



Please Like Tom

» He's Josh Thomas' best mate in real life as well as on *Please Like Me*. **Thomas Ward** chats to Matt Myers about the challenges of playing himself convincingly.

DNA: Congratulations on the International Emmy nomination for *Please Like Me*. Was that surreal?

Thomas Ward: Yes, it was. I always thought if I got an Emmy nomination I'd be living in a mansion somewhere, but I'm still living in a house where you need to know the trick to locking the bathroom door properly!

You and Josh Thomas have been mates for a very long time. How would you describe the chemistry? Gosh, I'm so in that relationship that it's hard to view it objectively. It's like a marriage. We've known each other for 15 years and behave like a bitter couple that probably should get divorced!

How did you meet? We met on the first day of high school. I was 13 and Josh was turning 13, and I hated him! But then I found him quite funny. In fact, I found him more funny than annoying... just [laughs].

Has the dynamic changed since working on the show? Not really. I mean, he's technically my boss, but everything's exactly the same. I just have to make sure I turn up for work. I can cancel plans with him, but I can't cancel work. So if he wants to hang out, he can make that happen by telling me we have to work!

Where is Tom's character headed this season? [Sighs] He's basically the same. You think by the end of season two he's going to turn his life around, but he's still making mistakes and blaming anyone but himself. He's still pretending he has no control over what's going on, when really it's his own decisions that get him into bad situations.

How do you feel about doing the sex scenes in the show? It's pretty weird and certainly not sexy. For me the pressure isn't the awkwardness between me and the person I'm pretending to have sex with, but more the fact that I'm trying to look like I'm having a good time while a rough-looking cameraman is literally 30cm from my face trying to focus!

At the end of last season, Tom passed up a prostitute for a wank. Is that equally weird to act out? For the past two seasons I've been telling people the show is based on real life, and after that went to air I thought I might stop telling people that! For the record, I've never rung a sex worker because I was feeling bad about myself, and then cancelled on her to hide in the bathroom. That's never happened!

But honestly, that's not the most embarrassing thing I've had to do on the show. That would probably be the scene where my girlfriend and I bury a rabbit and then she forces me to have sex, I finish too quickly, so she gets annoyed and I clean myself up with a pair of shorts.

And of course that one is based on real life. Oh god, I set myself up for that one! [Laughs] No comment! No comment!

Your being cast as Tom came about in an unexpected way, didn't it? Josh decided to make the show based on his real life and, of course, that includes his best friend Tom. I was already involved with writing the show and six months into the process, Josh asked me to audition. So I did, and according to the casting director I did an "okay" job at playing myself. I got the part, but I think the truth was they just couldn't find an actor quite as pathetic as

"I didn't feel like being in a bar at 11pm talking about the time I touched my girlfriend's vagina while I had chilli on my fingers."

required! I gave the closest representation of myself – if not even nailing that.

When you were growing up and knowing Josh, did you ever witness homophobia?

Absolutely. I saw it all the time, especially in high school. It was horrible and Josh wasn't even out, which made it even worse with the accusations and such. Guys in high school were the worst. I imagine that in school now it would be a lot better. The number of mainstream gay characters in pop culture has tripled since I was a kid. If you had a gay character on *Dawson's Creek* for instance, it would be a five-episode story arc, but in a show like *Glee* there's like three regular gay characters. I think that makes a huge difference to how kids treat each other.

Who is your diva? Carole King. My mum used to play the *Tapestry* album on repeat when I was

a kid! I'd also have to say Stevie Nicks, as she's the one I had a big crush on. There's a clip of her on YouTube backstage singing *Wild Heart* and it's the hottest thing I've seen on the internet!

If you were gay, who would you fancy? There's a model, Jordan Barrett, who Josh's boyfriend pointed out to me in New York. I thought, "My God, that guy is just beautiful!" That's very objective, isn't it? But if I had to go on talent, I'd say Michael Fassbender as I've a bit of a man-crush on him.

What is the campest thing in your house? The other day I bought a dresser that's painted baby blue. It's quite pretty and at the very least, quite feminine. I'm not sure if it's camp, though?

Does it look like it came out of Marcia Brady's bedroom? Yes it does. I guess it *is* camp. In my bedroom I also have the wardrobe from *Please Like Me*, and Josh likes to dress me quite flamboyantly. For this season I have this white sweater with native Australian parrots on it, and I now wear it often because I think it's great!

Many people probably don't realise you're a stand-up comedian. I started doing stand-up when I was 20. I'm a massive comedy nerd, so a lot of the time I was getting on stage while finding my feet, and kind of copying the style of others. Then I finally started being myself and had just found my rhythm when I got tired of it. I hated my own jokes and didn't feel like being in a bar at 11pm talking about the time I touched my girlfriend's vagina while I had chilli on my fingers. But I haven't quit. I may turn up doing my first solo show at a comedy festival.

Do you agree with the theory that comedy is an emotional crutch for inner issues? I think about this a lot, and I don't like the term 'crutch'. I think it's actually a really good way of processing issues. More than pretending that issues don't exist, making a joke about it actually makes you feel better.

This is our entertainment issue. What TV shows do you watch? *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* are my favourite shows of all time. I also love *The Office* (both the UK and American versions), *Arrested Development* and *Breaking Bad* is one of the best shows of all time. *Glitch* is one of the best Australian dramas to come out in the past few years. But if I ever think to myself, "How do I write a good show?" I go and watch the pilot of *Mad Men*.

If you could zap yourself into any sitcom in history, what would it be? *Extras*, with Ricky Gervais. I would play myself in it. I think that Patrick Stewart's appearance on *Extras* is my favourite moment in comedy... ever!

Last but not least, jocks, boxers or freeball? Boxer briefs, but definitely not Y-fronts. I know they're coming back, but I'm just not ready yet. I'll let you know when I am! ★

MORE: *Please Like Me* airs Thursdays at 9.30pm on ABC. Find Matthew on Twitter @MattMyers1964.