

'I'M UP FOR NAKED TWISTER!'

Star of TV's *Stingers* and now taking the lead in *Oklahoma!*, Ian Stenlake answers some Curly questions. By Matthew Myers.

You're straight. What attracts you to musical theatre?

Ian Stenlake: [Laughs] Judy Garland! No, I think I've just loved musicals my whole life. I have fond memories of growing up with all of those mainstream movies that were shown on TV every year. *The Wizard Of Oz*, *The Sound Of Music*, *Oklahoma!* – our family didn't miss them. I never thought I'd be a part of it until much later, but I love music and I love singing!

Do you have an all-time favourite?

As I was growing up, I couldn't go past *The Wizard Of Oz*. *The Sound Of Music* is definitely another one. My favourite scene is where the nuns hold up the jumper leads and foil the Nazis.

What's the best thing about performing in *Oklahoma!*

This musical comes with so much history and has been so phenomenally successful. I just feel honoured to have the opportunity to play the role of Curly.

With all those dancing cowboys in *Oklahoma!* is there anything about Curly you're not telling us?

[Laughs] Well, he is bow-legged but I believed that's from the saddle! He does hang around the blokes. It's something I'll have to look out for when I'm next near those sweaty rope-twirling cowboys – I might even get lassoed!

Who is your best gay mate?

I have two favourites. Billy Brown who was one of my groomsmen at my wedding and Michael Cormick who was my wife's [actress Rachel Beck] brides-mate! He was the mate of honour. They met on *Beauty And The Beast* and I met Billy after my first stage show in 1990 and he's been a mentor and friend ever since.

Do you ever get hit on by guys?

I do from time to time. I had a situation quite recently when I was doing *Walkabout* at Federation Square. This tall Mohican descendant from Phoenix Arizona was watching the show and chatting to us afterwards. My director was teasing his nieces by saying, "It's a shame Ian's gay, isn't it?" Well, this guy heard it and I didn't correct it. He was six-foot-five and tapped me on the shoulder, smiled and very calmly said, "By the way, we're family."

How's your gaydar?

It's pretty good but it's the ones that get below the gaydar that are always the most interesting!

There's a few of those around, like tradesmen, for instance.

Yeah that's right. But a healthy gaydar is not really a priority for me. I like anyone and I'm cool with who they are.

You taught Jeff Jantz how to make Strawberry Puffballs? Please explain!

[Laughs] Strawberry Puffballs! I spent a lot of time in the kitchen with my mum and I'm very proud of that. Strawberry Puffballs are one of my favourite biscuits. It's basically sweet and savoury, a cheese Jatz with salt on it, with a marshmallow top and strawberry jam in the middle.

Not many people know that you had a part in *The Godfather Part III*

I had a part as a waiter. If you watch the film very carefully and don't sneeze or blink, you'll see me three or four times in the background!

Have you ever been to the Mardi Gras?

Oh, yes! I remember my first time fondly. It was 1994 and it just blew my mind! It was a terrific night. [Mischievous laugh] I love the role that Fred Nile played in making sure everyone knew it was on!

What's the campest thing we'd find if we went over to your house?

Rachel's pretty camp. She played Judy Garland! Actually there is an Elvis jumpsuit with twelve-inch gold tassels and gold platforms. It's a budgie smuggling kind of lycra suit!

Is coming out a career risk for an actor?

It can be, but coming out in general can unfortunately be fraught with ramifications. It's up to individuals as to how they want to conduct their career.

Do you watch *Queer As Folk*?

Yes, some of the UK one. What the hell is felching anyway?

Er... next question: if you were gay, what celebrity would do it for you?

It would have to be someone not too camp. I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be Eric Bana! [Laughs] I'd say young Orlando Bloom. I was bewitched by him in the first *Lord Of The Rings* movie.

Who would you prefer to see in concert Madonna, Kylie or Barbra?



Definitely Kylie! I knew a follow-spot operator on Kylie's show who actually sat above the changing room. I reckon that would be the best seat in the house!

Who would you rather have at a dinner party at your place: Oscar Wilde, Rock Hudson or Rudolf Nureyev?

Oscar Wilde. I think he was an extraordinary man. In fact, I think all those guys would be great to have around for a dinner party and maybe a bit of naked Twister after, but definitely Oscar Wilde.

Boxers or briefs?

I'm a reformed boxers man and I'm now into briefs. I went through a huge boxers phase and I think that when Rachel and I decide to have a baby, I'll go back to boxers. I've heard going commando is better for that.

So when you're on stage, do you wear a dance belt?

No, just a pair of socks! Actually I might ask DNA readers for advice on this – I wore a dance belt, or dance thong, for three years. But the best thing about that, every time, was peeling it off at the end of the day. It was like stopping smashing your head against a brick wall. It felt so good... you'd go oohhh! My mother-in-law still sends me G-strings for my birthday! 🍌