



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

'I've learned so much from my cats'

'Britain's Got Talent' finalist Jonathan Antoine says cats have changed his life.

When Jonathan Antoine spoke to Your Cat, Pandora, one of his three

Battersea rescue cats, was asleep on his lap the whole time! But that's nothing unusual for 19-year-old Jonathan, as the young singer is a self-confessed cat addict who says he can't remember a time when felines were not part of his life.

"Crystal Tips, my mum's cat who sadly passed away earlier this year, had always been with us," says Jonathan, who sprang to fame in 2012 when he and his singing partner, Charlotte Jaconelli, were runners-up in the final of 'Britain's Got Talent'. "She was a tabby with a cream tip to her tail which is where her name came from. She must have been getting on for 20 when we lost her. It was the first pet loss I had ever suffered and it took some time to come to terms with."

Fortunately for the family, there were two more cats to console them at this sad time. "When we moved to our present house 10 years ago, Crystal Tips disappeared," Jonathan says. "Of course we were

worried sick. We asked our old neighbours and looked everywhere, but eventually went to Battersea and adopted two more tabby sisters, Pandora and Polly. Not long after that, Crystal Tips came back to us!

"Polly got her name because she climbed up onto my dad's shoulder and perched there like a parrot. Pandora, who is the friendliest cat in the world, seemed to take a special liking to me. I have quite long, thick hair and Pandora sleeps in it — often kneading away at my head during the night. It's rather like having a head massage and very soothing!"

The latest addition to Jonathan's family is tabby Siamese-cross Willow, another Battersea rescue bought for Jonathan as a surprise gift by his record company.

"Everyone was so sympathetic when we lost

Crystal Tips. Willow is a little sweetheart with a very loud Siamese voice! We kept her in the front room on her own for a few days and then began introducing her to the others. Pandora is more territorial, but Willow and Polly have become great friends. Soon after they met Willow began washing

those less lucky."

Like all cat owners, Jonathan admires his cats' independent spirit but he says that people who think cats aren't as loving as dogs have clearly never owned one! "You can tell your cats love you and don't just come to you when they want feeding!" he says. "They seem to have a sixth sense when their owners are troubled or upset. I remember my mum was ill once and Crystal Tips never left her side."

Jonathan himself has had problems — he was teased at school because of his weight, and suffered from a lack of self-esteem. The cats, he says, helped him through the bad times. "There were days when I didn't want to face the outside world," he admits. "But there was always a cat to comfort me. They are a cure-all. I've learned so much from my cats; they know how to relax and they have life sorted out. My whole family are devoted to them — although my dad sometimes pretends he isn't! I've heard that a home without a cat is just a house and I really believe that!" ■

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Polly, who is twice her size and didn't mind at all."

When it comes to choosing a new cat or kitten, Jonathan says he would always go for a rescue animal.

"There are so many adorable ones needing homes and some have such sad stories attached to them," he says. "I just don't know how anyone could abandon a cat or a litter of kittens. Willow came from a litter of three who were just found somewhere. Battersea do such wonderful work rescuing and rehoming them. The ones that arrive there are the lucky ones, I don't like to think about what happens to



Jonathan's debut solo album 'Tenore' is released on October 13 on the Sony Classical label. He was talking to Jill Eckerley.