



HERE'S TROUBLE!

Barbra Streisand show tunes, *Please Like Me*, Bradley Cooper...? No wonder Keegan Joyce had trouble convincing his girlfriend he's straight!

DNA: Most readers will know you best as Arnold, Josh Thomas' troubled lover in *Please Like Me*. What was it like working on a show that's so widely loved?

Keegan Joyce: *Please Like Me* was an incredible experience. Josh was on set the whole time being really supportive of what we wanted to do. He had a fierce idea about the direction of the story. I realised the importance of the story and the way society was looking at gay people.

Arnold was a great character. Do you still get much feedback?

It's been really lovely to get messages from people all over the world telling me how much Arnold and Josh's relationship has meant to them. Or how much it meant seeing someone with anxiety on the show.

You had a shining moment singing Sia's *Chandelier*!

Yes, and had lots of messages and kind words about that. It was a great moment, quite climactic, and obviously important to many people. It was fun to film but stressful because filming anything with music is often complicated, with hidden microphones and such. For me it was a shining moment. I have a career in music and I'm fortunate that Josh had seen me performing and asked me to sing.

Who is your music diva?

I grew up in the world of musical theatre, so I'd have to say Barbra Streisand, especially her album *Love Is the Answer*, produced by Diana Krall. She's so precise with her voice. I also love her musical work like *Hello Dolly* and *Funny Girl*.

In 2016 you released your own CD *Snow On Higher Ground*. Was that a Barbra influence?

No, I wish I could say it was. Maybe, in retrospect! In fact, I was coming onto the *Please Like Me* set every day and I'd play my music to Tom Ward [who co-wrote and played Tom in *Please Like Me*], who said I should release it. So I did. I've been pretty lucky to do a lot of different things in my showbiz career. I'm working on new music at the moment. I hope to have something ready for release by year's end.

Do many people mistake you as gay in real life?

Yes, I get the odd - and by odd I mean a lot - of Instagram messages! [Laughs.] I sometimes have a pretty camp personality, too, and people mistake that for gay, but it doesn't bother me. My girlfriend and I met in Byron Bay through mutual family friends when we were all hanging out, and she recognised me from the show. I was flirting with her but she thought I was gay. It took me a few months to convince her that I wasn't!

You're also well-known for *Rake*, playing Fuzz, the troubled son of Cleaver Greene (Richard Roxburgh).

Yes, I'm lucky enough to have worked on two celebrated Australian shows that have had multiple seasons. Fuzz plays an important role because Cleaver can come across as a cold, awful person but Fuzz provides this layer of humanity and a reminder that Cleaver is a father with

responsibilities. He may not do such a great job of it but deep down he has a heart.

Where is Fuzz going in the new season?

It continues on from last season with the big reveal that Fuzz and Melissa are pregnant. I guess you could say that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree!

What did you think of your counterpart, played by Ian Colletti, in the American version?

I never saw it. I did see the trailer and it was funny because the American version of Cleaver was called Keegan! I think it would be weird to watch, and I'm glad I never did because these characters are quite real for me. I've known them for a long time. Seeing them in any other form would be weird.

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What's it like having Richard Roxburgh as a screen dad?

Rox is amazing! We started eight years ago, and it's been incredible to have someone so supportive and of such high calibre, right there through my upbringing. *Rake* was one of the first TV shows I was in. I did a kid's series beforehand but *Rake* is a very adult show with great dialogue. Richard has been so generous and kind with his time.

This is the fifth and final season of *Rake*.

Looking back, how would you sum up your experience on the show?

That's a tough one! When I started, I had no clue what I was doing or who I was as an actor and person. I've done a lot of growing up. While doing the show I've been through two relationships, I've finished a university degree and, in a way, *Rake* has been my upbringing. It's been like going on a big holiday with family with wonderful memories. It's been incredible.

Away from TV, you've done a lot of theatre. Do you enjoy stage work?

Yes. Not long ago I did *Vivid White* for the Melbourne Theatre Company, and I'd like to do more Australian theatre. *Once* was a great experience and working with that creative team was one of the highlights of my life but developing something new doesn't happen very often in Australia, and for MTC it was a brand-new production written by Eddie Perfect. Being involved in the creative process was wonderful. It's different to working on a show that already exists.

Have you ever had an on-set wardrobe malfunction?



(Top) Kegan with Josh Thomas in *Please Like Me*; (Above) with Richard Roxburgh in *Rake*.



DNA: IF YOU WERE GAY FOR A DAY, WHO'D BE YOUR MAN?

Keegan: I'd want him to be super-attractive, and I think Bradley Cooper's pretty handsome. But if I were to settle down with someone, without all the fiery passion, it'd be Neil deGrasse Tyson, the astrophysicist. I know he likes his wine!

I've actually been pretty lucky. I started performing at 12, and I had this fear of being caught with either my fly down or a booger in my nose. There are these weird interviews I did for *Saturday Disney* where you can see me doing a rabbit twitch with my nose every minute and making sure my fly is up! But nothing has ever happened. I've been naked quite a bit on *Please Like Me*, but when you're naked there's no real malfunction that can happen. [Laughs.]

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

My girlfriend's brother, who's in a pretty big Australian band, said if you're going to take a job it has to have one of three things - creativity, inspiration or career advancement. That's one of the best pieces of advice

I've been given, even though it seems too practical for someone in the arts. You have to make a living, and I think it's okay to say no. Some jobs are not going to be fulfilling, so what's the point?

For Keegan Joyce is it briefs, boxer briefs or free-balling?

I'm a boxer briefs man. Are jocks-people still around? I don't think I could transition into jocks anytime soon, and I'm just too anxious to free ball! I'd start going through all the things that would go wrong. I can't even free ball to take out the garbage!

MORE: *Rake* returns to ABC1 this month and streams on iview.