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"I'm making no apologies!"

George Michael's uncompromising life remembered by Marc Andrews, Steve Pafford and Paul Mac

8 SEXY PAGES OF BRIEFS FOR BLOKES

WHY *MOONLIGHT* IS THE MUST-SEE FILM OF 2017

THE ALL-BOY **BOLLYWOOD** CINDERELLA MUSICAL!

#205



Nacho Figueras: is he the second sexiest man in the world?

ON THE COVER:
JASON WHIDBY
BY ABEL CRUZ.

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A man with a beard, shirtless, is shown from the side, wearing boxing gloves and hitting a large, dark, cylindrical heavy bag. The scene is lit with blue light, and a string of small lights is visible in the background.

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Wham! Bam! Thank you, man!

LET'S CELEBRATE THE GEORGE MICHAEL YEARS!

CHRISTMAS DAY – last Christmas – came the news that George Michael had died. At first I thought it was a tasteless hoax; one of George's biggest hits with Wham! was about Christmas.

Sadly, it was true. George Michael's life was tragically encapsulated in the platitude "gone too soon" in headlines around the world. He was just 53. There followed the usual outpouring of grief, the naming of George as an icon, and the rather irrational finger-pointing at 2016 itself as some evil undoer of beloved pop stars.

I preferred George's music with Wham! over his solo work. *Young Guns (Go For It!)* and *Wham Rap!* – it's hard not to have fun with songs with exclamation marks in the titles! With their suntans, speedos and obvious close bond, George and Andrew Ridgeley were *gayer* than Christmas! (Even though Andrew was straight.) They were never going to hook-up with their frumpy back-up singers, Pepsi and Shirely – they were too busy putting shuttlecocks down their shorts and giving each other piggybacks around the beach.

I liked George a lot. Not so much his grown-up music, but how he lived his life as an unashamed gay man after his spectacular outing. It was 1998, he was in a public toilet in a park in Beverly

Hills. He cruised a hot Latino – who turned out to be an undercover cop, and was busted and charged with committing a "lewd" act in public. George was one of the biggest music stars in the world, so it was massive news. And it would have killed the career of a lesser mortal; but not George.

Finally, the truth he'd wanted to tell the world for years was out. A weight was lifted from his shoulders and *Freedom* waved hello. He hit the talk show circuit rather than hiding in shame. He spoke about being gay, his open-ish relationship with Kenny Goss, his previous relationship with Anselmo Feleppa who died from an AIDS-related illness in 1993, about wanting to protect his conservative mum from his sexuality, and about coming out as gay in a world gripped by AIDS panic. He laughed it off and the world laughed with him.



***Outside* was a sarcastic pop-tastic comeback with a disco soundtrack.**

The not-subtle subtext: fuck you!

Meanwhile, Michael Jackson was at home. Sitting in a closet. Sweating up a storm.

George released *Outside*; in my opinion, one of his best solo singles. It ridiculed the LAPD's entrapment policy, it shrugged off the 80 hours of community service he was ordered to perform. "I'd service the community but you know that I already have..." he sang with a saucy grin. It was a sarcastic pop-tastic comeback with a disco soundtrack – and in the video George played a hunky LA cop in a public loo that turned into a nightclub with "lewd acts" galore. "Fuck you LAPD. Fuck you anyone who feels like judging me," was George's not-subtle subtext. "I own this."

George went on to live his life like millions of gay men do – including cruising hook-up apps for sex. And he did this without fear or self-judgement. Chances are, if you were on Grindr or Scruff or Gaydar (back in the day) when George was, and you were his type, he'd have hit you up. For one of the most famous men in the world, and one of the richest entertainers, that took balls. There are closeted gay entertainers, even today, whose dates are arranged by their agents and personal assistants. George made no apologies for being George, being gay, or going after the kind of sex he liked.

In this issue, George is remembered by our Entertainment bloke, Marc Andrews who encountered him during his time working on pop magazines, and on a Sydney dancefloor. Steve Pafford writes about meeting George on Gaydar and how that unfolded. And there's a revealing anecdote from Paul Mac, the Aussie dance music legend.

Fan or not, I hope you enjoy these unusually frank stories about George's life. He was a trailblazer who smoothed the way for the likes of Sam Smith, Adam Lambert and Troye Sivan.

A toast to you, George Michael!



Wham! "What, us gay?"



Andrew Creagh
Founding Editor



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INSIDE THE MINDS OF DNA READERS! EMAILS, LETTERS, TWEETS, FACEBOOK POSTS, CARRIER PIGEON DISPATCHES AND RAMBLINGS



CALUM ON THE COVER OF DNA #204

Did the breathtaking ginger on the cover of DNA #204 used to dance as a go-go boy in an Oxford Street gay bar? – *BJ*

Wow, is that a redhead? – *scotty72*

I'll take a handful of that bulge. – *MasterTim*

Calum Winsor castle! – *Estevez*

THE TWISTED GAY WHO MADE TRUMP

Great article on Trump/Cohn [*The Twisted Gay Man Who Made Donald Trump* by Andrew M Potts in DNA #204]. I've been following the *Washington Post* material on this and it's fascinating/scary. However, you need a better Latin advisor: VCL is not 145 in Roman numerals – it's meaningless. V (five) C (one hundred) L (fifty). If you want to write 145 in Roman numerals, it's CXLV (one hundred plus ten less fifty plus five). Sorry! – *Chris Puplick*
More than happy to stand corrected on the

Roman numerals, thanks Chris! To be honest, we used Google Translate to work it out. Stupid internet! – Ed.

WHO'S THAT SIZZLE BOY?

Who is the smoking hot dude in the Sizzle app ads? He makes me sizzle! – *Horny Bryan*

His name is Alfie Liebl. Go to sizzleapp.com for more and Instagram. – Ed.



A WHEELCHAIR USER ON THE COVER?

I love DNA – all the articles to read plus the pictures of all the young hunks. I saw an article in the *Star Observer* about queers in wheelchairs. Why not show the diversity in our community; that is, those with disabilities as well? Look outside the square. We are all very different. – *Norm Porter, Wentworthville, NSW*
Hi Norm, we noticed the *Star Observer* story and their quote, "When was the last time you

saw a wheelchair user on the cover of DNA?" Representing the diversity of our community is important to us. Over the years we've done numerous stories about people living with many types of disabilities, from Daniel Monks and his film *Marrow*, to returned soldier Alex Minsky and even Nyle DiMarco who is deaf and was on the cover. We'll continue to look for those stories, too. – Ed.



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DNA POLL:

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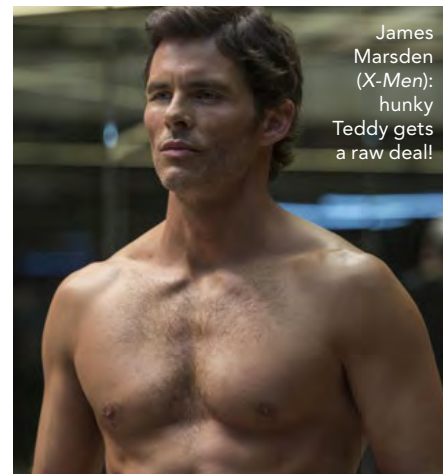
THE STUFF WE'RE **Loving...**

Not my
President!



Lost Loves, Found

Imagine reconnecting with a summer fling from 15 years ago. Is the spark still there? Is there the potential for something more, or did that ship sail? Dean and Alex find out in *Lazy Eye*, a slow-burn gay romance. If in Sydney, see it at the Queer Screen Festival: queerscreen.org.au



James
Marsden
(*X-Men*):
hunky
Teddy gets
a raw deal!

THE WESTWORLD HUNKS!

DNA's entertainment bloke, Marc reckons HBO's *Westworld* is a "convoluted orgy of violence" where the only hints of male homosexuality belong to wicked and weak characters. He's right! But the show's man candy makes the rape, torture and bloodshed bearable.

Feeling, Looking, Smelling Good!

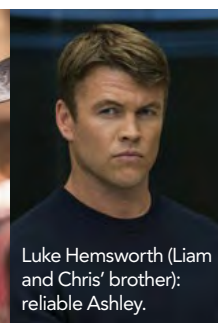
Napoleon Perdis' Sexual Fluidity: this provocatively named pack contains Gold Metallic eyeliner and How Deep Is Your Love massage. Mard Gras is coming! napoleonperdis.com

Lqd Blemish Control: magically smooths away blotches and blemishes and leaves skin clear. Five stars! Lqd.com.au

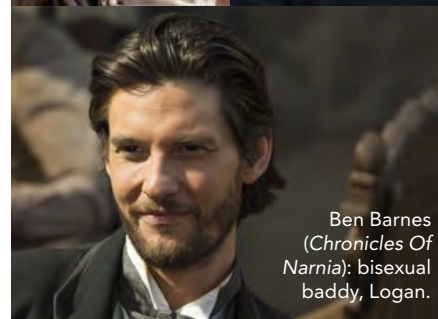
No Pong: a dab of soft wax in the armpit and this all-natural product keeps you fresh and odour-free all day. No roll-on, no aerosol and a great price. nopong.com



Rodrigo Santoro
(*300*): sexy
outlaw, Hector.



Luke Hemsworth (Liam
and Chris' brother):
reliable Ashley.



Ben Barnes
(*Chronicles of
Narnia*): bisexual
baddy, Logan.



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CRAFTED IN CALIFORNIA



Alex Hibbert plays Chiron as a child in a scene with Mahershala Ali as drug dealer, Juan.



A LIFE BY MOONLIGHT

It's a masterpiece and the must-see film of the year but, writes Katie Jowett, perhaps *Moonlight* is also one of the best gay films ever.

IT'S RARE that a feature film with a black, gay protagonist is even made – that *Moonlight* has attracted so much positive attention is even more remarkable. Winner of this year's Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture-Drama, it tells the story of a young black man struggling to grow up in the rough Liberty City neighbourhood of Miami, and understand his sexuality.

Set amid the ongoing “war on drugs”, we follow young Chiron through three distinct and defining chapters of his life; each adding its own layer of complexity. He deals with poverty, bullying, the pressure of his environment pulling him into crime, and an explosive relationship with his addict mother, all the while confused and confronted by his own sexual identity. While the film's subject matter is tough, it's told with a tenderness and compassion that's captivating.

Dividing Chiron's life into three chapters (childhood, adolescence and adulthood) may seem like a narrative gimmick but it proves effective in demonstrating how much a person can change and how pivotal a single moment can be. Each chapter is different in style and tone, and the large periods of time they skip sometimes stretch our powers of belief; especially when the buff and glistening adult version of Chiron appears, complete with gold teeth, immediately after his awkward, skinny, teenage incarnation. But each stage of the story is

buoyed by superb performances.

Alex Hibbert plays the child Chiron in the first and slowest chapter (*Little*). His performance is intense and engaging; quite a feat for a character who is mostly silent. Ashton Sanders assumes the role as the teenage Chiron in the middle chapter (*Chiron*), taking us through the film's most pivotal moment. In the final chapter (*Black*), Trevante Rhodes' presents us with Chiron as a conflicted man, struggling to accept himself while maintaining a public facade.

The film also stars Naomie Harris (Moneypenny in *Spectre* and *Skyfall*) as Paula, Chiron's mother. It's a chance for Harris to show her gritty side and she brings raw emotional

power by the bucket load to this difficult character, making her deserving her Golden Globe nomination for Best Supporting Actress.

Overall the film boasted six nominations including Best Director for Barry Jenkins and Best Supporting Actor for Mahershala Ali (*House Of Cards*, *Luke Cage*), who appears as Chiron's drug dealing mentor and surrogate father, Juan. In a film that questions what it means to be a man and how that is learned, the delicate relationship between Chiron and Juan is crucial and masterfully portrayed.

Moonlight's cinematography is a delight. The critical moments are luminous; shot with such power and beauty that they stay in the mind long after leaving the cinema. Nicholas Britell's graceful score, along with an eclectic mix of music from classical to Hip Hop and R&B helps the film find elegant new ways to tell stories of pain and struggle.

A.O. Scott's review in the *New York Times*, concluded, “Perhaps the most beautiful thing about *Moonlight* is its open-endedness, its resistance to easy summary or categorization.”

Indeed, it's much more than just a gay film or a black film or a coming-of-age film or a film about poverty. The real beauty is that it manages to be all these things. Above all, it's a film about human experience, shared with empathy, in every exquisitely still moment of each characters' life.

“

**Not just a gay film
or a black film... the
real beauty is that
it manages to be all
these things.**

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You piece of shit!

– Yelled by a protestor at Martin Shkreli (right), the pharmaceutical company CEO who raised the price of life-saving HIV drug, Daraprim from \$13.50 to \$750 overnight.



» **IN HIS OUTGOING** speech, former-President Barack Obama reiterates the importance of upholding civil rights. He says, “Democracy can buckle when we give in to fear. So just as we, as citizens, must remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values that make us who we are... We cannot withdraw from global fights to expand democracy, and human rights, women’s rights, and LGBT rights – no matter how imperfect our efforts, no matter how expedient ignoring such values may seem.”



» **AS DONALD TRUMP** is pledging to be a President for all Americans in his inauguration speech, all references to LGBT rights are quietly removed from the White House website. A page on LGBT rights in the workplace, which appeared on the site previously, is also no longer available.

» **A NEW STUDY** reveals a huge increase in the number of Americans who identify as LGBT. A Gallup poll discovers that around 10 million US adults now says they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender – 1.75 million more than in a similar poll in 2012.

» **IT IS REVEALED** that Russia has more than one million citizens who are HIV-positive. According to aidsmap, Russia accounts for 64 per cent of all HIV cases in Europe, up from

60 per cent in 2014. The Russian government is widely criticised for its lack of an effective strategy for tackling HIV and other STIs. Many other European countries including the UK, Spain and France have experienced a decline in new HIV infections due to effective policies and treatments.

» **A BILLBOARD** in West Hollywood is adorned with one of the bluntest pro-PrEP adverts yet, displaying the strapline, “Fuck Without Fear”. It’s the brainchild of The Los Angeles LGBT Center, whose bold campaigns are using raw, real-life language to effectively get messages about safer sex through to gay and bisexual men in the area.

» **FORTY-NINE** rainbow-coloured seats are unveiled at the New Orlando Lions’ soccer stadium in memory of the 49 people killed in the city’s Pulse nightclub shooting in June 2016. Orlando City president Phil Rawlins says: “We’re here to commemorate and unveil the 49 rainbow seats that will sit permanently in section 12 of our new stadium as a constant reminder of the senseless acts of June 12... sport can lift up a community and help to heal a community.”



» **A NEW SURVEY** of men’s porn-viewing habits in the US reveals that in the last six months, 21 per cent of straight men had watched gay porn, and 55 per cent of gay men had watched opposite-sex porn. The top search terms among gay men on porn sites are “straight guy”, “black”, “daddy” and “bareback.”

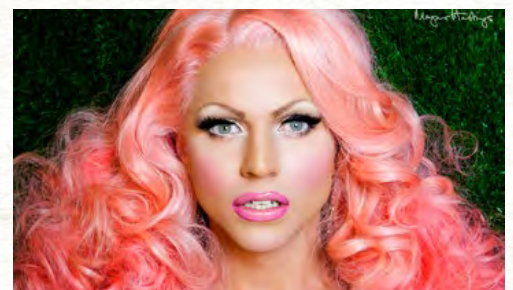
SHOWBIZ SIDE COLUMN



Two Australian artists create a mural to honour George Michael. Scott Marsh and Stereogamous’ wall artwork goes viral on social media as fans share images of the former Wham! singer depicted with a rainbow halo, a bottle of poppers and a joint. It’s on the corner of Bray Street and Concord Street, down the road to the entrance of Sydney Park.



The music world mourns the loss of Larry Steinbachek (above, top), keyboard player with ground-breaking, gay, UK pop band Bronski Beat. The group’s hit songs during the 1980s including *Smalltown Boy* and *Why* dealt with issues such as the age of consent, anti-gay violence and coming out to your family. Steinbachek dies following a battle with cancer. He was 56.



Courtney Act shares a video of her STI test results after discovering she’s had unprotected sex with an HIV-positive man. She hopes to raise awareness of the importance of safe sex and the options that now exist to help prevent HIV transmission, such as PrEP. The video shows Courtney finding out that she remains HIV negative but has caught chlamydia.

ANIMAL INSTINCT

UNLEASH YOUR INNER BEAST





ME, MY SELFIE, I

Like millions of people around the world, Chris Wilks snaps images of himself on his smart phone and posts them to Instagram. He never expected where it would lead...



UNKNOWN TO him, the people at Milkbeach towels were watching. They sent him a Day Towel, he took a selfie unwrapping it from his body, and before he knew it, he was the star of the Milkbeach ads – like the ones that have appeared in DNA.

“It was a real surprise,” says the unexpected model/photographer. “And now to be in DNA as well – such a compliment.”

Chris, a 38-year-old interior designer, says he became “obsessed” with creating beautiful images for Instagram. “Almost all my photos are taken by me on my iPhone using a self-timer app and a ledge of some sort – a gutter, a nook in a wall or a window ledge on the opposite side of the street. Amazingly, this has only lead to only one broken screen when the wind picked up and blew it off a window ledge.”

Chris didn’t set out with a particular shooting style in mind but, looking back at his images, he recognises it now.

“My images range from black-and-white to colour, from dark and moody to washed-out and minimal, but they tend to have some common features – a straight-on perspective being one. I like framing the smallness of a person against a large background or a body in an interesting space or shape or light, and to create a sense of spying on a moment.

“Content-wise there’s been a major switch over the last two years from a fairly architectural feed to much more me! I joined a gym and enjoy the progress I’ve made,” says Chris. “My aim is to be sensual rather than crude – though my boyfriend would argue I’m failing there!”

One thing Chris says is obvious about Instagram is that people love pictures of people. Your followers might like images of architecture or textures but throw in a person, “and make him cute, hot, naked and before you know it... Milkbeach ad!”

Whether Chris takes up a professional SLR camera and explores his talents further remains to be seen. But he’s been approached to model for other people’s shoots – and has completed a couple already.

“I’m an awkward model,” he admits. “I did my first shoot and it was both frightening and a major buzz – but the results were amazing.”

MORE: Follow Chris @X2fa and Milkbeach @Milkbeachsydney

“

My aim is to be sensual rather than crude – though my boyfriend would argue I’m failing there!



Best Undies Ever

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WATCH THE
EYEWITNESS TRAILEREyewitness: Tyler Young
(left) as Philip Shea and
James Paxton as Lukas
Waldenbeck.

ACCIDENTAL ACTIVIST

Crime thriller *Eyewitness* and Jennifer Lopez's cop drama *Shades Of Blue* are pushing the boundaries for gay characters on TV. The man behind both is straight producer/writer Adi Hasak – in his own words, “an accidental LGBTQ activist”. Interview by Marc Andrews.

HBO'S WESTWORLD hinted at homosexuality amid its orgy of violence. NBC's *This Is Us* outed a geriatric gay (also dying of cancer, of course). Amazon's third season of *Transparent* saw everyone turning lesbian or transitioning. Thank the small-screen gods for *Eyewitness* and *Shades Of Blue*.

Eyewitness, based on a Norwegian series, involves two teenage boys, lovers, who meet up in a forest for sex but witness an act of violence. *Shades Of Blue* pairs Jennifer Lopez with a crooked cop (Ray Liotta) who happens to be gay. What links these two series? Dutch-born screenwriter, producer and heterosexual Adi Hasak.

DNA: Was there ever a thought of changing the *Eyewitness* couple from being gay for the American version?

Adi: Not even a second's thought. From the beginning, we felt that what made *Eyewitness* stand out is that it's a thriller with two gay boys at the center.

Was it difficult to cast the two leads?

We found Tyler Young, who plays Philip Shea, quickly. He auditioned on the first day of casting. I instantly knew he was the one. Casting the right actor to play Lukas Waldenbeck was more



Adi Hasak.

challenging because it was about finding someone who had the right chemistry with Tyler. We eventually found James Paxton, who brings so much to the role. I swear he is going to be lifelong friends with Tyler.

Did the actors have any issue playing gay?

They're millennials, so they don't have the same attitudes toward gender and sex that someone of a generation older might. For them, their characters' sexuality was a non-issue.

A groundswell of support from gay youth spiked interest in the show, right?

The level of authentic, personal involvement we're getting from young LGBTQ fans is humbling. I hoped that our show would strike a chord with LGBTQ youth, but I had no way of imagining this kind of groundswell. Reading people's heartfelt comments on social media and seeing the fan artwork has been one of the most meaningful parts of making this series.

Has this opened your eyes to how Hollywood portrays gay characters?

This experience has shown me just how hungry young audiences are for genuine, non-stereotypical LGBTQ storylines in mainstream media. Until making this show, I was unaware of exactly how limited the portrayals of gay characters are in media. For example, did you know that most LGBTQ characters on TV end up getting killed off?

Oh yes, we knew! You also produce *Shades Of Blue* with a strong gay character. Is this a coincidence, on trend, or something else?



Shades Of Blue: Ray Liotta and Jennifer Lopez.

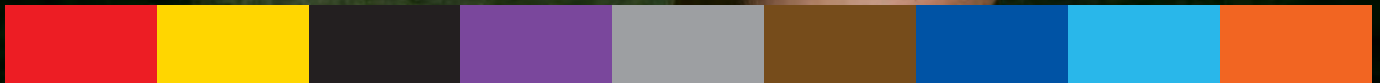
When I created Ray Liotta's character in *Shades Of Blue* – a very strong, closeted gay police lieutenant – I received a lot of support from gay executives. They were thrilled to see a gay character who was so complex and this opened my eyes to how rare it is to create LGBTQ characters that are free of stereotypes. I'm very proud to be what I've come to call an “accidental LGBTQ activist”.

How supportive is J-Lo of the gay character in the show?

She's not only supportive on *Shades Of Blue* she executive produces *The Fosters* (about foster children living with a lesbian couple). She's really a champion for all kinds of diversity.

MORE: For *Eyewitness* go to www.usanetwork.com/eyewitness. For *Shades Of Blue* go to www.nbc.com/shades-of-blue

WHAT MAKES YOU



FIST

WS

S&M

PIERCINGS

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DIRTY

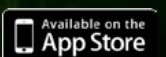
ANAL

ORAL

ANYTHING
GOES

sizzelapp.com

Credits: Tom Cullis Photography
Publicist: Shandrew PR (LA)





They're called Fufanu and their second album *Sports* could make them bigger than Björk. Interview by Marc Andrews.

DNA: Talk us through your name and titles: Fufanu and *Sports*.

Kaktus: The name Fufanu comes from being young and stupid. We made it up. It doesn't mean anything. It describes our music. We named the album after a track on the album.

Give us a brief history of the band up to now.

It all started when me and Gulli met in school late 2008 at the age of 16. We both had an interest in electronic music and started making our own. That evolved under the name Captain Fufanu. In 2013 we started to experiment with live instruments and the sound changed. We dropped the Captain and kept on developing with the new sound as Fufanu with Erling on drums and here we are today, still pushing our limits and making music.

When did you realise that you wanted the band to be your day job?

Right from the start. There was something about the partnership between us that felt good and still does.

Who were your idols when you were young?

Michael Jordan and Vala Flosadóttir [she won bronze at the 2000 Olympics in the pole vault].

Iceland's done quite well on the spooky pop front. What's the secret?

It's probably *Lýsi*, an Icelandic omega fish oil



[laughs]. I can't think of anything else.

Is it true that in Iceland everyone somehow knows Björk?

I sure hope not... I would feel really sorry for her if she knew every idiot in Iceland.

Your song *Sports* could be about a boy or a girl. Are you trying to tell us something?

Maybe I'm not telling you something specific. Maybe I'm sharing my feelings with you. When writing lyrics I could spell everything out and tell the story but it's healthier to take time and dig into the lyrics so that people can take their own experiences out of it. Most people know the feeling of desiring something, everything from a chocolate brownie to a person. That is what *Sports* is about: desire.

How is Iceland on gay rights, gay marriage and adoption?

It's all allowed, no problems, except from a few narrow-minded dinosaurs. My gay friends say that they don't lack anything in society.

Do you have gay fans?

Yeah! We got a good amount of gay fans after our tour with John Grant who are very loyal.

What should they throw at you on stage that

you would appreciate?

Some good food. Food on the road can be a bit boring. Or maybe a fancy pink cocktail.

Who are your gay role models?

Stephen Fry, Ellen DeGeneres and Aaron-Carl Raglad and Frankie Knuckles [dance music luminaries].

Do you think it's still important to have gay clubs and venues?

Gay clubs were important and still are. Maybe they're not serving the same role as they did in the beginning of the fight for gay rights, but more in playing the role of helping people coming out to find themselves in a gay environment; at least that is the case here in Iceland.

What's the gay scene like in Iceland?

It's really open and welcoming for everyone but small so maybe it's a bit monochrome. Just one gay club, for example. The scene is like a family, and in a country of 320,000 people it's hard to be picky.

What are the three things we have to do or see if we come to Iceland?

The thing that you will do is hear the wind, the ocean... and more wind.

What's your message for the readers of DNA?

Don't fight to please others. You'll please someone else by being you.

MORE: *Sports* is released through One Little Indian. Go to www.fufanu.rock or find them on Facebook/Instagram @fufanumusic

It's Lunch time! *lunch.*
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PWR BTTM: power to the bottoms!

PWR BTTM - UGLY CHERRIES

It's been a long time since such an overtly edgy gay band was so intent on fucking up the mainstream and taking it to bed for a good fudge-packing. Imagine the Scissor Sisters coming out of rock rehab with Nirvana and considering whether to transition and you get Pwr Bttm. Yes, it's short form for "power bottom", thanks for asking. While the duo's videos are extravagant and out-there the music seems purposely unadventurous considering their New York demeanour. Indeed, they seem almost like a throwback to early '90s grunge with a serious Kurt Cobain fixation. Liv from the band says neither he nor partner Ben identify with the label "gay man". Ben insists they are simply "two queers who vent our attention problems through shiny outfits and loud music". This often raucous, unpolished rock pastiche is not to everyone's taste (more moshpit than dancefloor) but perhaps therein lies its charm.

DEADMAU5 - W:/2016ALBUM/

This month's theme seems to be about artists who've changed their name to something catchy. In this case Deadmau5 (FYI: the "5" is said like an "s") is mild-mannered Joel Zimmerman who, for the last decade, has been twisting and taunting the dance scene with his music, total self-indulgence and crapping on other celebrities. This is his eighth proper album of sorts and another journey into the future of trance. *4ware* starts off the proceedings with lots of thumping stops along the EDM highway, but the best bits are when our Mousehead tries on different hats, like the minimalist electronica of *Cat Thruster*, or the Moby-ish *Snowcone*.



exercises in great

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT - CHOREOGRAPHY

This Welsh cutie with tuggable ears to rival Russell Tovey is something of a protégé of Elton John's. Sir Elt makes a guest appearance on *Symmetry Of Two Hearts* and *All In The Name*, which were also bright, sparkly singles with a very queer-sheen that were cruelly neglected by radio programmers. Also on board are Alan Cumming and the Scissor Sisters so you just know this has a truly gay bent. Perhaps the only thing that might be hampering his potential takeover of planet pop is how BLBL's songs sometimes sound a little too generic, like you've heard them all before and not with any new twists a la Years & Years. A sister EP *Cinematography* is also out now.



WATCH THE VIDEO

SHURA - NOTHING'S REAL

Half-Russian, half-English 25-year-old pop newcomer Alexandra Denton reinvented herself as a groovy '80s-bound pop star called Shura. Based in Manchester, the video for her single *What's It Gonne Be* puts an unexpectedly gay twist on '80s teen movie classic *The Breakfast Club*. Co-starring her twin brother, Shura says the song is "based on my personal experience as a kid, thinking you're in love but then realising that's maybe just because you feel you should be and ending up with someone totally unexpected". Somewhere between the gloomy beauty of London Grammar and a Brit chick version of Taylor Swift here is an exciting artist who is likely to become a major player if she can steer her career down the right path.



THE WEEKND - STARBOY

Canada has always been a mixed bag when it comes to pop music. For every k.d. lang there's a Carly Rae Jepsen, for every Drake, a Justin Bieber and, phew, The Weeknd to make up for Nickelback. This 26-year-old, with the more regular real name of Abel Tesfaye, is working diligently on becoming the next Michael Jackson. The ear-catching title track, complete with Daft Punk bleeps, has already captured the world's attention and like MJ's *Thriller* almost every track is a potential hit single. To be honest, we also get goosebumpy flashes of Prince and George Michael on occasion (*Rockin'* does indeed live up to its name). An album you're still likely to be listening to this time next year, too.





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Dropping The F Bomb!

Declan Greene, one half of Sisters Grimm, throws down the theatrical gauntlet once again... with faggots and gravy!

ARGUABLY THE hardest form of theatre to write well is comedy, and of all the options available – satire, sketch, alt, black – farce seems to offer the least opportunities to also make pointed or poignant social commentary.

With its larger-than-life characterisations, slapstick, implausible plot twists and physical humour, the genre has been unfashionable in recent years. Its roots, however, go back to Greece and the earliest theatre. It evolved into the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*, was refined by the French and made common by Shakespeare. It influences Wilde's *The Importance Of Being Earnest* and reaches its modern zenith in *Noises Off*. In television it's the stuff of *I Love Lucy* and *Fawlty Towers*. In film, it's the fallback position for Hollywood and Bollywood comedies.

Declan Greene's *The Homosexuals, Or Faggots* returns theatre-goers to farce. Greene is well known as one half of Sisters Grimm (along with Ash Flanders), who have gained a reputation for innovative fringe theatre. Their camp, melodramatic and experimental work hits hot-buttoned topics and often involves homoeroticism. Add some farce into the mix and you've got Greene's latest work. This time he's taking aim at political correctness.

"I've always had a very dorky love of farce," says Greene. "You know, the classic comedy with mistaken identities and running in and out of swinging doors, and broadly stereotyped characters? For example, in *Boeing Boeing* the main character goes to extreme lengths for fear of being outed as a polygamist, and in *La Cage aux Folles* a gay couple try to pass as straight.

"Those kinds of plays don't get written much anymore because they used to be driven by the main characters' fear of being outed as a sexual deviant – which isn't such a big deal these days. But what people *do* care about – particularly in the gay community – is being thought of as racist

or sexist or trans-phobic. This is often in conflict with the anti-PC nature of a lot of camp or gay humour."

The point Greene is making is distilled in the title of the play, "homosexuals" or "faggots"? The story begins with two happily partnered and wealthy gay men, Warren and Kim, discovering an offensive item on the local pub menu – faggots with mashed potato and gravy. The two prepare a politically incorrect themed Mardi Gras party, dressing in offensive costumes only to meet an unexpected and easily-offended guest – a radical queer academic – where the farce explodes.

Greene says he was partly inspired by the 2014 "female or she-male" controversy on *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

"I was really interested in how that played out," he says. "There was defensiveness from a lot of the gay cisgender ex-contestants who criticised trans protestors for being over-sensitive, when nearly all of them had told a sad story themselves. They had been hurt by homophobic language or behaviour at some point in their lives. Plus, their 'sisterhood' toward trans ex-contestants evaporated the moment they said they was uncomfortable with these aspects of the show."

Transgressing political correctness is popular in the queer world (*Little Britain*, *The Catherine Tate Show*, *Absolutely Fabulous*), but are we laughing at ourselves or is it just an excuse to laugh at someone else's expense? *The Homosexuals, Or Faggots* holds a mirror to the gay community. Can we justify using the F word among ourselves?

"It definitely feels great to say to the straight world, 'You can't use that word but I can'," says Greene. "There's power in that. But that power only manifests when the perimeter is respected. My friends and I use faggot as a term of affection all the time but it still hurts like hell when some guy calls me a faggot for holding my boyfriend's hand in public."

MORE: *The Homosexuals, Or Faggots* plays at Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre 17 February – 12 March, then the Griffin Theatre Company, Kings Cross March 17 – April 29.



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CINDERELLA

In Bollywood

WHAT COULD BE MORE ENTERTAINING THAN CINDERELLA ON STAGE? A QUEER, ALL-MALE BOLLYWOOD TWIST ON THE CLASSIC FAIRY TALE, OF COURSE, REPORTS MANAV CHOUDARY.

IN THE MIDDLE of Sydney's Paddy's Markets on a busy Sunday afternoon, Raj Qazi is trying on a long dark wig. He looks in the mirror and, with smouldering eyes and a perfect pout, dramatically declares, "Pinky! Miss Pinky. I love my new name."

Qazi is not alone. He's part of a small group of South-Asian gay men, all of them trying on wigs and reciting dramatic lines in front of the mirror. The lines come from a play they're about to stage later this month as part of Sydney's Gay And Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival.

The cacophony is not going unnoticed. The young Asian girls who run the shop giggle uncontrollably, and outside, a circle of curious onlookers grows. "I can't believe we're attracting so much attention," exclaims Qazi. "If we can be this entertaining at Paddy's, imagine how hilarious we'll be on stage."

Qazi has a point. What could be more entertaining than a group of 15 gay men, some in drag, bringing *Cinderella* to life on stage? And there's another twist – this is no ordinary *Cinderella*. It's *Sunderella*, an all-singing, all-dancing Bollywood-style adaptation with a queer plot.

"This production is unlike anything Sydney or Mardi Gras has seen before," says seasoned Sydney actor, Bali Padda who's directing the play. "It is the classic fairy tale, but not as you know it. The action takes place in 18th-Century Bombay during the British occupation of India, so expect a sea of saris and sequins, bindis and bangles."

The show is from an original script by Kunal Mirchandani who recognises the unique appeal of Bollywood-style drag. "There are plenty of drag shows in Sydney, particularly during Mardi Gras," he says, "But I've been to parties where these Bollywood drags – dressed like courtesans in a Maharaja's palace – walk in and the energy in the room instantly rises to a whole new level. Now imagine that on stage."

It's not a new phenomenon, either, says Mirchandani. "Bollywood drag is a timeless tradition. It dates back to the days when women weren't allowed to perform on stage in India, and male actors would, often happily, take on the female roles," he says.

Sunderella's cast includes Sydney men from many

different backgrounds – India, Bangladesh, Fiji, The Philippines, the Middle East, China... even The Caribbean – playing the classic *Cinderella* characters like the evil stepmother, the comic stepsisters, the dashing prince and, of course, the leading lady herself.

No Bollywood production would be complete without foot-tapping music and sweeping dance numbers. “There are eight high-energy dances throughout the show. Each of them features dazzling costumes and jewellery – it’ll be an explosion of colour and so much culture on stage,” promises Padda.

Sunderella is produced by Trikone Australasia (trikone.org.au) – a not-for-profit social-support group for GLBTIQ folks of South Asian background living in Australia. The play is a rare opportunity for people from diverse queer backgrounds to come together and express their creativity.



Bollywood drag is a timeless tradition. It dates back to the days when women weren’t allowed to perform on stage in India.

“My work always revolves around making sure the people I work with achieve a great deal of personal satisfaction,” says director, Padda. “I’m often reminded of a performer from Trikone’s 2011 show (*In The Space Between*), who confided that he had severe stage fright after being ridiculed on a stage in his home country when he was a child and wanted to break through this emotional barrier. He ended up soaring through the production and pulled off an immensely challenging role. It’s those achievements that drive me in the work I do.”

Raj Qazi – the boy trying on the wig at Paddy’s Markets – knows what Padda is talking about. “Being part of *Sunderella* is an incredibly liberating experience,” says Qazi, who plays one of the wicked stepsisters. “It’s allowing me to push the boundaries of the restrictions society has imposed on me for as long as I can remember. To be able to express a more feminine and creative side of me has been a delightful experience and a huge step for me as I’m not even out yet.”



The play is a particularly Sydney creation – the original script has been written from scratch by Mirchandani, the costumes and jewellery are sponsored by Harris Park-based Swastik Institute Of Dance (swastikdance.com.au), and rehearsals have been going on for six months at various city locations.

Since its establishment in 2008, Trikone has organised a range of events – from plays such as *In The Space Between* (a queer Bollywood sell-out show during the 2011 Mardi Gras festival) to the Bar Bombay Bollywood dance parties (facebook.com/BarBombaySydney), which have become a cult hit in Sydney. Its aim is to provide a safe, non-judgemental space where its members can forge new friendships and express their creativity. “We also want to raise awareness about this demographic

– a minority within a minority – within the larger Australian queer community,” says the founding director of Trikone, Alan Maurice.

“The focus for this production and previous Trikone events is not just entertainment, but social cohesion and personal development,” says Padda. “It’s important that we are supporting our community members, providing them with opportunities to develop skills that they can carry on through their personal and professional lives and have a voice in a globally recognised festival.”

MORE: *Sunderella* will be staged over two weekends (February 17, 18, 19, 24, 25 and 26) at PACT Centre for Emerging Artists in Sydney’s Erskineville. For more information and tickets, visit sunderella.com.au



Dear Diva

Making sense of the shit life throws!



Dear Diva,

My boyfriend has become addicted to his pain medication. He suffered a back injury at work several months ago and needed the medication to get through the day. He has been increasing the number of pills he takes a day. We were going out of town for the weekend trip and I had been driving for over an hour toward our destination and he made me turn around to go back home to get his medication. This is freaking me out.

Dear Freaked Out,

Your man is in trouble and needs professional help but he has to want to get that help. If he doesn't, the downward spiral will continue. Try to talk to him about his drug use. If he isn't ready to go to rehab you may have to move on. It will only get worse and you can't let him drag you down to rock bottom with him.

Dear Diva,

I think my man has been going through my wallet. I'm a neat freak and notice when some of the items are out of place. I'm not sure why he feels the need to do this. We've only been dating for a month.

“
When animals don't like someone there's a reason why. This motherfucker may be a serial killer!

Dear Wallet Boy,

You need to call this bitch out on his shit. Let him know that you will not tolerate such behaviour. This is a major violation. He has no right to go through your wallet. If he fucks up again dump his ass.

Dear Diva,

My new man doesn't like my dog and my dog doesn't like my man. Every time he visits she barks at him and I have to keep her in her carrying case and put her in another room. I love my dog but I like this new guy.

Dear Doggie Drama,

Bitch, you better run. FAST! Animals are very perceptive. When they don't like someone there is definitely a reason why. They pick up on shit that it takes us years to see if we see it at all. This man is bad news. The motherfucker may be a serial killer. Don't stick around to find out. Give your dog a hug and a special treat. She is a lifesaver.

Dear Diva,

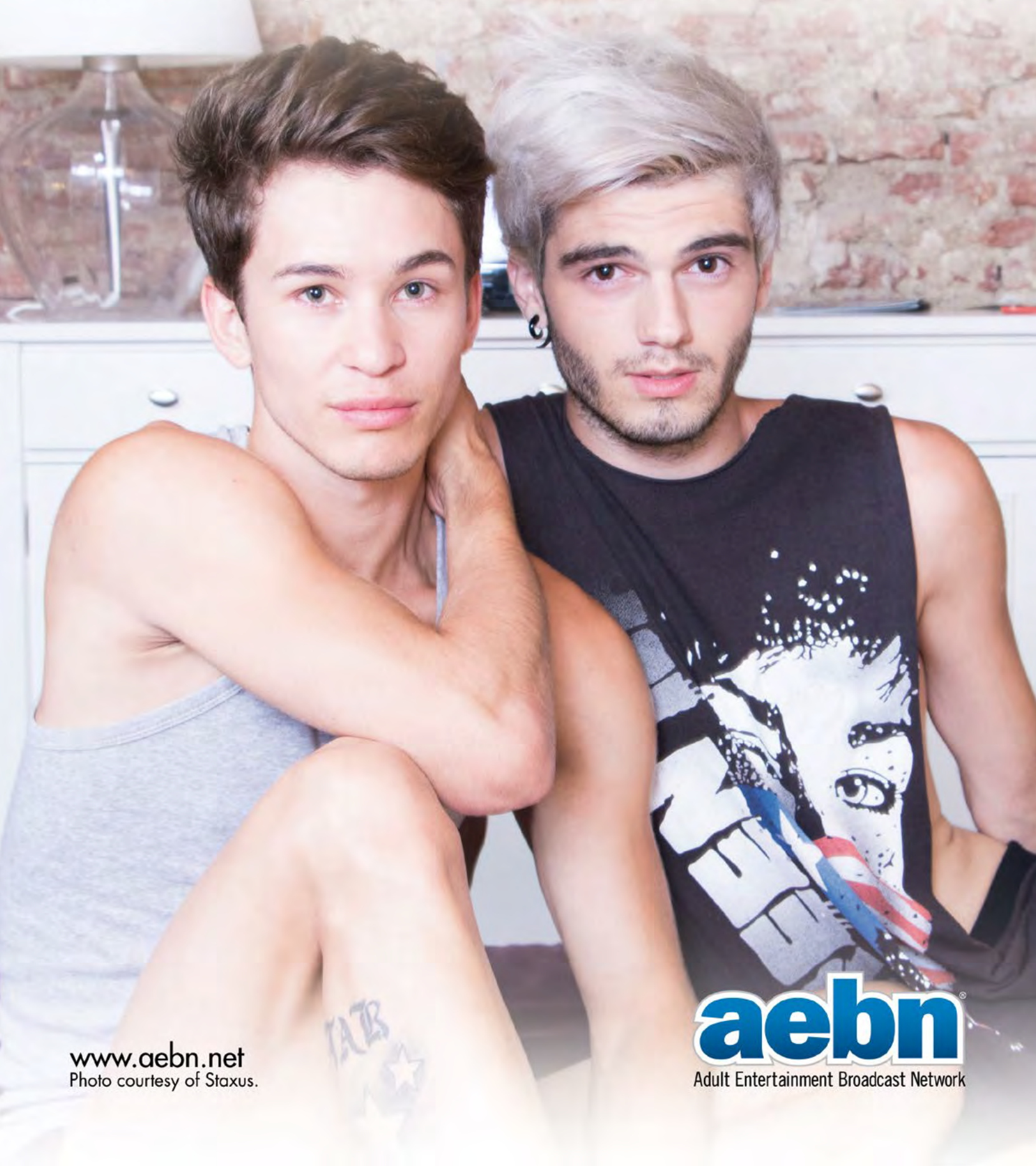
I overheard one of my boyfriend's co-workers gossiping about one of our mutual friends when we went out to dinner recently. I mentioned this to my boyfriend and he told me mind my business.

Dear Busy Body,

Your man is right. Stay out of other people's shit. Don't create drama where there is none. Focus on your shit and fuck everything else.

MORE: Robbyne Kaamil is a relationship expert on TV, radio, and at Playgirl.com. She is also an actress, comedian and singer. Find her on FB, [Twitter@theadvisediva](https://twitter.com/theadvisediva), and email your confidential Dear Diva questions to: asktheadvisediva@gmail.com.

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WATSON'S WORK

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Tarmac (featuring Dolph Lambert), oil on board, 45x46cm on board, 40x30cm.

THE DREAMER

Ross Watson's works hang in public and private galleries around the world, his fans include Elton John, Ian McKellen and Stephen Fry, and a new exhibition opens soon.

ROSS WATSON'S work often reflects modern themes in reinterpreted masters. For example, Olympic diver Matthew Mitcham appears in a re-imagined version of Sebastiano Ricci's *The Fall Of Phaeton*, but rather than falling he's diving upwards. Or *The Crucifixion Of Francois Sagat*, which depicts the famous porn star as if painted by Caravaggio.

The Melbourne painter's first Sydney exhibition in two years opens as part of the Mardi Gras Festival. The new works capture an idealised romanticism but, typically, with an erotic subtext. *Tarmac* evokes a stifling Far North Queensland summer day and an encounter between naked porn star Dolph Lambert and a uniformed stranger. Themes of authority, freedom and vulnerability seem to percolate through the image, while a light aircraft, tightly wrapped on the tarmac underscores Dolph's nakedness.

Elsewhere, surfers, soldiers and heroic young men are the focus and pass across Watson's canvasses like daydreams.

Original Ross Watson works and limited edition prints will be available at the gallery exhibition, which opens on February 23, 2017.



Two Soldiers, 31x31cm



Surfer (featuring Nathan Collett) 61x60cm



Hudson, oil on board, 40x30cm.

MORE: Ross Watson Sydney Exhibit
When: 23 February to 5 March
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Website: rosswatson.com

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SERVES: 2-4
PREP: 30 MINUTES
COOK: 15 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1 cup self-raising flour
1 cup ricotta
2 tablespoons caster sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons vanilla essence
2 eggs
Zest of one small lemon
Rice bran oil for deep-frying
Caster sugar
Cinnamon
Nutella

METHOD

1. In a large bowl, mix the flour, ricotta, caster sugar, salt, vanilla essence, eggs and lemon zest until well combined and cover with plastic wrap. Leave to rest for 30 minutes in the fridge.
2. In a large fry pan, heat rice bran oil to 170 degrees and place a tablespoon of dough mixture into the oil, cook until the dough turns golden brown. Remove from oil and drain well.
3. To finish donuts, combine two parts caster sugar with one part cinnamon and then roll hot donuts through the mixture to coat. Alternatively drizzle nutella over the donuts to finish. Enjoy!

MORE: Get *The Gay Chef* free from jordanbruno.org and donate to one of his LGBTI charity recipients while you're there.

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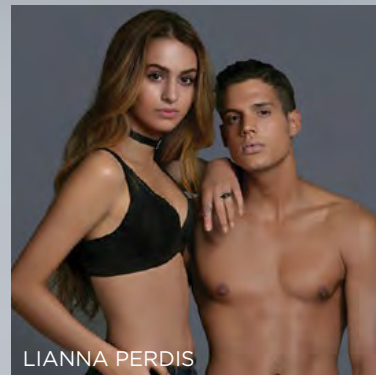
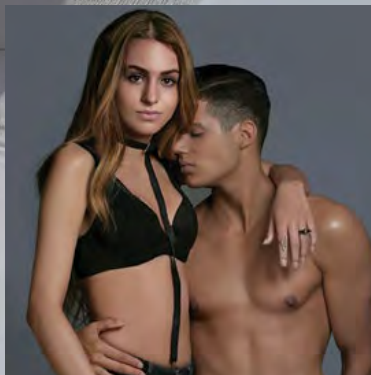
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LIANNA PERDIS

EAT, DRINK, PARTY ON...

BIG CULTURAL FESTIVALS LIKE THE MARDI GRAS, WITH PARADES, PARTIES AND DANCING ALL NIGHT, CAN TAKE THEIR TOLL ON YOUR HEALTH. HERE'S HOW TO MINIMIZE THE DAMAGE...

PREP YOUR BOD WITH THE RIGHT FOODS

During a festival we all end up eating “conveniently” which often means poorly. To better prepare your digestive tract for an attack from saturated fatty acid foods, a proper cleansing is in order. Do this by adding more fiber into your diet. This will not only cleanse our bowels but also ensure you can digest large amounts of food and drink.

Try and keep a health conscious mind while making food orders and try to have a snack before you start drinking and dancing. Remember, most festive foods create an acidic solution in our bodies, creating body stress. Make sure there are a few vegetables on your plate every time you eat as that will create a better pH level in the body. Make a shake or a bowl of steamed veggies and leave it in the fridge for some easy snacking.

Often, making healthy food choices gets more difficult when alcohol is involved. Drinking alcohol usually increases our appetite, so we are unwittingly eating more calories while also drinking calories. That's right, alcohol, particularly many ready-to-drink options, contain large amounts of sugar and calories so try to stick with soda water when you mix spirits.



PHOTOGRAPHY RUSSELL BASTOCK



Never leave your drink unattended and never take a drink from a stranger. It only takes a split second to spike a drink.

slows down the alcohol absorption.

A DRINK BETWEEN DRINKS

With alcohol, it's important to pace yourself. You can easily achieve this by

drinking a glass of water between drinks. It will keep you hydrated throughout the night, pace your alcohol intake and help you not get sick.

THE NIGHT BEFORE...

Before a big drinking night, being properly hydrated is a must. Drinking nothing but water throughout the day is important. Try to avoid fizzy or caffeinated drinks as they are very harsh on the liver. You want your liver to be in peak condition throughout a night of drinking.

I suggest waking up and eating a nice cup of yogurt and maybe some oats. The oats will give you long lasting energy and the probiotics of yogurt will help boost your immunity – you'll be taxing your immune system during a night of partying.

Eating a healthy fatty meal such as fish, pasta or chicken before starting to drink will help slow down the digestive tract and

HAVE FUN!

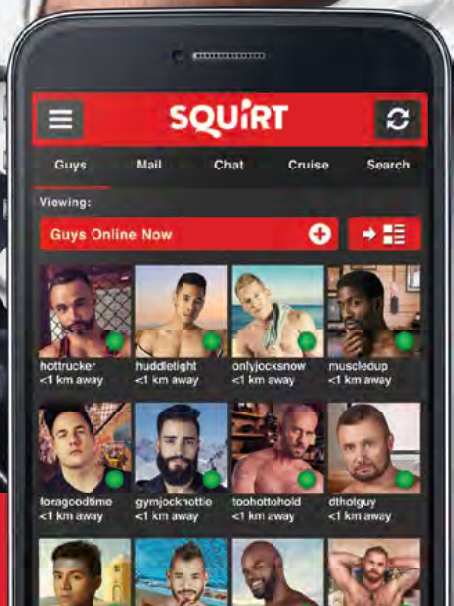
These festivities aren't around all year round so leave your worries at home and live in the moment. Make smarter choices and ensure you have a memorable time with great people. #betterlifechoices.



MORE: Dr Zac Turner (MBBS RN Bsc) can be contacted at www.drzac.co

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LARRIKIN by Paul Freeman

This new book from the internationally renowned photographer marks the launch of a new series following in the footsteps of *Bondi*, *Heroics* and *Outback*. Freeman has brought this book to market in a new way, raising funds to publish via Kickstarter and it has proven immensely successful for him. He raised more than \$160,000 from more than 900 backers and these funds will allow Freeman to release two books in quick succession. A second book in the series, *Larrikin Yakka*, is scheduled for release in the first half of 2017. As it has been more than two years since his last book *Outback Dusk* was published, this is a great bonus for his fans.

Building this direct relationship with his customers via Kickstarter is a shrewd move for Freeman, who has been self-publishing for 13 years and is one of the industry's success stories. Kickstarter allows Freeman to make a large number of direct sales, bypassing both physical and online bookshops such as Amazon. In the new publishing/bookselling landscape this is a real necessity as specialist GLBT bookshops (his traditional stockists) have closed in droves over the past decade and only a handful exist worldwide now. The explicit, full-frontal nudity that is prevalent in his books may also turn some general bookshops away from stocking them.

Freeman now has a mailing list of customers who are invested in his work and he has nurtured this relationship by offering special bonuses and packages as part of Kickstarter and inviting his fans and followers on social media to help choose the cover image. *Larrikin* has similar themes to the *Outback* series – hunky Aussie men photographed in a range of largely outdoor, rural settings, while *Larrikin Yakka* will include European and North American locations.

Larrikin also includes an introduction by Freeman which explains what a larrikin is – essential for overseas fans who would probably be baffled by the term.

THE GUSTAV SONATA

by Rose Tremain

Tremain has often featured gay male characters in her novels (*The Colour*, *Trespass* and *Merivel*) while her 2004 novel *Sacred Country* features the transgender awakening of a young girl. This new novel won't disappoint her gay male readers, though, to be any more specific, might spoil the pleasures of reading it for oneself.

Gustav Perle is a young boy, living with his widowed mother Emilie in a Swiss town after the end of WWII. He adores his mother but this love is only grudgingly reciprocated. Rather, Emilie resents the struggle life has become as she tries to support herself and her child on her own.

Luckily, Gustav finds a true friend in the new boy at school, Anton, a piano prodigy. But Anton is Jewish, a fact Gustav discovers when Emilie fails to hide her distaste for the boy. Slowly Tremain reveals the backstory – the circumstances that made Emilie a widow and why her anti-Semitism is so entrenched.

As the two boys grow to adulthood, Anton seems



destined to be a concert pianist, yet his nerves and temperament may prove to be his undoing. Anton also enjoys a string of women, while Gustav remains neutral (like the country in which the novel is set), devoted to his undeserving mother and his friend until late in life when a loving relationship finally falls into place for Gustav.

GOODWOOD by Holly Throsby

This debut novel by the well-known songwriter and musician has been highly praised and it's easy to see why. The novel is immediately captivating as it sets up a tantalising mystery in the small Southern Highlands town of Goodwood, "a home to small humble lives that didn't bear much mention".

In the space of one week, all that changes. First, Rosie White, an alluring but aloof local girl vanishes. She goes to bed one night and the next morning she is gone without trace. The town is still reeling from this shock when a second disappearance occurs. Bart McDonald, the local butcher, goes fishing

one Sunday and is never seen again. Uncertainty and speculation grip the town but 17-year-old Jean Brown also makes a discovery of her own that may have some bearing on events. Two days before Rosie vanishes, she finds a large, hidden stash of money.

Goodwood is a highly readable and engrossing novel that sets up an intriguing mystery and unfolds it cleverly. The small-town, and early 1990s setting is authentically portrayed and the town's various inhabitants are drawn with humour but also warmth and sympathy. Throsby's use of language is confident and distinctive and one of the novel's many strengths.

When the central twin mysteries are finally explained, it is most cleverly done, with minor characters and events suddenly assuming greater significance. The novel also brings a romantic conclusion for Jean that has been delicately hinted at from early in the book and lesbian readers in particular will applaud this finale. Though, ultimately, this is a novel that will appeal across niche readerships and most deservedly so.



MORE: The Bookshop Darlinghurst specialises in gay and lesbian books. Phone (02) 9331 1103, email: info@thebookshop.com.au, visit thebookshop.com.au, or in person at 207 Oxford Street, Sydney.

“

Larrikin has similar themes to *Outback*: hunky Aussie men in a range of rural settings.



2017



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Riding High

He's an icon of style, one of the most photographed men in the world and now a romance novelist. But, Nacho Figueras tells Matthew Myers, his greatest passion is still polo.

DNA: Polo has been your life since the age of nine. What is it about the sport that you love so much?

Nacho Figueras: When I was young I started loving the game, but as I matured I started to love and appreciate the horses more than the game itself. Of course, I still love the game, but the horses are really my passion.

You've taken on the new challenge of romance writer. Has that always been an ambition?

No, a friend in New York who is a book publisher and agent came to me with the idea. She knows my passion of making polo more mainstream and thought it would be good for

bringing polo into more people's lives. So it was more about using the fiction and romance to educate people about the life of a polo player.

What do you use as inspiration for these stories?

In my case, the romantic stories are an extension of how much we care for the horses and how we spend our days with them in the stables. It's about how much dedication there is behind the scenes with polo, not just when we play, but in the months of preparation we take for a tournament.

There's no doubt that a man riding a horse is sexy. Why do you think that is?

[Laughing] Well, I'm the one riding the horse so

that should be answered by other people! I think a man and a horse look good together. There's a cool factor but I can't explain it.

For the past 16 years you've been the face of Ralph Lauren Polo. How has that affected your life?

In every way! Ralph Lauren is a very big worldwide brand, and that association has given me a lot of recognition and the chance to talk about polo – the sport that I love. I think what has been so good about this relationship is that it makes sense for them and also for me – a polo player that represents a brand whose logo is a polo player, and I identify with the brand. It's



been a real honour and I hope to continue for 16 more years.

Polo hasn't been an Olympic sport since the 1936 Berlin Games. Do you think it could make a comeback?

The polo community is working on it. Logistically, polo is very complicated and requires lots of horses. That has been the hurdle. We are trying to bring it back. It's a dream. I don't believe there'd be anything more fantastic for the Olympics than polo!

You're an ambassador for Sentebale, the charity set up by Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso to help the children of Lesotho. How did that come about?

I've been playing with Harry for over ten years now and around five years ago he invited me to come to Lesotho. I fell in love with the country and their mission to change the lives of the children. It's such a small and beautiful country, and one where you can really make a difference. They offered me the chance to be an ambassador of the charity, which I was very honoured to accept. Prince Harry's commitment is so real and pure. It's inspiring to help him.

Equestrian sports are popular with gay men. Do you have any gay friends in the sport?

Many. Polo is a big community and very inviting and in the United States there is the Gay Polo League, which is great and growing! They do an event in Wellington, Florida every year and I have friends who have played there. I think it's great.

Do you ever go out with friends to gay clubs?

Yes, I think gay clubs are a lot of fun. Gay people know how to have fun. That's for sure! [Laughing]

Do you get up on the dance floor?

I'm not much of a dancer. When I do go out it's usually with my wife Delfina and I try to keep up with her. But I don't really dance. It would take a drink or two to get me up!

When it comes to music, who is your diva?

Madonna. I've met her a few times and she's a great woman. She's very charitable and philanthropic, and she rides horses! She's wonderful. My favourite Madonna song is *Celebration*.

WHO DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST HANDSOME MAN IN THE WORLD?

"I believe in the whole package. Cool guys, to me, are Frank Sinatra and Clark Gable. It's the way they look and the way they go about it."



In 2009 *Vanity Fair* readers voted you the second Most Handsome Man In The World between Brad Pitt and Robert Pattinson! How does that feel?

I don't pay attention to those things. They don't change anything. Attractiveness is not important and it's not what really matters or lasts. If someone calls me a good guy, I'll like that. That's what makes me feel good.

Working with Ralph Lauren you get to wear great clothes and have terrific personal style. What's your best fashion advice?

I believe the most important thing is to feel comfortable within yourself. I don't believe there is a way of dressing that is better than that. Frank Sinatra looked great in a suit and a hat, and Mick

Jagger looks great in skinny jeans and a T-shirt. I believe that dressing is an extension of who you are and whatever makes you feel your best.

This month is our underwear edition. What's your favourite style?

I go commando!

Even when riding a horse?

Yes, I do! [Laughing]

What about at the beach?

In Argentina we don't wear speedos. In Brazil they do, but here we don't. I was brought up wearing shorts.

Who has been the greatest influence on your career?

Gonzalo Pieres. He is one of the biggest and most influential polo players. He helped me a lot as a young player. He played polo most of his life with Kerry Packer and together they did so much for polo. In the 1990s they changed the way we look at the horses, the teams and the playing field. My father has also been very supportive and a big reason why I play polo. And, of course, there is Ralph Lauren who inspires me. I admire him greatly.

You once said that playing a particular sport comes down to where you're born: Hawaii for surfing, Austria for skiing, Argentina for polo. What sport do you associate with Australia?

I think of you guys as rugby and surfing and of great swimmers and tennis players. Am I right? And Australian Rules Football; I love that, too. I think it's great.

When will we see you return to Australia?

I'd love to come to the Melbourne Cup but it's in November, which is the middle of my polo season. But I'm getting older and I'll start to eventually retire so when I'm not playing so seriously I'll come to the Melbourne Cup. ★

MORE: Visit nachofigueraspresents.com and ralphlauren.com. Follow Nacho on Twitter @nachofigueras

ON THE COVER /

ALL SYSTEMS GO!

Abs – check. Pecs – check.
Megawatt smile – check. We
have lift off! Cover guy Jason

Whidby brings a playful,
positive, rocket-fuelled energy
to this shoot with Abel Cruz.

PHOTOGRAPHY ABEL CRUZ
(PHOTOSTUDIOMIAMI.COM)

MODEL JASON WHIDBY



ON THE COVER /





JASON WEARS
RUFSKIN DENIM BRIEF.

ON THE COVER /



JASON WEARS
STUD ME UP
"CORN FED"
BRIEF.



A close-up photograph of George Michael performing on stage. He is wearing a black suit jacket over a black shirt, clear aviator-style sunglasses, and a large diamond earring. He is holding a silver microphone in his right hand and has a joyful expression, with his mouth open as if singing. A silver chain with a cross pendant is visible around his neck. The background is dark and out of focus.

Remembering George Michael

Before 2016 ended it claimed yet another of our most beloved souls. George Michael was snatched away on Christmas morning. A soulful singer, a thoughtful songwriter and a performer of great charisma, he was the gay icon of a generation. His creativity, generosity and warmth were, sadly, matched by his self-destructive inclinations – talented but troubled. Importantly, he was loved – by friends, family, millions of fans and, eventually, even by arch-rival Boy George!

In this special feature, **Marc Andrews** reflects on the man, his music and his legacy. **Steve Pafford** recalls his up-close-and-personal encounters with George, and we unearth a great anecdote from Aussie music's **Paul Mac** – something to do with “fluffing”!

Like so many gay men of my generation, George Michael has meant a lot to me at different times in my life.

As a gawky teenager in the early 1980s I remember taking posters of my idol from my *Smash Hits* magazines in to my mother's hairdresser and demanding they cut my hair just like George Michael from Wham!

A poster of this Greek Adonis, George glistening underneath an outdoor shower and wearing only the briefest pair of white speedos, was pinned up inside my bedroom closet, kickstarting my lifelong lust for tanned cuties in semi-transparent Lycra.

I wish George had come out then. He could have helped counter that tide of prejudice, but I understand why he didn't. – Peter Tatchell

I loved his music, both as part of Wham! and his subsequent solo career, and I loved the quick-witted George that would appear in interviews. There was a sly queerness about him when he'd somewhat unconvincingly announce he had a girlfriend. I felt strangely drawn to him, both sexually and spiritually, for reasons I didn't understand at the time but most certainly do now.

When I began writing about pop music in 1988 for *Smash Hits* George already rivaled Michael Jackson as the biggest male music star in the world. He'd already outlived his pop use-by-date in superduo Wham! with school buddy Andrew Ridgeley, who went on to race cars, marry Keren Woodward from Bananarama, take up surfing and not much else really.

Born Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou in East Finchley, London on June 25 in 1963 to a Greek Cypriot father and a Jewish English mother, George founded Wham! with Ridgeley in 1981 and just two years later the band's first album *Fantastic* reached number one in the UK. Their second album, *Make It Big*, reached the top of the charts in the US a year later and introduced the world to many songs that would become well

Wham! Bam! George in his own words.

“Fame after Wham! drove me close to lunacy.”

“Gay people in the media are doing what makes straight people comfortable, and automatically my response to that is to say I'm a dirty filthy fucker and if you can't deal with it, you can't deal with it.”

“Elton will not be happy until I bang on his door in the middle of the night saying, 'Please, please, help me, Elton. Take me to rehab.' It's not going to happen.”

“I normally get up about 10am, my PA will bring me a Starbucks, I'll have a look at my emails... Then, if I'm in the mood, I'll come up to the office in Highgate, do some work, writing, backing tracks or whatever. Come home. Kenny [his then boyfriend] will be here, the dogs are here. Maybe eat locally, hang out, and then probably go off and have a shag or have someone come here and have a shag.”

“It helps if you have a beard as it covers a multitude of sins.”

“I don't need the approval of people who don't approve of me.”

“I love [Kenny Goss] very much. This man has brought me a lot of joy and pain. My love life has been a lot more turbulent than I've ever let on, and I'm so sad about my relationship with Kenny. I'm sorry for any pain. My battles with substances are well documented. My partner has been through his own battle.”

“I have never and will never apologise for my sex life! Gay sex is natural, gay sex is good! Not everybody does it, but ... ha ha!”

“I finally realised that one reason why my life has felt so self-destructive is that I never had any feeling that my talent would let me down.”

“I've achieved what every artist wants, which is that some of their work will outlive them.”

loved George Michael signature tracks including *Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go*, *Freedom* and *Careless Whisper* – which would become the very first George Michael solo single when it was released outside of the US.

George's solo career began in earnest with a glowing mesh of big hair (it was the '80s), sympathetic nods to safe sex (his *I Want Your Sex* single was banned for being too explicit) and a swaggering machismo at odds with the real George, afraid to come out in the midst of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

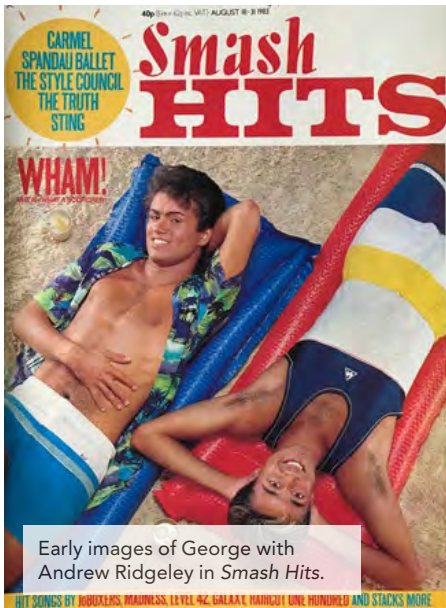
“Gay men were blamed for the deadly virus. Public attitudes become much more homophobic. Gay bashings and murders rocketed. It was a fearful period to be gay, let alone a gay public figure,” legendary British gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell declared in the days after George's death. “I wish George had come out then. He

could have helped counter that tide of prejudice, but I understand why he didn't.”

My next encounter with George came about in 1990 when I was living in London and working for the UK's *Smash Hits* magazine that only a few years earlier Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant had been editor of. On my way to interview Janet Jackson in Rotterdam (she was petite, sweet and gave me a black panther stuffed toy, in case you're wondering) I ran into George at Heathrow Airport at the newsstand near the Concorde departure lounge.

George was hovering around the pop magazines and when he saw me gave me a big wink and a Hollywood smile. I froze as I saw him grab a copy of *Smash Hits* to read and then run for his plane. Did he just cruise me? Did he know about me? Did he know if I knew about him? All these questions remain unanswered.

What I did know was that my magazine was >>



>> having real problems dealing with George's management at the time. This was around the era of his career-defining *Listen Without Prejudice Vol.1* album, which spawned the hits *Praying For Time* and *Freedom! 90* that featured a video of supermodels mouthing the words to his song because by this stage George had decided he didn't really want to be a pop star anymore.

His publicist, whom we glibly assumed was in the process of transitioning, informed us that George would love to do something for the magazine but would not be interviewed. That didn't leave us with many options, so we got rightly pissed off with George and decided that if he was going to be difficult then we were just going to make fun of him (as *Smash Hits* did so love to do in its own ironic way). A few years later I left the pop business, and so did George – at least for a bit.

In 1996 he returned with the album *Older*, a nifty goatee and enough telltale signs to let us in on his big secret – he was one of us and finally seemed ready to own it. If the video for *Fastlove* (with its knowing lyrics about “stupid Cupid's always calling me but I see nothing in his eyes”) wasn't enough to let us in on George's private life then you either weren't listening or watching closely enough.

Just two years later in 1998, George got himself arrested in LA for engaging in a lewd act in a public restroom with a hot Latino... who just happened to be an undercover cop. George came clean, finally coming out officially, and then joyously released a video making fun of his arrest for his *Outside* single – written mischievously about the joys of outdoor sex.

From this point on it's fair to say George came into his own and started to really enjoy his life.

He announced he was in a long-term relationship with Texan Kenny Goss and that it was something of an open monogam-ish relationship and, as we would discover from his numerous subsequent arrests, he had a low tolerance for drugs.

Musically, his output waned in the Noughties as his inspiration went soft and the hits stalled. And, as tales of gay debauchery and drug-addled rebellion filled column inches, George's stature in the mainstream press and audience sank from pop hero to tabloid punching bag.



Drug addiction has affected many of our most famous names ... George Michael's problems have been well documented. – Matthew Todd

Yet his devout gay audience stuck by him and he stuck by them, making a no-excuses sexed-up appearance at the Sydney Gay And Lesbian Mardi Gras Party in 2010 to perform – what else? – *Outside*.

Soon after, I got to rub shoulders with George for the last time. It was on the dance floor of a now defunct men's only club in Sydney and, yes, he does dance just like he does in his videos. He also chatted up my flatmate at the time. George

definitely had good taste – my flatmate went on to be a DNA cover model!

By this stage George had also moved on from dating Kenny to a handsome-but-haughty Australian-Lebanese celebrity hairdresser called Fadi Fawaz. His use of recreational drugs also appeared to be getting out of hand. A near-death experience in 2011 while on tour in Austria, sadly, was still not enough to convince him to put the drugs down.

In 2015 he reportedly visited the world's most expensive rehab in Switzerland for a year to help overcome his addiction, but the last photos taken of him in public from late summer 2016 shows him unhealthily bloated, if not quite obese.

Only months later, on Christmas Day (his very own *Last Christmas*), in a year that had already seen Bowie, Prince, Pete Burns and more taken from us, 2016 claimed another beloved star victim.

Aged just 53, it was reported that George died peacefully in his sleep of heart failure. However, at time of going to press, police are investigating if an overdose of drugs was the cause of death and are awaiting a second autopsy results. His body was found by Fadi who, a day later, managed to tweet how it had been a Christmas he would “never forget”.

So now we are left without the man and with just his music. While much of that cannon of work is undeniably soulful, moving and timeless, George Michael also leaves behind a somewhat tattered and battered legacy.

It's too easy to pick apart George's life in hindsight and suggest that if he had been open about his sexuality earlier on he may have found a way to constructively counteract his self-

destructive and self-sabotaging ways. Then again, he may never have become the true artist he evolved into without being informed and directed by his own personal angst over his homosexuality, his fondness for chemsex, and attempting to reconcile those things with his strict Greek and English upbringing.

Like all of us, George had his debilitating flaws and fearsome blindspots. If he had been able to beat his addiction to drugs, like longtime rival and nemesis Boy George, he might still be around and still making incredible music.

“

I have never and will never apologise for my sex life! Gay sex is natural, gay sex is good! Not everybody does it, but ... ha ha!

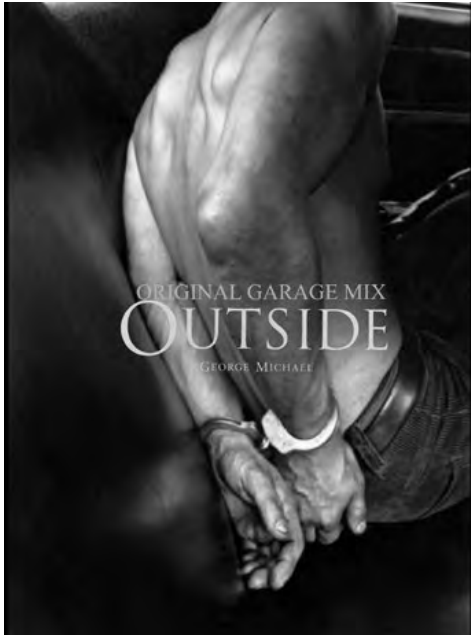
“Drug addiction has affected many of our most famous names including Elton John, Boy George, Stephen Fry, Rufus Wainwright, Marc Almond, Jimmy Somerville, Andy Bell and Olympian pin-up Matthew Mitcham, who wrote of his crystal meth addiction in his autobiography,” Matthew Todd noted in his recent book *Straight Jacket: How To Be Gay And Happy*. “Superstar George Michael’s problems have been well documented. In 2007 he pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of drugs after he was found slumped at the wheel of his Range Rover and, three years later, served four weeks in prison after driving under the influence of cannabis, into a North London shop front. In 2013 he fell out of a vehicle travelling at 70mph on the M1.”

Sadly, George Michael became yet another who is gone too soon without living out a truly full and purposeful life. On the positive side, he not only gave the world the gift of so much unforgettable music, but also paved the way for the next wave of openly gay artists like Adam Lambert, Troye Sivan and Sam Smith.

Lest we forget that George Michael was a true legend and a real gay icon who was actually gay. He will be sorely missed by his army of fans, by lovers of great music and by gay men like me everywhere who idolized him, despite the careless whispers. ★



LADIES AND GENTLEMAN THE HIGHS AND LOWS



THE HIGHS

The Wham! Phenomenon

In their five-year pop reign, Wham! established George Michael as a major global talent, and his partner Andrew Ridgeley as someone who would live for the rest of his life from royalty cheques for co-writing *Careless Whisper*.

Touring China

The duo's ten-day tour of China was the first ever by a Western group – beating Queen to the mark. Wham!'s manager convinced Chinese authorities that Wham! were clean-cut while Queen, fronted by Freddie Mercury, were too flamboyant.

Going Solo

Even before Wham! officially split the foundations for George's solo career were laid with some classic singles (*Careless Whisper*, *A Different Corner*). He eventually went on to sell more than 100 million records worldwide, win Grammys and change lives.

Princess Diana

It was no secret that the late Princess Of Wales was a huge Wham! fan and the two forged a close bond and friendship. When she died in 1997

George attended the funeral alongside another of their mutual pals, Elton John.

Getting Outted Outside

Being arrested for committing a “lewd” act in an LA public toilet in 1998 could have been a PR disaster. But George brilliantly “owned” the shame, described it as a “subconsciously deliberate act” and hit the chat show circuit to laugh it off. And the world laughed with him. Now out, his career reignited both as a singer/songwriter and an LGBT role model.

Cheating Death – Once!

In 2011 in the midst of his *Symphonica* tour George was admitted into hospital in Austria and slipped into a coma. He literally came back from the dead after a bout of pneumonia and when he briefly did he took on a regional British accent to boot!

Redefining The Gay Pop Star

Overcoming society's homophobia and his own internalised homophobia, George turned from being a self-proclaimed bisexual at age 19 who hid his true nature to spare his mother, into becoming openly gay after finally falling in love with another man. As an out gay man he was active, and shamelessly, on dating and cruising apps.

Charity And Generosity

After his death it was revealed that George had been a major – and often secret – donor to many charities including child protection group Childline, AIDS foundation The Terrence Higgins Trust, and was responsible for many random acts of monetary goodwill.



THE LOWS

Speculation On His Sexuality

For many years it was an open secret in the music business that George was gay. As much as he originally tried to quell tabloid gossip with

“girlfriends” and groupies, his depression over his sexuality was the real reason he quit Wham!

The Book Of Non-Secrets

In 1991, just when he had decided he didn't want to be famous anymore, George released an autobiography called *Bare*. Somehow it managed to skip over any mention of his private life, let alone his gay life, and was met with general derision.

The Death Of Anselmo

In 1991, at the Rock In Rio concert, George met handsome Brazilian fashion designer Anselmo Feleppa. They became a couple but Anselmo developed AIDS and dying in 1993. George's hit song *Jesus To A Child* was written in response to the loss.

The Death Of His Mother

George shielded his homosexuality from his mother, Lesley. She died in 1997 of cancer. Coincidentally, she had a gay brother who died the day George was born, which he documented in his moving 2004 song *My Mother Had A Brother*.

His Feud With Boy George

Pop's longest on-going bitch-fight was between George and Boy George. The Boy was infuriated that George Michael refused to come out. He described him as loitering in public loos “like some pre-war homosexual” and once quipped that “George Michael's heterosexuality is the best kept secret in showbiz”. They officially patched things up in 2010.

The Kenny Goss Years

Without doubt, the true love of his life, George started his romance with the Texan in 1996. Their relationship weathered George's toilet antics and subsequent outing. They split in 2009 after 13 years together with Kenny admitting he, too, suffered from addictions.

Drinking And Drugging

Sadly, George's issues with drink and drugs became a major part of his later life, overshadowing many of the musical achievements of his life. His first drug arrest was in 2006, followed by four more; the final one in 2010 putting him in prison for a month.

Terrible Driving

Part of George's problem with drugs was that he still liked to drive. He famously went to sleep in front of a set of traffic lights, later crashed into a shop, and in 2013 even fell out of a moving car on a freeway.

Goodbyes

THE STARS' TRIBUTES TO GEORGE...



"I am in deep shock. I have lost a beloved friend – the kindest, most generous soul and a brilliant artist. My heart goes out to his family and all of his fans. #RIP." – *Elton John*

"Heartbroken at the loss of my beloved friend Yog. Me, his loved ones, his friends, the world of music, the world at large. 4ever loved. A xx." – *Andrew Ridgeley (former Wham! partner)*

"Farewell, my friend! Another great artist leaves us. Can 2016 F— Off NOW?" – *Madonna*



"I am thinking of George Michael's family, friends and fans right now. He was so loved and I hope he knew it because the sadness today is beyond words. Devastating. What a beautiful voice he had and his music will live on as a testament to his talent. I can't believe he is gone. I hope the Buddha will hold him in his arms. NMRK." ("NMRK" stands for "Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō," a Buddhist chant) – *Boy George*

"I just heard about my friend George Michael's death. He was such a brilliant talent. I'm so sad." – *Ellen DeGeneres*

"Rest In Peace our dear George Michael!" – *Dustin Lance Black*

"2016 – loss of another talented soul. All our love and sympathy to George Michael's family." – *Duran Duran*



"I've loved George Michael for as long as I can remember. He was an absolute inspiration. Always ahead of his time. George Michael wrote *Praying For Time* 25 years ago but I truly believe its message means more now than ever." – *James Corden*

"My god. Rest in paradise George Michael – an icon, an ally, a legend." – *Margaret Cho*

"Rest with the glittering stars, George Michael. You've found your *Freedom*, your *Faith*. It was your *Last Christmas*, and we shall miss you." – *George Takei*



"Thank you for the music, magic and memories. RIP George Michael." – *Kylie Minogue*

"George... you inspired, you filled the room with no apology and filled my childhood with such moments of magnificence... thank you x." – *Stella McCartney*



"Oh God No ...I love you George ...Rest in Peace. X." – *Robbie Williams*

"Miss you already! Thank you for your radical activism in the LGBTQ community! Love you always!" – *Miley Cyrus*

"So sorry to hear of the passing of George Michael. My prayers and condolences go out to his family, friends and fans." – *Gloria Gaynor*

"We are shocked and saddened to hear of George Michael's death. As you see, we have very fond memories of him. RIP." – *Sydney Gay And Lesbian Mardi Gras*

"Heartbroken at the loss of one of my oldest friends. I will never forget the fun times we had together. Rest in Peace George, I'll miss you." – *Sarah Dallin (Bananarama)*

"Dear George, gone too soon. It's so sad. Heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. Love, Neil and Chris x." – *Pet Shop Boys*



"Do you really want to hurt me? I guess you do 2016 - #rip boy george I was truly one of your biggest fans" – *Sarah Michelle Geller*

PAUL MAC: “I WAS GEORGE MICHAEL’S FLUFFER”

A FEW DAYS after the shock of George Michael’s untimely death, Australian DJ/producer and electronic music guru Paul Mac shared this intimate story of what it was like hanging out with the superstar towards the end of his life...



“It’s been a super sad couple of days thinking about George and how he was such a beautiful man, friend and inspiration. Me and Jonny [DJ/producer] were working with him on what was, unfortunately, an unfinished dance album. The only thing that saw the light of day was the Stereogamous remix of *White Light*, which is the amazing song he wrote after surviving a near death experience when he caught pneumonia on tour.

“We had spent a lot of time together in Sydney and London working on music. I can’t get the image out of my head of us and his bestie Keiran Smyth laughing and listening to music in our backyard

and studio, introducing him to Sia, and him being incredibly generous with his time, money and musical experience.

“Anyway, as part of *Queerstories* (at the 2016 Sydney Fringe Festival) me and Jonny were asked to tell stories of our queer life experiences. Part of mine was sharing a beautiful night we had at George’s house.

“The story is called *I Was George Michael’s Fluffer*. I wondered whether it was a tribute or disrespectful to make it public, but after much thought I know that it would make him smile wherever he is now so, fuck it, this is the story...

“Me and Jonny are touring Stereogamous through Europe. We haven’t slept for five days and arrive to do a live set at Lovebox in London. George promises he will show up. He does and it’s chaos. Me and Jonny are playing security as everyone from Beth Ditto to Robyn want a chat with our mega-star friend. An amazing flamboyance of club kids accompany us all back to his mega house.

“I’m exhausted but the drag queen from Israel

with the incredible voice and one long scooper finger nail keeps entering the room every 10 minutes chanting the name of the new drug she is offering in an elongated Euro-camp accent, ‘Methadrone, cocaine, ketamine’.

“The party is delightful but finally the week’s lack of sleep has caught up with me. I ask our gracious host if I can pass out in one of the many guest rooms. He shows me where and I say good night.

“Next thing I know I wake up sensing a presence in the room. I open one eye as I know that someone is standing next to me at the bedhead. I wake up a bit. Someone’s jerking off near my face. He looks at me expectantly. He’s not really my type but it feels kinda rude not to participate. I give him a perfunctory blowjob. He gets nice and hard.

“I feel another presence at the doorway. It’s George with a cheeky grin who has been watching the whole time. He’d met someone on Scruff, invited him over to his house and promptly sent him up to my room. I warmed him up and sent him on his way. It was then that I realised... I was George Michael’s fluffer.” ★

The 10 Essential George Michael Tunes

1. CARELESS WHISPER (1984)

One of the finest big-hair, bittersweet ballads of all time that has not dulled with the years and his first solo hit as well, though he hated the lyrics.

2. FASTLOVE (1996)

Showing his true colours as last, George drops some not-so-subtle hints at his true nature with arguably his career best dance song.

3. JESUS TO A CHILD (1996)

An epic, written for his partner Anselmo Feleppa who died of AIDS in 1992, at a time when George thought he might die from the disease, too.

4. PRAYING FOR TIME (1990)

George’s big statement song about the state of the world was also his first single not to feature himself in the video.

5. LAST CHRISTMAS (1984)

The biggest selling single of all time that never got to #1, held off by Band-Aid’s *Do They Know It’s Christmas* which also featured George.

6. FAITH (1987)

Not only one of the greatest pop songs of all time (and another #1 for him), but also a video full of shots of his



tight butt in jeans.

7. SOMEBODY TO LOVE (1993)

When Freddie Mercury died of AIDS in 1991 a huge fundraising concert was held and George sang, and owned, this classic, sending it to #1.

8. A DIFFERENT CORNER (1986)

Avoid the video (worst ‘80s hair in a video ever!) and you have a gobsmackingly gorgeous, albeit minimalist, ode to heartbreak.

9. I KNEW YOU WERE WAITING FOR ME (1987)

Although he didn’t write it, this duet with soul legend Aretha Franklin proved George owned more soul than any other white boy dared dream.

10. WAKE ME UP BEFORE YOU GO-GO (1984)

Though much of the Wham! catalogue is unashamedly pop-tastic, this “shuttlecocks down white shorts” bopper is an effervescent party pleaser.

The 5 Most Awesome Georgesome Videos

1. TOO FUNKY (1992)

Supermodels, super high fashion outfits and a super sly cameo from George himself. Plus all profits went to the Red Hot + Blue AIDS charity.

2. I WANT YOUR SEX (1987)

Long before anyone else dared make a risqué statement, let alone a safe sex video, George was doing it for his peeps.

3. CLUB TROPICANA (1983)

Yes, it’s that video featuring George in those tight, white speedos. The Wham! track also happens to be ridiculously catchy, too.

4. OUTSIDE (1998)

What do you do when you’ve been arrested for gay sex in a toilet by an undercover cop? Make a video making fun of yourself, of course.

5. WHITE LIGHT (2012)

Performed at the 2012 London Olympics, George’s musing on surviving death the previous year and starring his model buddy Kate Moss in the video.



/ GEORGE MICHAEL

**“I have never and will never apologise for my sex life!
Gay sex is natural, gay sex is good! Not everybody does it, but ... ha ha!”**



"I Want Your Sex"

Imagine being cruised by the world's top male pop star on Gaydar. That's how Steve Pafford met and became friends with George Michael. Steve recalls the sex, the spliffs and the warm and witty "Yog" he knew.

In the days before hook-up apps, the cruising megasite was Gaydar. I joined 13 years ago, newly single and living in leafy North London. "Internet dating" was a bizarre beast. So many reasons to be wary. How do you know that's them in the photo? And if it is, how do you know it's not from a time when ABBA were still in the charts?

Having only had a profile for three months, when I receive a series of messages out of the blue from a person who reckons he's George Michael, one of the greatest pop stars of the time, I'm naturally disinclined to believe him.

It's a wet Monday evening in April and as I log onto the 'dar, something more than a million users were doing every day back in 2004, I notice a message from a faceless user with a moniker not too dissimilar to that of a well-known brand of vodka. He tells me almost straight away that we are in the same business. On his profile page he states his profession as a lawyer. Mine says I'm in the music/publishing business so I joke to myself that I'm chatting to Stevie Wonder and ask him to clarify.

"Hi. How is law my business? And do you have

any pix?" This seems the only logical response I can muster. "Oh yeah, sorry, forgot about that. This is why it says that," and then I notice he's attached a photo. He extrapolates, "Just a little smoke-screening for unwanted guests, i.e. press. Genuinely. Are you a writer or a publisher?"

I smile at his interest in my job (makes a change from being asked about my dick) and then my beam becomes a belly laugh as I open the attachment and see a picture of George Michael. And not any old snap but a standard promo shot that his record company had mailed me earlier that month to accompany his latest album, *Patience*.

Bemused, I decided to play along. "Oh, hello George, I have your new album but haven't decided how good it is yet!" Cue LOLs. I then list some of the music mags I freelance for and tell the jester about the David Bowie book I've authored. He sounds instantly interested. "Really, did you ever get to meet him? He was the first celebrity I ever bumped into, unless you count Nerys Hughes from *The Liver Birds* when I was nine!"

Slightly too blasé for my own good I confess I've met Bowie too many times and that, "I'd be far more interested in meeting Nerys Hughes these days."

"Blasphemy!" counters Mr Vodka and I detect I'm touching a raw nerve. He's obviously an even bigger Bowie fan than me. He tells me how he "made a right fool of myself with him, too, never forget it. I was on the way out of a studio, long anecdote,

maybe I can tell you sometime." He continues, "I live near you. Do you puff at all?"

I tell him I'd rather go for a drink and, before I forget, "Are you gonna send me a pic of you rather than that hairy half-Greek before we meet?" He asks what I drink and then, almost as an afterthought, tells me, "And that is a pic of me, mate, the most famous male slapper on the planet!" But I read the message too quickly and say to myself, "I've got a right loony here. First he reckons he's George Michael, now he reckons he's George Michael's mate. He'll be telling me he's Elton John next."

Messages bounce back and forth over the next couple of days and I start to realise that far from being a nut job he's as passionate about music as me and I begin to wonder...

When he asks if I have Greek parentage because "you look mainland, not Cypriot like me," I tell him that if he's who he claims to be then he's extraordinarily bold to cruise a member of the press on a sex site. I ask if he has a webcam. He does, and tells me he's "totally over discretion", and warns me he won't be doing anything "naughty" on it but is happy to show his face.

My dial-up connection seems to take an eternity to load and then suddenly, snap, crackle and pop! A toothy grin dazzles my ageing monitor and lo-and-behold, it really is George Michael! He chuckles. I ask if he does this often. "The cam? I've only started using it in the past few days." He laughs again, and

he tells me he's just got in from misbehaving. "So relieved the album's out and well received so it calls for a little slutty behaviour methinks!" He says he'll invite me around for a "gay old chat soon". He seems surprisingly down-to-earth for someone in his position, and disarmingly open.

The moment we disconnect I get an attack of the nerves, not quite believing what's just happened. George Michael? Oh my god! It's not that I was a fan; my sister bought his records back in the day, and in the case of that first Wham! album I was too intrigued by the bare-chested pictures of George and Andrew Ridgeley to need the music. Wham! unleashed the repressed homo in me and became my first all-male wank material. Thank heavens for protective outer sleeves.

A decade later I found myself in a share house with a female GM superfan. One of our roomies came home with tales of a friend of his who'd been cruised by a baseball capped George walking his dog in a park near us in Golders Green. Vicky dismissed the tale as ridiculous. "He's not gay, you just want him to be." But I laughed, knowing there was a lot more to him than he wanted the world to know.

Five years later and there was no doubt in anyone's mind. When you're a famous pop star who's just been arrested for cottaging in a public toilet you can either go to ground and pretend it never happened or go completely in the other direction and release *Outside*. Wonderfully witty, humane, camp, subversive, hilarious and utterly defiant, both song and video were a disarming, self-mocking response to the kind of grubby police entrapment that ended careers in darker times. Was there ever a more perfect coming-out record than this? It impressed me so much that, Ladies and Gentlemen, I bought my very first George Michael album.

Fourteen months later I receive a firm invitation to a palatial Georgian house in Highgate. By this point, George owned four homes in England and the Hampstead abode was just an occasional "shag pad". I was being allowed into the inner sanctum, as it were. It's Monday 13th June, 2005, and "Yog", as Andrew Ridgeley calls him, phones me: "You've always sounded like fun. Bring your videos with you if you like." (I'd recently filmed a couple of saucy suit films for Menatplay.) I arrive dead on 8pm as agreed and he comes to the gate dressed in khaki shorts and a baggy black T-shirt, one of his beloved Golden Labradors tracking his every move. He's warm and chirpy and in pretty good nick. Good start.

He leads me (not by the hand) to a kitchen diner that looks out onto one of the biggest gardens I've ever seen but, before I've even had a chance to sit down, George gets a phone call. It's his sister,

Melanie: "Put Sky News on. They're about to announce the Michael Jackson verdict!" So we sit, glued to the flat screen TV on the wall, waiting for the court's judgment on the latest round of child abuse allegations. We're so engrossed in the drama that Yog soon realises he's forgotten to offer me anything. "Do you drink? I think I've got a bottle of wine somewhere." It's obvious alcohol is no longer his regular drug of choice. This becomes even more apparent as he spends a good ten minutes looking for a bottle opener. At one point I turn around and catch George Michael with his head inside the washing machine. "Oh, I thought the cleaner may have put the corkscrew in there. I think she's hiding it from me."

He then sits at the dining table with two packets of Silk Cut and a stash of hash and rolls a couple



So relieved the album's out and well received so it calls for a little slutty behaviour methinks!

of joints. We watch the not-guilty verdicts come in. After the first one George is incredulous. "No, fucking way!" he cries. Then the next: "I don't fucking believe it. This is a travesty. Just how many people have been paid off?" It goes on and on, and I can see George's rage building. He's as red-faced as Jacko is white. He clearly believes the court has reached the wrong verdict. I ask him if he's ever met Michael Jackson.

"Oh yeah, we were even going to work together. But his bizarre behaviour put the kibosh on that. We drove all the way to his house in the steaming heat of California, met for over an hour and not once were we offered a drink or even a chair. He kept his sunglasses on the whole time and let his manager do all the talking. I came away thinking this guy is a complete and utter nutter. This was 1986 and it's funny, looking back, but at the time we were the biggest male pop stars in the world, rivals, I suppose. And our label Sony had this grand idea of a duet – the two Michaels – it could've been the biggest thing ever. But no amount of record sales was worth that kind of behaviour."

George switches off the TV and starts to calm down. He's extremely grounded and well-mannered. "My mother always taught me to treat people with

respect and common decency."

We bond over music and he regales me with stories of his contemporaries: "Stevie Wonder I adore but because he's blind he has no concept of time. I once waited for him an entire day at the studio." The Dame: "I knew I was never gonna be Bowie, with a level of coolness that was way above everyone. I always thought I was gonna be Elton without the piano."

As with Michael Jackson, the only time he's less than polite about someone is when he feels he's been treated badly by them. "I invited Mick Hucknall to share my stage and as soon as the show is over he slags me off to the papers. What an absolute cunt!"

It was the middle of the night before we went upstairs. As a mood setter, Yog wanted to watch a couple of the movies I'd made but they wouldn't play! Never mind, I guess we made our own entertainment. He eventually drove me home around 5am. When I told my then-partner this inconsequential fact, he went ballistic, asking how many spliffs he'd puffed. It was a fair few but, I noted, George seemed immune to their effects.

I saw George quite a number of times after that and I can honestly say that the tabloid portrayal of him as a man constantly incoherent and off-his-face was not one I recognised at all.

A couple of years later he let me interview him for a *Gay Times* cover feature to tie in with him opening the new Wembley Stadium. I took along the Deputy Ed and, as we turned on the tape Yog asked Richard, "Did Steve tell you that he turned up at one of my concerts last year wearing a T-shirt that said, 'I wanked off George Michael.'?"

That was the last time I saw him. In 2007 I found myself in a relationship that was to become both monogamous and my longest by far. The boyf and I moved to the other side of London but Yog and I kept in touch.

The George Michael I knew was warm, funny, generous to a fault, extremely talkative and witty. It bothered me how housebound he was ("Two people followed me this morning, and I have people outside my house three or four days a week"), and that he'd become a little too enamoured by guys in the sex industry, both porn stars and escorts.

One night he asked for "any recommendations" and I mentioned a handsome Lebanese guy I'd met. "Fadi. You'll like him," I said. "He's a taller, more muscular version of me."

From hook-up to friend to Cupid. Was I stupid? I didn't read the signs (baby). It took a while to realise I'd done myself out of a relationship without ever expecting that he was looking for one. I'll miss you, Yog, and feel honoured to have known you.. ★

THE *Fight* OF HIS LIFE

Pretty boy Timothy Guest loves a good fight. In fact, he says fighting has helped him overcome both ADHD and depression. Now the former go-go boy and jail bird is in MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) training and hopes to become the first openly gay fighter in the UFC (Ultimate Fight Championship).

Marc Andrews did not step into the ring for this interview!

Photography by Ricardo Muñiz.



Timothy Guest looks set to become the first openly gay fighter in the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship), the martial arts promotion company that tours the world staging frightening in-cage fights between super-fit and super-agro opponents. Ask your straight buddies for verification!

With a major sponsor on board, Tim's set to claim his title as the world's first gay superhero, of sorts – something he's aspired to since he was a kid. He's as quick with his wit as he is with his fists and feet. With killer abs, a to-die-for smile, bubble butt and bulges in all the right places, he's the whole package. As a flamboyant gay kid, he survived schoolyard bullying and miraculously turned into a martial arts expert and LGBT role model on the verge. He tells DNA that his ultimate aim is "to break down the fragile ideology of masculinity in America" and beyond. Them's fighting words.

DNA: You came out at age 11. What made you realise you were gay so early?

Timothy: I don't remember what made me realise, but I recall the one thing that made me feel it was okay. I was hanging out with my best friend. She asked me if I had a crush on anyone. I said I did and she said, "It's okay if it's a boy. You're allowed to." I was shocked, but I quickly named the boy and I smiled. I was only 11 then but that's how I came out.

Then you started promoting LGBT events at the age of 15. Is that true? How?

Well, it all started when I used to hang out in front of a coffee shop called Big Cup. I saw someone passing out flyers for an LGBT event so I asked if I could help. I wasn't technically allowed to hand out flyers and I didn't get paid but I came up with these fancy fan designs and I put them in the back of my shorts. There I was, a loud, gay teen twerking with flyers fanning out of my little shorts. "Come get one!" I'd say. "See you later!" Let me tell you, I passed out a lot of flyers.

How supportive were your parents, family and friends?

My parents were already divorced at the time and had different reactions. My mom wasn't so open. During the time I came out, she was becoming a Jehovah's Witness. We didn't talk for a year and a half. I cut her out of my life until she accepted me. When she tried to contact me I'd ignore her or I'd be a bit cruel. It was simple for me. I am who I am. It's your job, as a parent, to always be there for me no

matter what. If you can't do your job, you are not my parent. My dad had a funny reaction. His response was, "I never imagined you with a woman anyway, so men would be the logical choice." That was that. The rest of my family quickly accepted it. I probably had more of an issue with it than they did.

Did you experience any bullying or homophobia as an out gay teen?

I dealt with homophobia in the fifth grade. I was called faggot, pegged with rocks and chased after school. One time, I was corralled and held up against a fence and beaten by other students during actual school hours. However, when I became a teenager, the bullying and homophobic remarks didn't happen so much. I was extremely flamboyant as a teenager. I also had a quick mouth and wasn't afraid to fight.

Did you get into fistfights with straight boys?

Yes.

Did you ever end up in hospital?

No.

Did you ever go to jail for the damage you caused?

Yes...

What was your driving force at this time?

I didn't have a driving force. I was just crazy. I kept pushing forward. I was in therapy.

What did you discover in therapy?

That I had ADHD and chronic depression.

Who did you look up to at that time?

This is a tough question because I never saw any living person as my idol. I looked up to superheroes.

After you left school you became a go-go dancer, is that right?

Yes. I had many scholarships to go to college but instead I became a go-go dancer. Actually, I was doing go-go while I was still in high school and working at American Eagle in Soho in New York City. When I was 19 I started bartending and have been a bartender ever since. Now I'm training to become a UFC fighter.

When you were go-going did you get involved in the gay sex and party drug scene?

Sex parties were never my thing. I'm actually the monogamous relationship type. I want a husband, kids and dogs, white picket fence – the whole boring American Dream! I've got the dogs; I'm working on the husband next. I did dabble in the drug party scene, though. Dealing with depression and my ADHD as a teen I was always heavily medicated but I never felt that it "fixed" me. The medications would treat me symptomatically but they never helped me with my emotions. About three years ago I discovered two illicit drugs that seemed to work on my

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I'd spent my whole youth fighting the world; my teen years fighting the bullies and homophobes, my early twenties fighting expectations. And I spent my whole life fighting myself. Now, it all makes sense.

emotions and I quickly started using and abusing them. However, I was in a long-term relationship and my partner said he would leave me if I continued to use. So I stopped.

That relationship must have been important to you?

You know, love matters more to me than anything else. Then, of course, we broke up after nearly two years. I could have returned to the drug scene but I started fighting in May of this year and that immediately became my drug.



Experiencing such intense physical activity and mental acuity – I felt like this energy fixed my emotions and helped me focus on issues for the first time in my life. This was the catalyst for my being a fighter today: discovering something that fixed me in a way nothing else ever had.

What made you want to become a Mixed Martial Arts fighter in the Ultimate Fight Championship?

There are many factors. One is my own mental state. I never felt at peace until I started fighting.

Training every day depletes all my energy and that's a very hard thing to do. Fighting makes me the happiest I've ever been. For the past ten years I've been battling depression. The day I decided to do Muay Thai, overnight, I felt pure happiness. At first, I was scared. I thought these new feelings of peace, happiness and relief were going to go away but they haven't. I've been happy every day since I've been training. There has been no more depression. I knew then I found my purpose. I had spent my whole youth fighting the

world. I spent my teen years fighting the bullies and homophobes. I spent my early twenties fighting expectations. And I spent my whole life fighting myself. Now it all makes sense.

Why spend all that energy fighting, fighting, fighting with no purpose in mind?

I did some research and found out there hasn't been any active, openly gay UFC fighter. I thought, "Well, then, the first one shouldn't be some hetero norm. He should have some queen in him. He should be someone who grew up in the gay >>



TIMMY'S SUPERHERO FITNESS PLAN

"I RUN AND swim every morning, followed by Muay Thai. I have Jiu Jitsu Monday through Thursday, Capoeira Tuesday and Thursday, classic jazz on Sunday, and I lift Monday through Friday. I lift for the maintenance of my strength. I'm no longer trying to go beyond my level.

"Nutrition is tricky. Everybody is different and I'm naturally skinny when I'm active. I take a lot of supplements: time-release multi-vitamins, joint supplements, spirulina, ZMA fuel and proteins. I'm training so much I can eat whatever I want. I have to make sure I'm taking in enough calories or I get skinny.

"My advice: know your body and make sure it gets its proper nutrients. Vary your workouts. Consult a trainer. Check with your doctor. Experience is the best teacher."

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I believe your happiness shouldn't be created by harming someone. Ironically, I'm trying to deliver this message while inflicting pain. The message, though, is not painful.

>> lifestyle and who understands the gay culture!" You see, what people misinterpret as femininity sometimes is just gay culture, and I plan on

breaking those boundaries. Of course, I've already told you about my obsession with superheroes. Now, I can become one.

How gay-friendly is the UFC?

Well, the UFC doesn't have any active and openly gay fighters, but there are fighters who have shown support to the LGBTQ community. Some of these fighters have made contributions to the community. However, I'd be the first fighter who is openly out.

A lot of people think the fights are staged. Talk us through that.

If anyone thinks being beaten in a cage where blood is spilled, cauliflower ears are made, and bones are broken is fake, then they need to jump in and fight themselves. Perhaps they are thinking about another pro sport.

What are your ultimate aims?

To break down the fragile ideology of masculinity in America.

That sounds ambitious. What does it mean?

My goal is to provide strength for young

boys and girls to follow their dreams, even if they don't fit the norm. If, as a man, you like construction work and the colour pink and doing drag on the weekends you shouldn't have to choose one or the other. Life is about doing the things that make you happy. However, I do believe that your happiness shouldn't be created by harming someone else. Ironically, I'm trying to deliver this message while inflicting pain. The message, though, is not painful.

Will you create a special fighting name, look and persona?

My name hasn't come to me yet. I'm obsessed with dragons, Cerberus, superheroes, and my favorite colours are blood red and periwinkle so maybe something will happen with all that.

You mentioned that you are husband hunting at the moment...

At the moment, I'm single. I'll be honest, a pretty face gets me at hello, but I am looking for a husband so there has to be a deeper connection. And I do have very high expectations of a partner.

Such as?

I want someone who puts as much effort into their life as I put into mine, and who will put as much effort into our life together. I look for will power. I look for someone willing to try anything. A non-negotiable for me is affection. I love kissing, cuddling and romance. I'm highly affectionate. I believe in doing everything together, teaching each other and learning new things together... do you know anyone like this? [Laughs.]

Until he arrives, what are the most important things in your life?

Fighting, loving, learning, sleeping, food, fitness and making a difference in this world for gay kids.

Speedos, board shorts or nude at the beach?

Trunks! No speedos and no board shorts.

Really, why trunks?

So it's just enough to show off the sexy and leave something to the imagination.

What body part do you most like to show off?

Honestly, I couldn't say. When I look at myself I see a bunch of flaws that happen to look good when placed together, I guess. I'm often told I have a gorgeous smile.

You do! What's your best non-physical attribute?

My empathy. I believe we all feel the same emotions despite experiencing different situations.

What's your message for the readers of DNA?

I have a lot of people believing in me and I hope to be a good gay role model. I recently did my first New York Fashion Week Show with Chulo underwear. It was so much fun. The founder of that charity line is also the photographer who took these hot photos. I just got a sponsor, Xceli Global, who will be sponsoring me on my journey to become the first openly gay UFC fighter. It really is a blessing to have a company believe in me so early in my journey.

We are excited for you and wish you all the best with your fighting career.

I'm really curious to see who else joins this team I hope to build. We can all make a difference for LGBTQ youth everywhere. Thanks so much DNA. I'm really happy to be able to share my journey with your readers. ★

MORE: Go to www.instagram.com/timmy_turnerg or find him on Facebook as timothy.guest.5. For more work of the photographer Ricardo Muñiz check out www.ricarto.com and www.chulounderwear.nyc



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I love kissing, cuddling and romance... doing everything together, teaching each other and learning new things... Do you know anyone like this?

THE UNDERWEAR REPORT

The choices available to men in the underwear department are greater now than ever. Technical innovations in design and fabric along with designers coming up with increasingly creative ranges means men are getting better fitting and better looking underwear. Our Style guy, Joshua Heath profiled some of the brands that are doing the best...

COCKSOX

The fitted boxer is making a comeback thanks to new fabrics that hold their shape longer. Goodbye “old man saggy pants” which many boxer styles end up resembling. The Cocksox range hold their shape wash after wash. These fitted boxers also offer a little luxury for your lap – the breathable fabric works moisture away from the body, keeping you fresher longer. The CX12 Boxer features the unique Cocksox pouch that keeps your boys front and centre, and seamless back and sides for a comfortable wraparound fit. Perfect for the gym under running shorts, and perfect for your suit pants as there’s no “visible panty line”.

cocksox.com





TEAMM8

Unleash your inner beast with the new Animal Instinct Collection from Teamm8. Unique print interpretations inspired by wild animals (Tiger, Jaguar, Cheetah and Giraffe) are paired stylishly with solid coloured blocks over the pouch for maximum impact. And all in a sexy low-rise brief.

teamm8.com

STYLE / *with Joshua Heath*



ADDICTED

This globally popular Spanish brand have launched their new range, called Creamy. High quality fabrics provide the wearer with an exceptional fit, while funky pop-art inspired prints add a young and fun feel. Their shoots, with photographers like Danniell Rojas, certainly convey their messaging.

addictedaustralia.com



LUNCH

Lunch's range of Packed Lunch briefs and trunks are made in Australia from premium, lightweight stretch fabric for superior comfort and wearability. The classic styling is designed to suit all body types, and all garments are engineered for support where it's needed. The overall look is relaxed, strong, masculine and confident.

lunchmenswear.com.au



GARCON MODEL

A modern classic, the Ocean brief offers comfort, style and fun colour combos. Garcon Model's SoBe Trunks (named after the vibrant South Beach district of Miami) provide a trunk alternative in comfortable and form-fitting microfiber.

garconmodel.com



MARCO MARCO

America's "out there" underwear brand Marco Marco have an eye-popping range of briefs, boxers, leggings, harnesses and some gear that simply defies description. Comfort, cut and fabric are important to this brand but they always have an eye to the extrovert in their customers. These jockstraps scream "look at me".

marcomarcounderwear.com



STYLE | *with Joshua Heath*

SUPAWEAR

Constantly experimenting with form, colour and cut, Supawear's brand new Vortex range includes a brief, jockstrap, leggings and a mid-length fitted boxer brief. This brand is active and sporty and always has something new on the horizon. Ones to watch.

supawear.2eros.com





BCNÜ

OTIÜM is the latest collection from BCNÜ, an active range with an uncompromising attitude to style, quality and comfort. Engineered using BCNÜ's revolutionary cotton punch-hole fabric, OTIÜM has been designed for all-day comfort – and they look great, too! BCNÜ say that OTIÜM, which comes in a brief and a fitted trunk, and offers support where needed, represents the next generation of underwear from the brand.

bcnuclothing.com/underwear

Les Farfadais

Half-naked men, their bodies intertwined and defying gravity. Les Farfadais is a performance troupe encompassing acrobatics, circus skills and haute couture costumes. On a recent visit to Australia, we caught up with founder Stephane Haffner and his husband Kyle Kier-Haffner for a chat and photoshoot. Words and pictures by Riley-McFarlane Photography.



DNA: How would you describe what the audience will see when they come to one of your shows?

Stephane: We mix live, contemporary music, dance, circus acts and aerial acrobatics with elaborate avant-garde costumes to create our fantasy world! It's like taking you into our own dreamlike realm. While our shows appeal to audiences of all ages, we also design shows for different markets. We have shows with aerialists, equestrians and even horses on stage or just Kyle and myself in a bathtub. For example, what the audience sees at *The One Grand Show* in Berlin (costumes by Jean-Paul Gautier by the way) is not quite as sensual and erotic as our performances on the Atlantis cruises.

Can you explain the scale of Les Farfadais today and how it all began?

Stephane: I founded Les Farfadais 20 years ago, and five years after that my brother joined me. Now, Les Farfadais is troupe of over 90 international performers with multiple productions and galas happening simultaneously across the globe. We came to Sydney to join a cruise ship for the inaugural performance of a show we are producing in collaboration with



STEPHANE HAFNER practiced high-level gymnastics between 6 and 17 years of age. In 1995 he began creating acts for street performances. Soon after he started to work in Italian show business. In 1996, thanks to a double training in fashion design and modern circus, he developed original visual acts integrated with acrobatics. Together with Emiliano Simeoni performs in the acrobatic duo Angels. Since 1998 he has been the Art Director of the Farfadais Company and creator of the acts that the company produce around the world.

“

“The word Farfadais refers to the lights between the clouds and the universe that we cannot see.”

them and installing across their fleet. We took the opportunity to arrive a little earlier to see some of the sights of Sydney. We'd love to come back and explore it in more detail and, hopefully, have the opportunity to bring our show to Australian audiences.

You made quite an impact when you appeared on Italy's Got Talent, and not just for your performance. What happened?

Stephane: Well, immediately after the performance I asked the host and judges if they would permit me to say something. At that point I got down on one knee and asked Kyle if he would marry me. Thankfully, he said yes.

Kyle: There's a bit of a back story to this. Some time before this we were in a plain, somewhat gloomy office in Paris, trying to arrange the French equivalent of the US Green Card so that I could stay with Stephane in Paris as we were now a couple. It wasn't going smoothly and Stephane said, "perhaps we should just get married," to which I responded, "if you are going to propose to me it had better be in a better place than this and a lot more romantic." That's how it ended up for the world to see.

Stephane: We have been performing side by side for the past four years. Living, dating and performing every single day! It seemed the logical place to propose. We're very grateful to have found each other. We are very similar in the way we think in both our art and our lives.

That explains the beautiful intimacy we see watching you work together.

Stephane: Thank you.

Where do you see yourselves in five or 10 year's time?

Stephane: Performing on the Atlantis cruises has given us a larger following in North America. While we are well-received and known in Europe I am hoping that we can take the shows across the Atlantic.

Kyle: We love doing what we do and performing together. We hope to continue to do it for as long as we can. ★



KYLE KIER is from Rochester, New York and has performed internationally as a circus acrobat. Kyle's specialties are in gymnastics, diving and circus arts. After graduation in 2009 he began performing at Walt Disney World Orlando Florida in shows such as The Festival Of The Lion King and Block Party Bash with Metropolis Productions. Soon after he hit the seas as a principal aerialist. He was featured in shows Le Cirque Bijou and Bollywood on the NCL Dawn. He now performs as a company member of Les Farfadais.



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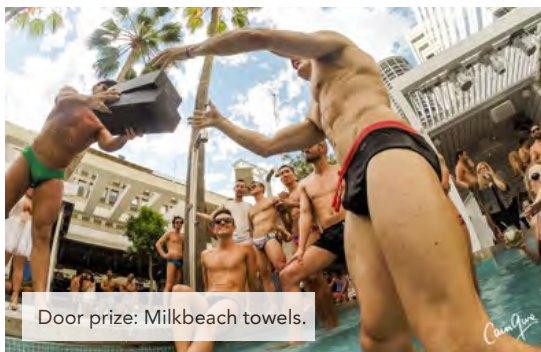
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NUTTIER THAN A SQUIRREL TURD

(HERE'S WHAT THE HATERS HAVE BEEN SAYING...) *Compiled by Torsten Hojer.*

‘We’ve seen such evil come out of our State Department... In a country that doesn’t believe in the gay agenda the Obama State Department has said, ‘You have to have a gay pride parade’.’

Republican Michele Bachmann speaks out against USAID advancing international gay rights. Obama’s state department encouraged countries to repeal anti-gay legislation.



“LGBTI is out to destroy families as we know... But now when we stand up on the side of the law to protect our family and children we gave birth to – we are told to shut up that we [are] bigots & homophobic – labelled, cursed sworn at.”

Queensland One Nation party candidate Tracey Bell-Henselin vents on her Facebook page.



“Lived a life of proud sin/ paid price for it. Last Christmas Before Hell.”

Westboro Baptist Church tweets about George Michael’s death.

“Don’t call me gay please! I’m a man!!! Who I love its my private life!!!”

Fashion designer Stefano Gabbana of Dolce & Gabbana responds on social media to a fan questioning his praise for Melania Trump wearing one of his dresses. The fan commented: “sad when a gay designer doesn’t care about other groups being repressed”.



Above: Stefano Gabbana (left) and partner Domenico Dolce arrive at the opening of a new Dolce & Gabbana boutique in Moscow. Not “gay”?



“Anybody in this room who is filled with the homosexual spirit, pray God to free you... That perverted, homosexual spirit is a spirit of delusion and confusion. If you, as a man, will open your mouth and take a man’s penis in your face, you are perverted. If you are a woman and you shake your breasts in another woman’s face, you are perverted.”

American anti-gay gospel singer and pastor Kim Burrell in a sermon. Burrell, who has duetted with singer Pharrell, was booted off a scheduled performance on the Ellen show following the comments.

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