Meet Merce!

Charles Sanchez stars in a musical comedy web series about an HIV-positive guy looking for love.

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A musical number from *Merce*

Who's Merce? He's a flamboyant and funny middle-age New Yorker and the star of his own outrageously gay musical comedy web series. He's also HIV positive. But as we discover in the show's July 16 debut on MerceTV.com, he's anything but downbeat. As the opening jingle puts it: "He's the sprinkles on your ice cream!"

Written by and starring Charles Sanchez and directed by Tyne Firmin, with music and lyrics by Ken Kruper, the colorful first season includes eight episodes, each no longer than 10 minutes. Each episode can stand alone, but combined they also tell an overarching story.

"The season is really about Merce searching for love and self-acceptance, and having great support from family and friends," says Firmin, who makes an acting cameo as Merce's mom.

In the premier episode, Merce goes on a date and must decide whether to disclose his status to the seemingly perfect beau. Future plot points include attending therapy at GMHC and meeting a life coach who's also a dominatrix—you know, the kind of everyday experiences we can all relate to.

"*Merce* is about more than HIV or gay people," Firmin clarifies. "It's about surviving and having a great attitude about life, no matter what happens. We all need a support system of family and friends to make the rough stuff a bit easier. And everything is better with a song, a dance and a bawdy joke!"

"Merce is thinly veiled me," Sanchez admits about his creation. "But he's much more fabulous, much more unashamedly gay. I really wanted to create a character who is just who he is, with no shame and no filter. I also wanted to show someone with HIV today who isn't ruled or defined by the condition and who, like me, is actually enjoying his life."

Watch free episodes on MerceTV.com, Vimeo or YouTube.com beginning July 16.

UPDATE: You can also watch the first two episodes on POZ blogger Shawn Decker's write-up here.

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