

GIVE IT LIKE GELDOF

*Festive philanthropy has
never been so fashionable,
says Stephen Armstrong*

Christmas: a time for giving. Once again Bob Geldof is raising huge sums for charity as he storms the charts for a fourth time with 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' – and he's not the only one.

In London we've just seen Eva Longoria lure Victoria Beckham, Ricky Martin and Nicole Scherzinger to the Four Seasons hotel on Park Lane for her Global Gift Gala, while the models Arizona Muse and Edie Campbell are about to bid for items donated by Chloé, Givenchy and Alexander McQueen at a fashion show in The Vinyl Factory space on Marshall Street for conflict charity Women for Women International. Next Monday is World AIDS Day and later in the week Elton John and Billie Jean King will host tennis matches at the Royal Albert Hall to raise money for the Elton John AIDS Foundation, with John McEnroe and Tim Henman among the players. Tuesday 2 December is GivingTuesday (a global event designed around the tax-relief opportunities at the end of the US financial year) and to mark the occasion, The Apprentice's Nick Hewer will host a City-focused fundraising ball for Ebola

orphans at the Honorable Artillery Company. Then there's Naomi Campbell's anti-Ebola pop-up store in Westfield. Spoiler alert: you could walk away with Kate Moss' hand-me-downs.

Celebrities and the mega-rich have long immersed themselves in charitable causes, but the scale of the work involved in raising the cash is changing. Charity fundraising balls are getting bigger for a start. Phones 4u billionaire philanthropist John Caudwell regularly books Elton John and Robbie Williams for his early summer Butterfly Ball, in aid of disabled children in the UK; billionaire property moguls the Reuben brothers (who own great swathes of Mayfair) threw an Adventure In Wonderland Ball in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital attended by Princess Beatrice; while entrepreneur hedge funder David Johnstone and Stanley Fink (hedge-fund king and former Tory party treasurer) continue the rolling fiesta that is The Global Party, raising funds with parties in 180 cities every September.



Helping hands: Eva Longoria, Ricky Martin and Victoria Beckham at the Global Gift Gala



Stars of sound: Chris Martin, Olly Murs, Bono and Bob Geldof at Band Aid 30

It has always been thus at this time of year. 'There has always been a charitable ball season in London — back in Edwardian times it would have been a little more elitist,' argues social critic Peter York. 'You wouldn't have had much new money present. About 20 years ago you found the scene taken over by rich Holland Park Americans who made the whole thing much more professional. And, of course, Elton John. In the past ten years, it's been dominated by Russian money. I suspect the Malaysians are next. It's reflecting the changing rate of madness in London society — like going up in a lift in an endless Candy & Candy building.'

'The problem is, loathsome as they are, charity fundraiser dinners make the most money,' explains heiress and activist Jemima Khan, who organises, among other events, UNICEF's annual Halloween Ball at One Mayfair, which this year, helped by attendees Hugh Grant, Guy Ritchie and Tinie Tempah, raised £750,000. 'Every year I consider asking people to pay not to attend another dreary charity dinner,' continues Khan. It's not just about the cash, however. 'The main reason for high-profile charity events is because complex issues rarely get reported in the celebrity-obsessed British press — unless they have a celebrity attached,' explains Jenny Rose, charity PR consultant, who co-ordinated the Women for Women catwalk show and auction.

Which makes the economics of these star-studded events a complex business. The parties make money but it all takes time and effort and they don't raise as much as you'd think. Eva Longoria's Global Gift Gala, for instance, threw pretty much everything into the ring. Victoria Beckham won the Global Gift Philanthropreneur award, Ricky Martin chaired the evening and sang, Nicole Scherzinger and Alexandra Burke showed up, Lord Archer conducted a charity auction, and luxury watch brand Frederique Constant, high-end bag maker Helmer and Delta Air Lines offered sponsorship, while Nicolas Feuillatte provided the champagne. The evening raised around £300,000, which is a tidy sum by anyone's account but only just enough to buy a two-bed flat on the Rennie Estate in Rotherhithe. And that £300,000 has to be spread between the Eva Longoria Foundation, the Ricky Martin Foundation and the Global Gift Foundation. But while these events may not come close to solving the world's problems, they certainly help to raise awareness: 'It's important for businesses to have social responsibility,' Longoria argues. 'Our corporate sponsors use their global platforms to help spread awareness and raise funds.'

It's the same with Band Aid. 'Unless a rock star has a real god complex, they're going to know that Band Aid isn't going to cure Ebola all by itself,' says Crispin Parry, CEO of the music industry development fund British Underground. 'What it can do is reach an Ed Sheeran fan who hasn't really paid attention to the story but who might now think about it. Bob Geldof says the UN phoned him to organise this and I think that's why.' The names attached are important, Rose explains, because 'unless you're a major charity with a huge marketing budget, it's very hard to talk to Brits about what you're doing without celebrity involvement, especially if there's any stigma attached to the issue.' She cites mothers2mothers, an AIDS charity that trains and provides HIV-positive women mentors to help HIV-positive pregnant women keep their babies virus-free. Victoria Beckham recently

auctioned 600 items from her wardrobe for the charity, gaining it priceless global coverage.

Over at the Financial Times they've been thinking outside the charity box. Everything featured in the paper's luxury magazine *How To Spend It* this weekend will be auctioned online at Christie's over the next 13 days in aid of Save the Children. 'We were going to do an issue dedicated to the new philanthropy for our 20th birthday, covering the rise of luxury brands' enthusiasm for corporate social responsibility over the past three or four years,' the magazine's editor Gillian de Bono explains. 'Then we thought we should just sell everything we feature. We have 83 lots with a net worth of £531,846, all of which – and more, we hope – will go to Save the Children.'



Fun for a cause: Jemima Khan at UNICEF's Halloween Ball in October

This is just one example of alternative fundraising efforts. 'I've been trying to think of different ways to fundraise lately,' Khan tells me, perhaps as a result of increasing press distrust about celebrity fundraisers. 'The problem with cynical [newspaper] columnists is that one negative article can genuinely affect fund-raising efforts,' she explains. 'I'm not sure whether columnists realise the power they have in that respect.' Khan has first-hand experience of just such a backlash. The daily running of Zaatari (the Syrian refugee camp in Jordan that UNICEF is raising money for this Christmas) costs more than £300,000; Khan figured the

quickest way to raise money and focus attention on the situation was through a social media campaign – to try to replicate the success of the Ice Bucket Challenge. Last month she launched #WakeUpCall, which involves posting a selfie taken first thing, preferably against your wishes, to Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, along with a donation to the campaign. Stephen Fry, Nigella Lawson and Christy Turlington have already posted pictures, but there's been a certain amount of flak from the press, with some journalists expressing the opinion that these selfie-centric campaigns are more about people making themselves look good than caring about the cause.

Still, for less well-connected Londoners, it's striking a chord – younger people are not only donating but volunteering more than ever. 'There's been such a focus and rush on consuming,' argues *Tank* magazine's fashion editor and street-style favourite Caroline Issa, 'getting actively involved in charity work is a reaction to that.' Issa will be working in a Crisis at Christmas kitchen over the festive season, cooking and cleaning until late in the evening on Christmas Day.

And even within the greedy walls of the City, young professionals are trying to put their skills to good use. Stephanie Brobbey, 28, is a private-client solicitor at Goodman Derrick. In 2012 she joined the City Funding Network, a fledgling organisation designed to foster philanthropy. It hosts *Dragons' Den*-style pledging sessions at which startup charities pitch to a room full of younger City types, then wait for the pledges to mount up. Over the past two years, the network has raised close to £100,000 for Footsteps UK, Cecily's Fund and Tools for Self Reliance (its Christmas fundraiser is at the Southbank Centre on 2 December). But Brobbey has taken things further, also becoming a trustee of Battersea's FAST Project, a youth charity in South London. 'My philosophy of philanthropy is that it's a way

of giving your time or money to effect change or empower people,' she explains. 'People think it's all about Bill Gates-style foundations but that's not true for me.'



Still, the big foundations and celebrity-backed campaigns certainly have their place. Bob Geldof reports that this year's Band Aid raised £1m in the first few minutes of its release, a huge sum, but, compared to the UK government's £11m, the USA's \$200m and the Bill Gates Foundation \$50m donations, it's a tiny drop in the \$1bn pool the UN has asked for. Tallying the biggest government donors alongside the Charitable Aid Foundations' World Giving Index of most generous nations, which measures how many citizens donate to charity, the UK ranks seventh, while the USA comes joint first with Myanmar (the countries whose governments give the most roughly tally with the citizens who give the most). In other words, one big reason charities need you to care is to make sure your government cares. As Khan explains: 'The #WakeUpCall selfie campaign led to the UK government pledging to double donations to Syria for the next three months, which they announced at the UNICEF dinner I organised, which in turn led to a well-known musician – I can't say who yet – offering to do a song for Syria for us.'

But why do we like to do our giving at Christmas? Partly because international charities focus their appeals to coincide with the end of the US tax

year, when wealthy Americans donate big sums on their accountants' advice. But in the UK, it's a little different.

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According to figures from the Charities Aid Foundation, British donations peak three times across the year: there are spikes in March, at the end of the tax year, when Comic Relief (which raised a record-breaking £52m this year) hits our television screens (cynics might suggest the timing appeals to rich people looking for tax breaks); in late June and early July during Ramadan, when Muslims donate heavily, giving some £50m this year to charities including Muslim Aid, a Christian Aid-style global NGO; and in late November when charities launch their Christmas appeals, the BBC runs Children in Need and half the men in the country grow moustaches for Movember. According to JustGiving, however, 21 December is its 'most charitable day of the year'. So whether you're persuaded by singing celebrities, tax breaks or old-fashioned guilt this Christmas, pick a cause and dig deep.