

RAPID FIRE HARRY CONNICK JR

New Orleans-born Harry Connick Jr, 42, has made a name for himself as a musician and actor. But at home, his wife and children prefer to keep his crooning to a minimum

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY? Tons of things. Everything from being with my family to playing music to eating ice cream.

WHAT DO YOU SING AROUND THE HOUSE? I don't really sing around the house. Usually my wife and kids keep telling me to shut up.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PERFECT ROMANTIC DAY? Sometimes it's romantic to put on a DVD and watch a movie at home. Sometimes it's romantic to say: "Get dressed, I'm taking you somewhere" – maybe just out to dinner or a bed-and-breakfast somewhere. My wife and I both like surprises and mystery.

HAS YOUR WIFE EVER SURPRISED YOU? I remember one time it was my birthday and I was playing. Right after I finished the show, she showed up and in the parking lot there was a horse. She puts me on the horse, blindfolds me and I ride down to this restaurant where all these people are waiting to surprise me for my birthday. So she's crazy like that and she knows I love it.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AT SCHOOL? I was pretty precocious, easily distracted, because I was so into music and sometimes it was hard for me to focus on schoolwork, but it was so obvious from an early age that that was just going to be what I did.

DID YOU HAVE JOBS ASIDE FROM MUSIC? I had one job for about two weeks. When I was 18 I was a ticket collector at a box office for a theatre. I hated it.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT ON STAGE? Every night is one of those. The thing about my shows is stuff is always screwing up, I'm forgetting words, people are playing practical jokes. They'll put Vaseline on the piano keys and somebody will throw a stink bomb... it's just childish, dumb stuff.

ARE YOU INCLINED TO PLAY PRACTICAL JOKES, TOO? Heck, yeah. My old guitar player Russell Malone – he spends a lot of time

Sometimes it's romantic to put on a DVD and watch a movie at home



getting his guitar perfectly in tune – so I'll completely detune it so when he starts playing it's just a wreck. Or putting baby powder on the drum set, so when they hit the drums powder comes flying out everywhere. It's ridiculous. Juvenile.

DESCRIBE A RECENT DREAM. I had a dream last night that one of my daughters wanted one of those chin-up bars that you put between the door frame. In real life I bought her one and it was too small, so last night in my dream I was building a wood bracket so it could fit. My wife said, "that's not going to work" and we got

into this big fight about the whole thing. And I woke up really mad at her.

WHO'S THE MOST INSPIRING PERSON YOU'VE MET? It's between my wife and my dad. My wife – she's unattainable. In so many ways she's so great and I'll never be that way. It's an inspiration to constantly strive to be like her. My dad is in many ways the same way.

Sally Browne
Your Songs is out now. Connick Jr appears on Australian Idol tonight at 7.30 on Ten and tomorrow on Seven's Sunrise.

THE BACK STORY



THIS WEEK: Brisbane-raised Andrew Veivers, 40, co-founder of Flamenco Fire and the Saruzu Quartet, talks to **Marie-Christine Sourris** about how he fell in love with the excitement of flamenco guitar

My mum is Dutch and my dad is Australian. His family were some of the first white settlers on the Gold Coast.

I don't speak any Dutch. My mum came over just after World War II and, for the Australians at the time, Dutch was just a little bit like German. It wasn't such a popular language when she was a kid growing up, so she wasn't too keen to pass it on.

I grew up in Brisbane and my school at that time, St Laurence's, didn't have any music program at all. So I started one up. I was pretty enthusiastic.

Looking back, I was probably really quite irritating. I managed to get the bursar to give me money to go down and buy musical instruments. I just really liked music and I jumped on anything at that point.

I started guitar lessons when I was 12 with a teacher who lived around the corner. When I was about 18, a relative gave me an LP that had a picture of a guitarist on the cover that they thought was a classical guitarist, but it ended up being Paco Pena, one of the finest flamenco guitarists in the world.

When I heard that record I went weak at the knees. That was really the carrot that kept me going through my Bachelor of Music at UQ. I just wanted to get to Europe straight away.

I finished at the end of 1993 and three months later I arrived in London in time for a Paco de Lucia concert.

I had \$235 and my guitar. I thought I'd see the concert, run out of money and go home again, but I fell in very quickly with the classical guitar scene and got a job in the Spanish Guitar Centre in Leicester Square. It was a bit of a mecca (it still is) for classical guitarists, so whenever any of those great guys came through London they would all

just pop up for a bit of a chat. I got flamenco guitar lessons with Francisco Antonio, whom I ended up doing duos with at concerts, at guitar festivals and summer schools throughout the UK.

I sincerely love being in Australia so I happily came back and set up my first little studio for about five years in the Metro Arts building in Edward Street.

I'd catch the bus in the morning with people going to work but I'd go up and practise guitar all day. And just drink coffee.

In the middle of that I went back

You don't need to be educated in the music's language to love flamenco

to Europe. I studied in Madrid for a month and saw some concerts. Then I was based in Holland for six months. I went there with a flute player and we did a chamber music series of concerts in Amsterdam and down south. That's when the Saruzu Quartet idea emerged.

We play a lot of repertoire from flamenco and from tango, and there's a plenty of improvisation, and some show tunes.

It's world music in its broadest sense. The double bass player and violinist are specialist jazz improvisers. It ticks a few boxes.

You don't need to be educated in the language or the technical complexities of the music to love flamenco. Flamenco's just got this excitement.

The Saruzu Quartet play at The Lakes, Kawana, on Friday; The J, Noosa, on Saturday; the Yungaburra Folk Festival, October 23-25; and Brisbane Powerhouse, October 26.

ITCH – WHAT'S HOT ON THE RADAR



MAKE COFFEE LIKE AN EXPERT

Want to learn how to make a great cuppa? Head to *The Courier-Mail/Sunday Mail Home & Design Show* today at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Bank, where Merlo Coffee will hold a demo and sample session (plunger and stove-top) at 11.30am. Then check out the rest of the Home Show.



THE GREAT DEGUSTATION

Two of our finest chefs will create a six-course degustation dinner on Thursday at Absynthe, Surfers Paradise. Meyjtte Boughenout will pair with e'cco bistro's Philip Johnson (above) to delight diners with the likes of Tassie trout and roast quail matched with Craggy Range wines. Cost \$185; bookings 5504 6466.



FASHION SPEAKS

Leading Australian fashion designer Akira Isogawa, who recently opened a Fortitude Valley boutique, talks to National Gallery of Victoria fashion curator Katie Somerville at the Institute of Modern Art, Judith Wright Centre, Fortitude Valley, on Thursday at 6pm. Free, seats limited. Call 3252 5750.



HEROES OF THE LIGHT HORSE

Australian Outback Spectacular's new show, *Heroes of the Light Horse*, a tribute to the men of the Australian Light Horse Brigade who fought in the Middle East during World War I, is now on at the Gold Coast arena, Tuesdays to Sunday at 7.30pm plus 12.30pm Sundays; www.outbackspectacular.myfun.com.au.



CHOCOLATE GIRL POWER

Like Chocolate for Women authors Kim Morrison and Fleur Wheligan are travelling the countryside with their book's powerful message to women that it's OK to put themselves first. On Tuesday, see them at the ABC Shop, Westfield Shoppingtown, Cherm-side, 12.30pm-1.30pm, then Mary Ryan's, Paddington, 6.15pm-8.15pm.



PARTY INTO THE WILD

Friday night's Coffee Club Charity Ball at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre will take you on safari – an exotic jungle-themed event full of prizes (blue diamond earrings) and live music. Journey to the Wild tickets \$160 each (supporting the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation), 3010 3000 or 3010 3020.



THRILL THE WORLD

Just three minutes – that's all it will take on October 25 to make history when thousands of "zombies" across the globe take part in the Michael Jackson-inspired Thrill the World. Here, zombies will assemble at Redcliff Place (top of Queen St Mall), 10.30am. Rehearsal next Sunday, 2pm, Mad Dance House, 99 Elizabeth St, City.