



'I've not cried in a hospital, but this...'

The documentary-making Van Tulleken twins have seen refugees before but they were still horrified by the migrant trail



Fortuitous twins, the van Tulleken brothers are remarkably different. They are having their photographic talent on the cold roof of New Broadcasting House, London, sporting a flat affect, dressed in dark, well-cut and heavily layered outdoor gear. Chris, seven seasons younger and with the focused eyes of a man who has spent too long staring down a microscope, looks like he'd rather have his head buried in the pavement than have to go to the roof for the camera. "I am the low angle one," he says by way of explanation.

The Telegraph photographer says "Can I just get you to hold hands?" Chris gives him a winking look. "No! We don't hold hands. Glocks are holding hands - in Asia, that's one thing. Not out here. Especially if you are a children's television presenter."

confront with good looks, shared genetics their day jobs as senior medical researchers at Add and Stree - that has made them a golden television combo. Over the past decade the two 37-year-olds have produced a number of documentaries together, including some fascinating Horizon programs where they have tested various diets on their identical genes.

But for a particular audience, they are known as simply Dr Chris and Dr Xand. They are now on to their fourth series of Operation Ouch!, a CBBC medical programme that has won two children's BAFTA and Britanna a lot of trust and love.

"It's hard to tell them apart," my eight-year-old tells me. "Dr Xand wears glasses." Xand's a fan.

Lachy, I don't need the silver-rimmed glasses as an aide-in-camp. They just seem, well, different. Plus, there's Xand's rather dashing beard.

Chris explains: "It's the stupidity of being. Everyone says, 'It'll be great having twins. But no producer has ever thought it through and said, 'We want them because they are the same, but we need them to look different.' So we developed the beard."

Dr Chris is born in 1974, you can see by half a per cent." The family name is Dutch, but their parents are Canadian - their father an industrial designer, their mother a doctor - who moved to London as students. The boys both got the same A-levels from the same private school King's College School, Wimbledon, both went to Oxford, both moved to the University of Liverpool. Xand is a neurosurgeon, Chris vice-captain, and both qualified as doctors and trained at the same hospital.

Xand says: "On my first week working in hospital, newly qualified as doctors, I was sleeping in the doctors' mess because I had just finished my shift. Chris was there up and said, 'What the hell are you doing here and you're meant to be on a ward today.' And I said, 'No, no, it's the other one. I'm not him. But once a day I had explained, he forever after had the image of his job as sorted asleep while he had a nap."

But to be not jealous it is Xand with this bit of medical news and not least.



Above: Chris (left) and Xand (top left) and right, helping migrants in the twins' new programme



for us. When Xand presents on Channel 4, he is referred to as Dr Chris van Tulleken. Our comments are intricately linked, and our features are too. When he screws up, everyone looks at me."

Their latest TV project could not be more different from Operation Ouch! In *Prostate Doctors: What's Behind the Crisis*, which airs tonight, the two brothers follow refugees, from their arrival on a beach on the Greek island of Lesbos all the way to the Calais jungle, to discover the ailments that afflict those caught up in the biggest wave of human migration since D-Day.

These are not two pitiful wretches dropping into mass camps. Between them they have worked in Berlin, helped those hit by floods in Burma and

Polistan and dealt with refugees in Central African Republic.

"The thing that struck us about the European migration crisis," says Xand, "is that it is people on the move and that is something as human as a doctor. We've never seen them before. I've seen loads of refugees and displaced people, but they are always at the end of their journey. They are in the camp. To see people on the journey is different. I've never cried in a hospital and you see lots of bad things in a hospital. But there was something about this journey." The programme does, indeed, feature him crying.

Chris adds: "What we shouldn't do is take the boats out of the water and then run the camps so tightly, so the hope it will deter people. It doesn't work."

He juggles his TV work with research, often cycling from London to his lab at the end of the day and working until 10pm before returning to his wife, Dana, a journalist. They're both married for 18 months.

"My number one thing is don't screw up being married," he says. "My number two thing is don't screw up the lab. My number three thing is don't screw up the TV work."

And how does one screw up your marriage? "My wife Cynthia, who has a very happy marriage, said, 'We have a very happy marriage. That's our thing. It keeps us sane. I don't always feel like it, and the doctor's always feel like it, but it's great,'" he laughs.

Xand, an Ebola expert, has a son, seven, "born a very happy accident". The son's mother was an old worker with whom he had a fling when they were both working in Burma. He lives in New York, working as a senior fellow at Fordham University.

In order to be just a short plane ride from his son, who lives Canada with his mother, "because having a son in Calgary, a full-time job in New York, and having family, friends and TV commitments in London, it's never time over. It's not ideal," he says.

He's considering moving back to London, but any British wannabe opening the last van Tulleken on the market should know he has a New York girlfriend. We finish it assuming that has the object of every female fantasy - and some male ones too.

"We lived in this body for 27 years, and I don't know what it would be like to be an actual human being. I am just getting older and fatter," he says.

In one either of them think I get ideas about their status, they have another series of Operation Ouch! in the pipeline. As Chris says: "If you are a reserved, middle-class Englishman, then being forced to look at your own body with your own eyes is a very interesting thing. Well, it's very therapeutic."

Prostate Doctors: Mike Alwood/Red Sun Image/ITV on BBC One