



When the Spice Girls reunited to launch their musical *Viva Forever!* last week, **HELLO!** had a front row seat. And Victoria Beckham, Geri Halliwell, Emma Bunton, Melanie Brown and Melanie Chisholm didn't disappoint as they gathered at London's St Pancras Hotel – where they had filmed the video for their first hit, *Wannabe* – to excitedly announce they plan to “introduce a whole new generation to Girl Power”.

“My little boy doesn't know who we are, so I can't wait for him to see this,” revealed Emma, 36, mum of four-year-old Beau and second son Tate, 13 months. She couldn't stop smiling as she stood alongside her bandmates for the first time in four years to unveil the details of the new West End musical.

The show, which opens in November, is written by Jennifer Saunders and created by Judy Craymer, the woman behind hit musical *Mamma Mia!*, and uses the Spice-y songs to tell the story of Viva, a “beautiful, talented girl” who enters an *X Factor*-style reality show with some of her best friends.

The launch came 16 years to the day since the release of the Girls' debut single, *Wannabe*.

“Wow, 16 years ago... I couldn't have imagined when we were writing the lyric ‘zigzag-ah’ that it would end up in a West End show,” laughed Geri, 39. “It's absolutely amazing.”

One thing that's changed in those 16 years is the band's dress sense – but fans will have a chance to own some of the girls' most famous stage costumes, with reports they will be auctioned for charity to coincide with the musical's opening.

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

Speaking exclusively to **HELLO!** at the launch, Mel C revealed that the *Viva Forever!* audience are in for a treat. “Recently, Geri, Emma and myself went along to watch some workshops and we were just blown away. The songs work so well and there was lots of laughter, but also some quite uncontrollable sobbing at one point – mainly from me, for some reason! It was very embarrassing.”

Meanwhile Jennifer claimed she had listened to Spice Girls songs for nine months nonstop while writing the script.

“I don't really have a favourite,” she told us. “I love them all. I almost love them more now than first time around.”

Mel B, 37, joked that the cast probably sang “better than us”. ▶

AS THE FAMOUS FIVE REUNITE THE SPICE GIRLS GO FROM GIRL POWER TO SUPER MUMS

‘It's like being with family. We've all got children now and that has united us’ Geri



Spice world: Melanie Brown, Melanie Chisholm, Geri Halliwell, Emma Bunton and Victoria Beckham relive the video for their debut single, *Wannabe*, on the same staircase in the St Pancras Hotel where it was filmed (inset, left). They were joined by *Viva Forever!* creators Judy Craymer and Jennifer Saunders (together, right)



While mum of four Victoria flies home to Los Angeles (left) to tuck baby daughter Harper up in bed, Mel B and husband Stephen Belafonte (above) head for dinner at Nobu and Geri (above right) and Emma (below, with fiancé Jade Jones) hit celebrity hotspot The Groucho Club. While their reunion was brief, Geri says the band members have grown closer over the years: “We've all got children now and I think that has united us”



So which of their hits being brought to life on stage resonates most with the girls?

“I think for us, seeing *Mama* will be really exciting,” said mum of four Victoria. “We've all got children and being mums is all of our priorities so I'd definitely say *Mama*. I think that will touch us all.” Added Emma: “The relationship between a mother and a daughter is a big part of the show.”

Indeed, dismissing rumours of bad feeling within the band, Geri says that motherhood has brought the group closer: “It's like being with family – only we're allowed to criticise each other, no one else is. We've all got children now and I think that has united us.”

GIRL BOND

Victoria was certainly prioritising her role as a mum. Straight after the launch she flew back to Los Angeles to be home in time to tuck her daughter Harper, who turns one next week, into bed.

“I'd love to stay and hang out with the girls but I'm desperate to see her before she goes to bed. I have to race home for bedtime,” said the fashionista. The other Spices weren't far from her thoughts, however. As she dashed to the airport, the 38-year-old tweeted: “On my way home!! Thank you @MelanieCmusic @OfficialMelB @EmmaBunton @GeriHalliwell for an amazing day!! X vb.”

Mel C, 38, also had to dash – but for Emma, Geri and Mel B, the night was still young, the spicy trio heading into central London.

REPORT: ALEXANDRA WILBY

Viva Forever! opens at the Piccadilly Theatre on 27 November. For tickets, visit vivaforeverthemusical.com.