

HELLO!



ALL REVVED UP AS THEY TAKE TO THE STAGE
TOM PARKER AND
LOUISA LYTTON
TELL WHY 'GREASE' IS THE ONE
THAT THEY WANT

Tom and Louisa are starring on stage together for the first time in a new production of *Grease*. Tom plays the super-smooth Danny Zuko, with Louisa as Rizzo, the leader of the Pink Ladies. In the classic film of the high school musical (left), John Travolta played the greasiest of greases, Danny opposite Olivia Newton-John as his love Sandy, with Jeff Conaway as T-Bird Kenickie and Stockard Channing as Rizzo.

With his good looks, famous friends and status as one fifth of former boyband The Wanted, Tom Parker is the epitome of cool. So he was as surprised as anyone to find himself at the hairdressers having a perm.

"How things have changed," laughs the singer, who is about to make his debut in a stage musical as Danny Zuko – quiff and all – in a new touring production of retro favourite *Grease*. "They were having real trouble getting my hair to look like Danny's. It has a mind of its own. So, yeah, I got a little perm to give it some body. It's for the role!"

Tom will be treading the boards alongside ex-*EastEnders* actress Louisa Lytton, who plays Rizzo, in the stage show, which opens in Manchester on 10 March. As **HELLO!** chats to the dynamic duo on the set of our exclusive 1950s-themed shoot, it's clear they're going to have a whale of a time.

JUMP START

"We get on well working together and we always just take the mickey out of each other," says Tom, who first got to know Louisa when they both took part in last year's series of *The Jump*.

"I'd not skied that much before we went to Austria for that job, but I picked it up quite quickly. Whereas she took a little longer, so it was on the floor having fallen over. I'd go over and spray snow in her face..."

Louisa interjects, laughing: "Basically, he's horrible to me."

"But we have that kind of relationship," insists Tom. "Really jokes. And you need that – we're on the road for ten months and it'll be tedious at times, with eight shows a week, so I think it's good that we've got that humour and that good working relationship."

The pair are planning to invite the other friends they made on the winter sports reality show – which has just kicked off a new series on Channel 4 – to watch them perform in

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Louisa and Tom turn back the clock in style as the pair get ready to rock theatre audiences in a revival of *Grease*. It's Tom's first stage role, but his second time working 75 with Louisa after they took part in last year's series of *The Jump*.



'There's a bit of Danny in every guy. We think we're the bees knees, but underneath, we're all soppy' Tom

Grease. "I've stayed really good friends with [ex-onniser] Rebecca Adlington and a few others will come to the press night in Manchester, like [singer] Brian McFadden and [Ex-Hollyoaks] star Gemma Merna. It'll be like a little mini reunion," smiles Londoner Louisa, who turns 28 this week.

Also heading to the first performances will be Tom's fiancée Kelsey Hardwick. The demands of the tour have meant that the couple, who exclusively announced their engagement in *HELLO!* last year, have had to put their wedding plans on hold. Tom says they now hope to tie the knot in 2018.

"We want to make sure we plan it right and I don't want to take two weeks off, get married, do a week on honeymoon, then go back on tour. I didn't think that was something I'd be comfortable with. So next year we'll have a big wedding," says Tom, who got down on bended knee to present his long-term love with a diamond sparkler during a romantic break in the New Forest last spring.

"We do need to get our act together, though. We're having nightmares with it, to be honest," continues the 28-year-old, who has been with Kelsey for seven years. "We've seen so many venues. But do you know what – I feel like the wedding is the girl's day and her dream. I feel like that might be seen as a cop out, like I don't want to do much, but I'll roll with that. I mean, Kelsey knows what she wants and how she wants it to be, so I'm letting her put everything into place and I'll just give her my credit card when needs be."

HOPELESSLY DEVOTED

The couple live in south-east London but, although they're used to being apart – Bolton-born Tom toured the world with his Wanted band-mates Jay McGuiness, Max George, Siva Kaneswaran, and Nathan Sykes – separation doesn't get easier. If anything, the opposite is true.

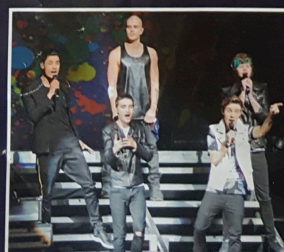
"I think it's going to be even tougher being away from Kelsey now because I've been at home the past two years and I'm going back away for a period," says Tom. "Lately, there's no doubt about it. It does put a strain on your relationship."

He seems a natural fit for the role of Danny. "I think there's a little bit of Danny Zuko in every guy," he says. "We think we're the bees' knees, but underneath it all we're all soppy." However, he says he was more of a Eugene – the show's geeky character – than a Bird when he was at school.

"I always thought I was cool but really I was that kid who



Rock'n'Roll Party Queen: Louisa looks ready for prom night at our retro photoshoot before hitting the stage in *Grease*, where 77 she can put the fancy footwork she learned on *Strictly* to good use



Tom and Louisa have been moving in similar showbiz circles for some time – he as one-fifth of *The Wanted* (left), Louisa as an actress followed by a star turn on *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2009 (far left). Tom hopes his pop star days will stand him in good stead for the role of Danny Zuko. "Being a T Bird. One hundred per cent," he says



'We both really want to do the jungle... I'd like to challenge myself' Louisa

got a bit bullied at school, to be honest with you," he says. "Do you know what they did? They chucked my bag with all my GCSE school notes onto the cricket field so I couldn't find it for two weeks and all my notes got soaked. I had to do them all again. But who's had the last laugh? Me. That's called karma. And being in a boyband is like being a T-Bird. One hundred per cent."

Meanwhile Louisa, who is newly single after a recent break-up, says she was "definitely a Pink Lady" when she was younger. "I was that girl who was just friends with everyone," says the actress, who went to the prestigious Sylvia Young Theatre School in London and landed her first professional role – in *EastEnders* – aged 15.

WE GO TOGETHER

Louisa is looking forward to meeting Tom's fiancée, who dressed up as Sandy to Tom's Danny for a big New Year's Eve party at Katie Price's house. "We've all been saying that Kelsey could play Sandy in this musical," she says of the Italia Conti-trained performer.

The role of Tom's leading lady on stage has gone to actress Danielle Hope, while Darren Day will appear as the Teen Angel. Danielle won TV show *Someone over the Rainbow* in 2010 to land the role of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and the 24-year-old has since also starred on stage in *Les Misérables* and *The Sound of Music*.

"She's lovely, and such a pro, so she can give us some tips," says Tom.

Having done *The Jungle* together and now the musical are there plans for Tom and Louisa to work together again in the future?

"We both really want to do the jungle [*I'm a Celebrity... Get Me out of Here*] together," laughs Louisa. "I've always said I'm terrified and being buried underground might be difficult. But now I watch it and think I'd like to challenge myself and, since we keep doing jobs together, we could both go. So watch this space."

INTERVIEW: ALEXANDRA WILBY
PHOTOS: DAVID VERNI

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For dates, venues and tickets, visit greasethemusical.co.uk

Grease monkeys: Tom and Louisa will be dancing their bobby socks off with eight shows a week for ten months and having a lot of laughs. "It'll be tedious at times, so I think it's good we've got that humour," says Tom

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