

PAUL SAN MARCO: *Male. Baritone. Introverted and slightly insecure but loves performing. Joined a 'drag' show to leave home. He is only now starting to feel comfortable about being gay and accepted by his parents. From Spanish Harlem, New York.*

PAUL

People would say "You don't look Puerto Rican" so I changed my name from Puerto Rican to Italian..... I just wanted to be someone new.... so I became Paul San Marco. I'm not exactly proud of my past.

My father loved movies. And he'd take us all the time. He worked nights and he'd come home and he'd take us to 42nd Street. And we'd come out of the movie and go to another and another movie...I don't know why...but I loved musicals. From seeing all those movie musicals, I used to dance around on the street, and I'd get caught all the time. God, it was embarrassing. I was always being Cyd Charisse.....always. Which I don't really understand, because I always wanted to be an actor. I mean, I really wanted to perform. Once my cousin said to me, "You'll never be an actor". And I knew she was telling me this because I was such a sissy. I mean, I was terribly effeminate. I always knew I was gay, but that didn't bother me. What bothered me was that I didn't know how to be a boy.

After a while, when I was 16 I joined a 'drag show'. Well, I was finally in Show Business. We were at the Apollo Theater doing 4 shows a day, and the show was going to Chicago. My parents wanted to say goodbye and they were going to bring my luggage to the theater after the show. Well, we were doing this oriental number and I looked like Anna May Wong. I had these two great big chrysanthemums on either side of my head and a huge headdress with gold balls hanging all over it. I was going on for the finale and going down the stairs and who would I see standing by the stage door...my parents. They got there too early. I freaked. I didn't know what to do. I thought to myself, "I know, I'll just walk quickly past them like all the others and they'll never recognize me". So I took a deep breath and started down the stairs and just as I passed my mother I heard he say, "Oh

my God". Well....I died. I had to go on for the finale but after the show I want back to my dressing room and got dressed and went back downstairs. And there they were standing in the middle of all these....And all they said to me was, "Please write, make sure you eat and take care of yourself". And just before my parents left, my father turned to the producer and he said, "Take care of my son..... That was the first time he ever called me that....I ...ah...I ..ah