



DANCER... WITH GUNS!  
KIP GAMBLIN AND PAULINI IN *THE BODYGUARD*.

# IS THAT A GUN IN YOUR POCKET?

FROM BALLET BOY TO TELEVISION HUNK, KIP GAMBLIN IS NOW ARMED AND DANGEROUS IN *THE BODYGUARD* OPPOSITE PAULINI. HE HOLSTERED LONG ENOUGH TO TALK TO MATT MYERS ABOUT HIS CAREER.

**DNA: What kind of research did you do for *The Bodyguard's* Frank Farmer?**

**Kip Gamblin:** Well, I didn't want to watch the film because I didn't want to be influenced. I've made the mistake before of watching someone else's interpretation and, whether you choose to or not, it sinks in and you end up taking on stuff. To me, Frank is a very grounded person who's used to protecting politicians but he's dropped into an entertainment world equivalent with the likes of Kim Kardashian. He winds up working for people with enormous egos and, at first, he's not comfortable but, through the relationship with Rachel (played by Paulini), he sees the romanticism and falls for her.

**In your research, did you hang out with actual bodyguards?**

No, but I watched documentaries on bodyguards and I know someone in the military so I wracked his brain, and did research into the physicality of guys in those roles. Frank is not your classic beefcake bodyguard. There's often a stillness and confidence in a lot of those guys. They're not showy. It's almost a bit of a disguise where they can look like the banker down the road but are very disciplined, almost to the point of OCD. They're very observant and trained to be on the game. There's a scene where he lets that down and you see his human side.

**Did you do any firearms training?**

Yes. We had a professional show us what to do, and not to do, when holding guns. It was a lot of fun. He brought five handguns and all the guys were picking them up and playing with them. I got a photo with three beautiful young dancers all holding their guns, which I was going to put on Instagram captioned "Dancers with guns"

but thought maybe not a good idea. Dancers with guns? How hot can you get!

**In the show your character protects a diva; who is your real-life diva?**

I absolutely love Nina Simone, Eartha Kitt and Janis Joplin. I also love Courtney Barnett and when I was living in Melbourne I got into her before she exploded on the American scene. I used to turn into a real fan-boy whenever I saw her at the local Thai restaurant!

**In 1999, you worked with one of the biggest music divas of all, playing Brother Time in the Barbra Streisand Timeless Tour. What are your memories of that?**

I remember that all my gay friends wanted to kill me because every dancer wanted that job! They were so pissed off because we were all up for it and I was the lucky one who got it.

**Have they forgiven you since?**

Yes. It was a phenomenal experience to work with her. There aren't too many people these days who'll come to Australia just to do a couple of concerts with 80,000 people at each. In fact, in terms of bodyguards, that was probably my first introduction to someone who had an entourage. That was the first time I'd seen guys with earpieces who'd walk into a room three minutes before her. She had two bodyguards, two dressers, two make-up artists and so on. Her husband, James Brolin is a very salt-of-the-Earth bloke and when they finished the concert he wanted to drive to Melbourne and so they got a four-wheel drive and did it. They wanted to experience Australia as tourists, which I thought was fantastic. I can see why she's drawn to someone like him.

**Why?**

Because her world is so heightened, everywhere she goes, and he's her polar-opposite, boots-on-the-table cowboy sort of guy.

**How did you find Barbra personally?**

When you meet someone with that amount of exposure, you're automatically thinking, "Oh, my god, how do I communicate with her?" But once you get past the assistants and she's staring you in the eye, she's one-hundred percent there, and that was nice.

**Have you ever had a wardrobe malfunction?**

When I was a back-up dancer for Kylie at the 2000 Olympics I completely ripped the crotch of my pants while doing a split jump. Thankfully, a lot of it was not "rear to the audience" so not that many would have noticed.

**Because you studied ballet, did people assume you were gay?**

When I was younger, yes, but we've come so far. Male dancers are, now, much more [understood], and people have a better respect for the demands of what they do. Early on, when I was about 15, it was different. Even nowadays I may get the occasional ribbing from mates, but half of it is banter. People often ask if all male dancers are gay but in most companies I've worked in it's about fifty-fifty.

**We recently interviewed your *Neighbours* screen son Ben Hall. Is he like a real son?**

Yeah! Many people said we passed well for father and son. He's an absolute prince. This industry is full of egos, and it was so nice to have a friendly

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#### WHO'S YOUR MAN CRUSH?



**Kip:** Michael Fassbender. He's an incredibly versatile actor, so strong and intense, and was so still in *The Light Between Oceans*.



chap who was beautiful in every sense of the word.

**Your mother Maxine was in the original Australian production of *Hair*. Was she an influence in you entering the business?**

Definitely. That was the same production with Reg Livermore and Marcia Hines, and we had the vinyl soundtrack at home, which was fantastic. I wasn't born when mum was doing it but my parents are a bit alternative with a lot of friends from that era. I've grown up around a lot of hippies. It could've been worse!

**In *The Bodyguard*, you wear some sharp looking suits. What's your favourite?**

The three-piece suit that I wear is tailored to fit me and I feel a million bucks in it. I definitely embody the bodyguard in that outfit! It's so good wearing those suits because I've been on *Neighbours* for the last four years wearing board shorts. And, of course, I also get to carry a gun. I've got to say, packing a pistol feels really good, especially around Darling Harbour [near the Lyric Theatre], because I sense there's a bit of an underworld hidden there.

**What advice would you give to people wanting to study the theatrical arts?**

Don't listen to people who tell you that you can't. There's a lot who will, particularly in Australia. I've had so many people, over the years, say, "Are you mad?" But if I'd listened to that, well, I don't know what I'd be doing now. I've seen so many talented kids with self-doubt who wonder how they're going to make it in the world, let alone this industry.

Many go to nine or ten auditions and give up, but it could be the 11th one that gets you in the door.

**Most dancers have odd stories about wearing dance belts. Can you relate?**

[Laughing] Oh man, when I first started ballet I was told which way to "wear myself" inside the belt. I was tucked the wrong way around for about a year before I got to Melbourne where it was pointed out to me. You can either be north or south, and I'm meant to be north! I still have a couple of dance belts because I'm hoping that one day I'll get to wear them again.

**Jocks, boxers or free balls?**

I would be a free-baller if I could but for me it's boxers. At least with boxers it's all about whichever way it falls!

**MORE:** The Bodyguard is playing at the Sydney Lyric Theatre. Go to [thebodyguardmusical.com.au](http://thebodyguardmusical.com.au)