

"I'M TOO LAZY TO WEAR UNDIES!"

Scott Maslen spent five years playing Phil Hunter on *The Bill*. Now he's off to *Eastenders*. He spoke to Matthew Myers about life on set, gay Miami and treading the catwalk in a leather thong!

DNA: What do you do to keep fit?

Scott Maslen: [Laughs] Very little! The timetable on *The Bill* is very demanding and I don't get any time to work out. I've been doing some physio recently because I had reconstruction surgery on my knee, so I'm gradually slipping back into it.

Do you have any gay mates?

Yeah, I've got loads of gay mates! I was in the fashion industry before this and I used to go out and party quite a lot.

Has anyone ever come out to you?

Yeah, a very close friend of mine came out to me when we were young. It was, I must admit, a bit shocking because we were best mates. He told me he loved me and we were drunk when he said it. I was like, "Yeah I love you too, man!" and he was like, "No, Scott, I love you." It was a funny experience. We are still very close. That was my first hands-on experience of being hit on.

We heard you auditioned for the original *Queer As Folk*.

I was offered a part in it. I gave the script to

Jeremy Sheffield, who is a gay actor friend. When I read it I didn't know what to make of it and I said, "Can you read it and tell me what you think?" There are a lot of gay actors out there and I don't understand why the industry is not using gay actors if they're going to make the bold choice of exploring this field. I suppose the nature of acting is that you don't have to be a psychopath to play a psychopath. That's the argument they were playing with, but there are a lot of gay actors I know that would have been brilliant in those roles.

Did you watch *Queer As Folk*?

I'm not a big TV watcher. When you're involved in television, the last thing you want to do is watch it. You want to go out and do stuff that's not about the industry.

Have you ever been mistaken as gay?

I was in the fashion industry and I got a lot of gay attention. I think more from men than women. I was seen as a bit of rough and my gay mates used to love that. They'd take me out around New York and use me as a pulling magnet!

Have you ever played a gay role?

I have in theatre. I did a play called *Fourplay*, which was about two couples, and the guys in it got up to all kinds of things. I have no inhibitions or qualms about doing these sorts of roles. It's part of the deal in acting. As long as it's not gratuitous I'm up for it.

You used to be in the Royal Marines. How does that compare to life on television?

There are parallels. Whether it's in business, the military or if you're an actor, the fundamental structure of work is pretty much the same. So working in television, compared to being in the marines, has the same sort of discipline, practice, focus and detail. I've always had a commitment and passion to achieve goals.

What made you a vegetarian?

When I left the military I fell into the fashion industry by luck. At the time I was about 15-and-a-half stone [100kg]. I worked with photographer Bruce Weber, who did everything from Calvin Klein to Versace, and he said, "You might want to lose some weight because you're only going to do pants and sportswear." The whole process of losing

weight was through being vegetarian. Initially it wasn't a moral or humane thing, but it became about that over time.

What was it like being a model?

I was 18 years old and blissfully unaware. I travelled around the world and it was fantastic. Everywhere was paid for. I stayed in lovely hotels and took it for granted. I wish I were doing it now. I went to some of the most beautiful places in the world.

Is it true that you went down the catwalk in a leather thong with a dog on a leash?

[Laughs] Yeah! Dirk Bikkembergs [fashion designer] took a real shine to me because I was a blokey-looking type and he had me doing all kinds of stuff in Belgium. I've done

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loads of catwalks wearing ridiculous clothes.

What is the campest CD you own?

I've got the Bee Gees in the car at the moment. I love disco. At the end of the day, people have to admit that the gay community are on the forefront of fashion, music and everything. They rubber-stamp trends. I lived in Miami from 1989 to 1995 and Ocean Drive on South Beach became the new gay Mecca. It took over from San Francisco and it was so much fun. It was so liberated and the fashion and music started from there and spread.

If you were gay, who would do it for you?

Hmm... I'm not into the androgenous look. I think Jim Caviezel who played Jesus in *The Passion Of The Christ*.

Do you have a particular favourite memory of working on *The Bill*?

I've had a fantastic time. I can't name one particular good time because there have been so many. It's always mischievous and we're like little kids. We play police but in between takes it's juvenile delinquency!

What is your new role in *Eastenders*?

I'm playing a guy called Jack Branning, and he's a cop, too!

Are you a boxers, jocks or freeballing guy?

I'm usually a freeballer, but I do boxers rather than jocks. I used to do jocks when I was younger for some reason, then I went back to boxers. Usually I'm quite lazy, get up and put my jeans on without underwear. 🐾

The Bill is on Tuesdays and Saturdays at 8.30pm on ABC-TV.

