



THE MAID



THE MASSEUR



THE BROTHER



THE PODCASTER

THIS MAN IS WORTH \$20MILLION. HE'S 'MISSING'. WE'RE OBSESSED

#50

The story of the fitness guru whose disappearance spawned a hit podcast

Whether you've been listening intently these past six weeks, or have no idea

who Richard Simmons even is, you cannot deny the subject matter is totally fascinating.

Missing Richard Simmons

is the six-part twisty-turny podcast that has dominated headlines and conversations since February, spending four solid weeks at No 1 on iTunes. During the six episodes, filmmaker and host of the show, Dan Taberski, investigated the sort-of disappearance of the

flamboyant millionaire fitness guru who hasn't been seen in public for well over 1,000 days. And much like *Serial* did back in 2014, its controversial subject matter and baffling theories soon spilled over into real life, even forcing police officers to turn up on Richard's doorstep to disprove suggestions of a kidnapping plot.

The story begins on 15 February 2014, when the fitness star

didn't turn up to teach his regular exercise class at Slimmons gym in Beverly Hills – the one he'd run for 40 years, creating a cult following. It's hard to overstate how famous Richard was in the US at that point. He'd changed the lives of literally thousands of ordinary people with his diet and fitness programmes, often personally ringing fans to help inspire their weight loss. Many of them became close friends who saw him as a god-like figure. Richard – who wept every week during his fitness classes – even hosted regular cruises for his most devoted followers. But after decades of courting attention and appearing as a regular guest on TV shows, 68-year-old Richard suddenly retreated from, well, pretty much his entire life. He cancelled everything, stopped speaking to friends and refused to respond to emails, calls, and even people

knocking on his door.

When questions started circulating last year, Richard called into a US TV show to say, "No one should be worried about me." But Dan, a friend of Richard's, felt there was more to it. Over the past few weeks he has trawled the life of the self-confessed "recluse" for clues. The theories presented during the podcast have ranged from the ludicrous – Richard's masseur, Mauro Oliveira, accused

