

Entertainment

The Good Wife star tells us about his celebrity pals, backstage riders and why he's still a party boy at heart

Hollywood actor, stage star, author, small-screen sensation and now singer. It really seems there is nothing that Alan Cumming can't do!

From his humble beginnings in rural Scotland to becoming one of the most respected faces in the industry, this all-rounder has managed to straddle the big screen – with the likes of *X-Men 2* and *Romy And Michele's High School Reunion* under his belt – alongside a stage career spanning almost 30 years.

His TV credentials are even more impressive, with guest appearances on *Sex And The City*, *Frasier* and *The L Word*, along with his ongoing lead role as Eli Gold in the Emmy-nominated drama series *The Good Wife*.

In three decades, the actor has kicked countless goals, but reaching the big 5-0 last year doesn't rank highly – as New Idea discovers after quizzing the star about being 50 and fabulous.

'I like that when I say I'm 50, people say: "No, you're not!"' he laughs. 'That's good!'

'I still seem to be able to exist in pretending to not be the age I am. I keep waiting to not feel like a horny 22-year-old, but it just hasn't happened yet!'

'There are certain rules I observe – drinking enough water and getting enough sleep included. I commit to my party-ness, I stay fit in order to be able to party well!'

Luckily for Alan, he lives in one of the world's ultimate adult playgrounds: New York – a city he and husband Grant have lived in for more than 15 years.

'It's not a place to live if you want a quiet life. When I leave my apartment, I feel like an adventure is about to begin – that's what I like about the city. You meet people in the street and end up on a balcony somewhere... Crazy things happen.'

It's this craziness that sits well with the less-than-conventional performer. Now openly bisexual, Alan was married to actress Hilary Lyon for eight years before starting a relationship with a man in the late '90s. At the threat of tabloid exposure, he made the decision to

Now in his fabulous 50s, there's nothing the star hasn't worked on, which has seen him win a long list of awards.

Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs plays at the Arts Centre Melbourne from January 5-7, followed by January 8-9 at the Sydney Festival Magic Mirrors Spiegeltent.

Alan Cumming 'I'M 50 GOING ON 20!'



Alan has appeared in *Cabaret* (left), *Romy And Michele's High School Reunion* (right), and has played Nightcrawler in *X-Men 2* (below).



come out very publicly and has continued to be candid about every aspect of his life since – talking about everything from his views on monogamy to confessing to 'accidentally' taking crystal meth.

But being such an open book doesn't come without its annoyances, says the star.

'Mostly, it's fine, but sometimes people feel that they can ask you things that they wouldn't dare ask another celebrity,' he says. 'Just because I'm open doesn't mean we have to keep talking about that stuff.'

A prime example of his honesty is the warts-and-all memoir he released in 2014, *Not My Father's Son*. In the book, Alan tells of the violent beatings he endured as a child from his abusive father.

'I was nervous before it came out, because I was revealing a side of myself that was huge and totally a shock to people,' he admits.

'I wrote the book because I felt I had to tell that story, it was something I wanted to, you know, expunge. My biggest worry was how it would affect my mum and brother, but it turns out it has been a really positive thing.'

It's this realness that sets him apart from other A-listers who live in the Tinseltown bubble.

'I'm a famous person whose public image is actually really similar to the way he is,' explains the Tony Award winner. 'I'm not a diva and I don't make any crazy demands, but in saying that, I don't take any **** either!'

Currently in Australia for his one-man cabaret show, *Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs*, the actor recounts his decidedly un-diva backstage rider.

'Hummus, crudites and vodka, that's it. Just give me a couple of celery sticks and a Martini and I'm fine!'

He follows hot on the heels of Hugh Jackman, whose cabaret-style show toured the country to sell-out audiences late last year. But Alan isn't intimidated by the Aussie stage veteran.

'I think we're very different!' he laughs. 'There's room enough for us all. We worked on *X-Men 2* together, he's lovely. Hugh's more of a musicals man – and my musical prowess is limited!'

While Hugh is formidable

THE GOOD LIFE!



The happy couple! Alan with husband Grant Shaffer.

competition, Alan does have a secret weapon: Liza Minnelli.

'I had dinner with her and talked to her a lot about doing a cabaret show of my own. She taught me some really great lessons and we've since performed together in a show.'

'I hadn't seen her for a while, but she was very integral in my decision to start doing this type of work. She was supportive.'

By Paul Ewart NI

ELI'S REBIRTH



Alan, Margo Martindale and Chris Noth on the set of *The Good Wife*.

Immediately after his Australian tour, Alan flies home to New York to resume filming *The Good Wife* – a commitment of nine months per year since he joined the show in 2010.

But having played campaign manager-turned-chief of staff Eli Gold for so many years, seven seasons into the show, Alan began to feel he was running out of steam.

'I was thinking of leaving because I felt like it had been great, but I'd done it all. Eli had his schtick, but was in a rut... I wanted to move on,' he reveals to New Idea.

On the brink of leaving the show, Alan thankfully voiced his concerns with the show's producers. In the new series, Eli has been given an exciting new lease of life.

'I'm really enjoying it – this season especially. I had a chat with [the producers] explaining that I felt the character had got a bit stale and, since then, this season has been amazing. There have been many new sides of my character and great plot things happening. So I love this season more than any other. It's been great to be still so excited in the show's seventh year.'

'I'm gagging to find out what's happening next in the script, which is a good sign!'