

MIDSUMMA 2010

Q MAGAZINE

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q comment: RAINBOW FAMILIES

The Rainbow Families Council will be running a one-day conference for gay and lesbian parented families and prospective parents on Saturday 13th February at Northcote Townhall.

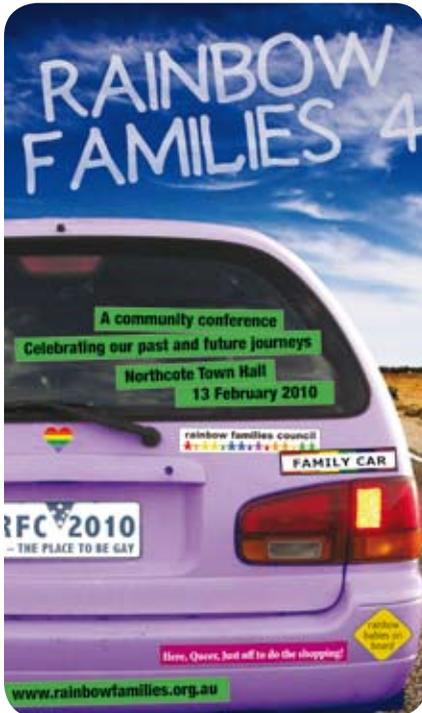
This has been designed to cater for a wide range of people within our community including gay dads, foster carers, men who are donors and known to the children and men considering parenting.

A major emphasis is on providing information about the recent state and federal law reforms that affect our families.

There will also be workshops on creating families, parenting, and research.

Download a registration form at the RFC website and register by 5 February.

Q magazine - supporting our community.



Publisher & Editor
Brett Hayhoe
+61 (0) 422 632 690
brett.hayhoe@qmagazine.com.au

Editorial
editor@qmagazine.com.au

Sales and Marketing
sales@qmagazine.com.au

Design
Uncle Brett Designs & Graphics

Contributing Writers
Pete Dillon, Addam Stobbs, Evan Davis, Ben Angel, Alan Mayberry, Tasman Anderson, Chris Gregoriou, Paul Panayi, Marc J Porter

Cover & Feature Pictures
Dolly Diamond and Luke Gallagher by Ross Brownsdon and Travis de Jonk

Photographic Contributions
Q Photos, Leigh Klooger - Tabitha/Bent tv, Ben Ashe - Peel, Vicki Jones Photography - Pride March Victoria, Alan Mayberry - Greyhound
scenepics@qmagazine.com.au

Distribution
distribution@qmagazine.com.au

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QMAGAZINE
PO Box 7479, St. Kilda Road,
Melbourne Victoria 8004
www.qmagazine.com.au

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Brett Hayhoe t/a Q Magazine
ABN 21 631 209 230



q feature: DOLLY DIAMOND

It's my birthday! Michael and Dolly have often been heard to say these words in the vain hope some kind samaratan might buy me a bottle of champagne or cheap white wine as a celebratory drink. I never really expect it but if it happens it happens and I would always try and let them know I am only joking - once I'd heard the delicious sound of the cork popping or the screw-top loosening.

Well guess what - it's my birthday! No really. I'm about to find 40. I wasn't looking for it but it found me anyway. It'll also be my 1 year anniversary. A year since I moved to Melbourne. I don't like to say back to Melbourne because after living the last 17 years back in London, my birthplace, this is very much a different chapter in my life and Melbourne has changed so much too.

What a year it's been:

Dolly has been getting herself about quite a bit. A few seasons at the Butterfly Club, including The Friday Night Late Show for 8 weeks. There is something about the place that keeps me coming back for more and, thankfully, the audiences like it too. She popped over and did TasPride, did 2 shows, the launch, comedy gayla and closing picnic for Feast in Adelaide (and had a ball) and is popping up here and there.

I've really tried to push myself as Michael too. I felt I was a little lost behind Dolly in London. She was overshadowing me. She's a big girl. Here though Michael won't let that happen.

As soon as I arrived I took myself off to Joy 94.9fm and said I'd like to be on the radio. I joined forces with my old high school friend and singing buddy Lulu (aka Supergirly). We used to rip-up the local shopping centres and tv talent shows as "Just Two" (just two what I'm not sure). We now do friday mornings "Holding it in". I love it and we're there for each others "time of the month". And bit by bit we're holding it in less and less and letting some people really have it. We were lucky to be welcomed so easily because pity the fool that thinks it's easy to do good radio - community or otherwise.

January is going to be exciting as my partner Gary and I are now in our new house and the future looks bright.

I'm excited about MIDSUMMA and teaming up with the show business leg-end Luke Gallagher (see cover pic). He does make me laugh - not often but when it happens, I love it.

We will be at the very plush Red Bennies (formerly Viper room) - 373 Chapel Street, South Yarra - Thursday 28 - Sunday 31 January at 8pm. It's been completely revamped and so have we. Our band is rockin' and our backing singers, the Nymphs, are finely tuned.

Also Chill-out is only moments away and it's going to be the best one yet.

I'm also fine about turning 40. It's only a number - a state of mind and my mind is in a good state. I feel ready to give and get back. I'm holding it in and with great joy too.



q community: **LOW REZ PERFORMS**

On Sunday January 31st 2010 at 5pm, =LOW REZ= Melbourne Male Pop Choir performs a concert entitled "REAL MEN" at the St Kilda Parish Mission Uniting Church in St Kilda East (cnr Carlisle/Chapel St). Tickets are just \$15 - including a free glass of bubbly! For ticket bookings go to : www.lowrezmelbourne.com



After the huge success of this concert in November and celebrating their first birthday, Melbourne Male Pop Choir, =LOW REZ= is back by popular demand, with "REAL MEN" - a performance of pop songs by male pop artists such as David Bowie, Michael Jackson, Mika and Queen. Doors open at 4.30pm and the concert starts at 5pm.

Hosted by the fabulous Trevor Jones (of Butterfly Club fame), with Ursula Paez directing and Tim Lehmann on piano, this is a group of 39 men with a unique sound and vibe, and one-of-a-kind in Melbourne. You really shouldn't miss it !

=LOW REZ= was founded in November 2008 by Nick Barker-Pendree, Rob Roelofs and Matt Sauvarin to create a new-sounding male choir specialising in pop arrangements.

The choir classifies itself as a "metrosexual" choir, which means that although the majority of singers are homosexual, it is not exclusively a gay choir and heterosexuals are most welcome. They aim to put on two concerts a year and have about 40 – 45 singers, divided into high and low tenors, baritones and basses. As well as rehearsing on Monday evenings the choir has social events, singing "boot camps", and trips to other concerts and events.



As well as singing as guests for "The D&G Experience" with Luke Galagher and Dolly Diamond on January 28th at Red Bennies, plans for 2010 include a =LOW REZ= weekend, and participation in "The Festival of Voices 2010" in Tasmania.

q community: **MARDI GRAS RECOVERY**

Queensland Mardi Gras Recovery Week - March 1st to 7th 2010. Party in Sydney, Recover in Paradise!

If you're heading to Sydney 's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (27th February 2010) don't miss the festival's hottest ticket – your place in the sun at Queensland's Mardi Gras Recovery Week.

An hour's flight north of Sydney lands you in paradise for seven days and nights of surf, sun and fun.

Queensland Mardi Gras Recovery Week organiser Rod Stringer says the event is a must on anyone's calendar. "Any serious party goer knows the most important ingredient is the recovery – you've partied hard – and the reward is taking it easy, restoring body and soul so you can do it all again!"

He said the event offered the perfect mix of relaxation, adventure and socialising.

"We've carefully balanced the program to include a fully escorted wilderness day trip to World-Heritage Fraser Island, a day snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, a gala dinner at the beachside resort enclave of Noosa, pool parties, time for shopping and lazy days at the beach before the finale, Brisbane's Big Gay Day – a fabulous street party featuring guest DJ's, live bands and plenty of local colour. "It's the idyllic way to recover – warm tropical waters, clean beaches as far as the eye can see, and an opportunity to meet and mingle," he said.



For the full list of events, email: info@mardigrasrecoveryweek.com.au, phone +61 7 5448 2951 or visit the website.

q lifestyle: with PETE DILLON

The MIDSUMMA season fills me with dread for several reasons - first there is the damage that a ridiculous amount of free boozing does to ones internal system. If I were to count the number of beverages I consume in January and February, I would make binge drinking look like a holiday camp - seriously, it is frightening the amount of liquor my body holds!

The second reason is the food - and not all of it good. I grew up in a large family where the consumption of something my mother called food was in itself something that was fraught with danger. If it wasn't boiled or burned she wouldn't serve it and the ingredients for things like pressed meat and mock chicken still fill me with thoughts of wonder and fear in equal proportions.

The third of course is the bad gifts you received for Christmas and what polite people should do with them. It is interesting this idea of giving someone something you like. A gift giving utopia, under a Dillon government, would be a voucher system - there I said it, I would want everyone to exchange vouchers.

But to return to my MIDSUMMA festive spirit ... When buying people gifts (at any time of the year), there are many things to buy and not to buy, and so I have included some handy foodie ideas to buy for your friends and loved ones next festive season and throughout 2010.

Hampers - out. They are wrong and should not be on anyone's gift list unless of course, you choose the ingredients yourself. Store bought hampers are filled with things that will sit and fester in your cupboard for the next 3 years or until you move out or die. That tin of weird Icelandic fish product that you are not sure of, will never be eaten. If you receive a hamper, the most polite thing to do is open it there and then, remove those things that you will eat or use. Then give the remains, with basket, ribbon and chequered cloth back to the person who gave it to you, with a smile.

Food purchased at cheapo stores - out. There is a reason that the stuff is in the cheap stores in the first place - it is either out of date or it did not sell. If it did not sell, there is a reason. People can tell when they open a %4 box of chocolates that they were possibly made in 1997, as the chocolate has miraculously turned

white. Jellies and biscuits and things in tins are still out of date and stale. If you give these gifts abstain immediately and spend the money on something better. If you receive these, have a gander at the label, find some obtuse ingredient like maltodextrins, and return them to the giver with a bare faced lie that you are in fact, severely allergic to maltodextrins. Suggest then that they eat the gift themselves.

Olive oil - alright if you purchase and give it immediately. Oil that sits on a supermarket shelf is more than likely rancid when you buy it, especially if it is imported. Nobody wants to use oil that has sat on the supermarket shelf for too long, because it must contain a preservative as well as the oil to prevent it from going rancid. Whether a supermarket, deli or other retail outlet, always try to find the date that the oil was bottled - if you can't find the date then don't buy it..

Vinegar - yes. There are beautiful bottles of aged Italian balsamic that you can purchase and do make wonderful gifts. Spend well and spend wisely - vinegar can be like wine and it is a terrific gift for the foodie.

Wine - yes but be careful. If you have not tasted the wine you are giving, don't give it. Just because it has a label on it that you know, does not make it right. There is a plethora of wine around that makes for perfect gift giving but you need to know the taste of the recipient. Make sure that you know what they like. Champagne is a lovely gift and people will always appreciate a bottle of something French. You can get French champers from about \$45 so make sure you have a fossick about in the right liquor outlet.

Really the best idea is to buy gifts for the recipient's taste and not you own. If you are really stuck, here are a few suggestions of things I might like. ...Or any other booze hag might like as well.

There was a lot of activity on the home bar front last year as many people have, like me, ground frivolous spending to a halt. As such, I'm sure a lot of you out there have friends or significant others who have started building their home bars - or are interested in doing so - and are looking for something thoughtful, useful and reasonably priced.

One of my favorite places to shop for glassware, punch bowls and accessories like trays or coasters is at my local op shop. I rarely pass a second-hand store that I don't visit, and have stumbled upon excellent finds like pristine sets of vintage champagne coupes (perfect for a cocktail). I've even found the occasional vintage cocktail manual, but those are fewer and farther between these days. Don't pass up eBay, either, as that's where you're going to find a great buy on a vintage metal ice crusher.

Pop into any store that sells men's thingy bits and you will find all manner of bar equipment that you can purchase. Whatever you buy, make sure it won't break in a week.



q money: with EVAN DAVIS

Ordinarily I stay up late on the 31st of December to see the New Year in. This year I stayed up late to make sure that 2009 actually finished. The words that adequately describe the recently departed year I can't use in this article.



Suffice to say, I am not the only one happy to see it finish.

In terms of money and all things financial, 09 was a beast, but now it is 2010. The year of the Tiger! Even the sound of it is pleasing. The Tiger, now that is a beast that promises much. This is a great opportunity to get it right and finances are an area that can always be polished.

If you have debt, reducing it is always a good move. If you have a mortgage, paying more than you have to on your repayment, can save you thousands over the life of the loan. Simply increase your repayments by whatever you can afford. On a \$250,000 mortgage an increase of only \$40 per week will knock nearly 8 years off the life of a 30 year home loan which is on an average interest rate.

The same is true of consumer debt. Credit cards, car loans and personal loans will seem like they are taking ages to clear if you are only paying the minimum repayment on the loan. Very often these types of financial facilities carry especially high interest rates so any additional repayments will help clear these debts way faster.

You're debt free? Fantastic, save something! Vowing to save is always a tricky one. That said, if you can budget to wack part of your pay into an online, high interest savings account, it will start to build. Then other financial options will present themselves. Even if it is only a modest amount of your income at least you will have some money for a rainy day.

Maybe you already have saved or you've built some equity in your property. 2010 could be the year to start investing to create some wealth. With property prices moving overwhelmingly in the upward direction if you haven't reviewed your mortgage in a year or two you might be surprised with what your home is worth. The difference between the value and what you owe is called equity. The more equity or savings you have the more you can invest.

No one wants to work for ever so why not review you situation with a professional? With your personal fitness, noone would argue that you'd do better with a personal trainer, and the same is true with your finances. Talking to a good financial planner, mortgage broker, insurance broker or tax accountant is critical to success. You shouldn't rely on only one. A team of professionals will serve you better. Email me at money@qmagazine.com.au and I will connect you with experts I trust.

Now the hangover from the party is done and the embarrassing memories are fading fast. We have the opportunity to make some constructive resolutions. Just remember not to pave the road to hell with them over the coming months!

An advertisement for Mannhaus. On the left is a logo consisting of a blue circle with a white lowercase 'm' inside. Below the logo, the text reads 'MANNHAUS' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by 'Leather. Rubber. Lifestyle.' in a smaller font. At the bottom left, the website 'www.mannhaus.com.au' and the address '130 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford' and phone number '03 9416 4800' are listed. On the right is a photograph of a man with a beard and tattoos, wearing a black leather harness. He is standing in front of a brick wall. A sign on the wall behind him reads 'DANGER EXPLOSIVE POWER TOOLS'. At the bottom right of the photo, the text 'For Your Lifestyle' is written.

q health:

by OPHELIA ANSAH-FERGUSON

Outcast or Forgotten in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Sound asleep! The phone rings and quakes me to wakefulness - it is two forty-one in the morning. I manage to find the phone and press the speaking end to my mouth but I say nothing. The seemingly frantic man on the other line calls my name in a traditional Ghanaian fashion, "Sa' (Sister) Eva! Sa Eva!" "Sa' Eva! Sa' Eva!" he repeats. I sluggishly respond, Y-E-S! Y-E-S! It's me, please talk. "Sa' Eva, the leader of our support group, Kofi, he died! What! I respond! He hangs up.

I look up at the clock but my eyes are blurry, I can't make out the time. I am feeling disconcerted, emotional and restless! The words "he died" replay in my head! I can't believe he is gone at a youthful age of twenty six.

I made a call to Kofi's closest friend, whom I knew would have been with him in his last hours. He answered the call. His voice sounding faint - he had obviously been crying. I began to choke with tears from the sound of his voice. I couldn't find the words or the courage to ask for the details of our friend's death. We both needed time to grieve but I had to know - I needed to know what happened.

Voice cracking and obviously holding back tears, he told me that he had received an anxious call from another friend that Kofi had been admitted to the hospital for severe dehydration a week earlier.

This was not the first time Kofi had been admitted to the hospital for this condition. In my three months stay in Ghana this past summer, he was admitted on three separate occasions.

By his own account, he had been suffering from the same symptoms - fever, fatigue, diarrhea, and vomiting over and over for nearly a month. He thought it was malaria. But malaria would have ceased sooner especially after daily doses of chloroquine. It was obvious to him that something was wrong - what could it be, though!

He was frightened but he knew what he had to do. He had mucked around too long. He visited the local doctor, whom he felt talked too much and asked too many probing questions. Maybe it was because he looked frail with paled-looking cornea and dried mouth. The doctor ordered a complete blood work on him and was told to come back in one week for the results.

Within that week, he collapsed while enjoying a conversation with his friends and had to be rushed to the hospital.

After a day of intravenous fluids (IV) administration, he was re-hydrated and began to feel better. The doctor found him lying on his back, eyes wide-opened. He engaged Kofi in a conversation and with a cautious yet hopeful voice he told him that the results of his blood work were in.

"I panicked" Kofi said. He rose from his supine position on the bed and sat at the edge. The doctor faithfully explained each test result including informing him that he had a high level of antibodies in his blood that indicated the presence of a virus, specifically the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

"His words filtered into my eardrum as a murmur. I was staring intently at him but my mind was wandering. I asked the doctor to repeat it! On second hearing, the doctor's words penetrated like a hot knife through butter. I felt at that moment like the earth underneath was sucking me in, and I didn't know what to do. I had 'morinka' (street slang for HIV)," Kofi lamented.

Kofi was not on anti-retroviral therapy. I learnt from his close friend that doctors had discovered that Kofi's viral load was high and had slid into full-blown AIDS. Despite efforts to keep him alive, his immune system had weakened and he succumbed to complications of AIDS. Kofi contracted the disease sexually but from a man. Yes! Kofi was gay and he was not alone; he had an estimated 13,400 fellow 'brothers' living in Ghana. Reading from popular media sources, one gets the impression that HIV transmission is only from man to woman or woman to man or mother to child. In Ghana, this original heterosexual pattern of HIV transmission is changing and they are observing male to male transmissions in an unprecedented numbers - a trend that has been noted by the Ghana AIDS Commission.

Because not much attention is paid to this phenomenon, homosexuals are bearing a high burden of the disease and the number of gay men living with the disease is estimated at 25% by the Ghana AIDS Commission.

To understand what is fueling this epidemic among homosexuals, we must try to grasp the complexities surrounding homosexuality and the HIV infection in the country. Homosexuality is a taboo and homosexual act is illegal and punishable under the Ghanaian Criminal code and Sodomy laws. The three schools of thoughts prevalent in the country illustrate the perennial denial of a sexual behavior that some claim is not a choice. Individuals who espouse these beliefs tend to lean on the notion that homosexuality is a deviant behavior and a condition exhibited by individuals with internal psychological problems or those who are possessed or cursed.

One belief is that a man having sex with a man is situational. Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe explain the social rationale behind this belief in their book,



Boys-wives and female husbands, "when the games between boys and girls are stopped, the boys no longer have the opportunity for companionship with the girls, and the sex drive finds satisfaction in close friendship between boys in the same group."

Another belief is, homosexuality is a result of Western influences – the idea that homosexuality is a 'white man's behavior' being adopted by the black man. In the 1970s, when the mother of South African's Simon Tseko Nikoli, a famed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activist, discovered that he was gay, she said, "I knew I should not have sent you to that white school."

These ethnocentric beliefs are naïve and without basis but if one was to accept these perceptions, then there has to be room to conceive that whether men having sex with men is circumstantial or a result of other influences, the affairs can persist through one's life. Yet, still another group clamorously proclaims that homosexuality does not exist in the country. Based on these belief systems, people feel justified, almost vindicated in threatening, mistreating and abusing those who are or perceived to be gay.

Fatima Khalid, an HIV counselor at Noguchi Memorial Institute of Medical Research at University of Ghana, Legon recalls a comment passed by one of the nurses that she worked with. The nurse threatened that if her son was to become one of them (gay), she would poison him. My aunt once retorted during a conversation that gays should be rounded up and killed. Across the country, people feel strongly about the immorality of homosexuality and excoriate it publicly and when given the opportunity to act on those feelings they don't hold back.

One afternoon, I was hurriedly passing through a small shanty community that is infamous for its lawlessness when noises filtered in from a distance; my heart began to race! I saw people curiously running towards a particular direction. I trooped right along with them. What I witnessed was something that can be likened to biblical stories where martyrs were whipped or stoned for refusing to denounce Christianity. Two young, attractive men in their twenties were mercilessly being whipped. People; young and old, women and men, took turns whipping these two - their crime; they were caught engaging in gay sex.

Even the media is punished when they are seen as favoring and condoning homosexuality through the airing of certain programs. In the late 1990s, a talk show host, Oboshie Sai-Coffie granted an interview to four openly gay men to discuss the existence of homosexuality in the country and

how the gay relationship was crafted, on her syndicated television show. For weeks, radio stations, newspapers and other media sources were flooded with calls and editorial comments from citizens who felt that the moral fabric of the society was deteriorating and the media had their hand in it - condoning deviant behaviors, such as homosexuality. Unconfirmed sources have it that she lost her sponsorships the following season and her show was taken off the air.

In light of the general homophobic sentiments, leading social scientists and intellectuals have stayed away from discussing or studying this sexual phenomenon. And from the public health perspective, very little information exists to inform targeted programs - programs desperately needed to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic among this vulnerable group.

Homosexuals live among us - they are our brothers, uncles, in-laws, and fathers. They are our friends, co-workers, professors and classmates, yet we don't see them. Society reprobate homosexual behavior, making it impossible for them to exist in the open so they seek refuge underground, where homoerotic desires can be freely exchanged. 'Underground,' wherever it may be, is where you will find them. They are inconspicuous – dressing as any ordinary man, speaking in the deepest masculine voice, and strutting with shoulders squared and heads up - vowing never to stand out.

To get to them you need help! You need someone who is part of the underground system to guide you through the murky terrain. But to be accepted, you must be trusted. Trust is highly esteemed – no gossipers or liars or snitches allowed. Once you have proven trustworthy, then you can enter. To reach out to this community with health information, I followed protocol. I befriended an underground member and he escorted me through many underground social gatherings before I gained their trust and was given the privilege to organize outreach events specific to their needs. Many times a week, I held an STI/HIV/AIDS prevention, transmission and treatment information sessions in secluded places and many would attend. The turnout at these sessions was a testimony of their yawning for information for sexual diseases that disproportionately affected them.

It was at one of my outreach event, that I met Kofi; apparently my repeated STI/HIV/AIDS outreach advertisement messages convinced him. We had a chance to chat after the event, mainly about my life in America, which many were curious to know – expecting 'juicy' information to quench their imagination. We would meet again at social functions and at my outreaches in different areas. We became fast friends! Once, sitting and enjoying a meal on the top floor of a blue-painted brick restaurant/bar that resembles a medieval castle; overlooking the James Fort, a former lighthouse during colonization and a former women's prison in the post-colonial era; I engaged him in a conversation about his life. He began by telling me about his community, which was going through chieftaincy disputes that broke out every now and then and led to riots and police interventions that included firing of tear-gas which left many scrambling for cover with running nose and uncontrollable tears. He admitted that he wished the disputes between the seven individual families all claiming inheritance to the throne would be settled so that people could live in peace.

"People die, you know." He said. This community, he tells me, is very poor. People engage in all sorts of transactions to survive. Even men engage in male prostitution to earn a cedi equivalent to 50 cents). "So, are you a male prostitute, yourself?" I asked. "No, I am not but I know a lot of men who are," he said.

As the conversation continued, emerging from one interesting topic to another with both of us feeling increasingly relaxed by laughter, he told me that he was HIV positive. It was obvious to me that this was not information that he

deliberately disclosed to anyone - he must have developed a certain level of trust for me. He told me on one occasion that he found it easier to disclose his HIV status to me because even though I'm a Ghanaian, I didn't live in Ghana, thus he saw me as an outsider with little or no prejudice.

I was honored to be entrusted with his secret but at the same time I felt burdened by the knowledge that my friend was HIV positive. In retrospect, I could have figured it out by his thin, almost frail figure but in this poverty-stricken community, thinness and frailness could be deceiving and are not an indicator of disease as much as they could be an indicator or result of poverty.

Kofi earned very little money (\$60 a month) as peer educator. He had been a peer educator for a year before his HIV diagnosis in 2008 for a local NGO. He was becoming the change that he wanted to see in his community, but it was too late, he had fallen victim to the disease. Being gay and HIV positive is isolating, physically and emotionally. There is HIV/AIDS-related stigma that permeates the general population - HIV/AIDS is associated with homosexuality, prostitution, promiscuity and injecting drug use - all behaviors seen as deviant. Some people go as far as to declare that HIV is a punishment for gay sex. Therefore, among homosexuals who contract the disease, HIV/AIDS is the extra shame and condemnation that they have to bear.

For many homosexuals, it is often difficult to know who to trust with this secret. My interviews with gay men in Accra (capital of Ghana) revealed variations in the reasons why some choose to disclose their HIV status and others do not. Unanimously, those who disclose only do so to trusted family members and friends while those who do not disclose do so for fear that their family and friends may pass harsh judgments.

After finding out his HIV status six years ago, Atta, now 32 years old and staying alive with anti-retroviral therapy, wisely "tested the waters" by bringing up the topic of homosexuality and HIV during various family gatherings and observed the families reaction, to find out who could be trusted with his secrets. Out of his nine siblings, he realized that only his younger sister was forthcoming and trustworthy. He told her he was gay and HIV positive, and she and her family have been supportive ever since. They make him feel loved and accepted which strengthens his resolve but he is acutely aware that many of his fellow friends do not have such support.

Eric, 26 years old, 6'2" with fair complexion spotting a Mohawk haircut, didn't hesitate for a

moment to inform his family that he was gay, but he has effectively hidden his HIV status from them especially his mother who is a health professional at one of the major teaching hospitals in the country. "My mother will often ask why I was taking so many medications (anti-retroviral cocktail, which is basically vitamins) and I'll reply defensively "I'm trying to stay healthy and you of all people must know the importance of vitamins. That usually shut her up. I know that I'm lucky to have the option of who and when to disclose my HIV status."

Michael didn't have that option at the time he contracted the disease. Now, at 38 years old, he's healthy and managing the disease with anti-retroviral drugs. 12 years ago he discovered that his male partner had infected him with the virus. He fell ill quickly and had to be taken care of by his aging mother, who in desperation disclosed his HIV status to his six brothers and sisters in hope that they will come to their brother's aid but in their anguish, they disowned him. Two of his siblings live in the United States and neither one take his phone calls or call him.

There are some "skeletons in the closets" that are better left unrevealed but not the same secrets these men have - they need help managing it, they need someone to love, encourage and strengthen them through it. When families are unable to provide the support, friends can step in but one's choice of friends is important as some friends cannot curl their lips shut about secrets. Eric was furious the day he found out that his best friend of ten years had seeped his HIV status throughout his community. They had a disagreement and to avenge the offense, he decided to destroy him - they have not spoken since. Kofi suffered the same fate when his friend who encouraged him to go for the HIV test and accompanied him to the clinic insinuated to mutual friends that Kofi had contracted the disease. Kofi severed the friendship.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is important for HIV testing and counseling programs to emphasize HIV status disclosure among HIV-infected clients and their sexual partners. However, disclosure may be associated with risks that many of these men are not willing to take. Kofi told me in a defensive manner that discussing HIV/AIDS with a partner may incite suspicion. The partner may feel that his lover has contracted the disease (even though sometimes that may not be the case) and is seeking a convenient way to ease his conscience.

Issa, a 23 year old HIV positive gay man with pronounced facial features recounts an incident when he thought he would use his peer education knowledge and skills to engage his partner in a conversation about HIV/AIDS. His partner became incensed during their talk and stormed out, never to be heard from again. His former partner does not know that Issa is infected with the virus.

Without families, partners and friends to turn to for support; all Atta, Eric, Michael and Issa have are each other, so they have formed an HIV/AIDS support group, which is thirty-member strong. Kofi was their leader. They meet at a secluded place once a month to share their stories - their challenges and their victories. They discuss everything from their CD4 or T-cell counts to jobs. They laugh, cry, eat and drink and in that moment, they are able to escape the harsh realities of their world.

Kofi is no longer with us - he died never able to exonerate himself from the double-shame of being gay and HIV positive. There are still thousands of gay men living like him; many are suffering because of society's deep-seated resistance in acknowledging and accepting them. As we allow morality to cloud our judgments, thousands of men like Kofi are dying of horrible deaths from AIDS and they are questioning why they have been left behind in the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

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q drag: **TABITHA TURLINGTON**

Tabitha's been the queen with the acid tongue for longer than she cares to remember. Alan Mayberry caught up with her to find if she still qualifies for Bitch of the Year as she headlines B FRIDAYS with Pussy at the Greyhound.

I don't remember where I first saw Pussy? Whether I've blocked it out or it just wasn't that memorable! We did, however, somehow, start a friendship and have been great gal pals ever since. We have many laughs working together on stage and even more so when we aren't. Together we are double trouble with the potential to be dynamite!

I did drag the minute I could hold a lipstick and walk in Mum's heels. I loved applying eyeshadow and was always in a dress even at kinder! I did ballet and tap dancing (not that you notice on stage) but stopped when I realised I wouldn't be wearing a tutu or be able to wear points.

At Canterbury Primary School every time they had a book day when you could dress up I went as my favourite Amelia Bedelia. I always did drag in school talent quests, normally a Mae West impersonation – 'come up and see me sometime big boy'. I even won a 3AW prize in Grade 5 in a Mae West voice competition.

One teacher asked, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' I said 'to act in movies as a woman. Dame Edna does it I said why cant I?' She rolled her eyes. I was very lucky to have such a wonderful, wonderful mother who always let me express myself and didn't allow others to stop me. She would be up at the school or telling teachers off: 'That's how he is', if they said anything, 'don't try and change him!'

As you do – self preservation – I stopped dressing up at Wattle Park High School, but was still overly camp. I started a performing arts course at Prahran TAFE but soon left – I wasn't really into doing monologues from *The Cherry Orchard*.

Then I started going to 3 Faces and discovered I could dress up and act as a woman like I had told my Grade 5 teacher. The first night my friend said: 'Just watch the stage!' Out walked the LIPSTIX! I was transfixed! I loved it! I didn't want it to end! This is what I wanted to be and do! I was back every week watching Kerrie Le Gore, barely missing a show, watching learning and loving it all. I did *Doreen's Damaged Disc* and eventually got my first show – the rest is history.

I put on a few pounds over the last few years and I contribute that to hanging out with Pussy! She makes it all sooo much fun! Whether it's a 2am drive to Krispy Kremes, a lunch at Wendys or a lazy cheese burger on our way home from somewhere, she's hard to say no too, especially when she's hungry!

I decided a couple of years ago to take a rest from performing. After working consistently for 15 years my face and legs needed a rest! Best is NOT shaving! I should really be a bear! Although I truly LUV performing there are other things I want to do in my life, and doing drag takes up a lot your time. I travelled, changed my day job and I bought a unit a year ago which I love. It's great to be able to go to family dinners and not rock up late with eyeliner and lash glue still on my face from the night before!

But now I love being back on stage and having fun again with the audience – wanting them to come along for the ride and enjoying watching the show as much as I do performing it!

I'm lucky to have worked with all the girls I wanted to. Caresse, Vivien, Régime, Pussy and of course Kerrie are among my favourite girls to perform with, not



to mention the fun in the dressing room. I would never say NO to working with any of these beautiful, talented people, and have made some amazing friendships. Which is why I agreed to come back to perform at the GH.

I love doing drag! But I don't have to do it! I don't like venues or managers taking advantage of girls wanting to perform and exploiting them to get everything, then paying them nothing! I can have just as much fun singing into a mirror at home or with friends! I only want to work with people I can have fun with and have a few laughs!

I didn't want to do the same show I'd done before just with a different (and larger) stretch denim skirt and tight black T-shirt (my favourite scrubber look).

I just adore being Dr T Feelgood, 'Therapist to the Stars' every Friday, but even better that I have the voluptuous Matron Pussy Willow as my assistant. I just hope you'll come to the GH, take the couch and relax!



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q theatre: A MIDSUMMA BUTTERFLY

Cabaret cocktail of the month:

Welcome back our infamous Midsumma Moonshine cocktail, along with the sexy shirts that are so daring that they're only brought out for this Festival!

Looking ahead:

In association with the St Kilda Laughs Festival, Bradley Tomlinson (2009 Melbourne Fringe "Best Newcomer" and "Best Cabaret") is back 12&13 February with a sneak peak of his show for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

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Andy & Adrian are RADIO HUSBANDS

Andy & Adrian are best mates who met one fateful night six years ago. Since then they've become official radio husbands as they co-host breakfast on JOY 94.9. The boys have become renowned for their riotous stories, their off-beat take on everyday topics and their out of control celebrity guest interviews. Hot on the tail of their 2009 Australian tour, join the boys as they reminisce about their friendship, recount their favourite radio moments, and share stories of being on the road.

Two shows only – officially opening and closing the Midsumma season! Sunday 17 January and Sunday 7 February, both shows at 8.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of JOY 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.



Dean Arcuri in NOW BOARDING: DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Starring Dean Arcuri & accompanied by Anastasia Russel-Head. Thanks to the global financial crisis there's no more first class for this frequent flyer. Stewart the Steward(Lawrence Leungs Choose Your Own Adventure – ABC) returns to MIDSUMMA, and travelling on budget airlines will never be the same again with this trolley dolly in tow! If he gets his way, the plane won't be the only thing going down!

Thursday 21 to Sunday 24 January Thursday to Saturday at 7.00pm; Sunday at 6.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of Joy 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.



Justin Clausen in: FABTASTIX HOMEWARES: A Brighton Cabaret

Join Justin Clausen as he delves 'behind the pearls' into the cut-throat world of Brighton retail, showing you how to outbitch a bitch, browse through the kitsch, and the survival strategies necessary when cornered by a Brighton housewife. With a cast of comical characters, hilarious songs and more shiny objects than the entire Swarovski collection, this is one cabaret that you will want to peruse before it's out of stock!

Tuesday 19 to Sunday 24 January Thursday to Saturday at 9.00pm; Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday at 8.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of Joy 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival. \$10 tight bum Tuesday.



BEST OF THE FEST

In partnership with the MIDSUMMA Festival, sample what it has on offer at a special low price. Your hosts, Caity Fowler and Trevor Jones, will showcase comedy, cabaret, burlesque and other performance treats from across the Festival, with the guest line-up changing nightly. The full line-up will be listed on www.thebutterflyclub.com closer to each night.

Late night Fridays and Saturdays of the Festival: Friday 22 and Saturday 23 January / Friday 29 and Saturday 30 January / Friday 5 and Saturday 6 February All shows at 10.30pm \$15 full \$10 for: concession holders; MIDSUMMA members; people who hold a ticket for a MIDSUMMA show that night (from any venue); JOY 94.9 members.



Jade Starr's FROM METAL TO MATERNAL

One woman – One guitar – One Life Word, video and music collide in Jade Starr's autobiographical acoustic rock cabaret show. Follow the unique roller coaster journey of a transgender woman's battle to transition leaving behind a world of anger, drugs and heavy metal music. Brutally honest, at times confronting yet brimming with hope, From Metal to Maternal will leave you breathless.

Tuesday 26 (Australia Day) and Wednesday 27 January, both shows at 8.00pm \$15



Rachel Juhasz in MY JUDY JOURNALS

In 1984 Rachel started primary school...and an obsession with Judy Garland. Judy has since become Rachel's guardian angel, providing the perfect soundtrack to help her through everything from pre-teen crushes and unrequited high school loves to finding and inevitably losing "the One". Join Rachel as she opens her diary, bares her soul and shares some of her favourite Judy tunes.

Thursday 28 to Sunday 31 January Thursday to Saturday at 7.00pm; Sunday at 6.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of JOY 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.



Cath Jamison in I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING

Award winning magician Cath Jamison undoubtedly proves that women's intuition does exist. In her new and hilariously entertaining interactive magic show, Cath explores bizarre dating rituals, paranormal activity, women's intuition and the "feminine mystique", with her trademark sass, style and illusion. Often noted as one of the most "bizarre and unusual" women in the world, Cath will delve and play with your mind, the way only a woman can.

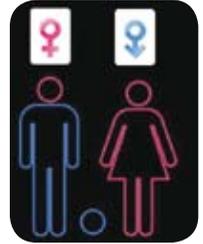
Thursday 28 to Saturday 30 January All shows at 9.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of JOY 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.



GENDER BENDER

Cold Chisel classics sung by a quartet? Judas played by a woman? Too often the best songs are sung by the boys. Why let them have all the fun? In the cabaret style show GENDER BENDER, four women will showcase songs from musicals, well known pop and rock songs and traditional duets with a twist. Starring Samantha Symons, Narelle Bonnici, Dior Deumer and Bec McGuinness, accompanied by Daniel Heskett on piano.

Sunday 31 January, Tuesday 2 and Wednesday 3 February 8.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of JOY 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.



Andrew Baker in TAUGHT BY EXPERTS

A True Story about Fairytale Families Peter Allen was one of the greatest cabaret artists and songwriters the world has known and was at the centre of showbiz for a decade. Before he hit the heights, he married Liza Minnelli, daughter of the legendary Judy Garland and for a few short years they were a family. Join Andrew Baker as he discovers truths about himself and his third cousin, twice removed. This show is for anyone who ever wondered how they came to be who they are.

Thursday 4 to Sunday 7 February Thursday to Saturday at 7.00pm; Sunday at 6.00pm \$22 full / \$17 concession and for groups of 8 or more and for members of JOY 94.9 or MIDSUMMA Festival.

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Provocative or Offensive – High School Graduation Speech Controversy

Remember your year 12 Graduation ceremony? I don't because I never graduated! And yet, I was asked to deliver a twenty minute address at my old High Schools presentation night just last month in front of over 500 students, teachers and parents and boy did it cause a bit of a stir!

I always promised myself that if I was given a platform to make a difference I would use it. This was my opportunity and I wasn't going to let it slip. My presentation addressed many issues, including; depression, suicide, relationships, business, career and of course, sexuality.

Yes, I came out to over 500 people in my old hometown – at once! And all in front of a town that only one year ago had become infuriated at the fact the one of the churches had become gay friendly. Visions of them hurling abuse (even rocks) at me raced through my mind.

How did I bring up my sexuality? By exposing an array of mistakes I'd made in my life and diffusing any potential anger with humour. "There was one main mistake I made in life – dating girls in high school, especially when you realise later that you're gay and looking at breasts was more in wonderment as to whether or not they were wearing the right bra for the outfit they had on."

Did they laugh? Thank god, yes. Those in the audience who were disgusted remained quiet and unopposed because social proof had just exposed to them that they were the only ones with an issue and that for once, they were now the outcasts.

The message of my presentation was clear, be who you are and never deny yourself. Denying your own true identity causes much self harm and in my case years of depression and almost suicide.

After the presentation many of the students and parents came up to me and congratulated me on having the balls to be so honest. The principal on the night backed me up by saying that he hoped the school was far more accepting in this day and age than ten years ago and that he'd love to have me address the students directly a second time in the new year.

The most humbling moment for me occurred however when a sixty year old man approached me with a tear in his eye. He was a friend of my dad's when he was still alive. He said my father would have been proud.

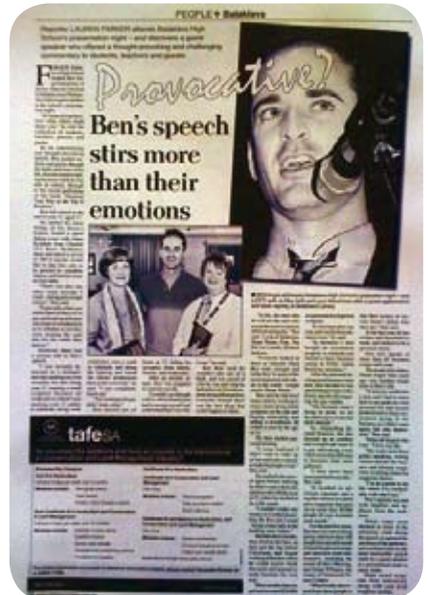
Did I expect this overwhelmingly positive response? Not at all! It is the most humbling experience I have ever had. It taught me a valuable lesson; public opinion changes when the message is packaged into a digestible format.

Was there a backlash? Only one letter to the editor of the local paper who said, "His speech was littered with sexual innuendo from beginning to end and was smutty and offensive." Well, it may have been but I know it got the message across.

My presentation resulted in two pages of coverage in the Plains Producer and highlighted the issue of sexuality in a town that once furiously opposed it. Do they still oppose it. Apparently not as much as I'd previously thought. Since then I've had a flood of emails from parents, students and teachers giving their support and congratulations. The icing on the cake came when a letter to the editor from a graduate was published that fiercely backed my presentation.

Maybe small country towns aren't as homophobic as we think they are after all!? My perceptions have been turned on their head after what's been an incredibly emotional experience. I wouldn't take back one moment of it.

View the video of my speech and the media coverage by visiting my facebook page; www.facebook.com/inbedwithben or going to www.benangel.com.au



g epicure: with PAUL PANAYI

European - 161 Spring Street, Melbourne – (03) 9654 0811. An elegant European restaurant with old-world charm, smartly located opposite Parliament. The fit-out is charming and has aged well with the patina transporting you to a European cafe. This aptly named restaurant offers a menu that is reflective of rural France, Italy and Spain, and just keeps getting more interesting. The food is rich and filling and care is taken to select recipes that are at once delicious and comforting.

I arrived later for lunch one hot Friday just before Christmas. The place was packed, inside and out. It's always packed – busy and humming with smart ladies and business gents. An elegant crowd that are after a slow breakfast, rowdy lunch, refined dinner or late supper after a show. You'll note that this is one of the few places in town you can get supper after midnight, any day of the week.

I had the roasted shin bone marrow to start. I always have this – it's so yummy. A very peasantry dish packed with divine flavour. Essentially it's a piece of shin bone that has been roasted to bring out that lovely caramelised marrow you sometimes try to get at in roast beef. Pull out the marrow with a lobster fork – spread it over some grilled ciabatta – sprinkle with salt – crown with parsley and caper garnish – then pop it into your mouth. Ahh... I'm salivating as I type.

As for main, there is a good selection of fish, meat and game. I really recommend the rabbit pie. If you are ravenous and have an equally glutinous friend, then I recommend the Châteaubriand. The Châteaubriand is essentially a salt roasted thick cut tenderloin steak, which is usually only offered as a serving for two with fat chips, béarnaise sauce, blue cheese & endive salad.

At this stage I was as full as a beetroot, but I pressed on never-the-less with a chocolate and peanut pavé with orange and peanut parfait. Enough already!

The comprehensive list of French, Italian and German wines is amazing, and this is one of the few places in Melbourne that serves great Bordeaux, but be warned – they do come at a cost.

The service is always friendly and good natured. The kitchen is always well run, but don't be in a hurry if it's packed. Standards have always been very high in this long-standing establishment, however, have been slipping of late. For example; my marrow was underdone (ie pink) – an unforgivable sin, as all the flavour is in the transformation from firm white/pink marrow to a caramelised, gelatinous and translucent form. We were told there was no salt for the table; however, after pointing out that my entree came with a dish of salt, we got some. Also, don't ask for cocktails, as the bar staff are a little sensitive that the only serve what they serve.

Overall a great experience, but go there when you are really hungry and resist the temptation to fill up on the delicious breads they serve at the start.

Open Daily; Breakfast to supper; 7.30am to 3.00am. Entrees \$8.50-\$20, mains \$19.50-\$38, desserts \$7.50-\$15.50 (10% Sunday surcharge). Cards accepted: AE, DC, MC, V, Eftpos. Wine List: Concise list of Australian, French, Italian and German



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q whispers: with ADDAM STOBBS

Is Australia a "white" country?

I am pissed off with other countries labelling us 'racist'.

If you look down any main street of any capital (State - Federal) you can instantly see we are a multi-cultural society.

The problem is not racism, but discrimination, stereotyping and intolerance. As homosexuals we are used to discrimination and intolerance, but the big one is stereotyping.

I've been trawling the internet to see what the popular stereotypes for gay men are.

Here are the general ones:

They (we) want to be the centre of attention, have limp wrists and talk with a lisp. We are supposed to hate sport, can't catch a ball. We can't operate heavy or technical machinery. All gay men do drag and live out their lives in pop culture. We are supposed to be generally better educated, and have narcissistic tendencies; we know all the words to every song by Madonna, Judy Garland and Britney Spears). Gay men love theatre and performing arts; we are clean, neat & tidy, and fashion conscious to the point of obsession. That's why they claim most Gay men are interior designers, are flight attendants and hairdressers, they are effeminate. Our most used word is "Fabulous"

Here are the not-so-nice ones:

Gay men are promiscuous, and can't maintain long-term relationships. We are all supposed to have a gaggle of fag-hags, Gay men find all straight men attractive (no matter what they look like), and little boys. Homosexual men all like to take it up the arse, or down the throat. We are supposed to be all into water sports and fisting! We have a lot more sex than straight men.

We are bitchy drama queens, love show tunes, we sit with our legs crossed at the knee, and we touch our hair a lot, and bend our little finger when drinking out of a cup.

It gets better the causes and consequences:

Guys are gay because they had an over-bearing mother, and/or a weak father. They have less testosterone. Men are gay because they were abused, or raped by paedophiles, or they have serious hormone imbalances. Gay men created AIDS, or that god created AIDS to wipe out gay men. We all do drugs (cocaine and ecstasy)

It's quite offensive isn't it? But how often do these stereotypes come up in media? All the time. I'd like to think it's getting better and that the awful process of labelling is diminishing, but it's not really. When we have TV shows like the various footy shows, demeaning us by over-characterising some of the stereotypes it really sends a very negative message to younger gays and lesbians.

It's for this very reason that we have to make sure we have strong visibility and representation, that's why pride march is vitally important to community, similarly with other pride events, we have to demonstrate our strength of community, our diversity and breakdown the stereotypes.

I was at a wedding a few years ago, I only know the bride and groom and his mother, all the rest of the people were complete strangers. I sat at my table and did the introductions, and chatted a little with the people, all very pleasant until one of the women said, that Stephens music teacher was coming and he was gay, this followed by this furtive look around by the members of the table to see if they could spot the gay. "What do you look for" I asked, and they all trotted out a lot of the above stereotypes. It was only after a few minutes did they realise the only single male on his own was me. I felt quite smug in their discomfort.



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Written and published by Robert Sims, 11 South St, Tel Aviv 6172105

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q fitness: with CHRIS GREGORIOU

Do you feel beautiful?

How we feel about ourselves sets the foundations to us being truly happy, regardless of body shape and image.

Our self esteem plays a huge role here. Studies show that people that feel good about themselves mentally also feel more comfortable within their body and about their body image, and tend to be more aware of their size, shape and curves. People with a negative body image generally have a distorted perception of their size and shape, and tend to compare their body to others, also feeling shame and anxiety about their bodies. Being unhappy with your body can affect how you think and feel about yourself as a person. A poor body image can lead to emotional distress, unhealthy dieting habits, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders. Developing a positive body image and a healthy mental attitude is crucial for your happiness and wellness.



When you look in the mirror, do you like what you see?

Is your body image positive or negative? Feeling beautiful about yourself, is about loving yourself



GLBTI & body image

The electronic super highway of media is constantly telling us what is the norm, from magazine covers (like Mens Health & Cherrie), billboards (such as Calvin Klein & other fashion houses), whether we know it or not, we are subject to some form of advertising either direct or indirect. The clubbing scene can also be harsh for males in particular, where there is a great fear to take ones shirt off for fear of body image. There is a disorder that can affect how we feel about our body called Body Dysmorphia, people with this illness will intensely obsess over their appearance and body image (often for many hours a day). The mirror tends to lie and often the person with this disorder is never satisfied with any course of action, no matter how drastic it may be.

BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER SELF TEST	Y	N
Do you feel there are parts of your body that are unattractive or ugly?		
Do you find yourself thinking excessively that you might be or are unattractive?		
Do you compare a body part with the same body part of others thinking its unattractive?		
Do you regularly look in the mirror & think you are unattractive, checking often in the hope of improvement?		
Have you asked others if you are attractive?		
Have you used makeup to minimise displaying to others a part of your body that you feel is unattractive?		
Do you camouflage any parts of your body that you feel are unattractive?		
Has your life been compromised by concerns about your appearance?		

This is only a very simple guide and by no means comprehensive. If your concerned about body dysmorphia, consult your GP.

Regular exercise has been shown to boost self-esteem, self-image, and energy levels.

There seems to be an almost magical relationship between exercise and a healthy (or at least improved) self image. When you exercise you're going to feel better. Over time, you will feel less stressed and more relaxed, you will sleep better, and you are likely be more confident.

Research has shown the positive psychological effects of exercise are experienced across our lifespan, by children, adults and older adults.

Exercising has biochemical results. Have you noticed that similar situations can look totally different, depending on how good you feel physically? From the flood of endorphins through your bloodstream to the flushing out of stress hormones, a good workout (or even just a good walk) can make your body feel wonderful.

How active are you? Go on, work up a sweat, at the least, it will make you feel good!

q youth: with TASMAN ANDERSON

There's nothing more emotionally and mentally draining to any youth than the first day back at school. Getting up in the early hours of the morning for the first time in a long time, figuring out where you're new classes are and whether the teachers are nice or not; wondering whether you're friends are still in school or have left to do other things and reminding yourself unintentionally that with each year coming and going, you're getting close to adulthood and the responsibilities that come with it.



I am a senior at Helensvale State High School. After years of preparation and longing, I, along with thousands of others across Australia are now finally ending our twelve year journey of education that has attempted to prepare us for a happy and successful future. Although hard work loads, multiple assignments due in one week and the dreaded OP or HSC exams which could be the difference between attending our chosen University or repeating senior year at High School make year twelve the hardest year of Primary and High School education; However it's also one of the best years any one can ever experience. It's the year that we finally get our drivers licenses and the freedom attached with it. It's the year that we get to attend the school formal, an event we've been dreaming of since we first stepped foot into high school as fresh faced year eights and it's the year that we get to let go of our childish ways and embark on our separate paths. We are no longer one group of people; we are separate individuals with different ideologies and career goals.

With all that in mind, plenty of people are now panicking that they haven't done everything they wanted to do during high school. Whether they had been too busy, too bored or just plain lazy, almost everyone will be thinking "I wish I had done that while I had the chance."

"You never think high school is going to end," Said Queensland resident, Skye Williamson. "No matter how many times teachers and school officials tell you otherwise, you never think that in only five years, you're going to be leaving this place and joining the adult world."

So why not make your last year at High School count for something? After I watched the popular drama feature, The Bucket List it had me thinking about my current situation and whether or not I would be completely satisfied that I had done everything that I wanted to do in High School before I graduated. So I decided to write a list of everything I wanted to do in my final year. Although, it was nowhere near as long as the list used in the movie, it had everything that I wanted to do on it. Things like; write the script for the school's annual play, host an event for charity involving the school, published regular editions of the schools newspaper and contribute to the 2010 yearbook were among my fifteen chosen things that I had to do.

So what about yours? Is there anything that you wish you had done and would like to do before you left? Is there anything that makes you think "I could do that" How about something you thought you'd never be caught dead doing? There are no limits to what one person can do. If you want to start something up like a school news paper or be a part of your schools formal committee than what's stopping you? Talk to your Principal about starting up a group or discuss it with the School Captain, because you have the ability to be a leader. Why not experiment with leadership while you're free of responsibilities and adulthood. So what are you waiting for? Write up your list now and start making those dreams a reality, because the sky really is the limit.

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Logos: Port Phillip, Parks Victoria, InterPride, X, Pride March Victoria, DJ, JOY 94.9, MCV, Douglas-Sitel Services, ActionCo, HYPE

q people: **A.J. ALLEN w/ Marc Porter**

AJ Allen is a funky, eye catching model and chef and hails from the good 'ol USA. I recently had a lovely chat with AJ and below he shares his thoughts on life and being a hot queer in demand model.

Where has modeling taken you so far, any crazy or sordid experiences you care to mention?

Modeling so far has taking me to many small and big place, such as New York, California, Texas, as well and a few countries in Europe.

I have experienced many crazy thing, such as being offered to doing adult entertainment, asked to be a sugar baby, sexual favors, get involved in drugs, and many other crazy things that could make you laugh or question "Why?"

Besides modeling you are also a professional chef, that's quite a combo to be a model and chef, explain this multi talent?

Well every since I was a child I wanted to be a cook, I never thought I was good looking enough to be on the runway or do anything associated with modeling/fashion.

When I was 14 years old I was in high school and one of the school administrators asked me to do a fashion show we had every year, because alot of guys think modeling isnt so "macho." I went for it and that started the trend of AJ Allen.

Of course this is 2 odd areas to keep up with but some how I balance it very well!

You live in Kentucky, USA, how is life there for someone not straight or fitting into other peoples perceptions?

Well living in Kentucky it's very small here, all of my close peers (friends/family/fans) keep pushing me to move away but some how I end up back here in Kentucky. Its very comforting here, but like any other place you do find yourself with drama, crazy people, and prejudice all around you, but I keep myself away from negative thing and surround myself with positive people with dreams and goals they have set for themselves, like moving out of Kentucky & getting away from the people that don't want anything out of life.

When did you first notice you had the look to be a model and how did you get into it?

When I was 14 years old after dealing with false modeling agencies I thought it was time to do things on my own, of course I wasn't old enough to do what I really wanted to do so I did little photo shoots with people that were local until I was 18 years old, then I started to change my image from my hair, my clothing, my attitude, just basically everything besides who I was.

I really got into modeling when I was 18 of course, I was able to sign contracts on my own, I was able to do whatever photo shoot, or travel anywhere on my own.

Are you seeing anyone special at the moment?

At this time im am currently single, I have had offers from many people to be their boyfriend, but I know what the deal is, they just want a handsome fellow on their arm to make themselves look good. I might be a model but I do have feelings also.

You now have over 1,200 fans on facebook, do mediums like this help your career?

It does help my career, many people don't know what I do or who I am until I explain things to them, I tend to get job offers thought facebook, especially modeling gigs, of course along the way I have made many friends, and fans that follow the work that I do.

Any plans to come to Australia for work or play?

I've always thought about traveling there, to see the country, and seeing the animals there, but if I get that chance I'd take it in a heartbeat. Whether it be business or just to enjoy myself.

All photographs of AJ are by Casey Moore Photography, in Louisville, Kentucky, USA.



Finally my \$uper Fund Recognises my Spouse.

That's why I
wear this
with pride.

Geoff Field & Jason Kerr



Some superannuation funds now recognise same-sex partners. So if yours doesn't, switch. 85 Federal laws that discriminated against same-sex couples have been reformed. To celebrate, 85 artists have created 85 T-shirts inspired by the changes. **Find out which ones fit you.**

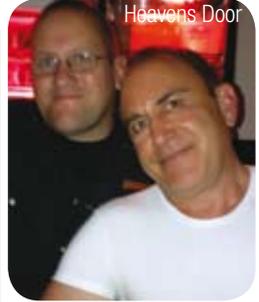
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q scene: **OUT & ABOUT**

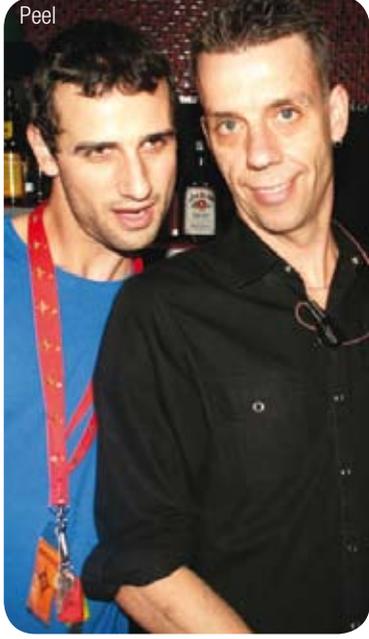
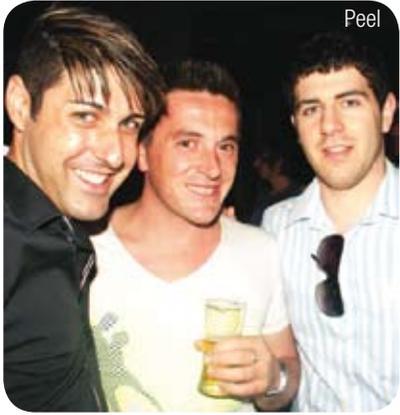




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g scene: OUT & ABOUT



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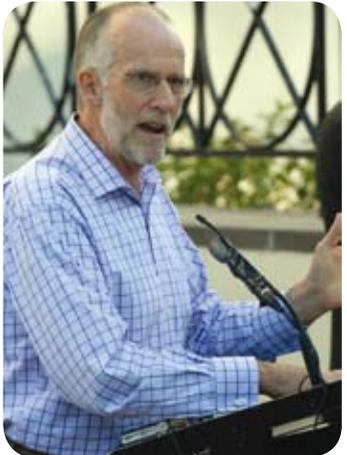
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q scene extra: PRIDE MARCH LAUNCH



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Click on the Win page on the Mardi Gras Recovery Week web site for your chance to escape to paradise!

After partying hard at Mardi Gras, Queensland is simply the best place to chill under the sun: the perfect mix of surf, sun and socialising. Relax on the beach at Noosa, explore the world heritage Fraser Island, meet the locals at the gala dinner and Brisbane's Big Gay Day Street Party.

With events running from Monday March 1 to Saturday March 6, followed by Big Gay Day on Sunday March 7, there is plenty to see and do. Visit the Mardi Gras Recovery Week website for all the details.

mardigrasrecoveryweek.com.au

QUEENSLAND
Australia

q dance: **WARRIORS OF BRAZIL**

For the first time in Australia, the world's greatest Capoeira experts will appear in a spectacular live stage show, featuring inspirational young athletes, dancers and musicians who still live today in the dangerous favelas of Brazil. Their bodies defy what is humanly possible as they leap, flip, kick and spin at breathtaking speed. Warriors of Brazil will tour theatres in January and February with tickets now on sale.



In a show that combines the extraordinary martial art of Capoeira (kah-poh-ay-rah) with the uplifting music and dance of Carnival, Warriors of Brazil showcases all of the power and the passion that is modern Brazil. From a country which has much to celebrate with its successful bid to host the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, its soccer prowess, and powerful musical impact on the world, this show represents a positive flipside to Brazil's street violence which is also dominating the news headlines.

The super-fit, young men in Warriors of Brazil have escaped the cycle of gangland warfare in the favelas or ghettos of Salvador de Bahia, former epicentre of the African slave trade. Selected as part of a social development program, they are the undeniable masters of Capoeira, and are now captivating audiences around the world and spreading a message of hope for the youth of Brazil. Prior to its Australian premiere tour, the show has had recent critically acclaimed seasons in Edinburgh and Hamburg.



Joining them on stage are the singers, dancers and percussionists of Rhythm Carnival who hail from the once notoriously violent favela of Candeal, which famously transformed the lives of its young people through the power of music. Members of Rhythm Carnival have performed with Santana, The Fugees, Ricky Martin, Sergio Mendes and The Black Eyed Peas.

Warriors of Brazil is created and directed by UK-based Toby Gough, a theatre-maker with a thirst for adventure, social justice and a genuine passion for nurturing the many fascinating cultures of the global village on the world stage. As the winner of five Scotsman First Prize awards at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and two Festival Lifetime Achievement awards, he has previously created the hugely successful shows Lady Salsa, The Merchants of Bollywood and The Bar at Beuna Vista. As well as directing Kylie Minogue in a Barbados production of The Tempest with members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Toby Gough has initiated many theatre-based social programs which bring an empowering sense of joy and celebration to the world's trouble spots. During the Bosnian war, he entered Sarajevo through a sewage tunnel to co-direct the Opera Europa with composer Nigel Osborne and the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra. Toby spent much of 2005 and 2006 working in Sri Lanka on the Children of the Sea project, running theatre projects and music workshops for victims of the Tsunami and the Civil War.

Warriors of Brazil initially came about through Toby Gough's friendship with legendary Brazilian musician Carlinhos Brown, who featured in El Milagro de Candeal (The Miracle of Candeal). This documentary chartered the area's transformation from one of Brazil's most notorious crime centres to a role model for the world, primarily through Brown's own music school. Carlinhos first introduced Toby to the musicians from Candeal who now feature in the show.



Warriors of Brazil features the world's best display of Capoeira, the martial art disguised as dance, and also captures the many aspects of Brazilian culture. Join us as we follow the journey from the pain of its African slave past, through the victorious joy of football, to the celebratory sounds and rhythms of samba and carnival.

For further information, visit www.warriorsofbrazil.com.

Sydney: Theatre Royal, 19 to 23 January, 2010 Bookings: 1300 795 012 www.ticketek.com.au

Brisbane: Lyric Theatre, QPAC, 28 to 30 January, 2010 Bookings: 136 246 www.qtix.com.au

Melbourne: Her Majesty's Theatre, 2 to 7 February, 2010 Bookings: 1300 795 012 www.ticketek.com.au

Adelaide: Festival Theatre, 9 to 11 February, 2010 Bookings: 131 246 www.bass.net.au



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q travel: with BARRIE MAHONEY

'Tweeters from the Atlantic'

Barrie Mahoney was a teacher, head teacher and school inspector in the UK, as well as a reporter in Spain, before moving to the Canary Islands as a newspaper editor. He is still enjoying life on his island in the Atlantic Ocean as a writer and author.

A Pair of Shorts and a Toothbrush

As much as I love visiting friends and family in the UK, the necessary flight fills me with dread, which is why I avoid this tortuous ordeal as much as possible. No, it is not the actual flying part, nor the possibility of catching pig flu from all that recycled air, nor being crammed into airport buses like sardines. No, my horrors begin when packing my suitcase, or several in my case, a week or so before the trip. Recent luggage restrictions are ridiculous; after all, my wash-bag alone is almost the entire weight allowance. Add to that all the necessary thermal underwear, gloves, scarves and gadgets that are essential for a trip to the UK, and you will understand the soul searching that I have to endure. Yes, I know, I am not alone in my whinging and I do fully understand all about global warming - as if an extra shirt or two would make any difference...!



A good friend of mine recently decided to take me in hand when he heard of my forthcoming flight. "You will be wearing vests, so take just three shirts. Make each one last for two days and then go to the launderette," he replied impatiently after hearing of my obvious distress. Hmm, and a good dose of deodorant, I thought to myself, but not wishing to appear ungrateful I continued to listen to his good advice. After all, my friend was an ex-marine who had travelled throughout South East Asia for several months with little more than a pair of shorts and a toothbrush. He taught me how to roll and not to fold my clothes. Did I really need to take an electric shaver, electric toothbrush, hairdryer and iron?

Two weeks later I was standing at the dreaded Gatwick airport, queuing to have my bags checked. I had suffered two weeks of just three shirts, visited the launderette twice, had plenty of showers and used lots of deodorant. No one had commented about my wearing the same items of clothing for two weeks and I stood with confidence in the queue waiting my turn.

"Had a good trip, sir," came a friendly voice from a spotty youth wearing a smart uniform. This chirpiness took me back a little as both age and experience has taught me that such chirpiness from anyone official in airports throughout the world usually means trouble.

"You're a little overweight, sir," continued The Spotty Charmer, grinning broadly. I thought he could have chosen his phrasing a little better. After all, I have been wasting away on a diet for three months or so. "How much overweight?" I snapped coldly, not about to indulge in pleasantries. "Ten kilograms, sir. You must have bought a lot of stuff in the UK. I hope it's worth it because that little lot will cost you £100." The Spotty Charmer had suddenly become officious and demanding in his voice, but he continued to smile broadly, although the breadth of the smile was thankfully restricted by the brace on his teeth. "That's impossible," I replied. "Anyway, ten kilograms at £5 per kilogram is only £50. You are trying to overcharge me, young man."

"Not so, sir. If you pre-book your excess luggage before your flight then you can have it for £5 per kilo. If not, it is £10, sir." I no longer liked the way he referred to me as "sir". It had an evil resonance about it.

"What rubbish," I spluttered. "How can I possibly foresee what the overall weight of my luggage will be until I have completed my trip. How can I judge that beforehand?" "Well, that is your problem sir. Will sir be taking anything out of his case or will sir be paying by credit card?" "This is preposterous," I exploded. "Sir will certainly not be taking anything out of his case," I retorted, reluctantly offering my credit card.

"That'll do nicely," beamed The Spotty Charmer, whisking the card out of my hand and into his evil machine.

I sighed, knowing when I was beaten. How my friend had travelled the length and breadth of Asia with a pair of shorts and a toothbrush I shall never know.

If you enjoyed this article, take a look at Barrie's website: www.bariemahoney.com or read his latest novel, 'Journeys and Jigsaws' (ISBN: 9781843865384).



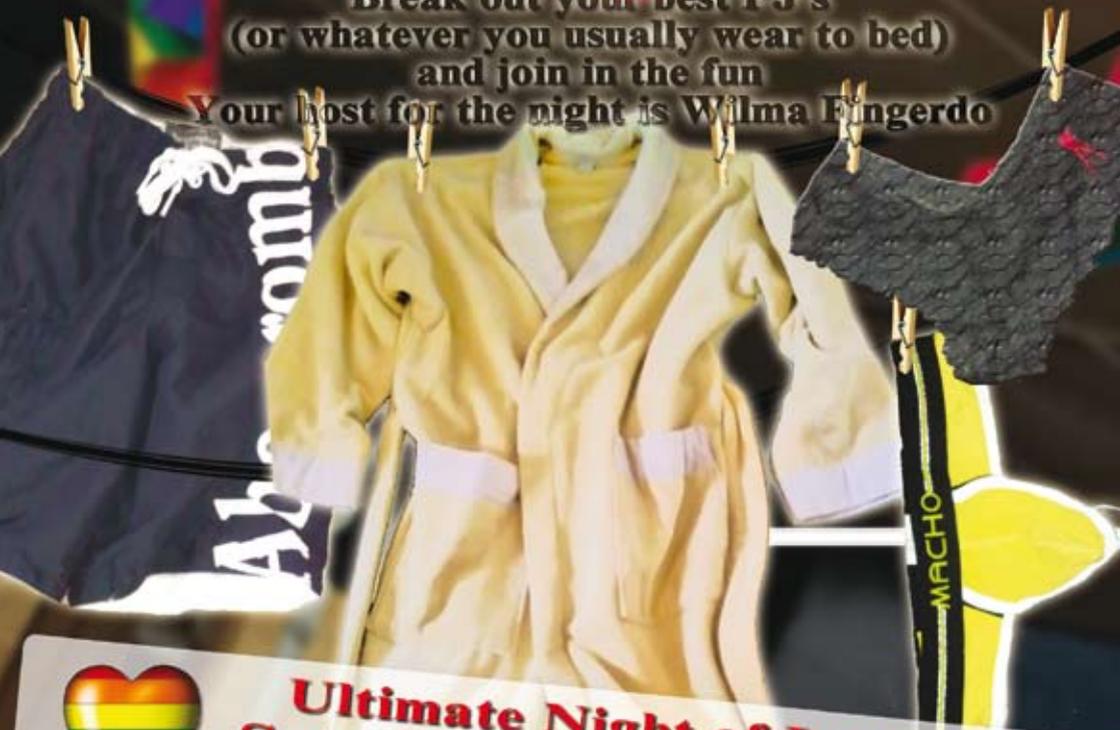
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