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Daily Male

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Steve Callahan: East Side Story

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Diego lives in the Latino suburb of East LA and is in a relationship with his closeted estate agent boyfriend Pablo. The pair finally decide to split after Diego has had enough of playing a Mexican immigrant in Pablo's fetish games, only for Pablo to woo Diego's spoilt and bratty Aunt Bianca. As it happens, it's the perfect time to be single, and out.

East LA is suddenly making a name for itself as *the* property hot spot for young gay men. When the dashing Wes and his outrageous boyfriend Jon move in next door, Diego's eyes start to roam. Wes, meanwhile, falls head over heels for his new neighbour. Hilarious, feel-good and scorchingly hot from start to finish, *East Side Story* tells a tale about what happens when you fall for someone on the other side of the fence.

We spoke to out and proud actor Steve Callahan, who plays the gorgeous Wes, to find out more.

I'm very excited about the release of *East Side Story*. What can we expect?

East Side Story is a romantic comedy that deals with a serious subject - gentrification - but at its heart, it is an old fashioned romantic comedy. It is a story of two people who meet, fall for each other and try to overcome obstacles to end up together.

What was it that first attracted you to the film?

I loved that it was a romantic comedy that succeeded at both of those things - the romance *and* the comedy. It has a real romantic heart to it. Audiences really want Diego and Wesley to end up together. I thought that the script by Carlos Portugal and Charo Toledo was also extremely funny.

Tell us a little about your character, Wes.

At the beginning of the movie, Wesley is a man settling in a bad relationship with the wrong person, his partner Jonathon. That all changes when he meets Diego, the neighbour across the street. Wesley and Diego connect immediately and the chemistry is undeniable. As much as he likes Diego though, Wesley is a really good guy who wants to maintain his integrity and do the right thing.

How similar are you to him?

Wesley was a pretty easy character to identify with, actually. He is completely comfortable in his life as a gay man. All of the gay men in the film are presented differently. Pablo is the closeted gay man who leads a straight life, but has gay sex on the down low. Diego is a man just beginning to come out and be comfortable with his sexuality. Jonathon is the sort of flag waving gay guy who immerses himself exclusively in gay culture. Wesley is the contrast - he is an out and proud gay man who is completely comfortable in his own skin. He is completely out, yet being gay is only a small part of who he is. I can relate to that.

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You mean you haven't fallen head over heels in love with your neighbour?

Um, no. You obviously haven't seen my neighbours!

***East Side Story* is a charming rom-com. Do you believe in love?**

Of course I do. I love being in love.

So are you seeing anyone right now?

Yes, I live with my partner.

What do you think is the secret of a good relationship?

You can't settle. You have to find the right person. It usually starts with attraction, but it lasts if that person becomes your best friend. The true test of a relationship isn't how you act on the big days - the birthdays and anniversaries - but what you

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are like together day in and day out.

I love coming home to my boyfriend. I love having that person to come home to at the end of the day to unload your problems on, share your day's stories, and so on. My parents have been together for 47 years, so I had great role models about how to make a relationship work. But you have to be with the right person. Opposites may attract, but they don't stay together. My boyfriend and I are a good match.



There's great sexual chemistry with Rene Alvarado. Did you spend a lot of time together to achieve this?

Isn't Rene great in the movie? He is in almost every scene and the fact that he is so strong in the movie is why it works so well. But Rene is straight and married, so all that sexual chemistry was faked. But yeah, making out with Rene Alvarado isn't such a bad way to make a living!

There are some great sex scenes in the film. Are they quite as sterile as actors make out?

Yes, they are as sterile as lesbian sex.

So how do you feel about getting your clothes off on film and stage?

I think it depends on the project. I've shown my butt in film, but I've never done full frontal. We live in a strange era, where everything is captured on the internet and posted and passed around. So no matter what the context of the scene in the film is, it gets boiled down to just being a still photo of that actor's penis. That's kind of weird to me.

There are some sexy images of you out there on the net. Do you find sexy photo shoots when you're not wearing very much easy or embarrassing?

Neither. It's just a good excuse to hit the gym harder that week.

Is there a scene or moment in *East Side Story* that you're most proud of?

The moment I was most proud of wasn't anything onscreen. It was at the cast and crew screening when I saw the finished product for the first time. I was so proud of what we had done. It was Carlos Portugal's directorial debut and I thought he did an amazing job. I have so many great behind the scenes memories of the shoot.



You've been in a lot of gay films and stage plays. What do you think of the state of gay film / theatre at the moment?

I think that it is a really exciting time for gay cinema. For years, gay films were coming out stories or AIDS dramas. I love that gay films can be about anything now and are crossing genre lines. My next two films - both gay-themed - are a suspense thriller and a Christmas comedy. How cool is that?

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You're an out gay man - quite a rare thing in the movie business. What was it that prompted you to be open and honest with the public?

I never considered being in the closet. I'm a firm believer that we all create our own lives. We all decide what is important to us. For me, living my life openly and honestly is simply important enough to me that I wouldn't sacrifice that. I was in the closet for the first 20 years of my life. Trust me, being out of the closet is way easier.

Were you ever pressured to stay closeted by people in the industry?

Sure, but I never took that advice seriously. If someone would not hire me because of my sexual orientation, I wouldn't want to work for them anyway.

What do you think about the many gay Hollywood actors who remain in the closet?

I feel sorry for them. Fear is a powerful thing.

Have you ever experienced any homophobia in Hollywood?

None that I'm aware of. But I'm pretty practical when it comes to auditions. I never question why I didn't get a part. I assume that I wasn't right for that role and focus on the next one.



And finally, what's next for Steve Callahan? Can we expect to see you play gay in the future?

I'm right now in New York City playing Judas Iscariot in the 10th anniversary production of Terrence McNally's amazing play *Corpus Christi*. It truly is the role of a lifetime. It is playing at the Rattlestick Theatre through to 26 October.

As far as films go, my next movie is *Pornography: A Thriller*, which will be released in 2009. This December, I am shooting an hilarious christmas comedy called *Make the Yuletide Gay*, written and directed by Rob Williams, for Guest House Films.

So I've got a lot going on. You can always check out my website - www.stevecallahan.com - to find out the latest. Thanks!