Meth-od Actor

Pop cult hero John Cameron Mitchell inches into battle against HIV's best bud: crystal meth

October 1, 2004 By Josh Sparber

In November 2003, three New York activists and Broadway's Harvey Fierstein launched the first of two raucous community forums on crystal meth—linked to unsafe sex and new HIV infections (see "Can We Talk?," June 2004). In July, another gay icon—John Cameron Mitchell, 41, who wrote, directed and starred in the play and film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*—replaced Fierstein as forum moderator. Here, he rocks the mic for *POZ.*

***POZ*: What effect did your stardom have on the forums?**

JCM: A lot more people knew about the forums [thanks to the heightened publicity]—mostly out gay men who can be easily targeted with educational campaigns.

Have you had meth troubles?

No. A couple of my friends have, but I ran from it. They looked cadaverous and were impossible to talk to.

What's your take on the HIV spike due to crystal?

I came out just as AIDS hit, so I've stayed safe and negative, but I'm shocked to see airhead punks running around like there ain't no tomorrow.

What do you propose?

A campaign combining scare tactics and support. Posters with young HIVers saying, "I have to have a job with health insurance for the rest of my life" and "I thought you could only get HIV from older guys." An older guy could say: "I avoid sex with younger guys now—it's too dangerous."

Do such AIDS-is-no-picnic ads offend HIVers?

The new danger overrides any objections. With crystal and the Internet, we've got bathhouse conditions again. Some gay-sex sites have been turning a blind eye to crystal references and have even been encouraging them.

Did you consider moderating the forum as Hedwig, your poorly endowed alter ego?

No. Hedwig's dead and living in other people.

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