

Al Pillay – star of stage, screen... and everything else!

Al Pillay is an international star whose electrifying and captivating career has illuminated every corner of the entertainment industry.

Transgressive being and maverick soul, Al Pillay was Channel Four's first out, loud and proud star. Al has packed a lorry load of credits into a life which began amongst the fish heads and neon lights of Grimsby, and has extended to movie stardom, comedy and recording a number one hit over a very illustrious career.

As soon as Al was old enough to don a wig and a pair of stilettos she took the northern club circuit by storm. However Al was too big a fish for that small pond and at just 18, she followed the yellow brick road (well, the M1) to London, where Al set about making dreams a reality.

Al's first TV appearances soon followed with stints on C4's first "yoof" programme *Whatever You Want* with Keith Allen and *Four For Tonight* with Ruby Wax. A parallel career soon developed when she caught the eyes and ears of Stock, Aitken and Waterman, who wrote and produced Her worldwide disco smash *Pistol in My Pocket*. As Humberside's answer to Sylvester, the early eighties were spent touring the world's top clubs in a whirl of sequins and feathers, PAs and limos (yes, really!). Her most prominent successes were in Australia, Paris and Italy, as well as having the No. 1 spot on Brit dance floors throughout the 1980s.

When the call came from *The Comic Strip Presents...* Al was ready. Ready to steal the show in *Gino, Susie, Consuela*, and *The Bullshitters* alongside co-stars Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, Rik Mayall and Robbie Coltrane. Her performance in the movie *The Supergrass* inspired Peter Richardson to write *Eat The Rich* as a vehicle for Al's multi-faceted talent. Also smitten with La Pillay was Bristol Funkster Gary Clail who invited her to contribute to his Top Ten hit *Human Nature*. The sight of Al on *Top Of The Pops* in Vegas-style headress singing 'Let the Carnival begin, every pleasure, every sin' brightened up many a Thursday night.

Several dance floor classics followed, including *I Can Make A Man Out Of You* and *Pistol in my Pocket*, before television lured him back into its bosom. As a critic for ITV's *Funky Bunker*, she received as much (if not more) fan mail as the show's presenter, Craig Charles.

Al's solo show *Hello La*, which was co-written and directed by Paul McVeigh, followed in 1996. It premièred at Islington's Kings Head Theatre, before a sell-out run at the Riverside Studios. Radio and voice-over work followed, as well as numerous TV appearances which kept Al from the theatre for a few years. But Al was back, bigger and bolder than ever with a new show. *Wide Open For You* which played to sold out houses at the Jermyn Street Theatre in London's West End for its three week run in 2001. This was a rare chance to see close up and intimate one of showbiz's most thrilling and spectacular performers.

Al made a shock move into childrens' broadcasting as resident voice-over artist and guest interviewer on the BBC World Service's ground-breaking new show *The Edge*, having revealed Janet Jackson's tattoos to the world and discovered that Robbie Williams really does believe in angels.

Al appeared in the autographical play "Glitter and Twisted", written by Tim Fountain (*Resident Alien, Julie Burchill Is Away*) and directed by award wining theatre director Matt Ryan (London Royal Academy of Music and Drama). The show opened in New York City in 2004, as part of the

inaugural Manhattan Musical Theatre Festival where it was met with great acclaim and standing ovations on Broadway.

Out of Broadway, Al has delivered intimate performances at London's legendary venue Cafe de Paris in the heart of theatre land, as well as having a bi-monthly residency at the King's Road Pheasantry. Appearances on TV shows such as *Big Brother's Big Mouth* and as Paddy McGuinness' guest on Fox Television's show, *Unanimous* have kept her on TV screens, whilst Al entertains on the airwaves with regular guest slots on Jo Good's late show on BBC London.

2012 saw the release of the latest album on iTunes and Amazon, "PILLAYDIUM", a sumptuous and darkish collection of unique and original songs written and composed by Barney Ashton And Christopher Frost. Another triumph that year was Al's portrayal of the legendary Welsh singer and real-life wife of 007 James Bond star Roger Moore, Dorothy Squires at the Edinburgh festival Gilded Balloon production of "*Dorothy Squires – Mrs. Roger Moore*" for which Al received top five-star reviews, proving to the profession that Al possessed paramount acting skills.

More currently, Al now has a City and Guilds qualification in Make-up and so has her own internet YouTube make-up tutorial channel called "*The Empress of Slap*", which is a deliberate Laugh-as-you-Learn experience of bona-fide make-up tips sourced and contained after 30 years of working with the best artists in the business. Additionally there is the new children's story-telling channel on the internet: just YouTube "*Lana's Storyland*".

Al has also just finished playing the part of Margret in the new John Jenkinson movie "*Pelicans*" which, amongst others, features Fennella Fielding.

Al is also an extraordinary presence on the live concert and intimate cabaret stage and genre

- "INTERPRETING A LYRIC IS AN ART FORM, AL PILLAY IS ALREADY A MASTER!"
(*whatsonstage*)

Al is considered to be one of showbiz' most unique personalities, and not just for her own organic Pandrogynous (positive androgyny) identity, but as a personality whom the press like to feature and the cool love to go see. She is the subject of two Documentaries currently in production: "*An Epicene Scream*" produced by television producer Elena Mourney, and "*The Sepia Source*", a film made by Claire Lawrie which tells the story and the influence that the likes of Al propagated throughout the 80's as seminal star of channel 4 TV's "*The Comic Strip Presents*" and the most influential trans performer and close friends with Leigh Bowery of Taboo night club in that great period of British expressionism.

Al is a staunch and much loved personality, and as comedian and pundit Stewart Lee described in the Times Culture, "An important part of the cultural British landscape and is like the Leonard Zelig character from the Woody Allen movies". But the very best quote is from Al's neighbour Alan Bennet who said Al Pillay "simply does not know how to give a bad performance".