



“I’d sleep with George Clooney...”

...but marry Matt Damon!”

With two hit television shows and a book to be released, Charlie Pickering is more than your average comedian. He tells Matt Myers about anti-homophobia, Impractical Jokes, hanging out with the Golden Girls and drinking at Cheers!

DNA: You've had a lot of success with Talkin' 'Bout Your Generation. What's the secret to the show's success?

Charlie: It was very smart of Channel Ten to put someone as easy as Shaun Micallef in charge of a family show. I think it works really well. If we had too straight a host, the show could be almost too daggy. But there is a real chemistry between the four of us and we love hanging out together. It's also a genuine show for the whole family and, without being too corny, I think when it's a thing that the family can do together, then it's a good thing.

The 7PM Project is also another notch on your belt. Do you see yourself continuing on in a television career?

Yeah, I think so. I've never been a person to make a five-year plan because I think life changes way too quickly to stick to something like that. I love my two jobs that I have right now and if I blinked and it was five years down the track and I was still doing these shows, then I'd be happy.

If you could zap yourself into a classic sitcom, what would it be?

Probably *Cheers*! I thought it was the funniest show when I was young. I'd stay up and watch it with my parents. But also, it was in a bar, so you could drink the whole time! Back then, those sorts of sitcoms were so well written and so much effort went into them. That was why they ran for so long and were an important part of people's lives. Shows like *Seinfeld* and *Friends* also connected to people and really reflected where people were at.

You joined an anti-homophobia campaign, which truly makes you a straight mate.

We were approached through Channel Ten and I said yes straight away. I have lots of gay friends and I think any kind of homophobia is so outdated and unwelcome in Australian society. We talk about Australia being the land of the fair go, but it has to be a fair go for all people and if people are judged on who they sleep with, or really who they are, then it's not a fair go and we have to sort that out.

You obviously have gay friends?

Well, one thing I remember from my time at university is that there's nothing quite as tedious as a straight person trying to claim they understand what it's like to suffer homophobia. You get those people who are really loud and talk a lot about what it's like to face homophobia, and they don't actually know. And I would never claim to know. It's simply a quirk of genetics that I'm straight and had an easier run of things because of that. But I have enough gay friends to know that it's still a problem and *that* is a problem.

Do you think gay guys have some advantages over straights?

[Laughing] This conversation has come up with my gay and straight friends. From my experience, gay men might have a better

chance of understanding what's going on in their partner's minds. Mainly because a man knows the way a man thinks!

As a comedian, is there anything about the campness and kitsch of gay culture that you can identify with?

I identify with a good sense of humour. All my gay friends have a really edgy sense of humour. They're a little bit wrong and they call a spade a fucking steam shovel, but they just have that sense of humour that clicks with me as a comedian. And there is a flair for the theatrical, which is also part of what I do.

What's the campiest item you own?

I've got a framed picture of Liberace. I guess that's pretty camp. I have it to remind myself that Liberace happened and that the gayest and

comedians whose thing is to get on stage and pour out their thoughts. I don't think that category works for all comedians. I think, as with society, you get a mix of personality types, and it varies with afflictions and neurosis' that go into someone being a comedian.

Personally, I don't have any of that. I think the old stereotype of the troubled comedian that needed comedy as therapy was almost from a time when the career comedian was fairly new. I grew up listening to Billy Connolly and Bill Cosby and thought I could have a career.

What is your porn name? (Your first pet and the street you grew up in.)

Hudar Lucas!

I believe you've met half of the Golden Girls?

I was in a lift once with Bea Arthur at the

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campiest guy in the history of the world was popular to conservative American housewives. And that reminds me that in show business, anything can happen!

If you were gay, who would you go for?

It used to be Pierce Brosnan, but he's starting to look a bit ragged. I'd say George Clooney but I also like Matt Damon. I've met him a couple of times and he's the nicest and politest person, and really funny. Maybe I'd sleep with George Clooney but marry Matt Damon!

Of the gay divas, who do you like the most?

Probably Barbra Streisand. I just think she's done more. Streisand has an amazing voice and she's a great actor with a real variety of work. She's always been an elder stateswoman of showbiz and with a dignity about it. For as long as she's been in the game, she's carried herself so well and she's a really classy lady.

The Way We Were will always be one of my favourite movies, and also *Yentl*.

If you could meet a gay comedian from the afterlife, who would it be?

I'd love to interview Kenny Everett. I watched his show all the time when I was young and I would laugh so much. He was irreverent and silly and had a budget of about three pound fifty, and he still made it funny all the time. He had Abba on his show and even had Cliff Richard. But he'd also have the Hot Gossip dancers, which would do over-staged dance numbers. It was before the *Beat It* film clip and it was like dance street-fights with knives. It was real variety television, kitsch and funny. It's also why I have a beard. It makes me just that little bit more like Kenny Everett!

Do you think comedians use comedy as a form of therapy?

I think some do. There are definitely some

ABC. She was on her way to be interviewed and I was on my way to Triple J, so I got a twenty-second conversation with her. I was quite gushy and said I was a fan of *Maude*, and she said, 'Darling, you're way too young to remember *Maude*!' More recently I interviewed Betty White and I asked her if she has more fun now than when she started out. She said she gets away with more, but that she's always had fun.

And sadly, Rue McClanahan died last month.

Yes, I'm sad that I never got to meet her. She was hilarious and captivating and sure knew how to wear a negligee! It's very hard when the stars of one of your favourite shows pass away, but I guess when the premise of the show was about people in their sunset years that's going to come sooner rather than later.

You have a new book coming out?

Yes, it's called *Impractical Jokes*. It's a true story about my dad and his best mate Richard and a ten-year practical joke war between them.

It happened when I was a kid growing up and I was a part of it, helping out with all these pranks that started out little and escalated.

It's a really happy story and makes for a great Father's Day present!

And speaking of Father's Day presents, are you into jocks, boxers or just free balls?

I'm between boxers and briefs – boxer briefs.

I mix it up, but more than anything I try to enjoy my underwear. That's where I differ from most straight guys. I try to have nice underwear and I never keep underwear long enough for the elastic to go. I have a high rotation in my underwear draw.

That's the sign of a metrosexual.

Yes, I think so. And it's something your partner will also appreciate!