


SPECIAL
MOMENTS

..... OF

2008

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Throughout 2008, people from all walks of life have had their lives changed for the better through their association with one of our shows, events or companies. Offering opportunities, making people happy – here we celebrate some of those successes.

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Hallelujah – We have a double winner! ✨

At first, **Alexandra Burke** failed. Back in 2005, she did her first audition, and judge Louis Walsh decided not to put her forward for the final stages. Then Alexandra said: “If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again”. And so she did. In the second run she became the crowned winner of *The X Factor* in 2008, singing a highly emotional *Hallelujah*. The show made her also a winner in private life: after 14 years not seeing him, Alexandra accepted her father David back into her life: “He was very supportive when I was on the show,” she says, “and it helped bring us close again.” ✨



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Lifting the title – and a lot more besides

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After just two years on the strongman circuit, Albanian-born **Jimmy Marku** has surprised many of his rivals by winning Five's *Britain's Strongest Man*. Already seen as an ambassador for the sport – and one of the most competitive athletes around – Jimmy came to London 12 years ago. “I like to beat everyone – that’s my game,” he laughs. “And I’m proud to be giving something back to my adopted homeland.”



Christian Rach rescues Blue Duck from extinction

Heartbroken **Kerstin** and **Hubert Eschweiler** were on the verge of closing their beloved restaurant *Blaue Ente* (Blue Duck) in Berlin – a dream in which Kerstin had invested her inheritance. But thanks to accepting the professional advice of *Rach, der Restauranttester*, many more people are now aware of Hubert's undeniable skills as a chef, and the newly famous Blue Duck is no longer an endangered species.



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Modest Sabina gets green light to modelling career ★

Civil traffic engineering student **Sabina Behlic** always dreamt of a career in modelling, but never thought she'd stand a chance in the first season of RTL Televizija's hugely popular series, *Croatia's Next Top Model*. But her dream came true. "I love every single thing about it," she says. "As well as being recognised as a model, I'm really enjoying travelling and meeting so many interesting people!"



Highlighting a plight

In 2004, **Victorine Dikobo**, a nanny from Cameroon, was granted French residency after meeting a partner and having a baby. The child died tragically at three months, causing the authorities to send a letter revoking her visa. RTL Radio campaigned vigorously on Victorine's behalf, and on hearing of her plight, the French Minister for Immigration looked further into her case and reinstated her visa. Victorine can now call France home.





Quick step to a new dancing career ★

Born in Belarus, 19-year-old **Ivan** was voted the overall winner of RTL 5's *So You Think You Can Dance* 2008 finals. He began dancing at seven years old, and thanks to RTL Nederland – and his natural talent – he can now focus on becoming fully professional. As well as €20,000, Ivan has a role in the musical *Footloose* in Amsterdam and a place on a prestigious international dance course.



Father and son stay on the rails through Latin America ★

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Gérard and his son **Cédric**, from Nice, were the winning pair aboard M6's reality game show *Pékin express: la route des Incas* in 2008. The show demonstrates how various couples deal with the extreme challenges faced during a long-distance race across unfamiliar countries. As well as the language barrier, couples have to cope with a budget of just €1 a day. Covering 8,000 kilometres across Brazil, Bolivia and Peru by train, hitchhiking and on foot, Gérard and Cédric's father-son bonding shone through – despite a few heated rows and trailing way behind their closest rivals at the start of the final day.



Michael's moving story puts him streets ahead

An accident left truck driver **Michael Hirte** in a coma for two months, partially blind and out of work. Not sure what else to do, in 2004 he took his harmonica and started busking in Potsdam. Local fans encouraged him to audition for *Das Supertalent*. Not only did Michael make the show, but just before Christmas he won the final with a heart-rending performance of *Ave Maria* which had judge Dieter Bohlen – and most of the audience – close to tears. Michael's rags to riches story now continues with a successful album, tour and autobiography.