



third time's the charm

With his third appearance on *Home And Away*, former *Mighty Morphin Power Ranger* Richard Brancatisano's star is beginning to shine. He talks about Britney Spears, the Italian Stallion and living with gay men.

DNA: Tell us a bit about your character on *Home And Away*?

Richard Brancatisano: Well I'm playing the character of Vittorio, an Italian Prince. He cheated on his fiancée Bianca back in Italy so she comes home to Australia and lives with her sister in Summer Bay. Then Vittorio enters Summer Bay looking for forgiveness and to try to win her back.

And you appeared on the show back in 2002 – as a different character?

Yes, I've been on it three times actually. Don't tell anyone! The first time I was an extra and got to throw cheezels at someone and the second time I kidnapped Bella! But the thing is, every time I've been on the show I've had a different haircut. Now I'm a prince with a bit of stubble and short hair.

You have an Italian background?

Yes, my dad is Calabrese, from Calabria. He was born here, but my grandparents were born in Italy.

Where did your nickname *Richie Branco* come from? It sounds like something from *Grease* or *West Side Story*.

Yes, it does! That came about from school. Everyone called me Branco and then after school casting agents thought it sounded good, too. But in terms of credits, I like my full name being used.

Have you ever been mistaken as gay?

Yeah, I have. It happens a bit. I guess I'm not a typical blokey bloke and I can easily be mistaken as gay sometimes. But I take it as a compliment.

Do you have gay mates?

I have heaps of gay mates, especially in the TV and music industry. I also lived with three gay guys just recently in Darlinghurst.

It was awesome and one of the best places I ever lived. They liked to party and I loved coming home to a social household. I felt really comfortable and had a great time living there.

Did they open your eyes to anything?

Grindr! I found it pretty interesting. They should get a straight version. They also used to watch *Wife Swap* and *Wipe Out* all the time, both the Australian and US versions. Monday nights were great!

What is the campest song on your iPod?

Well, playing in a covers band I have lots of Kylie and ABBA comes up straight away at the beginning of my iPod music list – *Dancing Queen!*

What's the name of your band?

Black Diamond Hearts. We play around at different gigs and it's basically indie rock. All the band members bring their different influences into the band. It's hard-hitting, with soul. It's got balls! Remy the drummer brings the balls.

So how many balls are there in the band?

Hmm... Let's see, four people – eight balls. But I think Remy might have three balls!

You studied acting for three years at the Theatre Nepean. What advice would you give to anyone who wants to study drama?

Studying drama is like anything: you get out of it what you put in. That's the most important thing. You can't just think you can rock up to drama school for three years and become a great actor. You need to go in wanting to learn. Some go into drama school when they're ready and some don't. I don't think I was fully ready for it. I wasn't as focused on becoming an actor as I am now, so a lot of it went over my head. But having said that, I met about 25 great

friends and it really consolidated the fact that acting was what I wanted to do.

You also played the *Green Mystic Ranger* in *Power Rangers: Mystic Force*. What was that experience like?

Yes! I played Xander. It was great. It's shot in New Zealand for the US and I have a few friends that have worked on it.

Xander! That was the gay cartoon character on *Drawn Together*.

[Laughing] That's right. They must have got their inspiration from me.

Another DNA Straight Mate, Dan Ewing, also played a *Power Ranger*

Yes, Dan was the Black Wolf Ranger, but that was two years after me. He asked me about it when he was first offered the role and I said, "You can't knock back being a *Power Ranger*, you have to do it for planet Earth!" I mean, that was the main thing that drew me to the job.

You're mates with Dan?

I've known Dan for a while now. We love hitting the gym together. In fact, he taught me to work out my legs. He's been coaching me and we spot each other. I don't think people there recognise us as *Power Rangers*, unless we morph!

Who would you turn gay for?

Sylvester Stallone. I like it rough! Apparently he's done a porno?

Yeah, *The Italian Stallion*. That came out in the '70s. He is somewhat the stallion. Maybe you could be in the remake?

Hmm...They're into remakes now. But I'd have to hit the gym for a few years.

On that note, what's your porn name (your first pet and the street you grew up in)?

We had a cat called Tangelo and the street >>

>> was Moree. So Tangelo Moree!

Do you have any tattoos?

No, I'm totally clean-skinned. I like the look of tattoos on both guys and girls and sometimes I draw things on my skin in texta – rude things – but I change my mind too much. I think it's cool and then I don't. Plus the other thing is that it's better for actors, otherwise it's longer in the make-up chair!

Our readers love looking at our models. How do you feel about guys checking you out?

Well, I've never really thought about it. I guess I check guys out, too, but more like I might check a guitar out. I can admire it for what it is, but I don't feel a sexual compulsion towards it. It might be a beautiful thing, but I don't feel like spooning it at night time.

Would you like to also pursue modelling?

I've never considered it, as I don't really know if it's my thing. Although there are a lot of different jobs that fall into the category of modelling. I guess you never know until you try, so I won't rule it out.

What's the healthiest fitness thing you do?

Being serious about my fitness is something I've only started doing in the last year or so. It's always been a months on, months off kind of thing. I'd stop training for five days and, before you know it, five days would turn into five weeks. So I'd say the healthiest thing I do for my fitness is making it a habit and a priority. I'd have to say that one of the key motivators is working out with my mates. It's a great opportunity to hang and have story time, but we don't let each other get away with wimpy workouts!

What about in terms of nutrition?

I don't really like eating unless it's pizza or pasta. So I need to force myself to have a good breakfast and eat regularly throughout the day. I try not to eat sugar, soft drinks or fast food. But when I do, it's like I'm in heaven! Most of the time, though, I try to replace sweets with fruit.

In terms of grooming?

I'm not a terribly hairy guy, so I don't really have much to do in this department. I've never

shaved my legs and I'm not a fan of the shaved chest. Sometimes I might clipper it slightly to make sure it's not too messy, but I've never waxed. Facial-wise, I've never enjoyed shaving, so I tend to just trim the stubble. Actually I've had my eyebrows waxed a couple of times, but that's about the extent of my man grooming.

What about the pubes?

Let's just say I like to keep things nice and tidy down there, but definitely no waxing – and no letters or landing strips!

And what's the healthiest thing you do for your mind and spirit?

That's a hard one, because I'm always learning and changing my attitude towards life. I guess the healthiest thing is to always actively want to improve that part of your life. If it's something you're aware of, then naturally you start finding ways to find happiness and peace. I've been working on segmenting my day so when I work, I work, and when I relax, I relax. That is, being totally in the moment and not trying to multi-task everything. I've always been a little unfocused, but with practice I'm improving. I think some of the most important things are to always keep an appreciation of everything, treat everyone with sincere respect and remember you have a choice.

Kylie, Madonna, Britney or Pink?

I love Britney. I love her songs. I actually listen to her and I listen even more to The Pussycat Dolls. Their film clips are through the roof. I use them to psych me up before a workout.

Young actors such as Sam Worthington and Chris and Liam Hemsworth are making it big in Hollywood. Do you think there is a secret to their success?

I don't know what the secret is yet, but hopefully one day I'll be able to tell you. I have a few hunches, but we'll have to see if they work.

If you could have a beer with any famous person, living or dead, who would it be?

Oh mate, that's such a hard question. I'd say Jimmy Hendrix. I'd like to have a beer and a jam with him. That'd be cool. He was a genius.

Boxers, jocks or freeballs?

It depends on what I'm going to be doing. Normally I wear underwear and sometimes when I go out I'll freeball... and maybe boxers to bed.

What about under the Power Rangers suit?

We wear a G-string!

Yes, Dan Ewing told us he had to wear a man-kini Ken doll thing that takes the shape away from your manhood.

That's it! I remember walking on set the first time and the assistant director came up and looked at us all. Some of us got told to straighten up, which was pretty funny. I was like, "Oh yeah, it's crooked, just give me a second while I adjust!"

That's sounds almost like auditioning for The Italian Stallion.

Well, that's it. They like symmetry, apparently. ★

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