

GOTHAM

Monday, November 14th, 2011

Sir Ivan Wilzig's World

A chat with the caped crooner Sir Ivan reveals more than what meets the eye.



Infamous for his cape bedazzled with a peace sign and his annual Hamptons “castle party,” musician and philanthropist Sir Ivan Wilzig is living his version of the American dream—his latest single, “Live for Today,” was a top ten hit in the U.K. The son of Siegbert Wilzig—Auschwitz survivor, banking and oil tycoon, and philanthropist—Sir Ivan spent 20 years dutifully plugging away at his father’s Trust Company Bank before making a U-turn into a music career at the age of 45. “I never had any banking aspirations. I had showbiz aspirations since I was five years old,” says Wilzig of his ultimate departure from banking. No matter his direction in life, Sir Ivan remains dedicated to philanthropy—a value instilled by his father—through his Peaceman Foundation, which aims to eliminate hate crime and assists those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. We spoke with Sir Ivan to learn more about his music (which he describes as “technippy,” or techno-hippy), his mission and his eccentric lifestyle.

What kind of music did you listen to when you were growing up?
SIR IVAN WILZIG: Elvis Presley. But I was weaned on Motown. The three big albums that were my biggest influences were The Greatest Hits of the Temptations, The Four Tops and The Supremes.

Why did you choose to cover John Lennon’s *Imagine* for your first single?

SIW: Well, in the late '90s I just felt the world was taking a turn for the worse with events like the murders of Matthew Shepard, James Byrd, Jr. [and] all the seemingly daily bombings in Israel—a murder every week. World events and news drove me to believe that people needed to hear the words of *Imagine* again. I feel like Lennon was a prophet and we didn’t take the warnings the first time and paid for it. I decided after that that all my songs would be from the '60s or have '60s-type lyrics.

What did your father think of your trading banking for music—and a cape?

SIW: My dad didn’t think much of it at first because he wanted stability for us, and he didn’t think the entertainment business was stable. He knew it was a one-in-a-million shot to become a famous entertainer. But he and my mother always encouraged me to sing as a hobby. They took me to all the Broadway shows as a child.

Are you happy with the choice you made?

SIW: Well, I’ve had seven singles and all of them have charted on Billboard. So I’m seven for seven.

All of your work has been with cover songs. Will you transition to original songs?

SIW: I wrote my first three original songs recently with a writer and a producer who works with *American Idol*-level talents and I will be recording them soon.

What will those songs sound like?

SIW: Still in the vein of wanting to help and heal the world. One song is a campy, cult-like song of a utopian world without bullies—*La-La Land* is the name of that song. The others are a bit more serious.

How does your look, namely the cape, fit your musical persona?

SIW: The things I wear and the parties I throw both draw attention to me as an artist so that people realize that the banker Ivan no longer exists and that I’m all about being the artist. I wear the peace sign because it represents how sincere I am about it. It all draws attention to the charity and the music.

Sir Ivan’s second album is planned to be released in 2012 and will feature contributions from Debbie Gibson and Kimberley Locke.