



ROCK IT MAN

GRINSPORN LEAD SINGER, PHIL JAMIESON HAS TAKEN A SURPRISING, THEATRICAL CAREER TWIST. HE TELLS MATT MYERS ABOUT HIS ROLE IN THE GREEN DAY MUSICAL, AMERICAN IDIOT.

DNA: We know you as the lead singer of Grinspoon, and now here you are in *American Idiot* doing musical theatre.

How did that come about?

Phil Jamieson: Last year my management said they had something a bit left-of-center that may be of interest. I said yes immediately because it sounded different and fun. I didn't realise just how challenging it would be. In rehearsals I thought, "I can't do this" and "I can't do that". I was flabbergasted. I was sharing the role with Chris Cheney from *The Living End* and we were comparing notes going, "Whoa!" And I was surrounded by all these incredibly talented young people who could sing, dance, act, and do cartwheels, so it was all fairly intimidating. Ultimately, I got my groove on, relaxed and enjoyed it. It was really flattering to be asked back for the touring season. I've gotten so much out of this, including a wonderful sense of camaraderie, teamwork and great friendships.

For those who haven't seen *American Idiot*, can you explain your character, St Jimmy?

I encourage one of the main characters to indulge. The story centres around three young men living in Jingletown, USA, and they're disillusioned with life. One of them, Johnny, moves to the city and meets me, where I live in the alleys! I'm that person who sits on your shoulder. The classic enabler. I'm all about destruction and I lead Johnny down a hedonistic path. In some ways I'm a villain and pretty nasty. It's definitely not pantomime.

Uniquely, the role has been shared with Chris Cheney (*The Living End*), Sarah McLeod (*Superjesus*) and Adalita (*Magic Dirt*). You're part of a '90s music alumni. Who were your influences back then?

Grinspoon started in '95, we broke out in about '97, and had our successes in the Noughties. I fell in love with Aussie bands like Magic Dirt, Tumbleweed and You Am I. I had to get their CDs through mail order because I lived in regional New South Wales, but those bands gave me hope that I could be in an Australian band and be as cool as they were. Outside of that I was heavily into Nirvana, Slant Six and those kinds of bands, but as a young teen I was inspired by the holy trinity of Lou Reed, David Bowie and Iggy Pop. They were my

main people not just for songwriting, but I loved their stage game as well.

If there's one musician you could bring back from the dead, who would it be?

I can't go past Freddie Mercury. He had the best rock voice of all time. David Bowie and Lou Reed were also incredible artists and I love Prince as well. There's four!

Who is Phil Jamieson's diva?

I go straight to Whitney. *How Will I Know*, when she opened the '86 Grammys, was brilliant. I think she was all of 19 and they didn't even bother giving her a band - she played to a backing track. There's just something about Whitney and, of course, the original - Diana Ross. They are my go-to divas.

You made a huge impact at the Countdown NYE Concert performing Stevie Wright's *Evie*. Are you aware how well it was received?

I'll be honest, it was a bizarre experience for me because I don't know Marcia Hines or John Paul Young, and I've never met Colin Hay or Kate Ceberano. I'd never mixed in those types of circles and everyone there had an entourage of about seven people. I literally had zero! I'm glad my performance was well received because it's a hard song to sing.

It was beautiful.

Thank you very much. I was emotionally invested and wanted to make Stevie's son proud. Nick is one of my best friends and was the best man at my wedding. I have a lot of love for Stevie and his family, I know them personally and I attended his funeral. I guess that's why it came across the way it did. I was honoured to be asked to sing it and I couldn't fuck it up!

At your Grinspoon shows last year you sold tour T-shirts renaming Margaret Court Arena "Marriage Equality Arena". Thanks for that!

My pleasure!

How happy are you that marriage equality has become a reality in Australia?

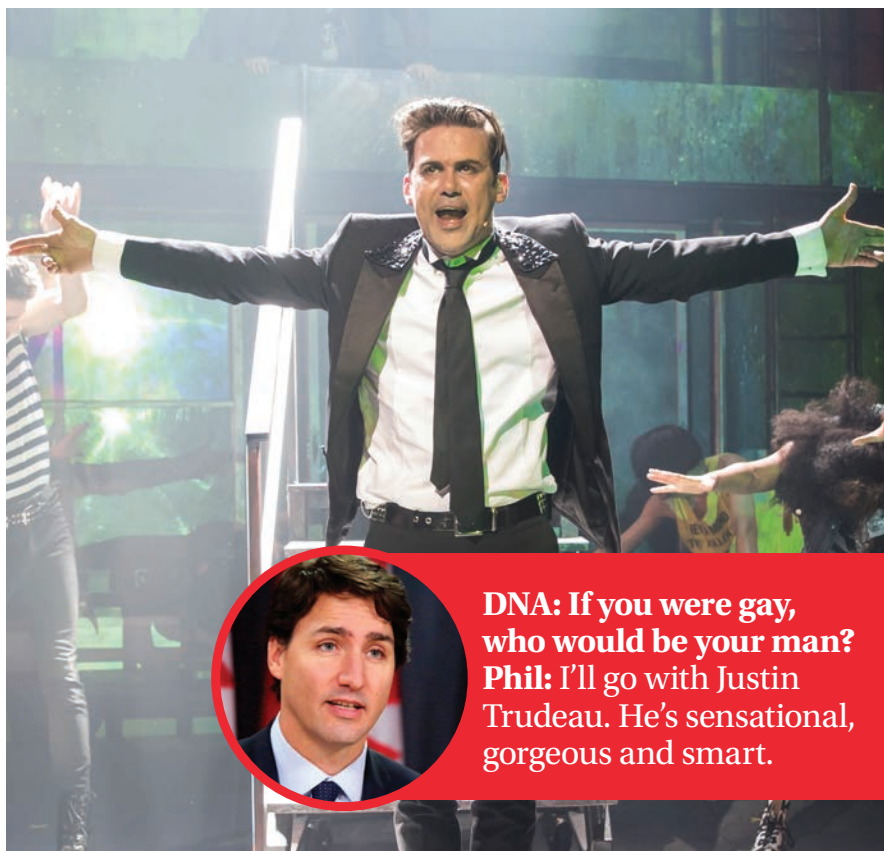
I'm fucking relieved. I was so incensed that it was even a thing. I didn't like the way the debate was framed, and I'm glad it's over. I'm glad we've now got equality but to have this silly debate about human rights in 2017, to me, was mindboggling!

It was fantastic to have that support from the music industry.

For us, we didn't want to politically grandstand, we just wanted to give money to the cause and sell some shirts that showed where we stood. Some of the opposition speech was not very positive and actually quite harmful, to everyone, and there's still that lingering sentiment of conservatism in this country, which I can't believe is happening. I just we had a progressive leader like Canada's Justin Trudeau or New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern.

Rodger Corser went from a rock band into musical theater and is now a leading TV star. Any plans to movie into that industry?

I have no aversions to doing television or film. With Grinspoon we did a lot of videos in that medium and while I love watching it, I find the creative part really quite tedious. No offence to all the TV people out there. I'm so flattered to be asked to be



DNA: If you were gay, who would be your man?
Phil: I'll go with Justin Trudeau. He's sensational, gorgeous and smart.

PHIL JAMIESON AS ST JIMMY IN THE MUSICAL VERSION OF GREEN DAY'S *AMERICAN IDIOT*.

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in *American Idiot*, but I'll see what lands in my lap. The more I learn and the more I'm challenged is definitely a plus for me. The producers took a risk in casting me and I'm really grateful, so if these opportunities keep arising then, hell, yeah to that!

What's the best piece of advice you've received?

Bernard Fanning from Powderfinger told me to roll my clothes in a suitcase and not fold them. And I should have taken some songwriting advice but I was too busy getting drunk!

Have you ever had a wardrobe malfunction on stage?

Yes. I was playing a solo show in Brisbane for a food and wine festival, and I'd gone *sans* underwear wearing a delicious pair of Jack London tight-fitting pants. I got a little excited running around, crouched down and they split right up the back. There were kids there, and this was in Queensland, the most conservative state in Australia! Luckily, it was the last song so I held my legs together and shuffled off stage as well as I could. The twigs and berries were exposed to everyone! It was quite embarrassing.

Do you often free-ball?

On that day I was certainly freeballing! Otherwise I go for the comfort of boxer briefs.

MORE: *American Idiot* is playing at Melbourne's Comedy Theatre. For more go to americanidiotlive.com.au