

MARTHA LEWIS

Extract 1: 16.36 – 19.40

PERFORMING IN THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST.

M: I met somebody who's erm, who came from the same kind of background as me who's also a British, a BBC we call British born Cypriots, we're BBCs. So she was a BBC, and a performer, and I met her in a Greek nightclub. She was performing in a Greek nightclub and I was, I had just come from ... I had just come from doing the Eurovision Song Contest ... representing Cyprus, and erm ...

C: You've got to tell us a little bit about that, I mean that's quite a big thing ...

M: It's a mad thing...

C: To drop in!

M: It's a mad thing to drop in! I represented, I was part of a team that represented Cyprus in the Eurovision Song Contest, and my ... and that came about because my mum sent er, the Greek radio station over here in London were advertising for a singer, a female singer, and my mum sent them a demo tape of mine without me knowing and of course they ... they phoned up and said "We'd like to audition you." So then suddenly I was selected as part of the three girl singers in the er, band for the Eurovision. So that was a really wild experience. We went to Luxembourg and came nearly last, second ... second from last, and I'm very proud of that moment. It was a great experience.

But because of that I became a bit of a star in Cyprus, because Cyprus was very ... it was only the second year ... or third year that or ... yeah, second year that Cyprus had been in the European Song Contest so um, we were instantly elevated to these stars um ... which meant over here in London I could get, you know, walk into any Greek nightclub and get a job, which I did, um, and so I was kind of moving around. The Greek nightclub scene over here was very very healthy and I'd never considered Greek music before. I'd been a singer since I was fourteen, professional, semi-professional singer, since I was fourteen. I was in function bands, and doing the whole social ... social club circuit, Conservative club, Labour, Labour clubs, all the social clubs circuit. That's kind of where I got my training, being in a covers band and ... and I'd ... I'd had a ... so I was quite an experienced singer by the time I got to university.

I'd been earning money from it for quite a long time, and it, and it supported me all the way through university, having gigs every weekend, during uni. So I continued that road and became a session singer in my early twenties, and then this Eurovision thing kind of threw me off track when I was in my ... so twenty-three or four, it threw me off track a little bit, because I suddenly got into Greek music, and I'd never even considered that I ... because as I've just said, being Greek was never something I wanted to identify with because of all of the cultural erm ... disadvantages.

Extract 1: 24.18 – 28.38

HAVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN AND WOMEN AND HOLDING ON TO THE BISEXUAL LABEL EVEN WHEN MET WITH PRESSURE NOT TO.

M: ... anyway one thing led to another and we started seeing each other, and then I left my fiancée and ... so that was when my er, sexuality started leaning towards women. So I was I guess in my mid twenties, and from that ... we had a brief relationship and then from that time to now, thirty years, no ... twenty-eight ... five years later, whatever, twenty-five odd years later, I think I've, I've had two ... er, two major relationships with women in terms of length of time, um, and some relationships with men in between.

The relationships with men haven't lasted for a very long time, um ... but I think probably I consider myself to be bisexual, because it's not, it's not out of the question ... I'm very attracted to men. It's not out of the question for me to be ... if I was ever to, I'm in a relationship now and I'm very happy in this relationship but if this relationship should ever end, it wouldn't, it wouldn't be weird for me to be with a man. And I think I hang onto the bisexual ... I don't like labels, but I hang on to the bisexual label, if I had to have a label, because ... simply because of the experience that I've had with men, because when I've been with men, they ... the men that I've been with - I'm not saying it's all men, but the men that I've been with, have been really angry about my um, not angry, um ... unsettled about my relationships with women, and they've wanted me to identify as a straight woman, and ... it ... when I've been in relationships with men, to identify as a straight woman, feels that I'm denying something, and I'm not willing to do that ... for ... to make somebody else comfortable, I'm not willing to do that, and it's something I feel really strongly about that I don't want to be denied what I feel is right, and it's my ... to make somebody else comfortable.

And so I think I've ... it's very, it's not a comfortable thing labelling yourself as a bisexual. It's really not the easy way. It's really, really not, in my experience. When you're straight, when you're in a straight relationship, it's not comfortable being a bisexual. When you're in a gay relationship it's not comfortable being a bisexual. There are, there's a lot of pressure from both sides to just say "Well, you're just straight." You know? Obviously if you're in a gay relationship, you're in a gay relationship. I'm in a gay relationship now and I'm very happy in that relationship. I'm in a lesbian relationship, and I'm very happy to say that I'm in a lesbian relationship, but does that make me, you know? I don't want to be ... I don't want to say that I'm a lesbian to ... and therefore deny that I have had relationships with men, or that I could possibly have relationships with men in the future. Erm, and I think that's why I prefer, if I am going to have a label, I think that's why I ... it's more a political thing. I want to hang on to my right to say ... and because if my next relationship is with a man I will never deny that I've been in relationships with women or that I have an attraction, or that I have that side to me. I will never deny that, and I think that is my right to hang onto that, and I think that's probably a nod and a wink to my cultural um, oppression there, that I'm not going to be denied what I feel ... you know, something that I feel is quite important to me.

BEING OUT AS BISEXUAL IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

M: ... yeah, well, I was part of a, a very ... reasonably known music duo um, and I think it was quite known ...

C: A very well-known music duo!

M: I think it was a reasonably well-known music duo, and I think it was quite known that we were, um, that we were gay. I don't know actually. I mean I have spoken to some people actually who didn't know, and who still don't know, because we've had a fair amount of press, and in the press I've, I've never failed to say that I'm bisexual! And my music partner is ... identifies as gay, and so there's always in the press, there's always, you know "One is bisexual and the other one is ..." So, you know, obviously that's the press that we've had and I don't know ... Has it ... has it disadvantaged in any way being gay? Has it advantaged, you know, in what ways has it, you know? Has it made a difference? God, you know, I could spend hours talking about this. Um ...

I think the ... we've had a huge amount of support from the gay community and have, you know, we're very lucky to have a great audience of mainly women when we play London, um, not mainly women, but, but we have a very strong women following, and we're very lucky to have that, and ... and we feel it, we feel the love! We feel the er ... we feel the support and it's very, it's wonderful. It's a wonderful feeling, um, and we love doing gay gigs, women only gigs. We love being on, on that kind of a stage because it's so celebratory. It's wonderful. It's the most wonderful feeling. Um, I don't ... you know, the rest of my performing world I'm, you know, we mix, I mix with women musicians, I mix with, you know, straight male musicians. My world is World, World music and jazz. There's not a lot of gay performers I can think of in the World music or jazz areas. There's only, you know there's not that many.

Has it disadvantaged me? I sometimes think it has. I sometimes think that there's still a stigma. I ... I genuinely, I genuinely feel that there is a bit of a stigma attached to being I think, I think the opportunities that I've had ... could probably have gone differently if I was in a straight relationship or known to be just straight, I think they could have been different. But having said that, I'm happy where I am, and so I think everything happens for a reason. I'm, I'm happy with ... you know, I think everybody could always do with whatever, whatever, you know, part of the ladder you're on, I think you could always do with more ... success, um. I've had, but I've had quite a successful career, and I'm glad to have been able to make the choices because the fundamental thing for me has been to be in control of my own destiny as much as I can be, and that's what I've done.

So would I ... would I have stayed straight in order to get higher up the ladder in my performing career? Not in a million years.