

fizz, POP, bang!

Pop star, television presenter and devoted mother, Cheryl Baker's star continues to shine as she sings her way around the country with her bubbly band, The Fizz. Tim Saunders caught up with her for a natter

She's 65 on March 8 yet the next 12 months will see pop star Cheryl Baker release a new album as well as perform live in Sussex in June and November.

The East Ender was catapulted into the limelight at the age of 27 after she joined Bucks Fizz, who won the 1981 Eurovision Song Contest with *Making Your Mind Up*. The group went on to produce 20 singles. Between 1981 and 1988 they were regularly in the UK top 100 and enjoyed three number one hits with *Making Your Mind Up*, *The Land of Make Believe* and *My Camera Never Lies*. During their stint at the top they sold millions of records worldwide.

"Now The Fizz and I are working on our next album," says bubbly Cheryl, who was born in

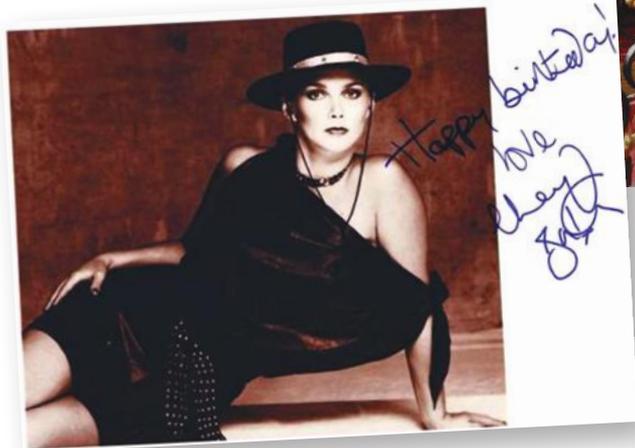
Bethnal Green in 1954. She adds: "I'll be doing a few more cruises this year where I do a one woman show and The Fizz will be performing at some 80s weekends in Sussex too. If you love 80s music they are so much fun, the last one was with Jason Donovan, Toyah and UB40. It's great to watch the audience's reaction when the skirt comes off in *Making Your Mind Up!*"

Family have always been important to Cheryl. Her upbringing was in complete contrast to the glitz, glamour and wealth that her celebrity status was to deliver. "We lived in a council flat in the East End and did the same things all the time," reveals Cheryl, an upbringing which has no doubt contributed to her being so down to earth today. "It was funny because limos would turn up and there were gold disks on the walls." A world away from the metros, escorts and cavaliers lining the streets at the time.

"I eventually left home at 29," says >>>



Cheryl. “My parents had a very Victorian attitude; my mum did not work, she brought up five children, and my dad was a shoemaker. We went to the Isle of Sheppey for two weeks every year for the family holiday but mainly our lives revolved around the East End, it was very insular. My first job was three or four stops from home and I wasn’t allowed to wear makeup. In 1975 when I joined the band Co-Co Dad still told me I wasn’t allowed



“In 1975 when I joined Co-Co Dad still told me I wasn’t allowed to wear makeup!”

to wear makeup! He was a man who commanded respect but we never fell out. Blackpool was where I joined my first band and it was like Outer Mongolia to my parents, but I always came home.”

Cheryl goes on to reflect on the changes in her fortune as her star began to rise: “When I was growing up I wasn’t allowed out after 10pm, then my life changed and my parents completely accepted it,” she says. Cheryl remembers that when she was growing up everything in their flat was second-hand, even the carpets and clothes, but they always had new shoes! She was then delighted when she could buy her parents a four-bed house when she had made enough money with her band. “Mum always kept a room for Rita (Rita Stroud is my real name),” smiles Cheryl.

Cheryl’s ambition was always to be a pop star. “All I ever wanted to be was a singer. My friends wanted to be nurses and teachers.” Having left school at 16 Cheryl took a Pitman secretarial course with shorthand and worked for



five years until she was 21, then a stroke of luck befell her: “I always looked in the situation vacant column in NME and saw that a singer was required for a harmony band. I applied and joined Co-Co. I was with them for five years. Bucks Fizz was assembled by Nichola Martin who put together Co-Co. Bucks Fizz was a two-boy, two-girl harmony group and that’s what I do, harmony. As luck would have it I left Co-Co and joined Bucks Fizz. Like many things in my life it was down to timing and luck.”

Cheryl left Bucks Fizz on December 11th 1993 to have twin girls, for which she underwent IVF. “Kyla is now a singer songwriter,” beams her proud mother. “I’m incredibly proud of her, she is determined to forge her own way in the music world. Her professional name is Laky, an anagram of Kyla, simply because there are a lot of singers called Kyla out there. I give encouragement, but Kyla is responsible for her own career.”

“Family is the reason why I stopped doing pantomime,” admits Cheryl, who starred in *Aladdin* and *Cinderella* on three occasions as well as *Babes in the Wood*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Dick Whittington* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. She also starred as *Cinderella* in a 1986 Christmas Day TV production. “You don’t want to be entertaining other people’s children if you can’t spend time with your own,” Cheryl reflects.

For Cheryl it was important and necessary that she was able to juggle her family commitments alongside work. “As Bucks Fizz had had its heyday that income had gone so I had to do something else. I did TV presenting from 1994 for about 10 years – it was family friendly. TV was like a proper job. Sometimes I would take the children with me or I would





as an office administrator. “I have a mortgage, council tax and huge electricity bills so I phoned a friend who owns a business and he employed me,” she recalls. However, as luck would have it her fortunes were to change again when she was invited to audition for *Dancing on Ice* in 2017, and she has not looked back since.

Being a savvy business woman

after years in the industry, Cheryl has invested in a pension and property. “My first house cost £28,000 and I kept moving up the ladder to the one I’ve got now,” says Cheryl of her beautiful family home. From humble beginnings to a star which continues to shine, this hard-working devoted mother is a classic story of girl done good. ●

To see *The Fizz* live visit www.thefizzofficial.com

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have a nanny. I would leave at 4.30am, arrive at the studio and finish the show at 12 to be back home for 1pm having done my day’s work. Steve had bathed the children and fed them and we were able to spend quality time together as a family.”

Cheryl presented 11 series of *Record Breakers* on the BBC and a host of other shows including *Really Useful Show*, *Children in Need*, *Telethon Live* and *Thank You for the Music Eurovision Special*. She’s also been a guest presenter on BBC Radio 2.

In 2016 Cheryl, who now lives with her husband Steve and their family in a six-bedroom country manor with a pear orchard, was forced to work



