TeleVisionaries

Queer as Folk’s cowriters talk about HIV--the new reality of non-reality TV

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Showtime’s *Queer as Folk* tripled its positive population last season with two new HIVers, tackling mixed-status love, steroid abuse and teenage prostitution. *POZ* quizzed *QAF* producer-writers **Daniel Lipman** and **Ron Cowen** about their positive visions for season four, premiering this spring.

***POZ:* Why the emphasis on HIV?**
L&C: HIV is so much a part of the gay community that we’re drawn to these stories. Vic has been positive since the first episode. Michael and Ben’s relationship has allowed us to explore positive-negative couples. It stands to reason that the teenage hustler, Hunter, would also, unfortunately, be positive.

The two of you have pushed the AIDS envelope, from your early work on *Sisters* and *An Early Frost* to *QAF*. Why?
The triumph of the gay community in surviving the loss of life, friends and loved ones in the face of political and religious hostility has compelled us to speak out in a way that most people can hear us—on television.

As the foremost TV voice for HIVers, must you cater your stories and characters to outside standards and pressures?
We do not conform to notes or listen to people on the outside. We do our research as thoroughly as possible and try to present HIV-related issues through our characters. Any pressure to live up to a certain standard comes from us. And we’re pretty demanding.

How will season four address HIV?
We can’t give anything away. We can assure you, however, there will be major stories for our HIVers—probably more this year than ever.

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