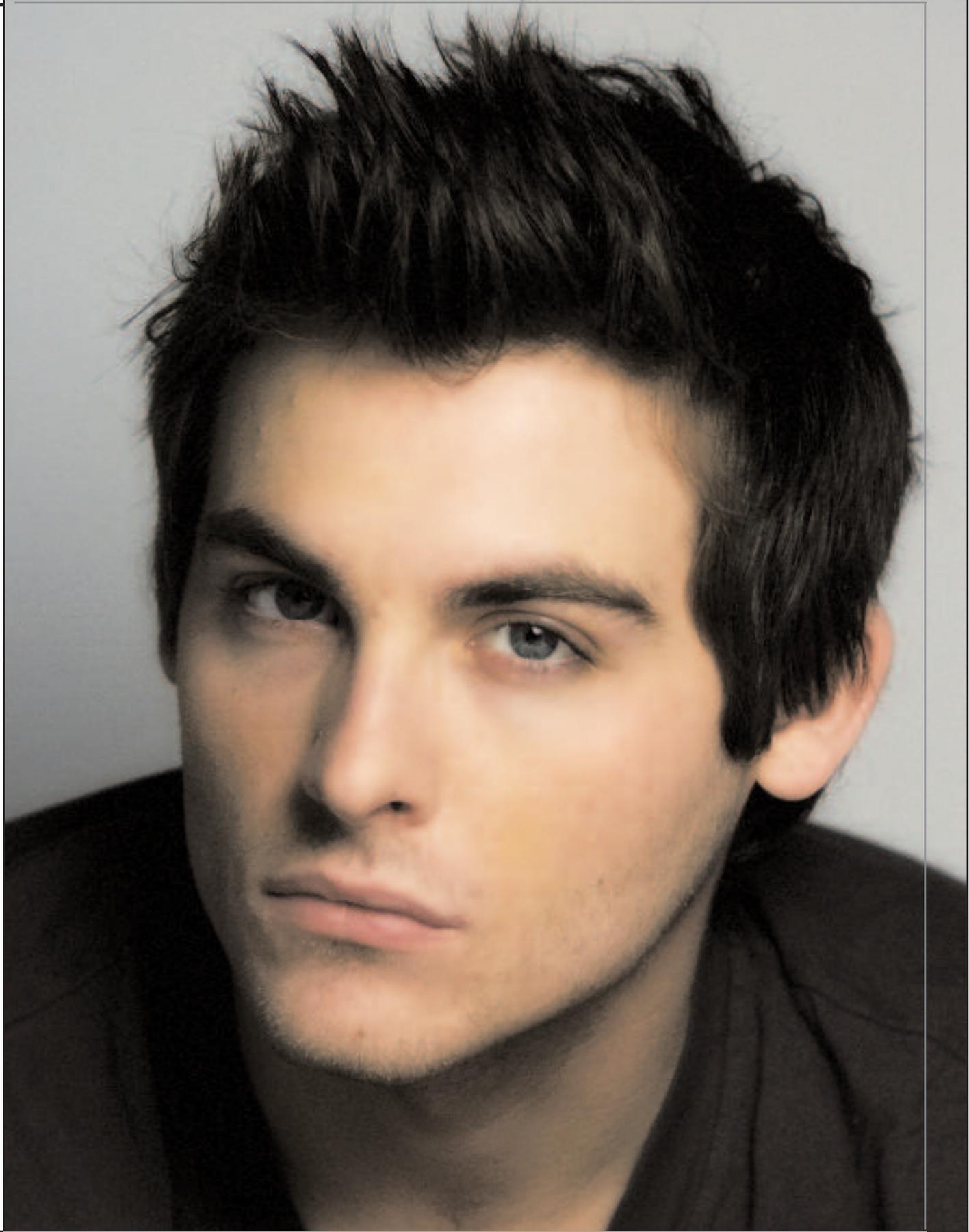
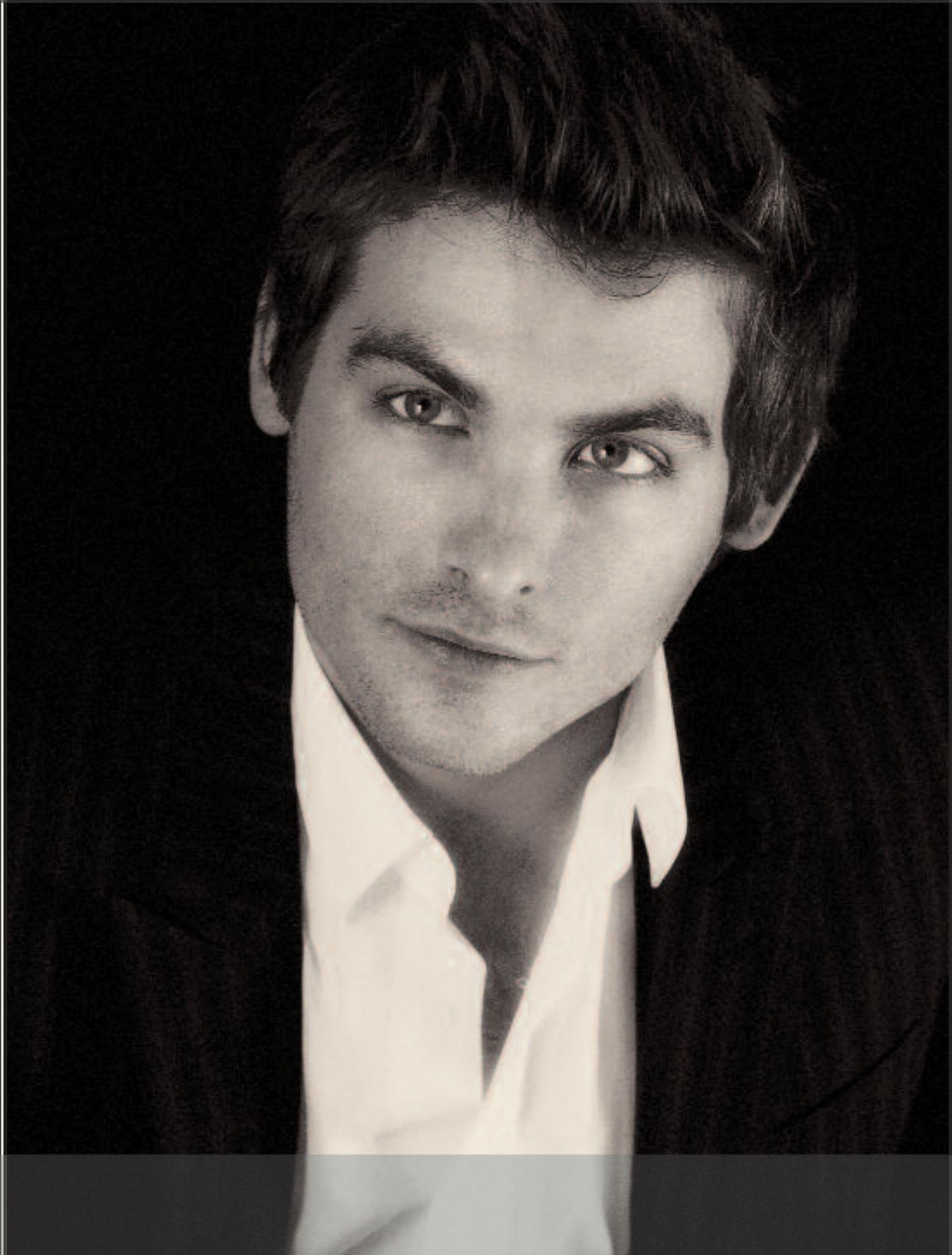


TRANS formed

A CHANCE MEETING CHANGED THE COURSE OF ACTOR **KEVIN ZEGERS'S**
PATH AND HE DISCUSSES WITH *A&U*'S **DANN DULIN** HIS NEW MISSION AND
THE URGENT CHALLENGE TO HIS GENERATION

PHOTOGRAPHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR *A&U* BY TIM COURTNEY





Oh, to be young, handsome, talented—and to use these gifts wisely. Kevin Zegers has not only left his mark on the silver screen in several memorable films, but, under the aegis of the Elton John AIDS Foundation, he's now donned a teacher's hat to educate his generation about HIV. In just a few years, he has evolved from child actor to leading man. Pull over Warren Beatty, Zegers is stepping into the shoes of outlaw Clyde Barrow for his next film, *The Story of Bonnie and Clyde*.

"Acting is a selfish job and it will eat you up," he asserts crisply. "That's why some actors drink and do blow every night. They are bored and they can't stand sitting with themselves because they've just spent three months—ooowww," his voice lowers to feign self-importance, "getting into character."

"Well then, do something about your boredom!" he yells sternly.

As the Los Angeles sun streams through my living room window and lands on Kevin's brown locks, the skilled actor of such films as *Transamerica*, *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *Air Bud*, and *Gardens of the Night* is revved. "I feel that a lot of celebrity is wasted and many actors moan, 'Yeah, I don't have time to help others....' That's bullshit. If you're an incredibly working-a-lot actor then you're doing nothing. I think actors don't speak up because they're told not to. They're told to look pretty, do their job, and shut-up," he says boldly. "There's such a great opportunity for actors my age to just do *something*."

Kevin *has* done something. He joined the ranks of Habitat For Humanity to rebuild homes for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. He's also worked with Equality California, an organization that enforces civil rights for LGBT citizens, and with Camp Heartland, a national organization that provides outdoor activities and other services for kids impact-

ed by HIV. His leading role, though, is his work with The Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF).

A few minutes earlier, Kevin, twenty-four, who's been racking up acting credits since the age of six, arrived at my home with several outfits swung over his shoulder for the photo shoot. Also in tow was his manager. Awaiting them was a makeup artist (recommended by Kevin's publicist) and Kevin's publicist, a somewhat starchy twenty-something woman who kept an eagle eye on all proceedings. Despite this swirl of activity, Kevin is easy-going, friendly, and professional.

Clad in worn dungarees and a plain loose-fitting short-sleeved nondescript green-gray V-neck T-shirt, Kevin curls up on one of my dining room chairs as the makeup artist kneels on the floor to work her magic on his Abercrombie & Fitch face. I pour him some green tea and soon he's ready for the photo shoot.

Over the past few years, I've been struck by this native Canadian's polished performances, especially in the film, *Transamerica*, where he portrayed the delinquent son of a preop transsexual, exquisitely played by Felicity Huffman. In 2006, about a year after filming *Transamerica*, Kevin had a chance encounter with David Furnish, Elton John's life-partner, at a preproduction meeting for the film *It's a Boy Girl Thing*. David and Elton were the film's producers. Later, during the shoot in London, Kevin spent time with both of them on and off the set. He was so inspired by their passion and their commitment to the AIDS community that he chose to be a crusader for their foundation.

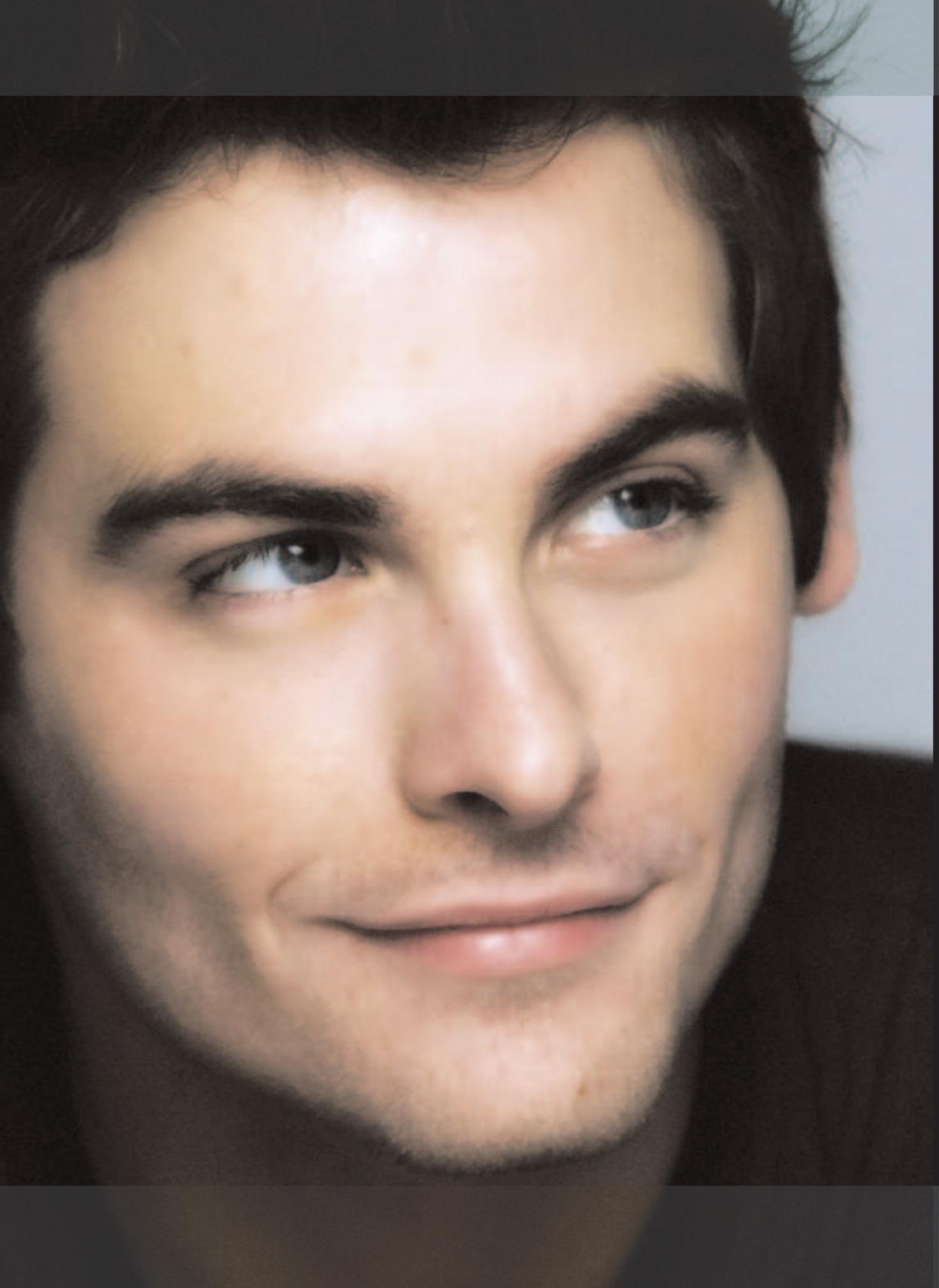
The Elton John AIDS Foundation was established in the United States in 1992. The following year, a branch opened in the United Kingdom. Although the branches operate as separate entities, both have parallel missions: to support HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, to

fight against AIDS discrimination, and to facilitate the care for people with HIV and AIDS. EJAF-US, which awards grants to community-based projects in the Americas and the Caribbean, and EJAF-UK, which focuses on programs in Africa, Asia, and Europe, collectively, have raised over \$150 million in support of projects in fifty-five countries.

Kevin experienced first-hand the work David and Elton are doing through the foundation. "The first thing I learned from them is that we need to acknowledge that AIDS is unacceptable," he says intensely, now perched on my romping-size, crimson sofa. "Viewing it as a disease that's prevalent only in Africa is a very passé way of thinking about it." His arms are expressively spread open with palms up, as if to ask, 'Don't you people get it?' "AIDS is a 'Here' disease—now, more than ever. A surprisingly high rate of growth is here in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. HIV doesn't discriminate socially or economically. It's not a gay disease; it's not an African disease." He cringes. "Anybody would be remiss to think that it's not something that can grab them too."

"My friends will probably listen to me talk about this issue over somebody who's much older. For example, Miley Cyrus would make more of a difference to younger people than Elton John does....which makes no sense to me," he shrugs in a slightly sing-song voice then adds flippantly, "however that's our culture."

Kevin's friends seem to be listening, as he's rounded up other actors ("who make shit-tons of money") to participate in EJAF fundraisers. "I know that the money goes directly to the Foundation. There's no roll-down like twenty-five percent of the money for overhead," he contends. "The Foundation has a four-star rating and for a Foundation that's as high as you can get. I think only seven percent of foundations get that kind of rating. EJAF



has established people's trust.

"Supporting the Foundation and reaching out to others is necessary in order for me to *not* completely self-destruct," he confesses, flopping one knee on the sofa and crossing his ankle with the other leg.

He's comfy, but not totally relaxed. "To be a good actor it has to be all about me. When I get done I don't want to look at myself or hang out with myself or get to know myself any better!" says Kevin genuinely. "In this fake fame-obsessed

culture, this is my opportunity to throw bits of information out there. It's surprising how thirsty for knowledge people my age have become...."

Kevin says that many of his peers are not too scared of AIDS; that their major concern is pregnancy, followed by herpes and then AIDS. Part of the difficulty, he notes, is that many still believe the myth that AIDS is a gay disease. "Look, there's an AIDS prevention billboard in Boy's Town [the predominately gay area of West Hollywood]. That's a problem," he says, which is also his hood. "The sign is *only* in Boy's Town. That reinforces the fact that it's just a gay problem. So here you have somebody who's not educated about the AIDS epidemic driving through that section. They see the sign and say, 'Well, there ya go. I'm not gay, so I don't have to be worried about it.'"

Kevin is pissed. This hockey player and die-hard fan of the Toronto Maple Leafs looks down for a moment and

sucks in his lips, exposing his dimples. He smirks, somewhat distraught. "This gay disease myth should *not* be an excuse for not getting tested," he warns,

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twisting the ring on his tattooed finger. "There should be an AIDS testing center in every American city. C'mon guys, this needn't be so complicated," he stresses breathlessly. "What's horrible is that three or four people can get infected before some jackass goes to a testing facility and finds out that he or she has AIDS."

Though Kevin has been in "a pretty settled-down" relationship for two years with a gal who is on the casting end of show business, he still gets tested yearly. Before that he says he wore a condom not so much for HIV prevention, but for the purpose of preventing pregnancy.

Throughout the interview, Kevin's manger has been chatting on his cell while his publicist is busy texting. The makeup artist and the photographer have been packing up their paraphernalia, all of this within earshot of Kevin, who stays focused throughout. An actor learns to center himself very quickly on a crowded movie set. At

times, though, he tends to speak in fragmented sentences as he intensely searches for the precise words to express his thoughts.

"I'm aware of the size of my voice," Kevin says matter-of-factly, sipping green tea. "Though I'm not Leonardo DiCaprio, I feel like any bit [I do], helps." It's interesting that he mentions DiCaprio. Kevin, like DiCaprio, is a chameleon actor who tackles roles that are dark, edgy, and complex.

With his upcoming films, *The Narrows*, *Fifty Dead Men Walking*, *The Perfect Age of Rock and Roll*, *Frozen*, and of course, *The Story of Bonnie and Clyde*, he'll be making inroads through

that show business trench from leading man to star. In the meantime, his focus with EJAF will soon extend to speaking at high schools, doing PSAs, and, of course, recruiting more of his actor friends to get involved.

Kevin sets his cup of green tea back on the glass coffee table. He leans in. "Look, maybe some people might be a little more open to listening to a young straight actor." There's a brief silence. Kevin's face quickly transforms from frustration to satisfaction, his blue-gray puppy-dog eyes sparkle, he cracks half a smile and concludes, "If I can accomplish this...then I've done my job."

Makeup by Lauren Kaye Cohen. Contact her by e-mail at LKCmakeup@yahoo.com.

Merit goes to Jill Roberts, who is consistently accessible and imaginative. Read the full interview at www.aumag.org and www.DannDulin.com.

Dann Dulin interviewed singer Erin Hamilton for the April cover story.