

Edelsten on *that* dress and his wedding

AJN STAFF

WEDDINGS do not get much bigger than the upcoming marriage of Dr Geoffrey Edelsten and wife-to-be Brynne Gordon.

Dr Edelsten, a former medical world high-flyer, will marry Gordon in a lavish Jewish ceremony next month at Melbourne's Crown Casino.

The wedding will have a true Jewish flavour, with the invitations – sent out to 500 people – encouraging guests to join in the “fressing and nashing”. The entertainment will be provided by two of the funniest Jewish people: Fran Drescher from TV show *The Nanny* and Jason Alexander, formerly of *Seinfeld* fame. The bride- and groom-to-be are also encouraging guests to donate money to their favourite charitable causes, including Magen David Adom, the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and the Australian Sports Foundation.

Their generosity will continue Dr Edelsten's commitment to charitable causes in the fields of music, medicine, education and sport.

Importantly, American-born Gordon is on a quest to convert to Judaism, and is being assisted by the rabbis at Melbourne's Temple Beth Israel.

“We've been attending shul on Friday and Saturdays, she has been attending lessons and studying hard,” he said. “I have to confess, I can't remember learning half of this

stuff at Mount Scopus,” he said of his alma mater. “Reading Ivrit [Hebrew] isn't difficult, but some of the history and celebrations I can't remember ever learning.”

Dr Edelsten and his fiancée hit the news recently, when Gordon wore a show-stopping dress to last month's AFL Brownlow Medal awards. The dress was bought in Las Vegas.

“I made a mistake by saying to her that young girls wear fashion [to the Brownlow] that is really out there,” he said.

After a high-flying career as a doctor and successful medical entrepreneur, Dr Edelsten made headlines for the wrong reasons in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when he was struck off the medical register and then jailed for perverting the course of justice in 1990. Following his release, a review by a Supreme Court found a miscarriage of justice had taken place, but at the recommendation of a legal professional, Dr Edelsten never applied to have the conviction overturned. These setbacks, though, have not slowed down the now 66-year-old.

As well as his impending nuptials, Dr Edelsten is still running a number of medical centres. The former Sydney Swans Football Club owner is also pursuing his passion for AFL. Having grown up in Carlton, he has returned to his beloved Carlton Football Club, where he attends games and is a sponsor.

Safran crucified over new show

ADAM KAMIEN

COMEDIAN John Safran's new show has caused a public outcry, even though its debut on ABC TV is still a week away.

The Australian Family Association last week hit out at the show, *John Safran's Race Relations*, describing it as “filth”.

In episode one of the series, in which Safran explores interracial attraction, the former Yeshivah College student donates sperm at a Palestinian sperm bank while looking at a picture of US President Barack Obama. He also steals women's underwear to perform “sniff tests”. In a later episode, Safran is crucified as part of a religious ritual in the Philippines.

But the scene that will likely generate the most controversy in the Jewish community involves Safran going to his mother's grave, with a shovel and a Kabbalah prayer book to discover what she thinks of him marrying a non-Jew.

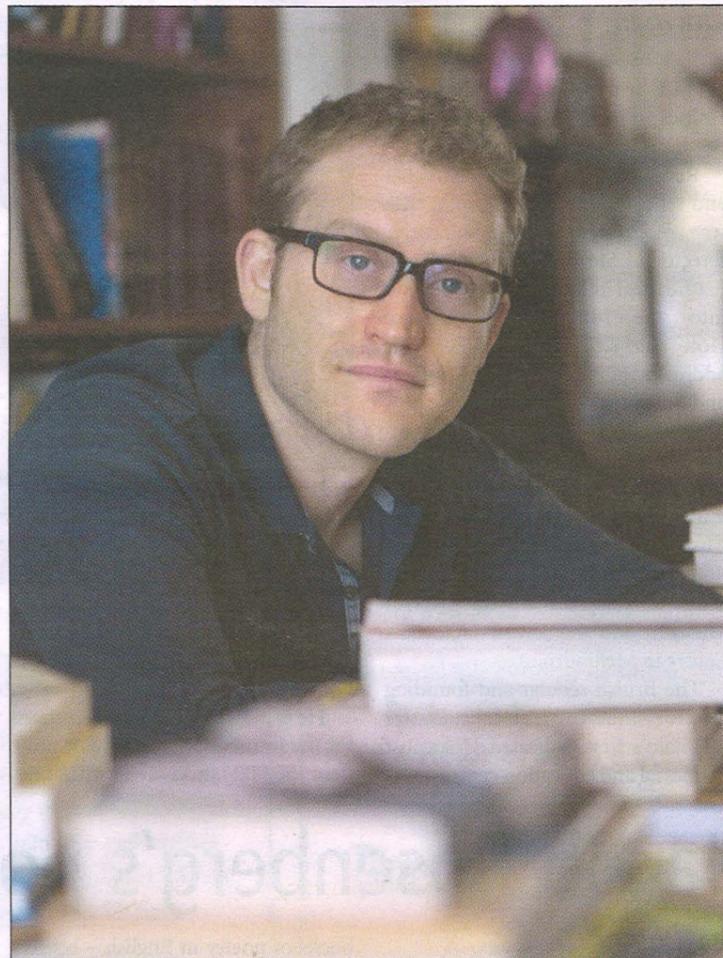
“When I was on *Race Around the World* and I got baptised, my grandfather, who was alive then, said ‘you've got to be careful because you don't want to insult other cultures,’” Safran told *The AJN* this week.

“But it seems like Jews are more offended when I offend other cultures, while if I dance *Footloose* in a synagogue [as he did in an episode of one of his previous television series, *John Safran's Musical Jamboree*] that's okay. I tried my hardest to get crucified tastefully.”

The ABC has defended Safran, who has a longstanding relationship with the network, in the lead-up to his new series.

Safran shot to fame on the ABC's groundbreaking documentary competition, *Race Around the World*, and later filmed two pilots for the national broadcaster, neither of which were ever aired. Safran then had two successful documentary series on SBS – *John Safran's Musical Jamboree* and *John Safran vs God*, in which he road-tested different religions. He can also be heard weekly on Triple J, the ABC's youth radio station, on a show he does with Catholic priest Father Bob Maguire.

A chat with John Safran: 12



John Safran is at it again with his new series.

The Safran conundrum

VIEWPOINT

ADAM KAMIEN

JOHN Safran announced his arrival on the Australian television scene by streaking naked through Jerusalem, breaking into Disneyland and putting up plaques detailing Walt Disney's alleged support of Adolf Hitler, embroidering “Satan Hitler” on a Mickey Mouse ears hat, and being baptised in an African river.

The former Yeshivah College student went on to carve himself a niche on non-commercial television, and has also enjoyed a healthy following on radio; first on Melbourne community station Three Triple R, and then on Triple J.

But is Safran good for Jews?

Like it or lump it, the 37-year-old has become arguably the most prominent ambassador of gen X Jews in the land. He might not want it, but it has been thrust upon him.

In his shows since *Race Around the World*, Safran has placed himself as a cultural and social satirist and has often drawn on his experiences growing up in a Jewish household and attending a Jewish school.

But are young Jews doing well to have Safran flying their flag, even if it is inadvertently?

He is irreverent, edgy, almost always controversial, and subscribes to the tenet that humour can't be discriminatory as long as it slags off everyone evenly.

He's also ambitious and smart and has managed to stay relevant in an industry known for dumping shows even before the results of the focus groups are in. But above and beyond everything, he's funny.

All too often, Australia's Jewish community is tarred with the earnest/serious brush. Perhaps it's time for a changing of the guard, and the self-effacing, envelope-pushing Safran might be just the man.



Seinfeld's Jason Alexander and *The Nanny's* Fran Drescher will entertain at the upcoming wedding of Dr Geoffrey Edelsten to Brynne Gordon.