

"I am so proud and so f***ing brave - do you know where I come from?" snaps 35-year old Greek-Cypriot expatriate demi-God Marios. He is a finalist in the Mr Gay Cyprus category of the Mr Mediterraneo contest, held on the thankfully gay-friendly Greek island of Mykonos next month.

This gagging gay gala lets you gawp at Mediterranean hunks from all nations that lap against that mighty sea's shores - including Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Malta, France, Turkey and Spain! What started as merely Mr Gay Greece back in 2002 has now expanded to showcase other queer categories - not least Mr Gay Cyprus and Mr Mediterraneo himself! Each scarce-clad Adonis can even vie to be crowned for executing the 'Best Dive into the Pool'!

"In my life, I dare to make new things happen in Greece," gushes Mr Mediterraneo organiser Paul Sofianos - also the publisher of Greece's first gay lifestyle magazine and force behind Athens Prides gone by. "After the successes of Mr Gay Greece in recent years, I've decided to make it a truly pan-Mediterranean contest. These guys are indisputably the most erotic in Europe! That's why most of you poor pale north Europeans head our way on vacation - quite apart from our equally stunning climate!" "Many magnificent Greek beauties

are too frightened to enter," confides Sofianos, a stray cloud fleeting through such sunshine thoughts, "despite us banning national Greek media to protect the boys from that whole gossip machine. Thankfully, all gays in Mykonos feel free! It's like a completely different, independent country and the ideal place to organize this event. We're not really aiming to change the world anyway - just have a bit of fun!"

Yet, despite all this meaty merriment, there inescapably is a more serious side, in a region where - despite Euro law - priests, police, media and government so often conspire to inflict

enough queer oppression to make even the proudest Ancient Greek hero spin in his grave.

"I believe events like Mr Mediterraneo can help change public opinion and make life over there that little bit easier," rejoins our God-like Cypriot Marios, reminiscing of a homeland far from London - his happy base for the last nine years. "Repression can lead to depression - or double lives. I once asked someone after we'd bonked a few times if he considered himself gay. He said, 'No, I am married!' Whatever! He was certainly a great bottom!"

"Gay Greek guys are generally more cool and relaxed than queer Cypriots," moots Marios, who recently ran the London Marathon and loves cooking, all-night clubbing and English lads - though he has a current sweetheart. "Greece is a bit more tolerant and certainly more populous. That is why there are loads of Cypriot gay guys in Greece - mainly in Athens."

But Marios is less sure of others Med-on-Med con-

MED MEN

Ye Gods! ADRIAN GILLAN meets organisers and finalists of the Mister Mediterraneo contest to be held on Mykonos next month (Saturday 4th June). Can the event combat the

homophobia of the islands parent country, Greece? And just what separates the Pick-of-the-Cropolis from Mr Flopodopolis?



trasts: "I don't find there are huge differences to be honest. I've experienced all Mediterranean types - here in vast, cosmopolitan London where so many of us come. Perhaps this is why most of my mates here are from over there - I find their mentality very compatible with mine."

"I do miss Mediterranean life though," muses Marios, despite everything - and despite shivering with nerves at the mere thought of squeezing into his skimpy little pants in Mykonos next month. "Of course, gay London is unbeatable on most fronts. But what I really love is to spend a few days back home in summer on some 'secluded' beach - beneath the blue sky and the sun, beside crystal waters - awaiting 'wandering surprises'! And come they do!"

"Sex is not allowed around the hotel that hosts our finalists on the day," cautions organiser Sofianos. "We have volunteers responsible for ensuring that! Anyway, these twenty finalists - these Gods - are travelling all the way to Mykonos to give the best show of their lives - not to have sex. These boys can get sex anywhere!"

"And the winner is not just some dumb Barbie," rebuffs our impresario when challenged on the whole political correctness of such pageants. "If someone believes he's more beautiful

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▶ **OFFICIAL WEBSITE:**
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▶ **OTHER CONTACTS:**
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The event will be hosted at 22.00 on Saturday 4th June 2005 around the majestic swimming pool of the 5-star Kouros Hotel - with a wonderful view of Mykonos harbour and more than 1500 people expected to attend. The entrance ticket to the event itself is only 35 Euros in advance (available through the official website, above) or 45 Euros on the door, and includes unlimited drinks!

▶ **WINDMILLS TRAVEL & TOURISM**
The celebration is officially tour-operated by Pride World and Windmills Travel & Tourism who - in collaboration with travel agents worldwide offer full packages: including accommodation and flights plus special trips to Athens, Mykonos & Santorini or cruises around the Aegean & Turkey - as well as the contest entrance ticket itself.

Windmills Travel & Tourism, Fabrica Square, PO Box 154, 84600 Mykonos, Cyclades Islands. Tel: (+30) 22890 26555-7 and (+30) 22890 23877. Web: www.windmillstravel.com

▶ **SENSATIONS HOLIDAYS**
Alternatively, Sensations Holidays can also organise great deals on flights and packages to Mykonos for the event, including passes to the competition. Tel: 020 8902 7177 and mention 'QX magazine'.

Note: On Friday 3rd June - the day before the main event - there will be a "Gay Greece Parade" through Mykonos Town - it's free and open to all!

▶ **ALL GREEK TO YOU?**
Then check out these websites!
Gay Greece Guide - in Greek, but lots of hot pics: www.gaygreece.gr
Greek Helsinki Monitor - Greece's leading human rights organisation: www.greekhelsinki.gr
Synthesis - Greek HIV/AIDS Awareness: www.hiv.gr

than my boys, I invite him to show some balls too and come up on stage! A gay man has to be brave - no mere beauty - if he is to claim my mantle!"

Sofianos hopes his next visit to London will be with the winners of his extravaganza - in some breathless, sexy spectacle deep inside some giant club. Meantime, swags he: "We celebrate our contest around the pool of a glamorous hotel - in the open air, near naked - just like God made us! After the prizes and titles, there's a big party where everybody can swim - with or without clothes! And you won't find that in London!"

Indeed, although impressed by former Mr Gay UK Jarrod Batchelor, who officiated at his event in Mykonos last year, Sofianos is certainly not in awe of us Brit boys: "Mediterraneans are very sexy - especially on stage in a contest. Princes William and Harry? I don't find any of those young things with little red cheeks remotely sexy. Gay people just want to see hot men. And you can find them in the street or in a gay club - not on TV or in some posh Palace. And of course, you can find them at Mister Mediterraneo in Mykonos. I personally invite you!"

