the London School of Diving Photograph by Christian Sinibaldi

swimming, so I felt quite calm. It was interesting being down there, having a look round, and I waved at my dad and did some of the signals. I'd definitely do it again. I can see how you could get hooked.

I've always done loads of stuff with Dad; we get on really well. Some of my earliest memories are of him taking me to the park to feed the ducks, and jumping on him and rolling around outside. We used to go swimming a lot, too.

I was a bit worried about the gig because I thought I might have to stay with him the whole time or he'd be on his own. But he soon got chatting to other people. I'm glad it was mostly for over 18s, though, because it meant my friends weren't there. It wouldn't be cool to be spotted with your dad, and I definitely wouldn't let him dance.

The venue was amazing – huge – and I knew it must be cool because I spotted Peaches Geldof. My friend and I danced a lot and most people were really friendly.

I know Dad used to go to lots of gigs when he was young, and he often plays the Clash at home and in the car. He gets a bit bored and puts it on really loud and disturbs me. I like that music, but it's a completely different sound to what I listen to. Punk must have been such a shock, it must have been amazing to live in that era when it was all happening.

Most decades had their own movement – like the mods in the 60s and punk and new wave in the 70s and 80s.

I hope I'll be shocked by something new one day.

Interviews by Emma Burstall

The London School of Diving has a full range of Padi courses and also organises children's scuba-diving birthday parties. Call 020-8995 0002 or visit www.london-school-of-diving.co.uk

Jamila and Mark saw Larrikin Love at the Hammersmith Palais, London, www.larrikinlove.com