

DIVA

JANUARY 2013 UK £3.85

SCISSOR SISTERS'

ANA MATRONIC

*on her bi relationships
and Amnesty's
campaign to end
violence against
lesbians*

*Sharing
the love*

COULD OPEN
RELATIONSHIPS
WORK FOR YOU?

THE NEXT
BIG THING?
OUR TOP MUSIC
PICKS FOR 2013



EQUAL MARRIAGE
WOMEN-ONLY RUN
TEGAN & SARA
tATu

ANIMAL
ATTRACTION
YOU REVEAL YOUR
PET LOVES

*Is the
lesbian scene
transphobic?*
READERS TELL
THEIR STORIES

10

*steps to
living the
life of your
dreams*

ALL IN THE
MIND?
HOW TO FIND
THE RIGHT
THERAPIST



SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL

FORMER SCISSOR SISTERS SINGER ANA MATRONIC, AKA ANA LYNCH, EXPLAINS WHY SHE'S STANDING UP FOR BLACK LESBIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND OPENS UP ABOUT HER RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOMEN AND THE TROUBLE WITH JAKE SHEARS

PHOTOGRAPHY NICK COLLETT
WORDS TIM TEEMAN

Put a pop star in a photographer's studio and, typically, japes will ensue in a dizzying swirl of loud music, outrageous poses, feather boas and shimmery skirts. But on a darkening November afternoon in midtown Manhattan, the Empire State Building grandly lit outside, the mood is muted as Ana Lynch, or Ana Matronic as the Scissor Sisters singer is known, poses statuesquely in a gorgeous orange silk dress and silver heels, her red hair whirled into a sleek peak. The reason for the mutedness is there on the simple sign she is holding: "Being Lesbian Is Not A Crime."

It's not surprising she is holding the sign, related to Amnesty International's Write For Rights campaign: the Scissor Sisters, with their glorious mash-up of disco, electroclash, new wave and glam-rock, were born on the Lower East Side in the early 2000s, fully immersed in gay politics and boundary-dissolving "queer" identity. When I remark to Lynch – who in 2010 married Seth Kirby, her partner of nine years – that she defines herself as "bisexual", she says: "I have, in my life and professionally, sought to blur distinctions. I don't like identifying as gay or straight or even bisexual. I don't necessarily like identifying as a woman. I identify as a human being and I enjoy distinctions being taken away. I believe in human rights. We should treat each other exactly the same whoever we are. The rigid constructs put into place to define us don't really work."

She laughs a gorgeous, dirty cackle. "They're not really true, so just let's get rid of them or blur them, so we have some place to meet in the

middle." Later she'll dish about the sex and relationships she's had with women, why women are better kissers than men and why the Scissor Sisters, presently on an indefinite hiatus, was a "benevolent dictatorship run by Jake Shears".

The eloquent, funny Lynch, 38, is one of the celebrities taking part in Write For Rights, in which the public is encouraged to support someone "wrongly imprisoned, or at risk of harassment and intimidation for carrying out human rights work". Tragically, Lynch's chosen activist is dead. Noxolo Nogwaza, 24, a South African lesbian and human rights defender, was murdered in April 2011 in her home township of KwaThema, east of Johannesburg. Amnesty says before she was killed Nogwaza was raped, beaten and stabbed and believes she was murdered because of her sexual orientation. It is pushing for "a thorough and effective investigation into Noxolo's murder, so that those responsible may be brought to justice".

Nogwaza's case is far from isolated: there has been a wave of brutal murders of black lesbians in South Africa, many incorporating "corrective rape" – by raping the victim the attacker hopes to "correct" their sexuality. Lynch notes the "blood rivalries" of black tribal culture within South Africa, "added to poverty and all the things people in South Africa have had to face" give rise to conditions where crime flourishes. "There's a big problem with rape culture," Lynch says. The attacks have a "machismo aspect to them. If the woman gets shown 'the right way', it will cure her. If she is visible as a lesbian and an activist, she's an easy

"Every single woman I have kissed has been a really good kisser"

target. It's important to shine light on individual cases, but also the bigger issue. Gay rights and women's rights are close to my heart".

At 16, Lynch spent a year in South Africa as a high-school exchange student, six months after Nelson Mandela's release from prison: "An amazing, incredible time, my first away from home. There was such positivity in the air. I was soaking up a culture different to mine, understanding from the inside what this much-maligned country was like. I have a deep and loving connection to it," she says.

Before this brutal series of attacks, South Africa, where gay marriage was legalised in 2006, seemed a paradise model in a homophobic continent; at the time of writing, Uganda is proposing to introduce a law bestowing life sentences on those discovered committing homosexual acts, as well as prohibiting the "promotion" of gay rights and the punishment of anyone who "funds or sponsors" homosexuality, or "abets" it. In Nigeria, a year after same-sex marriage was made illegal, a proposed law would see gay couples who try to marry or live together face 14-year jail terms. Those who help these couples would face 10 years in jail. The legislation also outlaws public displays of same-sex affection and makes all LGBT organisations illegal.

"In Africa they are further behind than we are," says Lynch. "People fear their children can somehow catch, or be infected by, homosexuality. The only way to dispel fear is for gay people to come out, be vocal and visible, to show gay people aren't to be scared of: you work with them, they're in your families and like anyone they want to be respected, loved, cared for and have a decent life." But Noxolo's case highlights the harsh danger of being out. "It's so difficult," says Lynch. "You want everyone to be safe. My heart tells me, 'Be honest and true to yourself', then I think, 'If you are and that brings you harm, then I can't tell you to come out. I'd rather you were alive than dead'. All I can say is, 'Be true to who you are and hopefully in the work you do help create change'."

The Scissor Sisters smashed more than a few closet doors down in the world of pop, bringing a mucky, exuberant sexuality to anthems like I Don't Feel Like Dancing, Take Your Mama and Filthy/Gorgeous. All the bandmates are gay or bi. Their name, for goodness sake, comes from lesbian sex. Has Lynch had relationships with women? "I have, yes, never a serious one, but I would never limit myself. I'm happily married to a man. But if, god forbid, anything should happen and I find myself single and I fall in love with a woman, never in a million years would I stop myself from doing it. I could certainly see myself doing that. I am open

to love in all its forms."

Lynch had relationships with women in Portland, Oregon, where she grew up, and San Francisco, where she moved to in her 20s, discovering the club Trannyshack, "where men dressed as men, women as women, men as women, women as men, it just had to be good".

"It was definitely a college-type situation," she laughs of how her lesbian relationships bloomed. "When I was younger, I identified as straight, then it became something I was more open to. It was also a time when homosexuality was becoming less taboo. I experimented with my sexuality, gender. I wanted to blow the lid off everything." The polysexual delights of Trannyshack – her favourite outfits were vinyl dresses, her real eyes accessorised with doll-eyes which "goggled" when she moved – have faded. "It's so trendy to be straight-acting now. It's good the media is challenging old gay stereotypes, but if you have a friend who flames, let him flame!"

Who was the first woman Lynch kissed? "My drag mother, Miss Elle Superstar, in Portland. We were on the dancefloor at a gay club and all of sudden... wee-eeee..." The kiss was good? "It was great. That's the distinction I've made. I have kissed a lot more men than I have women. Not every man I have kissed has been a good kisser, but every single woman I have kissed has been a really good kisser." Why? "I don't know! It's because we have two sets of lips." She cackles. "Kissing girls is so soft I was like, 'Wow!'"

Is there a difference between the sex and relationships she had with women, compared to men? "Oh yes," Lynch laughs. "The big joke is, 'What do men bring on a second date?' 'There is no second date.' 'What do lesbians bring on a second date?' 'A moving van.' The relationships I had with women were very caring and loving. There was romance right off the bat. Sometimes with men, when you're first getting together, you act really cool 'cos guys are cool, whereas women are very warm. It can get very intense quickly, but also very loving and soft."

Were the relationships long or short? "Sadly, all short." The last was in San Francisco before Lynch moved to New York in 2000. How many relationships are we talking? She laughs: "A handful." Has she fallen in love with a woman? "None of them ever got serious to the point of me really falling in love, but I definitely had major crushes..." A faraway look passes over Lynch's face... "and I was very sad when she stopped calling me." She understands some gays and lesbians view bisexuals with suspicion. "That comes from self-preservation: 'I want to be in a

"I don't like identifying as gay or straight or even bisexual. I don't necessarily like identifying as a woman. I identify as a human being"

relationship with someone who identifies as strongly as I do with one or the other."

Lynch puts her openness down to how she grew up. Her parents had "lots of gay friends", her godparents were a gay couple she called her uncles. Her mother Sherry, an artist, told her that her father Robert was gay when Lynch was six. "My sister and I were in the car. My mother said, 'The way I used to be together with your father he is now with Don (his then-lover). I cried because my parents weren't going to be together. But I grew up knowing my father's partner. I had a lot of gay friends in school."

Her father died of AIDS in 1990. "He went pretty quick. In those days, when you said 'I have AIDS', you had less than a year. We found out in April, he was gone the following January." Lynch saw him, "barely cognisant or able to shake his head" in intensive care. Going to school on Portland's rural outskirts, she felt she had to lie he had died of cancer: "Only my close friends knew he was gay. I was in school with a bunch of fucking rednecks. Who needs to open that can of worms with a bunch of assholes who I was planning on leaving behind in three years - which I did."

In New York, on Hallowe'en in 2000, Lynch met Jake Shears. "I was dressed as an Andy Warhol Factory reject and he was dressed as a late-term back alley abortion. I took one look at him and thought, 'You're my kind of freak.'" Shears invited her to join the fledgling Scissor Sisters, saying the band needed "female energy"; "Matronic" comes from Lynch's childhood love of sci-fi and robots. She loved The Bionic Woman, "rather than 'I'm a princess from a faraway land'", and has a tattoo featuring bionic circuitry.

The band was fun "on stage", Lynch says cautiously. "Offstage, it was a challenge. I envisioned more of a democratic process, but the Scissor Sisters was a benevolent dictatorship run by Jake Shears. If it were my band, it would have been a darker, less mainstream statement. But I love it and love my bandmates. I always had enough creative freedom to be happy." Were there were moments Lynch felt disempowered, put into a box and not happy? "Yes, yes, yes, there were moments when I felt like an employee, not a board member. Nobody ever wins against Jake Shears." But, she adds, she made her peace with that "years ago" and all of them are friends. Her mother came to Scissor Sisters concerts in a special t-shirt which read: "Momma-tronic. Yes, I really am her mother."

Was there lots of sex and drugs? "No. I was like, 'What happened to the groupies? Where's the Rolls Royce Phantom packed with cash?' Has

Lynch done drugs? She laughs. "No comment." Pause: "Yes, I've done drugs before, during and after the Scissor Sisters, sure. Everybody does drugs. I've had several shots of caffeine today, I'll probably have some when I get home. I may have some alcohol..." she affects a squeaky voice... "and maybe something else."

The band announced its hiatus in London in October. "It's from touring, we've been doing it since 2010 with very little time for our lives," says Lynch. Is it a permanent break? "No." Will the Scissor Sisters return? "Of course, but we're not sure when. The record industry is changing. The way we operate as a giant, big rock band is ceasing to exist as a model: the amount of tech we need, the financial support from the record company..." After acting as a mentor on talent show *The Voice*, Lynch will do solo projects and finish a 13-part comic-book she has written, derived from a horror story by HP Lovecraft. She is looking for an artist to draw it. There are "more things I want to say professionally and artistically before jumping into motherhood", Lynch reveals. "When I have children, that will be my sole focus for their first few years." So, tick-tock? "Yes, I'm 38, agggghh. I'd like to have my own child, but there are other options, like adoption."

She doesn't "give a fuck" about ageing, even if the pop world judges women harshly for it. "Yeah, fuck them," Lynch says sharply. "I don't like industries. I like music, but not the music industry. I like clothes, not the fashion industry. I love fine art but the art world is bullshit. 'Industry-anything' can go to hell." She lost two stone in 2010 because she didn't have "the energy and stamina" she needed. "The gym is an unavoidable fact of life, but I would rather be reading a book than on a treadmill. I don't see myself being super-glamorous till the day I die. I like faces when they get older, with characters and stories in them. Anybody can do what the hell they want, but plastic surgery is not for me."

While she is away from Scissor Sisters, Lynch will miss the "Ana-sexuals" who, while not necessarily attracted to women, are attracted to her. "Most of the fans hardest into me sexually are women and dads," she laughs. To *DIVA* readers - lesbian, bi, category-less, or Ana-sexual - she says: "Never say never... keep fanning the flames, ladies. But as I'm not available, there are so many lovely ginger ladies in the UK. I'm sure some of them are just as kooky as I am. We're not hard to find." **D**

Video: Ana Matronic explains how to get involved in Write For Rights campaign: tinyurl.com/AnaMatronicAmnesty and amnesty.org.uk