

Current Affairs Cowboy

Handsome, intelligent and very, very cheeky, *The Today Show's* Karl Stefanovic gets Freudian and frisky with Matthew Myers about "long and stabby" things.

DNA: Congratulations on 30 years of *The Today Show*. Has there been a standout story or moment for you?

Karl Stefanovic: Looking back on 30 years, it's pretty hard to zero in on one because there have been very big news events over that time, on top of the entertainment side of what we do. For me personally it would be covering the Brisbane floods. It was a significant story and so personal for me because I come from Brisbane. With the threat and pressure that the people there were under, it was important to me to do as well as I possibly could up there. I'd have to say that was the moment that I've relished the most.

You also interviewed Bill Clinton on, of all days, 11 September 2001.

To be honest with you, it was bizarre more than anything. My grandmother got me up to answer a call and I literally had the phone to my ear when I watched the second plane fly into the building. Then I was told that Bill Clinton was in Port Douglas and to try and interview him. But then the whole of Cairns went into lockdown and there were planes going everywhere and they flew the Hercules in from the States to pick up Clinton and his entourage. The interview was very short. It was such a bizarre day.

You've been called many things, including the Cowboy Of Current Affairs. Would you say you have a great sense of humour and outlook on life?

I haven't heard the Cowboy Of Current Affairs before, but I will run with that. [Laughs] Cowboy gear is really cool. I have the philosophy that I don't take myself too seriously, but I take what I do seriously. You work hard and you play hard. I've used that philosophy throughout my life and it's served me well. It's about working to your potential, but also rewarding yourself along the way, too, and I always try to do that. Off the back of something significant I like to have a party with family and friends, or just go out somewhere.

How do you deal with bad press?

Well, when I first came onboard with *The Today Show* it was difficult because I'd been a foreign correspondent in Los Angeles and the content of what I was doing was what I was judged on. When I came back to Sydney and had the press on my back for the better part of three years, it was a bit of a shock. But it toughens you up and in this business you need to be a little bit tough in order to survive. You can't be too worried about what people say all the time, because people are going to say whatever they want. Now with Twitter you can have it instantly. What I've learned from *The Today Show* is that you forget most of it and move on.

"There is a tremendous sense of fun that gay men have, which is wonderful and endearing."

The most popular YouTube clip of you (over a million hits) is the discussion about the long stabby thing, which is pretty damn funny.

Yes, who would have thought that a long stabby thing would have more than a million hits? But that came about just in the ad break. We needed to fill 30 seconds and I started telling this story about how in case of prowlers, you need something beside your bed. Then Georgie Gardner came on with the long stabby thing in relation to her husband who has red hair. And, as we all know, all blokes with red hair tend to have long stabby things beside the bed. It was one of those moments we hadn't planned and we have plenty of them and I think that's part of the great fun of our show.

I've had a long stabby thing alongside my bed for 20 years. It's an Aboriginal nulla nulla.

[Laughs] A nulla nulla! That's funny! I recently moved house and forgot about the nulla nulla under the bed. But when I was all moved in, the nulla nulla was under the bed. So it seems the removalist guys got their hands on my long stabby thing.

You've got to be careful with who gets their hands on your long stabby thing. I think it's a case of less is more in this situation. You should be very choosy because in the wrong hands, bad things could happen!

Well, I do have a pussy in my bed, too. I have two! And they're beautiful Burmese Shorthaired.

So you're a cat man?

[Laughs] I'm definitely that. And you're a naughty man!

You and Lisa Wilkinson have been credited with lifting *The Today Show's* ratings since you joined. That's a pretty good achievement.

Initially we had a few lean years and then Sarah Murdoch came on the show and people thought, "Oh, it must be alright if Sarah Murdoch's on it." When Lisa came on board, all the pieces of the jigsaw came together. We got on like a house on fire right from the start and to have a great chemistry between the hosts is important. I'll be honest with you, it's like a marriage, but like a good marriage. Every day is a new discovery and if we didn't have that, then we wouldn't do it.

So who is Karl Stefanovic's diva?

George Michael. I didn't even know he was gay until I was 22. When I look back

at the Wham! days, it's fairly obvious! But it certainly never changed my opinion of him. I think he's fantastic and I've seen him in concert. I love his music, his energy and his philosophies on life. And he's also a bit of a naughty boy and we all have that in common with him.

Speaking of which, you do a great impersonation of Miley Cyrus.

[Breaks into a Miley Cyrus jitter] She loves a dart [cigarette] doesn't she? It's just her voice that grates on me, but I think she's a fabulous girl. She's got great character and I think she's really talented.

At the Logies you said your wife Cas has the best arse you've ever seen – how do you feel knowing that quite a few gay guys think you have a great arse!

I don't know that I do. I can't see it. My wife is always telling me to pull up my jeans because she reckons that I don't have much there. >>



In 2011, Stefanovic won two Logie awards – the Gold for Most Popular Personality, and the Silver for Most Popular Presenter.

>> You look great in a pair of jeans. She's right though, you've got to pull them up to show off your butt.

Thank you. I guess it's horses for courses. I will endeavour to pull up my jeans so that more people can see it.

Do you have gay mates?

Working in this industry, you can't not. And I think that's a great thing. When I started out in this business, there were very few gay people. I started working at Channel Ten in Brisbane and I remember this guy that was a senior executive had a sticker on the side of his computer that said I can't even think straight and I took it literally! So, he was really the first gay guy that I encountered. I grew up in the country and this was my first time in Brisbane. I went out to see some shows with him and his partner. It was a great education in the fact that it was just a different preference in sexuality and nothing else. But there is also a tremendous sense of fun that gay men have, which is wonderful and endearing and I think that is one of the great qualities of gay men.

Have you ever been mistaken as gay?

On occasion people have said that. I think for a while my aunty thought that both my cousin and I must have been gay because we didn't have girlfriends. [Laughs] I think it was a Cairns thing. But I didn't mind that. I am what I am and the attention is always nice.

Gay marriage in Australia – do you think it will happen?

Has to! It's a no-brainer. I'm Catholic, in varying degrees of practising of course, but I think it's the most ridiculous thing in the world for gay marriage not to have been legalised. There is so much hate in the world at the moment, but to stop two people from marrying each other, who love each another is obscene. I fully support it. It's not hurting anyone and I think it's only going to be good for society. It will happen. It's only a matter of time. The politicians are dragging the chain on this one. I think they're out of step with society. Eventually they'll realise that the sky is not falling in.

Have you ever met one of your heroes or idols?

I remember once meeting Peter Jennings, who was a newsreader in America for many years. He was the guy I sort of modelled myself on, when I was growing up in the business. I met him in Washington DC when we were covering a story and I felt quite chuffed after that. He turned out to be as good a bloke in person as on air. I also remember meeting Ray Martin for the first time, as well as George Negus. I was so thrilled to meet these Aussie icons and to be working under the same roof as them. But also people like Liz Hayes, who is not only a good journo but a beautiful person.

What is the campest thing in your house?

When I was in Papua New Guinea, I picked up a native wooden penis covering. I bought it for my wife, but she didn't really see the funny side. So I now have it hanging up in the doorway. No one really has any idea what it is, except she and I. But it does double as a long stabby thing. **Is it true that newsreaders sit behind the news desk in their underwear?**

Well, when I was reading news in Brisbane, it was so hot on set that I used to wear board shorts under the desk. So, on top it looked like a newsreader and down below it looked like a surfer. I have done that from time to time, but now that I'm on *Today* we're all very open and we can't afford to do that.

The *Today Show* airs Monday to Friday 5.30am to 9am on Channel Nine.



Grease is the word: Karl with *The Today Show* co-host Lisa Wilkinson.