



DAVE OR DAISY?

David Wenham, star of *The Lord Of The Rings*, *Sea Change*, *Van Helsing* and *Cyrano De Bergerac*, reveals, "I'm called Daisy!" Matthew Myers investigates.

DNA: You first became an object of affection as Diver Dan in *Sea Change*.

David Wenham: In all honesty, I missed out on the effects of the *Sea Change* phenomenon because I wasn't here when it screened. When I arrived back, after working overseas, it was rather bizarre, but in a very good way. I feel extremely grateful that I was involved in that program and that it struck a chord with people.

Is there a colourful story behind your nickname, Daisy?

I grew up with five sisters and a brother but my brother is quite a bit older so I didn't see him as much. My sisters used to shorten David to Daze and eventually a y was thrown on the end. So, unfortunately, there's no wonderful, colourful story that surrounds the nickname. It's something that I grew up with and it stuck.

Playing *Cyrano De Bergerac* on stage you get to wear a prosthetic nose!

That's right. I do have a rather large one myself – nose that is! But I'll be adding to it. **There have been comparisons made between you and your *Lord Of The Rings* co-star Sean Bean.**

I think that was obviously part of the reason Peter Jackson cast the two of us – because of the physical resemblance. And, yes, we both do have slightly big honkers.

Were you one of the *Lord Of The Rings* actors that got a commemorative tattoo?

No, the guys who got tattoos were the members of the Fellowship from the first movie. My character wasn't part of that so I, unfortunately, missed out. Sean's character, Boromir, was so he has one.

Are you tattoo free?

I wouldn't say that, but I don't have one from *Lord Of The Rings*.

So, you do have a tattoo?

[Laughs] I may have...

***Cyrano* was the finest swordsman in France.**

Did you study fencing?

I did when I was about 14 in drama class, but coupled with that I actually did fencing as a sport. It was something that I loved. I didn't touch it for quite a few years until I did a production of *Hamlet* at Belvoir Street. It was

a great production with Richard Roxborough, Geoffrey Rush and Cate Blanchett. There was a wonderful sword fight where Richard and I got to wield the steel! *Lord Of The Rings* was also a chance to get back in there and do boys' stuff.

Have you ever played a gay role?

The one that comes to mind was in a production of *Tartuffe* a few years ago at the Opera House, which Barry Kosky directed. The character I played was called Cléante, who is normally played by a much older actor. He's the wise man who imparts wisdom and knowledge to everyone. But Barry wanted to dispose of that and we played around with a heap of ideas. On day one of rehearsal I started out as a South African army guy in a wheelchair, however, by opening night I ended up as "gay Uncle Cléante" who loved dressing up! I even had a song and dance routine, which I did with a blind character, and it was an absolute hoot. I also did a lip-synch number to a Christmas song called *The Man With The Bag* while dancing the blind man around stage!

As a young actor called Daisy, did people ever assume you were gay?

Not that I'm aware of but that's not to say it didn't happen. The theatre is a profession that obviously attracts a large number of the gay community, so yeah, I'm sure it did happen but it's not something that sticks in my memory.

Do you have a gay mate?

My smallish circle of friends would be a very even representation of both the gay and straight community. In fact, it would probably be fifty-fifty. I'd say that only a small portion of my gay friends are actually involved in the same industry as me, so I have friends from different fields, and half of them just happen to be gay.

Do you ever watch *Queer As Folk*?

I have done, yeah. I think it's a terrific show. I think both the English and the American versions are really good.

How's your gaydar?

I reckon it's pretty good, but I'll always ask a friend just to make sure.

Do you think gay people should be allowed to marry?

Sure. I can see no reason why not. If a couple are committed to each other and they want a ceremony to express that, then I can see no reason why one shouldn't endorse that.

What advice would you give to young men who want an acting career?

The big negative about this wonderful business is that it has an enormous unemployment rate. It has about 98 per cent unemployment most of the time, so it's very, very difficult to actually make a career out of it. But if somebody is really serious and passionate about it, then I'd say go for it. What I did was beat my head against a brick wall for long time – and sure I got a lot of headaches along the way – but eventually there was a bit of movement.

Many gay actors choose to stay in the closet. Do you think that coming out is still a career risk for them?

In terms of the theatre, definitely not, but in the movie business, possibly. I'd say so. I'm

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purely talking about Hollywood here, where there's definitely still a stigma attached. I'm sure there are quite a number of gay leading men who are terrified of coming out because it would negatively effect their image.

Did you ever meet John Hargreaves? [Gay Aussie actor who died of AIDS].

Yeah, I worked with him on a mini-series called *The Heroes* and he's one of the greatest influences on my acting career. I would rate him as one of the greatest Australian actors, if not one of the greatest actors I've seen.

Lastly, boxers or briefs?

I've tried both, but I'm a bit more of a briefs man than boxers. 🍆