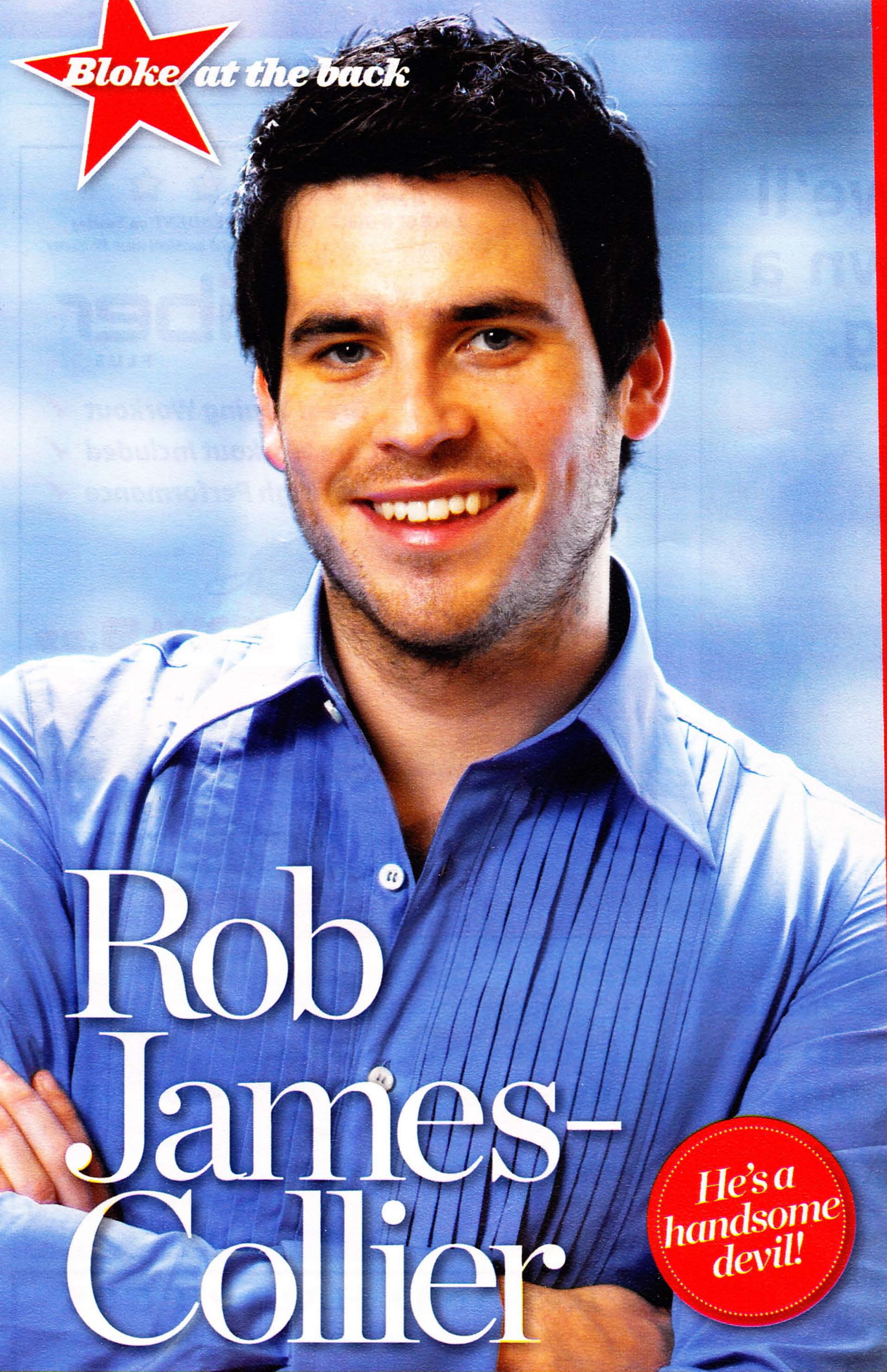


Bloke at the back



Rob James-Collier

He's a handsome devil!

Lovable rogue

With those piercing blue eyes and drop-dead gorgeous looks, Rob first made us swoon as *Corrie's* bad boy Liam Connor, a role that saw him voted Soap's Sexiest Man three times. Since then, hunky Rob has acted up a storm as devious *Downton* butler Thomas Barrow. Rob, 37, lives in Manchester with his girlfriend Lauren and their three-year-old son, Milo.

I did a short film before this series of *Downton* which involved having a skinhead. *Downton* said I could do it and sorted out a wig in the series. All the girls have wigs, so it was nice to see how the other half live. I put a corset on as well!

Thomas is gay in Edwardian times, which is a horrendous secret to keep. But he's a survivor. He's misunderstood. It's great being evil and sneering.

My family is a secure little unit. They keep me nice and grounded. I'm a dad and I'm in a very happy relationship with a lovely girlfriend. She's a great support.

I'm a massive Beatles fan. I went to the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Paul McCartney was completely off-key, but who cares?

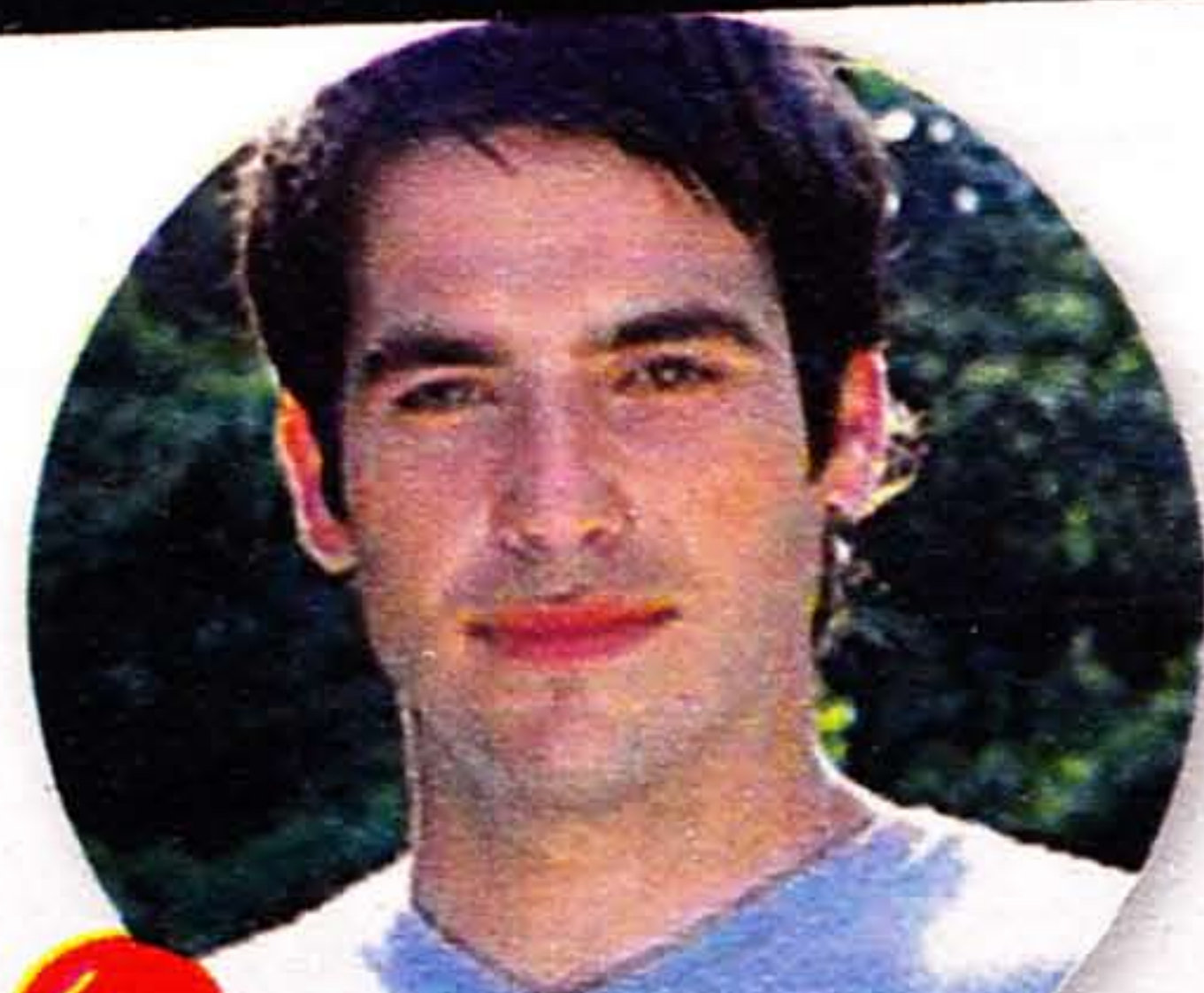
My dad was a computer technician and I'm a real working-class lad. So when at 25 I said, 'I'm going to be an actor', my mum was supportive, but my dad gave me a speech about getting a real job in that deep, dad voice.

Beverly Hills is too intimidating. Everyone's got lovely teeth so you don't want to smile. Everyone's ripped, so you start working out at four in the morning - my buns hurt! ☺

*** Watch Rob in the *Downton Abbey* Christmas Special on 25 December**

From Weatherfield bad boy to Downton's devious butler, gorgeous Rob sends our hearts racing...

THE CASTING COUCH From the *Corrie* cobbles to the red carpet...



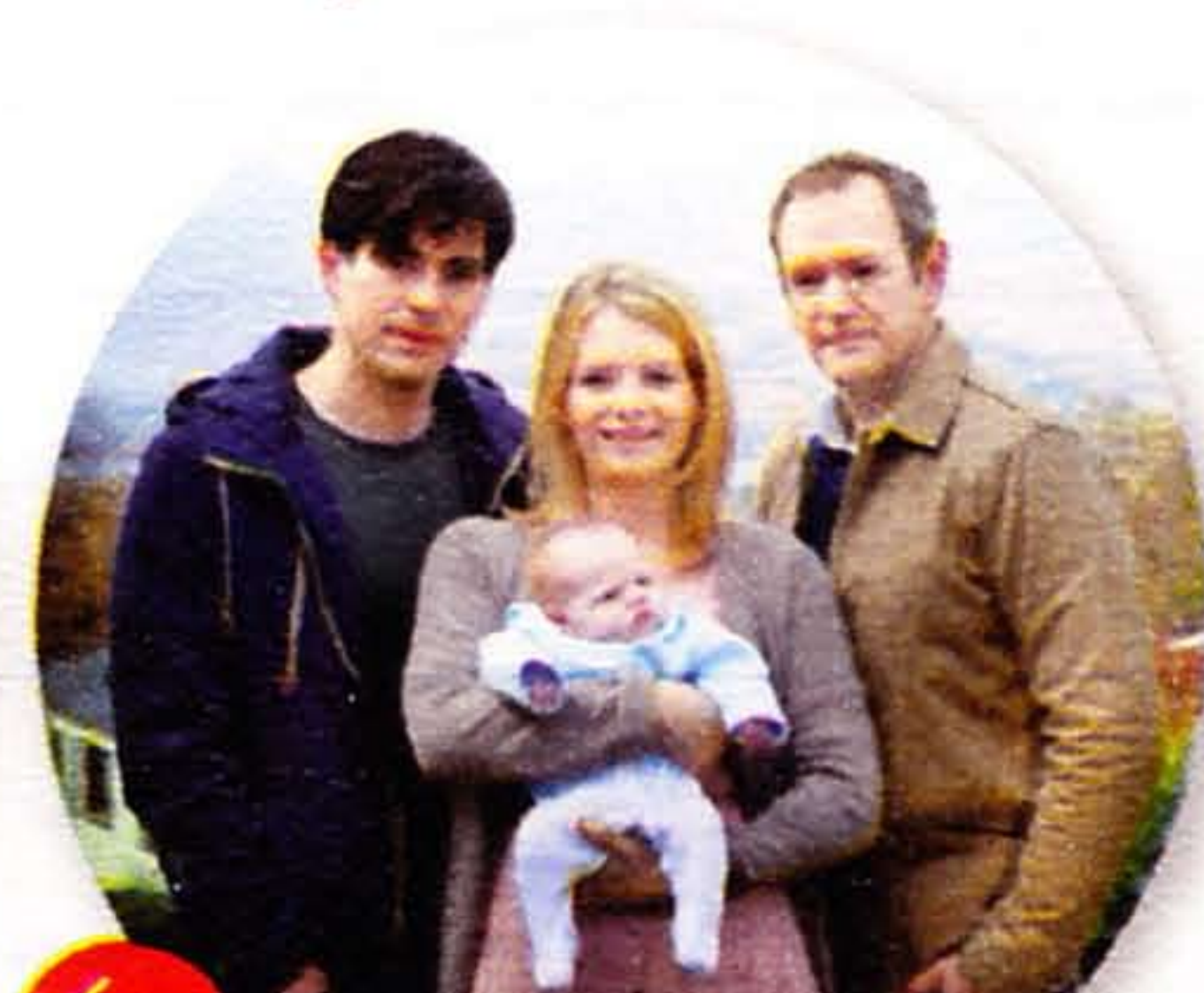
'04 **DOWN TO EARTH** 'It was a massive learning curve. I had no experience and it showed.'



'06 **CORONATION STREET** 'No one can envisage the impact it has on you. It's a phenomenon.'



'10 **DOWNTON ABBEY** 'It's enabled me to pay my mortgage. Acting is hard in a recession.'



'12 **LOVE LIFE** 'As an actor you want to get a variety of roles, so playing a nice guy was perfect.'

*Say what?
I've got the same red lips and pale skin as Freddie Mercury!*