

Wayne County

"Everything's too small and I'm too big!" wailed the vanilla custard haired pop singer as we sauntered past a couple of well-heeled, no price-tags visible shop windows. Wayne County wants to buy clothes but he's currently undergoing hormone treatment prior to sex change surgery so his body is taking unto itself a number of pounds of subcutaneous fat as it assumes more rounded contours.

The main problem is that Wayne can't stop eating. He's ravenous all the time and the Jewish delicatessen in which we ate provided appetising entrapments from the meatloaf to the chocolate layer cake. Earlier that day Wayne had put away two pizzas, four Pepsis and a few bowls of Cornflakes. So when photographs are taken he pleads that the "triple" chin will not be visible.

Growing need

Accelerated appetite is, of course, one of the side effects of the long, long process of changing one's body to that of the opposite sex—a growing need if Granada Television's recent *World In Action* programme 'Trapped Inside The Wrong Body' is to be believed.

Wayne is not a typical pre-operative transsexual. He's an exhibitionist and talks a mile a minute. His work as a rock singer ("Man Enough To Be A Woman", "Creaming My Jeans" etc) demands a confidence and a physical flexibility which quite a few men who decide that they are in the wrong bodies do not always possess. Hence *World In Action* showed the rather grotesque sight of men learning how to walk and how to speak 'like women'.

Rollers

Wayne utterly rejects this kind of stereotyping—for himself. "I've been in and out of every type of clothing since I was one or two years old and I don't need someone to tell me how to put rollers in my hair or that I must wear a skirt and mustn't swear. I went to a doctor in England who insisted that I wear a skirt when I came alone for consultations. I did it—put on my long blonde wig and tried to look 'feminine'—



but, hell, I wear T-shirts and pants. I don't know any woman under 40 who wears skirts!"

Although he's anxious not to minimise what (the tiny number of) British doctors are doing for transsexuals, in his experience the message seems to be "if you don't play my game and be the kind of woman I want you to be then you don't get the treatment and the opera-

tion."

"Some of their ideas about what a woman and a man should be are totally redundant and so *Fifties!* I've always wanted to be a woman since I can remember but I still want to be the same person."

He waxes lyrical about his recent visit to Berlin where not only did he have his nose changed without any fuss (his British doctor had refused him one) but hormones were freely available. "German hormones are the best in the world! I don't know where they get 'em from and if you know don't tell me—but they are the best." (At this point, best or not, the hormones are telling Wayne that one portion of meatloaf is not enough and he needs something else—a burger with bun but without chips.)

The treatment is tortoise-slow. Wayne took one pill a day for a couple of months and then graduated to a couple more. He gradually noticed his breasts increasing in size followed by a noticeable change around the hips and buttocks. Finally the skin texture—helped along by the electrolysis he'd received in New York—begins to soften. Wayne indicates a bottle of Heinz tomato ketchup: "a bottle this size, not as wide, costs around £10 or £11 in Berlin and contains enough pills to last a couple of months."

More marketable

But it's the psychological adjustment that increases the waiting time before the operation and, as the *World In Action* programme indicated, British

doctors insist that both male-female and female-male transsexuals live as the opposite sex for at least two years before they have the surgery. For all his impatience Wayne is not rushing into anything—although a few people have tried to suggest that a 'real' sex change pop singer is much more marketable than a 'half-way house' pop singer—even one with Wayne's flamethrower stage technique and powerhouse songs. "I'm going to have to start electrolysis again—you have to keep going back for a clean-up. Then I'll probably have to go and have the actual operation—you know, turning the penis, which is made from the same skin as the vagina, inside out—in America in about two years' time because it's easier there." (Though much more expensive.)

Randy all the time

The main irritant in Wayne's view is the over-protectiveness of British doctors. A great deal of NHS money is spent trying to put people off—the endless interviews. "Having a sex-change should be up to the individual. If they fuck up their life, so what? I've lived for well over a quarter of a century as a man. Now I'm going to have a woman's body. It might be a little better. It sure can't be any worse than having a man's."

Already the hormones have produced more than physical changes in Wayne. Sexually he's become far less genitally centred—he used to be randy all the time but now if he doesn't reach orgasm with his partners then it's no longer a crisis.

"Mostly I like having the other person there to snuggle up to at night. Most of my partners aren't gay any more. They're debatable. They don't know what they are. My boyfriend in Germany has no qualms about my male gender. Well, he's not overly keen on them but he doesn't ignore them."

He's still only sexually attracted to men—he doesn't think there's much chance of him entering into lesbian relationships when he becomes a woman. But his whole field of vision is changing fairly markedly. "Living as a woman gives me security. I'm less paranoid now. More armed inside myself. So now I don't judge people as sexual beings. If I wanna sleep with 'em, I sleep with 'em."

Suggestions

The real change is his deepening understanding of the way women are continually abused. "Last night I was walking along the street and this man drew along side me in a car, smiling and making suggestions. I tried to ignore him but he wouldn't stop." [At this point Wayne splashes mustard on his burger as if from a machine gun.] "So I said: 'FUCK OFF, ASS-HOLE!' You should have seen his face! 'Fuck off, ass-hole!' I said. And he did. I decided there was no way I could adopt a soft approach."

"I've become very radical, very radical. I'm amazed at the audacity of a lot of straight men toward me. Making remarks. Threats. Pinching my ass."

Show business

The attitudes of gays towards him is very mixed. "Some say 'you're really gay and you're just trying to run away from it'. Others say: 'You're in show business and you're just doing it to be noticed'. Some lesbians see it as a copy-out; others are very supportive. The reaction from gays is as varied as from straights. But I really can't understand it when gays put down transsexuals because people are always saying to gays: 'You're not really gay' just as they say to us 'You don't really want to be a woman, do you? It's just the chance to wear women's clothes'."

Wayne and the men and women who appeared on the *World In Action* programme are not much interested in the whys and wherefores. As Ben, now finding it socially easier to make the transition from a woman into a man though physically it's much more difficult, said: "Being a woman . . . is not how I see myself." The programme, while not being able to deal (in half an hour) with the many social problems of transsexuals (loss of employment, the cost of electrolysis, their rejection by other sexual minorities) did strongly communicate to peak-time viewers that some people's brains cannot always be bashed into the shape of their bodies—if they feel, for whatever reason, that those bodies are alien (and repellent) to them.

Strip away the 'crazee' surface of Wayne County and you have someone who's been prepared to fight—over the last few years and in public—for the right to be the person he feels most comfortable being. In the pseudo-aggressive words of one of his most famous songs he's man enough to be a woman. And he's not going to keep quiet about it. "It's better for people to get it from the horse's mouth. How can these doctors know? It's like all these men who write books on women—they don't know nuthin' about the real thing."

Keith Howes

[Wayne County's latest album *Storm The Gates Of Heaven*, featuring "Man Enough To Be A Woman", is available on Safari Records]