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# TELFAR FORMER TOP FROM NEW YORK WENT ON BUSINESS TRIP TO PARIS

Interview by Michael Bullock  
Portraits by Marcelo Krasilcic

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It's a real surprise to find out that Telfar Clemens is actually 26 years old. Not because he looks older (he doesn't), but because for the last seven years he's been ever-present and busy as a DJ and host of New York's most fun gay parties, as a performer in Ryan Trecartin's sensational video *K-Corea INC.K*, and as the designer for his own fashion label. Telfar lives in Red Hook, Brooklyn, never uses the subway, and sleeps every day through dinnertime, from 6 to 9, as 'nothing interesting ever happens then anyway', he says.



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**MICHAEL:** Can you describe what you've done over the last three weeks?

TELFAR: Yeah, I went to Paris.

**Oh really? How was Paris?**

Paris was hilarious. It was my first time there and I don't speak French at all. I hadn't been to Europe in two years, and the last time I was there I was in London, which is more...Ameri-friendly. So here I was in Paris, trying to speak really bad French.

**Oh, they're not having that.**

Not at all. They just answer you in English anyway. It was cool, the guys there are really hot. At least I thought they were hot. Maybe not as hot as American guys, but they were definitely down to cruise all the time. That was cool.

**Did you hang out with someone?**

No, I didn't meet anybody there. I was mostly working, but I was hanging out at night, which was a lot of fun.

**Where did you go?**

I went to the Duplex.

**That's the bar over two floors, kind of an ugly crowd?**

Yeah, exactly.

**I like that bar 'cause it's the only gay bar I've been to in Paris where you can have, like, long conversations.**

Really?

**Yeah. It's not the best place for hooking up.**

I didn't see anybody there who I thought was, like, you know... But also I was staying on the other side of town, so I was trying to hitchhike with hot moped guys, to see if they would drop me off.

**Did you go to Le Dépôt?**

I wanted to, and I was supposed to go the last night, but I never made it. I turned 26 when I was there and my mom and aunts and cousin ended up surprising me. Like: 'Happy birthday in Paris!' They were staying at the Liberian embassy, so I stayed with them. And as I said, my French isn't great, so what do you do when you're walking around and somebody bumps into you and you're like: 'I don't know, how do you say handjob?'

**I had that problem once in Paris with this super cute Moroccan guy that I hooked up with, where we wanted to exchange numbers but even that wasn't possible.**

That's another thing, too. I don't know how people know their numbers in France – so many to remember, so many different codes, like...door code, bar code, lift code, shit. It's a bit much.

**So what were you doing in Paris?**

I previewed my collection in Paris. I was invited for this showroom for new designers. I only brought seven looks, so it was small, but people got to see it in person.

**And you were, like: 'Oh My God, Paris! I have arrived!'**

No, it wasn't like that. But while people in New York are, like: 'Oh, that's nuts,' people in Paris were, like: 'That's cool.'

**Well, that's 'cause the French are the best in fashion history.**

Yeah, the best, but it was kind of weird, 'cause there's these certain things that they're into that I thought was equal to LA. I saw all these fashion people, where I thought: 'That's so LA.' Fashion faggots have a universal style right now.

**Can you describe that style?**

Basically it's this black, drape-y style – crystal necklaces. It's the same everywhere. It's a bit of a look for the night. Well, that's probably the wrong way to look at it.

**Did you get enough feedback that was good, that you're happy with?**

The feedback was good, but I'm never satisfied. I only see numbers – it's all monetary for me. It doesn't matter if people tell me it's cool. It's more, like: 'I sold this many things.' I always think about that.

**I guess that makes sense. You need to hit certain numbers.**

Exactly.

**Did you always want to be a fashion designer?**

No. I wanted to be an accountant for a while. I graduated with a business degree from Pace University two years ago.

**Oh really. I didn't know that. So you didn't**

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**go to school for fashion?**

Not at all.

**So you're saying you went to school to be an accountant? Holy shit!**

Yeah, literally, if you look at my grades: I graduated with a 3.8 GPA.

**What made you want to start a fashion line?**

Because that's what I wanted to do. When I was a college freshman I started making things and I got my first account. I was selling at a store called Lala on the Lower East Side. I was getting these 2Pac and Biggie T-shirts from Canal Street and reconstructing them to make hooded sweat-shirts and stuff like that.

**How were you as a kid? Were you a queeny kid?**

Definitely, I loved anyone who could do a back flip. I used to be able to do one. Maybe I still can. I think back flips are so gay!

**Really?**

Are you kidding me? A round-off back handspring is the gayest thing ever. I also loved music videos! In second grade, Janet Jackson was everything. I would practice her dance moves all day. I was so gay. Then as I got older I slowly learned I needed to become more like the other boys.

**Where did you grow up?**

I was born in Queens in 1985. I lived with my Mom, who was a model. She wasn't huge or anything, but she was working. When I turned one, we moved back to Liberia to be with my Dad. We stayed for five years until a huge civil war broke out in 1990. My parents never thought it would be a ten-year war, so at first they just sent me and my two older brothers back to Queens to live with my aunt. A year later my entire family moved into that apartment. There were eleven of us in a three-bedroom: my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. That was when New York was actually dangerous. People were constantly getting shot in the basement of our apartment building and my Mom was, like: 'We need to move.' So I went to middle school and high school in Maryland.

**What did your father do?**

In Liberia we owned rubber farms and property. My grandparents were in with the government, so when the government was being overthrown we had to leave.

**Was it tough to go from rich Liberian to poor American?**

It definitely wasn't easy. In Liberia we were so spoiled: we had nannies and drivers. My parents eventually got on their feet here and I ended up growing up mostly middle class, but then a lot more brothers came. I have five brothers.

**Are you the only gay one?**

I hope so. There's still time for the other ones. One is not even a teen; another is about to turn 20. The older ones really love women – they're definitely not gay.

**Did you have boyfriends in high school?**

No. I had girlfriends. They were always hot butch Jordans-and-hoodies girls. We would make out and I would feel their titties.

**Did you fuck them?**

No, I didn't have sex with anyone until I was 18.

**That's not so late.**

I don't know, it seemed like straight teenagers had so much fun. I just thought it was never going happen. I would watch porn. I was so into porn.

**Do you remember any influential porn form that period?**

Brian Pumper! Do you remember him? He was big then. Look him up. Brian was in all those mid-to-late '90s straight gangbang porns and I remember watching them, thinking: 'Oh, I'm not that gay,' but then there needed to be six guys in a scene to hold my interest.

**Do you still enjoy porn?**

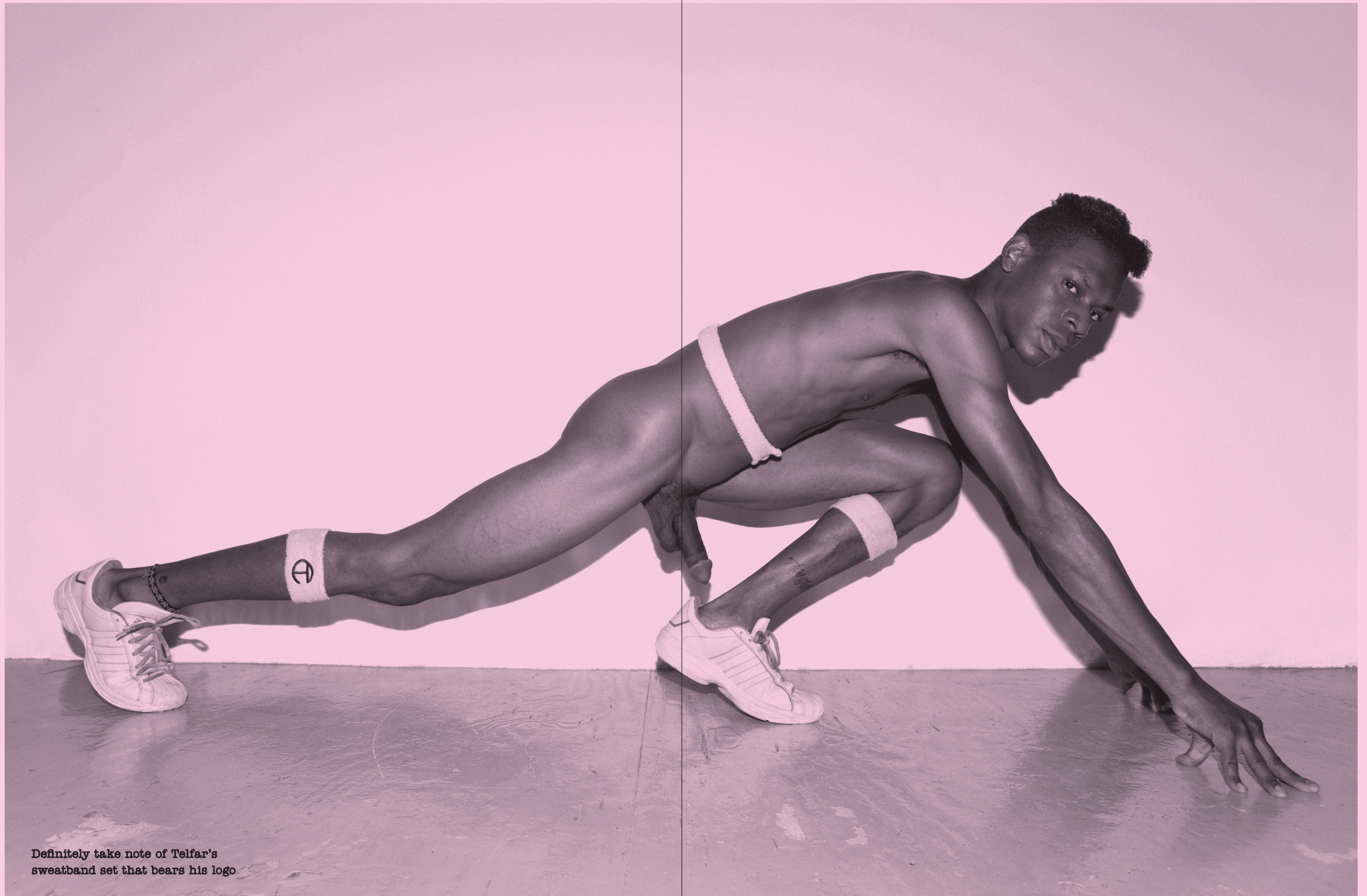
A lot.

**In an average week, how many hours of porn do you watch?**

Oh, every day, like, three times at most, but usually twice. Usually in the morning and again at night.

**What did you watch today?**

It wasn't very good today, but I like bareback porn. Treasure Island Media,



Definitely take note of Telfar's  
sweatband set that bears his logo



Three hot Telfar looks as modelled by a well-defined red mannequin. Left to right: rib-cage sweater, backless halter top and apron shorts; square-neck tank with choker attachment and boxer shorts with back pocket; cap-sleeve polo and boxer shorts.

Machofucker and Coco Dorm are my top three studios. They make really good porn. **Do you have a 'type'?**

No. I like funny guys with fat asses. Big dicks, fat asses, dirty minds. And also: I like it when they like to have sex. That's a plus-plus-plus. That's what I'm looking for.

**Makes sense; a partner that likes to have sex is important.**

Yeah. Also I like it when guys are really fluid. If it's too much masculinity, I just think they're trying to be straight. I need a mix. I love a guy that plays basketball and plucks his eyebrows. I also seem to end up fucking a lot of 'straight' guys that are, like: 'I'm not gay, I'm just into you.'

**How do you meet that type of guy?**

Hanging out. That type of guy is everywhere constantly. That's the story of my life right now. Most of them I'm sure are just lying to themselves, 'cause they start calling afterwards to meet again.

**So they're not straight.**

Well, you can tell the difference in a blowjob from a straight gay and one from a gay guy. Gay guys obviously know what they're doing. You can tell if they're lying just by that.

**Do you think you attract 'straight' gays because of your style? Last year I dyed my hair blonde for the first time as an experiment, and suddenly I was getting tons of action from creepy suburban dads that I never got before.**

I get that, especially in my neighborhood. In the summer I wear this pair of Prada shorts that are completely see-through: literally my balls hang out. When I wear them in Red Hook, men you would never think were gay go nuts. It's fun. I don't believe in dressing conservatively to blend in with your environment. I wear a sexy look to the grocery store. I wear lots of International Male, so you get the vibe: International Male loincloths cut all the way up the side. Plus I never wear underwear.

**Never ever?**

Never. That's the thing: I just don't like another layer. What's wrong with somebody picking up something off the floor and showing their crack? That's the hottest thing ever.

**I think your clothing designs match your personality. They have gender fluidity.**

In Africa, men and women wear the same traditional clothing, but it fits different

bodies differently. For me it's never about a red-carpet fashion thing. I want people to wear the same type of things. I make clothes that are utilitarian. Secondly, they have to be something I would want, or my friends would want.

**Can you tell me about the presentation you did with DIS magazine last year, where you showed your collection online in the form of a talk show?**

Yeah, we didn't want to do a traditional show. So we cast people with strong personalities and interviewed them about their online habits and preferences. All participants were dressed in my collection, so they doubled as models, and they were asked the same questions: 'How long have you been modeling?' 'Are you on Facebook?' 'How many hours do you watch porn per week?' I'm obsessed with reality TV: *Jersey Shore*, *Bad Girls Club*, and I really like *The A-List*. I love how each person on that show has to go through a pre-determined set of life experiences with the other members of the cast, whom they don't know, and they all pretend to be really good friends. It's a mindset I can't do.

**Really, you love *The A-List*?**

It's so amazing! I love it 'cause it's in New York and their vision of the city is hilarious. Who are these people? People hated that show, but I loved it.

**I can see why it was hated. It's the first reality show depicting homosexual life, and it's cast with completely retarded queens.**

Retarded? No, they have the same values we do: they want to go to Fire Island, they want to fuck, they want to meet the man of their dreams and get married.

**You really think you're the same as them? Is that what you want?**

Maybe not right now. I'm talking generally. **Okay, well, something else: I love your performance in Ryan Trecartin's videos. How did you end up in those?**

Ryan used to come to my party Something Tight at Happy Ending. I was a nude DJ there: at midnight I'd strip completely

naked. We got on really well. When Ryan directs, you never know what you're going to say till a minute before you say it. We didn't even know what the movie was about until we saw the movie.

**He just dressed you all in white-girl business drag and stuck you on a party bus? Yeah.**

**You really took it all the way in that movie.**

A lot of it was the alcohol. You know me; I drink like a fish, and those were long, hazy Miami nights. I can't even tell you that I remember filming certain things. It's just like drinking with your friends, but with fun menial tasks assigned to you. Like: 'Say that again, now sit with your legs crossed, now throw that phone...'

**I understand why you and Ryan get along: you both have this internet-influenced thinking process where you're able to take from anything that interests you, and all things have equal value.**

He and his friend Lizzie and the whole group definitely get where the world is going and notice all the changes. Some people say it's exploitive to be basing his characters on the performers' real personalities, but I never got into that with him.

**Well, that's what John Waters did. His scripts were partly based on who the performers really are, because they represented something to him at that time. Are you going to be in Ryan's next one?**

I hope so.

**Last thing: would you consider yourself top or bottom?**

I really got into a mix in the last two years. Before that I was strictly top, but now it's, like: 'Let's see.' I get bored.

**Don't you think Europe is so much better for being a mix?**

Well, I don't know. I didn't get to do that when I was in Paris. The furthest I got was second base.

**What's gay second base?**

It's down the back of the pants. Making out is first.