

# TV'S HOTTEST GAY SHOW

## OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

### Inside



The Needle Exchange Vote — An Inside Look Page 4



Holiday Gift Guide Page #23-27



Milwaukee LGBT Center Opens Page 5

by Terry Boughner

He is a darkly handsome young man with a killer smile. She is a beautiful young woman with radiant eyes. They live together. They get along great. They might fall in love and get married except for one fact. He is Gay, open, comfortably and up front Gay. He has been out for 15 years. This is essentially the plot of NBC's new hit sitcom, *Will & Grace*, which airs Mondays, 8:30-9pm.

The show stars Canadian-born actor Eric McCormack (veteran of *Lonesome Dove: The Outlaw Years*) as Will Truman, an upscale Manhattan lawyer; Debra Messing (veteran of *Prey* and *Ned and Stacey*) as Grace, a self-employed designer; Sean Hayes (*Billy's First Screen Kiss*) as Jack, Will's campy, funny, Gay best friend; and Megan Mullally as Karen, Grace's socialite assistant who works to fill up her days.

Let's make one thing clear right away. As he says in response to a direct question, McCormack is not himself Gay. Asked how he liked playing a Gay man, he replied seriously, "I love it. This is the best character for me that I've ever read. Will is so much like me."

Meaning?

There is a soft, knowing chuckle over the phone. "Meaning that his sense of humor is my sense of humor. His character is gravy — what a fun guy to play!" He pauses. "You know, being treated as if I'm Gay is not new for me. I've had experience. When I was in 2nd grade, people thought I was Gay. And you know something?"

What?

"There's a whole bunch of people in Toronto, I'll bet, who'll see this show and say to themselves 'Ah ha! See, I knew that guy was Gay all along, way back when, in the 6th grade'. And that's fine."

But there's this thing in Hollywood, I protest mildly, that says actors fear playing a Gay character because they'll be stereotyped.

Again a chuckle. "When I read the script for the first time and saw how good it was, how much Will and I are alike, well - you know. I thought if this show's the hit I think it's gonna be, I could be content to be Will Truman for the rest

of my life."

"Anyway," he continues, "we're coming up on the year 2000, the millennium. It's time to take the stigma off being openly, normally Gay."

Normally, I ask? Normal is not usually a word associated with us.

"Well, why not? I'm normally straight. You're normally Gay. That's the thing about this show *Will & Grace*; we're not taking a political stance. Will's sexuality is never an issue. What we're trying to do is show everybody that Gay can be an aspect of people's lives, but it isn't the total thing, just as sex isn't total with straight people."

"Will is a friend-of-a-friend you play basketball with for seven weeks and when you finally ask him, 'So are you married?' he says matter-of-factly 'No I'm Gay.' Will is that guy; he's the guy we want to introduce to America."

A sitcom with a Gay man at its center is not just another television show. According to the show's director, Emmy award-winner James Burrows (*Cheers*, *Frasier*) what sets

*Will & Grace* apart is that it has "the first Gay man on television with dignity. That's what I think makes the show different."

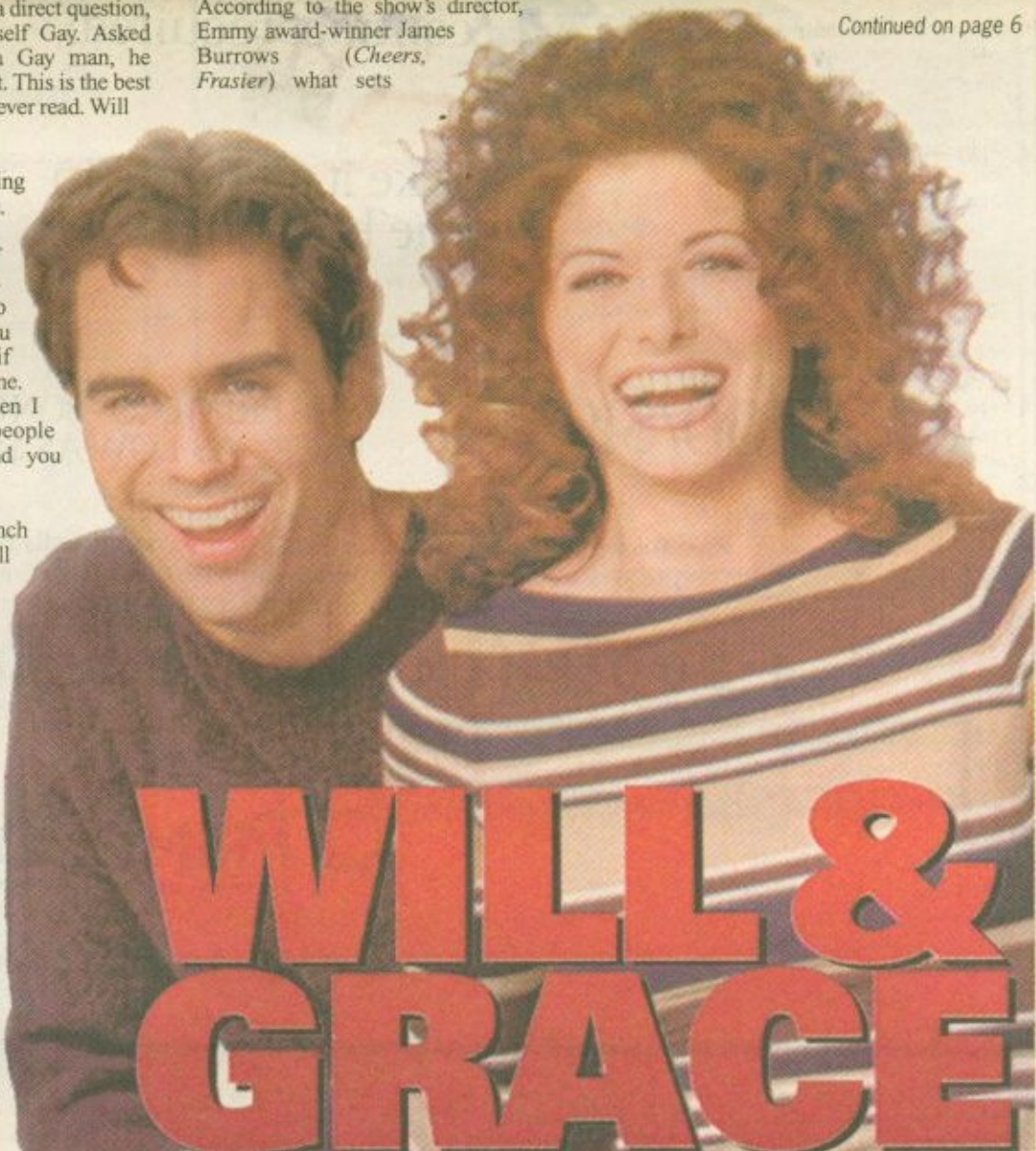
NBC chief Warren Littlefield told *Wisconsin Light* that having had a hand in creating the show that he is "solidly" behind it.

Will and Grace were originally secondary characters in another script by series creators Max Mutchnick (openly Gay) and David Kohan (openly straight). Littlefield has said that he passed on that show but liked the Gay-straight friends so much that he asked the two to create a series for them.

It is the fact that *Will & Grace* treats being Gay so "matter-of-factly" that is, perhaps, most revolutionary and threatening. Yet, Burrows and others involved with the show said they have yet to hear of any objections to it from right-wing Christian groups.

William Donohue is a former col-

Continued on page 6



# WILL & GRACE