



# Josh's world

Proudly gay Josh Strickland stars in the E! reality series *Holly's World*, is a respected theatre performer and just launched his solo career as a dance artist. Did we mention he's one hot dude? Interview by Marc Andrews.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC GARCIA

**DNA:** You're currently lead in *Peepshow* at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas with Holly Madison, who you star with in *Holly's World*.

**Josh:** It's pretty sexy. The show's all about female empowerment.

**Are you lap dancing at all in it?**

No, just regular dancing. There're no people putting dollar bills down my G-string. That's another show, one I do after the show [laughs].

**We have to say you look pretty hot in the photos you did for DNA**

[Coyly] I try to anyways [laughs]. In our condo unit there is a gym and during the day when we are not filming I work out with my partner and watch TV shows that I haven't caught up on. I always do cardio because it clears the mind and is good for your heart. It's also about eating right, too. A lot of people think it's always the gym, but it's really not. It's more about what you're putting into your body.

**Congrats on your debut single *Report To The Floor* becoming a dancefloor hit.**

Thanks. It's something I've always been thinking about doing. It was the right time and it all just came together. I'm very excited about it. My second single, *Last Dance*, has just been released. It's got a lot of Indian flair and is really cool. I like the vibe and that type of sound. Tapping into different countries and the way their music is, then fusing it with some dance beats, makes for a hot song.

**Holly features in the video. How did that friendship originally come about?**

We became friends after we opened *Peepshow*. I opened it up originally with Mel B from Spice Girls. Then they were looking for someone to replace her as Bo Peep and Holly decided to do it. Through the rehearsals we became really good friends. When you start you never know who you are going to click with, or get along with, and it really happened

for us. I wasn't supposed to be in her reality show, but because of our friendship it just came about.

**How long ago did you meet?**

Almost two years ago. *Holly's World* started a little over a year ago and we just finished our second season.

**Has being in a reality show been a great launchpad for you?**

Oh, absolutely. You always have to look for different ways to get yourself out there. I did Broadway and never saw myself as being in a reality show, but for me it's not like *Jersey Shore* or anything like that. It's us being really real and showing what we do around town.

**How real is a reality show nowadays?**

I would say almost all of it is real with us. Every show has a producer who has to make it work, but we tell the producer what we have going on in our lives and they piece it all together. They make sense of it for the viewer and how it all intertwines. I wanted to record an album and a video, so they wanted to shoot it.

**It's really become more like Holly And Josh's World now, hasn't it?**

[Laughs] I guess it kinda has. We just have such a great bond and are such great friends. It really works and that's hopefully what people like to see.

supportive people I have ever met and I'm just happy to call her my friend. We do *Peepshow* six nights a week, which takes up most of our time, then the reality show taping during the day – it's kind of like our job. It's fun and we enjoy it.

**How do you find time for your music?**

That's all kind of connected. You just have to find the time when you can hit the studio and record. Whenever we do a song it is quick because I'm musically inclined. I like a jam-packed day rather than doing nothing. I always think about the show in the back of my mind and if it would be good for other people to see what I'm going through.

**Do you see yourself as a role model as an openly gay man on TV?**

Absolutely. There is room for someone to lead the young gays of America and it's nice to be grouped into that. I love it when people tell me I've given them courage. Hopefully I can continue to be a role model.

**Have you and your partner ever consider having kids?**

That is always something that is brought up, but for right now we just enjoy our little puppy, Max. Being a parent is such a big job that you want to make sure it is the right time in your life. You never know – the sky's

**You had lead roles in both Tarzan and Rent?**

Uh-huh. Being on tour with *Rent* as the lead character really made me appreciate the opportunities you have. My dream role was *Rent*. It resonated with me and how I was feeling. The music is so powerful and so beautiful to sing. It really touches the soul.

**Who were your idols growing up?**

Old school singers like Sammy Davis Jr, Frank Sinatra, Aretha Franklin and the soul singers. I loved that type of music. Right now Adele is one of my favourite artists. She is such a musician and you can see she bleeds her soul into the music. Right now for me, the dance stuff is what's hot. Britney came out with a dance hit, J.Lo's new song is a dance track and Lady Gaga's stuff is dance beat-driven. I've always loved listening to that and singing it.

**Are there plans for a whole album soon?**

We're hopefully going to do an EP, which will be five songs, and get that released soon and hopefully people will love it.

**Because of your high voice do people assume you are a woman without seeing you?**

Absolutely! Even on the new track a lot of people thought it was a girl singing. I take it as a compliment because I think they are more shocked and surprised to see it's me instead of a girl.

**Did that get you bullied as a teenager?**

Absolutely. That is why the anti-bullying campaign has struck a chord with me. I was bullied as a kid and called gay and the f-word. It makes you feel alienated and not loved and no-one should ever feel that.

**And you're originally from the deep south.**

Yeah, so that was the double whammy because everyone there is not so accepting. But you grow up and you figure out that the people who are doing that to you are not going to be your friends and you don't need them in your life. You just move on and find people who are going to accept you for who you are.

**Any plans to visit Australia?**

I would love to! I have never been and hope to get out there soon. I'll bring my speedos with me, I'll just have to make sure they are nice-looking ones.

**Does your boyfriend have approval on this?**

Yes, he does [laughs]. I trust his opinion. He's in charge of ordering them. It's nice to have your partner with you and tell you that you look good. I love wearing speedos on the beach because it gives you a good tan line and it pays to advertise.

**What's your boyfriend's best feature?**

[Gushes] Aw, he's tall and handsome and I just love that he's taller than me.

**What's your best feature?**

I guess it would be my face – it's not too bad. I like to say it's my money maker [laughs].

For more go to [joshstrickland.com](http://joshstrickland.com). To download his singles *Report To The Floor* and *Last Dance* head to iTunes. *Holly's World* airs on E!

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**Would you like your own reality show?**

I would love to have a spin-off like Holly did [originally as one of *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner's girlfriends in E!'s *The Girls Next Door*]. Hopefully we will have several more seasons of *Holly's World*, then people will like me enough to get my own show. I would really love to do that.

**Your personal life is all out there on camera!**

I think that is what makes us likeable because we're not hiding anything. I want to be as real as I can. This is who I am – I'm a crazy, funny guy who likes to have fun with my friends and I love my music and love performing. There is a lot that is underneath that, as well, like as an adopted child finding my birth mother during this season. That was important to me and I'm glad it struck a chord with other people.

**What about your love life being up there on the screen?**

This season coming up you're definitely going to see that side. My boyfriend and I have just moved in together. That's something people don't see and I'm hopefully going to be able to show.

**Isn't Holly jealous you get so much airtime in her series?**

She knows she has interesting friends [laughs]. She is one of the most kind, loving and

the limit.

**Tell us about your time in 2002 on the second season of American Idol.**

I made it to Los Angeles, then got cut. It was more of a learning experience, looking back. I'm glad I did it because you can learn and grow from something like that. *American Idol* is a talent show and producer-driven – they like to have a story. For us doing reality it's almost the same thing, but on a more personal level. Instead of a competition it's a completely different genre. People like seeing people being real on television and seeing our day-to-day lives.

**Were you out on American Idol?**

Not out, but my close friends knew. There's been this big stink about whether gay people can play straight characters and that's one thing that gets in the way of a lot of people's minds. It's an art form, what we do. I mean, straight people can play gay characters. At this stage I didn't want to make it about being gay and wanted to make it about my talent and about what I love to do, which is performing.

**Do you think in 2002 they wouldn't have been ready for Adam Lambert?**

I don't think they would have. If you look back at who won, the people were completely different to the artists we have now. Now we have tonnes more artists who have come out.