

Spotted



British actor Jude Law at the Blue Marlin Ibiza beach club in Ghantoot and having dinner

at Zuma. US singer and REM frontman Michael Stipe with friends at a Dubaiian's private party. UK model Jodie Kidd at The Act, the new theatre club opening this week at the Shangri-La hotel.

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Hot seat Alastair Campbell

Following his recent Dubai visit, *Rob Garratt* cornered the former UK Prime Minister's spin doctor to talk addiction, depression and Iraq



Hi Alastair, what are you doing in Dubai?

I'm speaking at a conference about alcoholism organised by a company that has done some interesting research. **Are you there to speak from your own personal experience or your political experience?** Both to be honest: I'm an ambassador for [UK mental health charity] Time for Change. Britain and other economies have a problem with alcoholism. I'm worried that not enough people in politics speak up about it. It's very difficult to go out and tell people 'don't enjoy yourself', but when you consider the impact it's having on health – most people drink responsibly, but the number of people that are dependant is pretty staggering. **What do you make of Dubai?** It's only my second time here. In a world completely defined by the pace of change, you

can't help but see that change happening in front of your eyes.

Tell us about your latest book, *The Happy Depressive?*

It's basically an account of the story of my depression and how I dealt with it, and some of the politics involved. Most studies will show you the correlation between wealth and happiness is not exact at all.

'You can't help but see the change happening here'

It seems quite brave to open up about your depression.

I've never hidden it. I think that's the problem – people don't think it's brave if you have a broken leg and you go outside on crutches. There's a big taboo about mental health.

You published the third volume of your diaries, *Power and Responsibility*, detailing your time inside Tony Blair's Labour government in the UK's 10 Downing Street. Don't you fear such an intimate account damages the reputation of politics?

No. There's lots of stuff where you might think 'did he really do that?', but the overall picture is positive for politics. Most people see how incredibly hard we worked and how much we put into it.

Doesn't that make you miss politics then?

There's no point really thinking about that. I was there between 1994 and 2003 – ten years is a long time. I'm still involved in the Labour Party and always will be. Some situations are so full on, by the time I left I'd had enough. And when the personal and political mix it gets difficult.

Why did you quit? The backlash over the UK's invasion of Iraq?

To be frank, I was getting tired. It was seven days a week, day and night, no holidays, you can't do that forever.

So who's going to win the next UK election?

Anything can happen. Politics is very volatile. Labour can definitely win, but you should never ever assume.

Is Ed Miliband a future Prime Minister?

I didn't vote for him, I voted for his brother, and he knows that. But he's held it together.

Where would you be if you hadn't been part of a winning political party?

A professional footballer. I was only 40 in 1997, I think I could have done it. *Power and Responsibility is out now.*

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