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## Sri Lankan Thunder from Way Down Under: Radio Host Ginni Saraswati's Journey from Would-Be Doctor to Award-Winning Radio Journalist

by Winnie McCroy  
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Like every good Sri Lankan girl, Ginni Saraswati grew up with dreams of being a doctor. Somewhere along the line, however, she realized that she was a bigger fan of the Spice Girls than she was of science. Training her sights on the media, Saraswati joined the team at Australia's only gay radio station and burst onto the scene with her quirky wit and deep knowledge of music and pop culture.

Now she's a renowned lesbian Edward R. Murrow Media Award-winning international radio and TV journalist who interviews big celebs and even emceed the 2014 International AIDS Conference. So much for medicine!

"My experience is interesting, because when I first got into radio and was asked what I wanted to do, I ticked every box except being on the air," Saraswati told EDGE. "But once I settled into myself as a woman of color, an immigrant woman in Australia and also a lesbian in radio, I loved having that diversity card to play! And my experiences have overall been very positive, although there are a lot of people in my field with big egos and big personalities."

Born in Dehiwala in Colombo, Sri Lanka -- a country where homosexuality is criminalized -- Saraswati grew up and soon shed her shyness, realizing that she wanted to work in an industry where she could have a voice, share her stories and unleash her comedic charms on unsuspecting audiences.



(Source: Courtesy Ginni Saraswati)

And the listeners ate it up. After a stint acting and writing for the theater, she joined Australia's first and only LGBTQI radio station, JOY 94.9, in 2007. As a co-host of one of Melbourne's most popular breakfast radio shows, "Rise Up," for many years she brought sass to the airwaves with fellow co-host and Melbourne comedian Adam Samuel, broadcasting the latest news and interviews with local international celebrities and always having the last word.

One of her many aunties caught the LGBT program in Melbourne and "put two and two together." The news spread to her many cousins, family, friends and "the local Sri Lankan

grocer." But she was unfazed, saying that coming out is "a celebrated process" that's needed for the community.

Her quick-witted introductions and on-air antics have sent guest Paula Abdul into a laughing fit and had Australian recording artist Havana Brown choking. Saraswati has interviewed many LGBT icons, among them k.d. lang, Jennifer Beals, Ruby Rose, Eric Bana, Marlee Matlin, Martina Navratilova and Peter Paige.

"If I had to narrow it down to my three favorite interviews, I would say first it was Martina, because she announced she was getting married on my show and I was so happy for her," said Saraswati. "Then Peter Paige, because growing up watching 'Queer as Folk,' his character Emmett meant a lot to me -- even though I had to watch it on mute so my mother wouldn't hear. Finally, Paula Abdul, because she was a hoot, very bubbly and lovely to be around."

Saraswati's hard work has paid off. Last year, she was awarded the International Edward R. Murrow Media



(Source: Courtesy Ginni Saraswati)

Award for her achievements as an international radio and television journalist, both within and beyond the LGBT community.

"That was such an honor, because it was a prize awarded to me in New York. And obviously when you are doing media in Australia, to know that you reach people outside that area is gratifying," said Saraswati, who said that she has plans to relocate overseas sometime in the future.

The accolades keep coming. She was recently nominated in two categories for the Australian LGBTI Awards 2017: Journalist of the Year and Broadcaster and Presenter of the Year. The awards ceremony will be held on March 2 at the Sydney Opera House.

Saraswati looks out for her community as well. In 2014 she was invited to co-host the Global Village Main Stage at the 2014 International AIDS Conference, the largest international health conference in the world. Rubbing shoulders with Bill Clinton and Sir Bob Geldof, she also made time to chat and interview the "grassroots" voices of the conference, recording and sharing incredible and powerful interviews and stories through

her radio program. She wanted to be a voice people could connect to, because growing up she lacked Sri Lankan role models in the public arena. It's her dream to be the strong female role model that she didn't have.



(Source: Courtesy Ginni Saraswati)

"One thing I've learned is that those who want to pursue their dreams must have the right outlook. Ultimately you've got to be willing to do whatever it takes," said Saraswati. "When you are pursuing a creative dream, sometimes you just gotta 'eat the shit sandwich.' Meaning if you're a writer you may have to work another job until your writing career kicks off. I have worked multiple jobs before I was able to narrow it down to just one. But ultimately, if you put time and energy into your passion every day, it has to work!"

Saraswati recently launched her new show, "The Ginni Show -- Curry, Comedy & Connectivity," inviting listeners to follow the

hilarious journey of a young Sri Lankan immigrant lesbian growing up in Australia. The show will feature guest appearances from Saraswati's aunts and 170 cousins, as well as today's most popular celebrities.

For more information, visit [www.theginnishow.com](http://www.theginnishow.com) or follow Saraswati at [www.facebook.com/theginnishow](https://www.facebook.com/theginnishow) or [www.twitter.com/theginnishow](https://www.twitter.com/theginnishow)

### The Ginni Show



Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.


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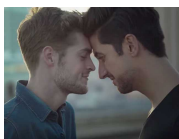
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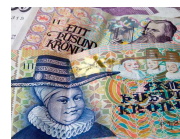
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