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"What does anal sex feel like?" Enough Rope's Andrew Denton asks DNA.

HOST ON A ROPE

Andrew Denton is Australia's most-watched talk show host. This time he's answering the questions. Interview by Matthew Myers.

DNA: How does it feel being DNA's Straight Mate of the month?

Andrew Denton: Actually, I don't think I've been anyone's mate of the month, ever! I must say, I'm honoured, but couldn't I be Bent Gent of the month? [Laughs]

You often interview people with unusual professions. How about drag queens?

I think after *Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert* it became a well-trodden path. For *Enough Rope* we're looking to go down the more unexpected route.

Do you have a gay mate?

Actually, my best friend through my childhood years was gay, but we sort of drifted apart, as you do in life.

What about in your current friends?

Yeah, in this industry, always. But, and this might be very boring for you, I just don't distinguish it that way. I mean, I work with gay people and friends and it makes no difference at all.

Have you ever been to Mardi Gras?

A few years ago Amanda Keller and I did television commentary just off Oxford Street and it was great fun. It was a hoot and I've been several times since.

Has anyone ever mistaken you as gay?

No, but tragically, no one has ever mistaken me as straight either!

Last year's lesbian mums on *Playschool*: a storm in a teacup?

Absolutely. Look, I think any good parenting model is a good model. Frankly, what children need is love and I just don't think you can classify it in terms of sexuality.

You appeared in the *Puppetry Of The Penis* documentary. You had a small cameo.

Oh, I think you're putting it rather cruelly. People might misinterpret that! Yes, the guys came into Triple M when I was doing the show and they filmed a segment. You'd think *Puppetry Of The Penis* wouldn't work that well on radio but just to hear somebody say, 'The Hamburger!' and then hear our reaction – it was pretty good theatre of the mind.

Back in 1998 you ran the *Triple M House From Hell*. Do you now look at *Big Brother*

and think, 'Been there, done that'?

Oh yes. We were the first to do that and I guess our only defence is that we were innocents. We realised afterward that it was hugely irresponsible and an exploitative thing to do, and we never did it again!

You've mentioned previously that you're opposed to organised religion. What are your feelings on that?

Opposed is too weak a word. I loathe organised religion!

We can relate. The gay community is under attack from many organised religions.

I always found it ironic that one of your most fierce adversaries was the pope, a man who wore a dress and was called Karol! What I really loathe about organised religion is this insistence that there is only one way to lead your life and if you don't like it, we're going to hurt you!

Do you think gay people should be given the right to marry?

Of course. Although it surprises me that with so many creative people within the gay community, you haven't created your own far more moving and worthy ceremony. To me, marriage is a commitment, a state of mind and a state of heart. It doesn't need to be state sanctioned.

As an interviewer, what is the one question you would love to ask a gay man?

[Pause] What does anal sex feel like?

It hurts!

[Laughter] That's a good answer!

It can hurt and it can be pleasurable too.

There's another question I'd like to ask, too. As a straight man and loving women as I do, I sometimes look at gay people and I feel like you're missing out on that other half of humanity. That might make me sound really ignorant, but do you ever have a longing to experience it? Do you ever have a sense of missing out on that?

I think we have a sense of missing out on having a family and children.

Which is a shame, because so many gay people are so nurturing in their instincts. And that's one of the stupidities about this

rebellion against gays as parents. But yeah, it's just that I find women so luscious and so mysterious!

We do too, but more as an art form.

Moving on... Hugh Jackman, John Travolta, Matt Damon. You've interviewed some pretty sexy blokes. From a straight man's point of view, who was the sexiest?

I can answer that very honestly: Hugh Jackman. The first time I met him was at a telethon in Perth. I was talking to his wife, Deborah-Lee, and I didn't know Hugh at all. He walked in the door and, well, sometimes a straight man will see another man and just instinctively go, 'Whoa! What a great looking guy!' And that was my reaction to Hugh.

Have you ever interviewed Ian Roberts?

No, but I've been a South Sydney fan from way back and I've followed his story from the start. I met him many years ago at Red Ribbon Day and I think he's a really impressive guy. He's an incredibly impressive footballer too, but a very impressive guy. I've modelled myself on him physically!

What about Australia's gay icon: Kylie?

I've interviewed Kylie a couple of times on radio and once on television. For a woman who has done so many interesting things she doesn't have a lot to say for herself.

Madonna, Barbra Streisand or ABBA's Agnetha Fältskog: if you had the chance, which one would it be?

No hesitation there: Madonna! I saw her once on *David Letterman* some years ago. *Letterman* is a very rehearsed and contrived show and she decided not to play along with it. It completely threw the show out of whack and it was fantastic television!

Ever indulged in a little Oprah, Ricky or Jerry Springer?

I went through a period of watching all of them. Fortunately I'm through it. I was in London last year and went to see *Jerry Springer The Opera*, but I left at interval as it got very dull. 🍷

Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope* can be seen on ABC TV, Mondays at 9.30pm.