



"I grew up on the beach in Sydney, and as an athlete, so I'm no stranger to wearing little or nothing," says Daniel MacPherson.

MR X FACTOR

Daniel MacPherson, star of *The Bill* and *The X-Factor*, talks about his best gay mate, getting naked, working with the AIDS Trust and staying over at Robbie Williams' place! Interview by Matt Myers.

DNA: From *Neighbours* to *The Bill*, you've grown into something of a sex bomb!

Daniel: [Laughs] Yes, it's been an interesting evolution! The press reaction to what I've done over the past few years has been amazing and it's very flattering.

You have plenty of gay fans.

I didn't have to begin with, but the first thing I did when I went to the UK was the cover of *Attitude* magazine – naked. I like to cater to my gay fan base!

A lot of actors wouldn't have done it.

I grew up on the beach in Sydney, and as an athlete. I'm no stranger to wearing nothing.

Tell us about your AIDS fundraising.

When I was in *Neighbours* I worked with the AIDS Trust Of Australia, a charity that I'm passionate about. Now that I'm back home I'll be working with them again. I was patron of the AIDS Trust For World AIDS Day in 2001. I'm looking forward to using my power again for good – not evil!

Do you have a gay mate?

"My gaydar's waned. I'm going to hang out with the Aussie Queer Eye boys and get it 'honed'."

I'm in the entertainment industry!

Is there one in particular?

Yes, a very good mate who I grew up with in Sydney. We lived together in Melbourne. His name is Josh and he's in *Dirty Dancing* in Sydney. I love him to death.

Do you go clubbing together?

We did in Melbourne in my wild *Neighbours* days, but I've hit middle age at 24! I've taken up golf and I'm house-hunting and I just grew a beard. Josh tries to drag me out every now and again.

Your first scene on *The Bill* involved some indecent exposure.

I think the executive producer had been reading *Attitude*! That gives you a guess at his sexual orientation. On my first day I was told I was going to be wearing boxers and

was going to get caught by one of the other coppers. But when I turned up on the set they said, "You're actually naked." I thought they were joking but, sure enough, I was naked! It was a cold, cold English morning.

With your bum flashing at the camera.

[Laughs] I had just been to Bali so I was looking alright... I think.

You joined the show right in the middle of the Luke/Craig/Kerry gay love triangle.

They were reinventing the show, sexing it up. It had mixed reactions and a lot of criticism about the new direction but it doubled its ratings and peaked at 12 million viewers in the UK last year.

When we interviewed Scott Neal (PC Luke Ashton) he spoke very highly of you.

Scott's an absolutely lovely guy. My only regret is that we didn't get to work together much because he was leaving just as I was starting. He's a great young actor and even though I've moved back home, I'm sure we'll remain good friends.

On *The Bill* you ended up with Kerry and with the actress who plays her, Beth Cordingly, in real life.

It was a double whammy! The English were up in arms because

I went over there stealing their jobs and their women! [Laughs]

You also starred in *Godspell* with Jonathan Wilkes, who is Robbie Williams' "very close friend".

That's right. There are plenty of rumours floating around about him and Robbie.

And you lived with them for a while?

Yes, I did. They put me up when we were touring. Johnny became my best mate in the UK. For a young actor, getting on stage in the UK is second to none.

Were there fights for the shower in the morning at Robbie and Jonathan's place?

[Laughs] No. Luckily Rob was in LA, so I was more house-sitting than a houseguest.

Dirty jocks lying on the bathroom floor?

[Loud laughter] I'll remain tight-lipped there!

You were once in a band called the Funky Bitches. What were they like?

Yeah, I used to play with Stephen Hunt who worked on *Neighbours*. He's also a very committed ambassador for the AIDS Trust. **He swam the English Channel to raise money for them.**

That's right! We had a little acoustic band.

We called it "pop punk folk fusion" but basically it was two guys on guitars trying to punch out '90s grunge covers. We've split due to creative differences!

How good is your gaydar?

I think it's been waning. I've had a couple of real surprises recently! But I was hanging out with the new *Queer Eye* cast at the *Australian Idol* final, so I might spend a bit more time with them to get my gaydar "honed" again.

What do you think of the Aussie Fab Five?

They're absolutely lovely. Each one is totally unique but equally amazing and special. I had my 12-year-old sister with me at *Idol* and they made her feel like a million dollars. They're going to be huge in this country!

Who will be outed on *The Simpsons*?

Well, everyone knows about Smithers, so I reckon Barney. He's just a big bear!

Have you been talking to Andrew G?

Did he say that as well? [Laughs]. It's the "out Barney" conspiracy! I reckon Barney and Mo get it on in Mo's after hours.

Who would you prefer to see live in concert: Kylie, Madonna or Britney?

Britney. She's a bit more buxom and that's how I prefer women. Madonna's got, dare I say it, X-factor, but I've always had a thing for Britney. When she got married and went off the rails I just wanted to rescue her.

X-Factor? Was that an intentional plug?

No. It happened by chance!

Should gay couples be allowed to marry?

Yes. This is the year 2004. We're into a new millennium. Society has to accept that.

Lastly, boxers or briefs?

A nice short, lightweight, fitted boxer keeps my boys happy! 🍌