



BARBRA, can you hear me?'

He's camp, supports gay marriage and wants to record with Streisand. Is David Campbell our best Straight Mate yet?

DNA: What inspired you to record an album of '80s covers?

David Campbell: It was my tween into teenage years, where I broke away from my grandmother's love of swing and movie musicals. I started saving my pocket money and buying my own 45s. It was the early '80s, around the time my hormones were exploding. It was also the same time that I first met my dad [Jimmy Barnes]. So all this music stuff exploded. Duran Duran, *Countdown* and *Smash Hits* all kind of accumulated. So this just seemed like a fun album to do.

Do you have a favourite song on the album?

I'd been wanting to do a gospel version of *I'm Your Man* for about three years. I'm a big Wham! and George Michael fan. It took three days to piece it all together, but it's my favourite song. In fact, I want to do *I Knew You Were Waiting* on my tour, and we have Josie Lane from the album joining us, so it should work well.

Is there an '80s act that stands alone?

Outside of the obvious ones like Jackson, Prince and Madonna, I think George Michael. He went from *Careless Whisper* into *Faith*, which was right in the middle of my teens. It was like he had put sex on record. It sounded

so modern and futurist, yet he had a retro look. **You've always been a great supporter of the gay community. For instance, you sang with Carlotta at the 2008 Mardi Gras. What are your memories of that?**

[Loud laughter] My memory is that I had to do *Sunrise* the next morning! Of course, we sang at three in the morning, and then Olivia Newton John turned up doing *Xanadu*. So at six I was at the bar with Olivia and a friend tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Aren't you on TV in 45 minutes?' Mind you, I still had the full drag king makeup on. So I showered and got to *Sunrise* barely functioning. They gave me the biggest coffee ever and somehow I managed to sing.

Where do you stand on gay marriage?

I'm very open on how I feel about gay marriage. It's ridiculous that people are against it. It's a civil rights issue, so let's finish this stupid debate. I think my feelings come from when I got my start in musical theatre and a lot of my cabaret audience in those early days were gay guys. They'd come along and support me and I've always felt an affinity to the community. I think it's also because I'm flamboyant and camp myself. And then having a son and the ludicrousness of thinking that he could not have the same rights as half the country? Are you kidding me? This is a democracy. This is

"I'd like to put my hand up to be the wedding singer for the first Australian gay marriage!"

Australia. It shouldn't even be in question. Plus I'd like to put my hand up to be the wedding singer for the first Australian gay marriage!

Do you think it will happen in our lifetime?

Yes! Yes! If it doesn't happen in the next six to 12 months, I think a lot of people are going to be rightly pissed off! I think Julia Gillard has painted herself into a corner. The conscience vote is a cop-out because both sides of parliament are 30 years behind the times. But even having a conscience vote has received more positives than negatives. If I elect a government to lead, I want them to lead. It's a civil and humane issue, and it's a no-brainer. This is about the happiness of our community and the people who don't get it were probably also for the White Australia policy back in the '50s. You know what? Fuck them!

What's the campiest thing in your house?

[Laughing] Well, I've got a glitter jacket and in the corner of our living room we have a Sharon-delier, which is a chandelier made by Neil Finn's wife. It was a wedding gift, with bits of Lisa's and my history on it. We also have two wine fridges and we're getting a bar made with mirrors. But I live in my house – that's camp enough!

Who would David Campbell turn gay for?

I guess I'd say Hugh Jackman. He's camp,

flamboyant. He's Peter Allen and he's Wolverine, what better combination can you get?

When you were in New York, Time Out magazine said you 'created the biggest buzz since Streisand' – that's pretty flattering!

Well, to put it in perspective, it was to do with Streisand in the Village. Looking back, it was flattering but at the time I was more daunted by the quote. It certainly sold out my shows for most of the time I was in New York. In fact, we had to extend the season many times. But to be honest, I found it a very scary thing because I was just getting confident with being a singer and putting a show together, then all of a sudden I was a sensation. I felt like I was playing catch-up to the quote for a long time. But I'd never take it back, because that quote was a wonderful gift.

Any thoughts of an album of Streisand covers?

Only if she'd do it with me – and she may because she's quite eccentric. I think we just need to get hold of Marvin Hamlisch. It would have to be something from Michel Legrand. Maybe an unknown song. Let's get this going! It could be a one-off single for charity. Let's do it for the Streisand Foundation. Jason Gould, are you reading this?

Who is your diva?

George Michael! He's a superstar and [Bruce] Springsteen is another for me. I would shudder

to meet those two. I already turned down an opportunity to meet Springsteen when he toured here last, because I was so scared to meet somebody like that. Those guys freak me out with their talent. Freddie Mercury is another. For me, he's the greatest showman to walk the face of the planet. We don't get a lot of guys as showmen, which is why I like George and Springsteen. I hold those two at such great heights, but Freddie is above and beyond that. I don't know anyone else who could walk on stage in a crown and giant robe like that.

I believe you met Bea Arthur?

Yes, I worked with her and Kristin Chenoweth on the workshops for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. We were the original cast that was supposed to go to Broadway, but we all left and it was recast. But it was amazing meeting her and she loved Australia. She was a lovely, lovely woman. Thank you for being a friend!

Do you have a good drag name?

My first was Dina Getintuya, but I recently thought of a new one – Miss TheUrinals 2012! It came to my head two days ago!

When you were eleven, you discovered that family friend Jimmy Barnes was actually your dad, your sister was really your mother and your mother was really your grandmother. That must have been a shock...

It was an absolute mind fuck! It took me years to get over the emotional shock of it. I was 11 and about to hit puberty, then to have my whole world explode and fall away from me was confusion. What bothered me in the later years was a trust issue, because I had been lied to and I've done years of therapy to counter it, but I've come through it. I think I've kept people at a distance through the years, and even in my career sometimes I have done some self-sabotaging. It was about not thinking that I'm worthy of the attention or the love. Not to get all Judy Garland angst, but over the last few years I've gotten over it.

I guess meeting someone special and having a child and not wanting it to continue in his life was part of it. I thought it was time to grow up and not have those issues any more. But it was very difficult and I think it's one of the reasons I didn't stay in New York.

I was alone and torturing myself. I wasn't doing drugs or anything, but I was literally sitting in my apartment breaking down all the time, thinking I don't deserve to be here. So I moved back to Australia and it started the healing process. I got the role in *Shout!* and that gave me the confidence in being independent from my father. But yep, the whole thing was an emotional minefield.

You grew up watching Countdown like everyone else. Was it surreal having the connection to Jimmy Barnes and his mates?

I knew who he was and when he would come on the TV my grandmother would say he's a friend of the family. And I have a distant memory of him turning up when I was about five years old. I have a vague memory of his hair. I'm not negative about it, but because he's such a legend it makes it hard to have a career in the same industry. In fact, I'm surprised I'm still going. But I think the fact I've had such a different entertainment career has made a difference, and I also realised that I'm good at what I do. I built my confidence, but it took a long time.

Every family has a skeleton in their closet...

[Laughing] Yeah, it's just unfortunate that I was the skeleton!

Can we expect to see you back at the Mardi Gras in the future?

Yes, I'd love to. Please! I was hoping to get a call this year. I mean, I've done an '80s pop album! How many hints can I give?

What has been the biggest "pinch yourself" moment in your career so far?

When I met the Queen. I was standing with Julie Andrews and Bernadette Peters and other West End/movie star royalty waiting to meet the Queen. But sadly I can't find a photo of it. I would have to also say when I played Danny Zuko opposite Olivia Newton John at the Adelaide Cabaret Festival. That was amazing and I want to do it again!

Let's Go is out now on Sony.