Suicide Watch

Marcus Wayland gives Sylvia Plath a run for her money

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Forget slashing your wrists or jumping off a bridge: Artist cum-singer Marcus Wayland says AIDS is the perfect suicide. After a decade of infection, Wayland maintains that AIDS is a viable alternative to a mouthful of pills or a head in the oven.

“It gives you time to stop being false, strip away all the shit and appreciate things,” Wayland says. “It’s a really thoughtful time.”

After 33 years of sex, drugs and–not rock ‘n’ roll—punk, Wayland has a lot to think about. He grew up gay in the small and small-minded community of Cambridgeshire. “I felt like one of those biblical characters who is stoned out of the village,” he says. “I spent the first 16 years of my life having to censor everything I did.”

Only in public. The private Wayland was an early starter, and by the time he attended art college in the seaside city of Brighton, he had many notches on his bedpost.

At school, Wayland met other gay people and slowly began shedding his country-boy insecurities. “I spent my teens having sex,” he says. “Somehow, the only thing I got at the time was the clap.”

This was the early ‘80s and AIDS awareness was increasing, but for Wayland it was sex s usual, safe or not. As a result, he was surprised when his first HIV test came back negative. “That made me think it was all bullshit,” he says. “There I was having unsafe sex all through my teens and I was negative.”

Safe sex proved to be problematic for Wayland. “It was difficult for me to make the transition from unsafe to safer sex,” he says. “I thought it could never happen to me, and then I went through the ‘I don’t care if it does’ stage.”

It did, and he doesn’t.

“I don’t know who I contracted HIV from and I don’t dwell on it,” he says matter-of-factly. Adding, “and it would have been a while before I realized I was positive, so I don’t know if I passed it on to anyone.”

So what does the man who espouses AIDS as a form of suicide think about medication? He watched his uncle, an early AZT monotherapy patient, die slowly and painfully, but last year, after weeks of persuasion on the part of a close friend, Wayland started a triple-combination therapy that includes Crixivan. The resulting viral-load dive bomb and CD4-cell surge have caused Wayland to reassess his suicide theory. “If they’ve got this far with protease inhibitors, then maybe they can find a cure,” he says, stressing that longevity has never been his goal. “A long life is not important to me. What is important is getting to the root of what is torturing me.”

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