

Nasty Nick finds a nice little earner



FAME AND FORTUNE

Nick Bateman was kicked out of the Big Brother house, but he now has three properties of his own. By **Natalie Graham**

NICK BATEMAN, 35, became a household name in August 2000 when he appeared on Big Brother, the Channel 4 docu-soap. He became known as Nasty Nick after trying to influence fellow contestants' votes. When he was axed from the show, he found he had achieved celebrity status.

Nick grew up with his four sisters in Kent and went to Gordonstoun School in Elgin, Scotland. In 1991 he joined Lloyd's of London as a trainee broker. He stayed there for nine years before resigning when he won a place as a contestant on the first series of Big Brother.

Since then, he has been a guest presenter on various TV shows, and has written magazine columns on health and fitness. In 2001 he wrote a book called *How to be a Complete Bastard*.

He fronted a TV campaign for Cancer Research UK last June. After winning *Celebrity Weakest Link* in August, he donated the £10,000 prize money to the charity.

He has recently been on tour as the narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show*.

Nick, who is single, lives in southwest London.

How much money do you have in your wallet?

I've got £140, because today I will have to pay my gardener £20 and my cleaner £21. The rest is for newspapers, lunches and limousines.

I use a limousine service because they are a lot friendlier than taxis and the cars are more comfortable. It costs me £15 to go from my flat to the West End of London.

I sold my car because for most of the jobs I do, TV com-

panies or theatres provide transport for me.

Do you have any credit cards?

I use a NatWest Premier Gold debit card for almost everything. I cut up most of my other cards a couple of years ago because I wasn't using them. It wasn't worth paying about £80 a year for an Amex Gold charge card.

Are you a saver or spender?

When I was a Lloyd's broker I earned enough to be able to be a bit reckless. I would spend my disposable income on going away for long weekends and dining out at The Ivy and Nobu in London.

Every job I get now, I put 60% away for tax and Vat.

How much did you earn last year?

Since I left Big Brother in August 2000, my income has averaged six figures a year. For magazine work, TV projects and acting I now receive double what I would have been earning in the City.

I loved drama at school, but in private education the masters don't exactly encourage you to have a career on the stage, as the average salary of an actor is £5,000 a year. The school steered me towards the City.

During the 35 days I was on Big Brother I earned £30 a day, but it led to greater things. I took a huge gamble leaving my City job, but I had lost all enthusiasm for it and was prepared to do anything different to bring in some money.

I am now working on two TV projects — one on making politics interesting to the under 35s, the other a celebrity game show.



Infamy and fortune: Nick Bateman hasn't looked back since his ejection from the original Big Brother series for trying to influence other contestants' votes

Have you ever been really hard up?

No, because I've always had work. At 16 my first ever job was harvesting blackcurrants in Kent. I worked 10-hour shifts on a blackcurrant machine, and was paid £250 a week, which was like a king's ransom.

My father, who ran his own catering company, was Victorian in his attitude to money. I had to earn my pocket money by cleaning his cars or helping my mother around the house. She had a lot of work, as three of my sisters are triplets.

What is the most lucrative work you have done? Did you use the fee for something special?

Last year I appeared on a TV chat show for 10 minutes and

was paid £5,000. I spent £3,500 of that on a Rolex submariner watch I had always wanted.

Do you own a property?

I have three. I've lived in the London borough of Wandsworth for 12 years and own a two-bedroom Georgian garden flat that is worth £350,000.

In the first year after leaving Big Brother I found myself in steady demand for interviews, personal appearances and chat shows. By saving most of the fees I was able to pay off my £80,000 mortgage and buy a second property.

I now own two houses in Lincoln that I rent out. I bought the first one, a converted stable block with a quarter-acre of land, in 2001 for £75,000. In

2002 I bought a middle terrace house for £65,000, which I let out to students. I don't have a mortgage on either of these properties, which have gone up in value by 25%.

I settled for Lincoln because it is a university city with 12,000 students, and I think it is a beautiful place.

Do you invest in shares?

I bought my first shares when I was 20. I now have 23 different shareholdings. Recently my portfolio has fallen by 22%, but it has fared better than my Isas and my two Standard Life maximum investment plans.

What about Peps and Isas?

I have a cash Isa with Abbey National and a Standard Life

equity Isa with a heavy bias towards southeast Asia.

Do you have a pension, or other retirement plan?

When I was 20 years old I was in a supermarket queue with two elderly people. I was heartbroken to see that they couldn't afford the food in their basket, so I paid the difference.

The very next day I started a pension with Scottish Widows, paying in £40 a month, which I stopped after Big Brother.

Do you believe pensions are a good thing?

I think pensions may not be an ideal vehicle for everyone. I am putting the rental income I get from the students into another pension plan, again with Scot-

tish Widows, but as a single premium each year.

The two properties in Lincoln are also increasing my capital. If the stock market crashes when I retire, at least I should have equity in the houses.

What has been your worst investment?

My Eurodisney shares doubled in value after their flotation to more than £14. I should have sold them but I was greedy. Now they are worth about 34p. I have framed the certificate and I have it in my office as a reminder not to be complacent about shares.

Another bad investment was the Aberdeen Technology fund, which I paid into until last year. I started it with £2,000 in 1998

and then put in £100 a month. Today it's worth about £900.

And your best?

Employing a voice coach and a personal fitness trainer to help me in my acting.

Do you manage your own financial affairs?

I have a very good accountant called Vaughan, who looks after my tax and Vat.

I think financial advisers are hugely overrated. Providing you don't mind doing some research, you can use the internet to locate products and be your own adviser.

What aspect of our taxation system would you change?

There are too many stealth taxes in this country, like stamp duty, council tax, road tax and Vat. I would be happier paying these taxes if I saw some benefits, like improved transport facilities.

I think the 40% top rate of tax is reasonable, but perhaps there should be a 50% supertax for really high earners.

What is your financial priority?

To get to the stage where I would not have to work if I did not want to — although I am actually a workaholic.

Do you have a money weakness?

I eat out far too much and I do love clothes, especially Versace jeans, which cost anything from £80 to £150.

You may say it's a money weakness employing a cleaner, gardener, voice coach and fitness trainer, but these people are improving the quality of my life.

What is the most extravagant thing you have ever bought?

It would be a Caterham, a two-seater, hand-built sports car, which cost £19,000 two years ago. Last year I only used it five times but I was paying £2,000 to garage it — a complete waste of money. So I sold it for £17,000.

What is the most important lesson you have learnt about money?

The most important thing is to learn respect for it. Being self-employed I am always fearful that my next job will be my last. I am much more disciplined with money than I was as an employee.