

MATT BOMER FAME FATHERHOOD & SURROGACY

Actor Matt Bomer, who has just celebrated his 35th birthday, is handsome, successful and adored by a loyal fan base. He is also a busy gay father of three. Recent news of his role in the hit American TV show *The New Normal*, together with his own family dynamics make him a role model for the LGBT community and those looking to have a family through surrogacy.

Matt grew up in Dallas with his brother, Neill, and his sister, Megan. He attended Klein High School in Klein, Dallas, with fellow actor Lee Pace.

Matt knew he was gay as a teenager. However, due to social pressures he didn't feel he could be open about his sexuality. Instead, he kept this to himself and didn't publicly come out until earlier this year during his acceptance speech at an awards ceremony earlier this year.

As a child, he acted and attended Alley Theatre, a non-profit theatre company. In 2001, he graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

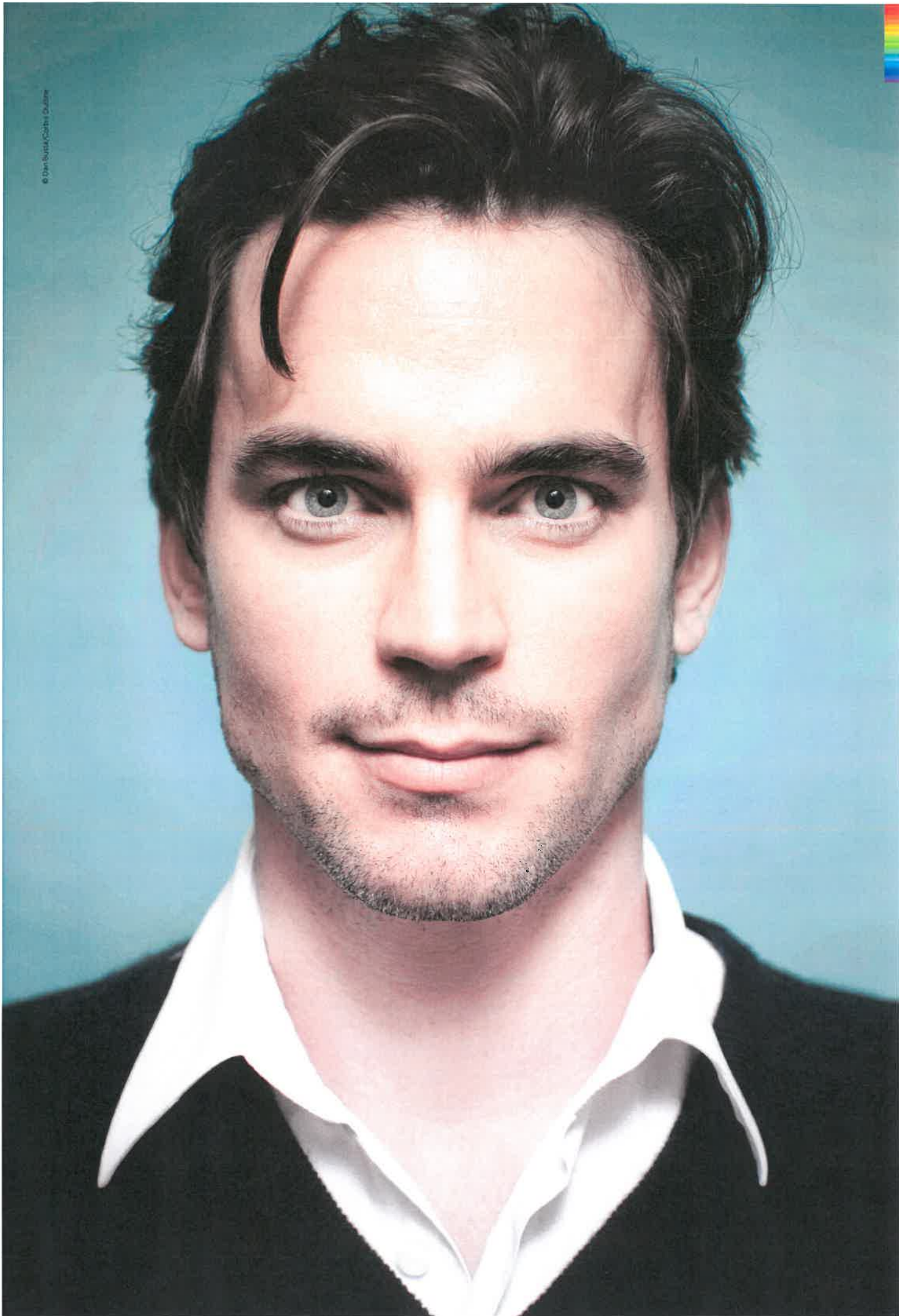
CAREER AS AN ACTOR

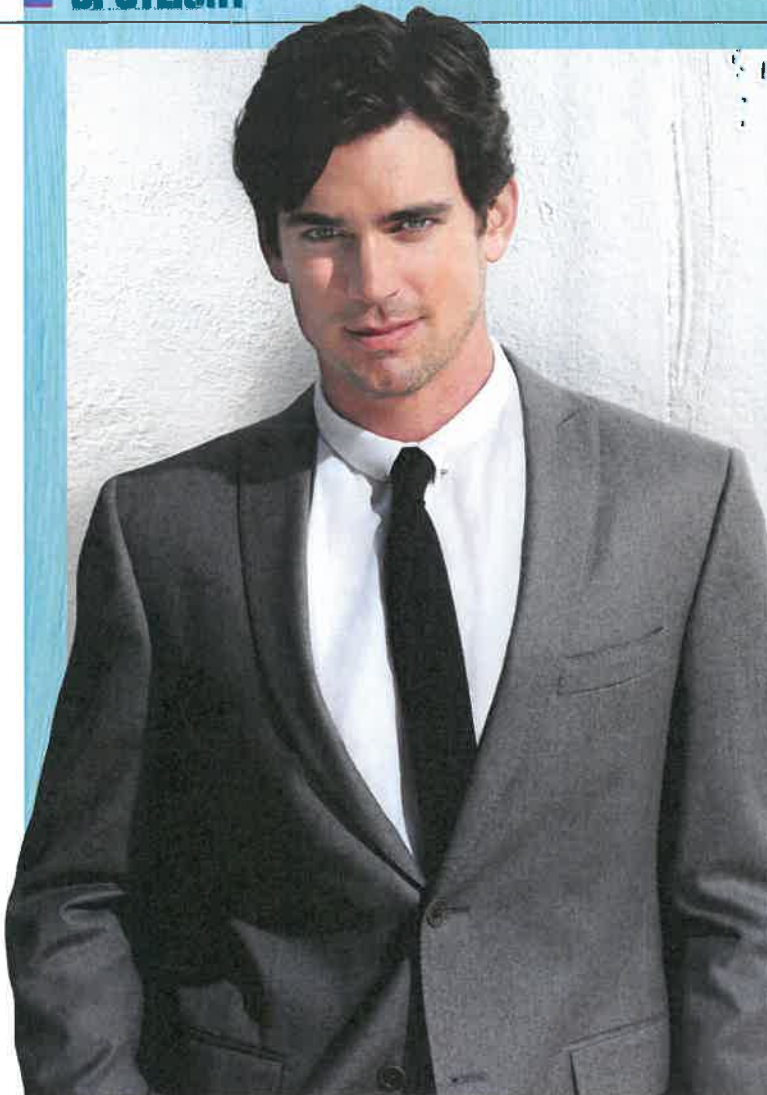
After graduating from university, Matt secured a small role in the daytime television soap opera *All My Children*. He then went on to star in another daytime television soap called *Guiding Light* from 2001 - 2003.

Building on this experience, Matt went on to star in prime-time television soap *North Shore* from 2004 - 2005 as well as securing a role in the 2005 thriller film *Flightplan* with Jodie Foster. He also starred in film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* in 2006.

Matt then featured in various films and television programs before starring in popular US television series *White Collar* in 2009, which characterizes a »







With roles as diverse as con artist Neal Caffrey in USA Network's 'White Collar' and as male stripper Ken in Steven Soderbergh's comedy, *Magic Mike*, Matt Bomer's most celebrated role is that of father of three boys via surrogate which recently won him and Simon the No.1 spot in the BuzzFeed.com 'The 10 Most Famous Gay Parents and their Families'.



» fictional partnership between a con artist and an FBI agent. Buddy TV ranked Matt as number 1 on its list of "TV's Sexiest Men of 2011". In October 2011, Matt appeared in the science fiction thriller film *In Time* along with Justin Timberlake and earlier this year he played the part of a male stripper in the feature film *Magic Mike*.

Recently, Matt captured press attention when he secured the role of Bryan Collins' handsome ex-boyfriend, Drew, in the 2012 hit US NBC television show *The New Normal*.

SURROGACY AND THE NEW NORMAL

The New Normal is a comedy show that revolves around a blended family of a gay couple, Bryan Collins and David Murray, and single mother Goldie, an aspiring lawyer and mother of one who agrees to be their surrogate. Its portrayal of a two-dad surrogate family represents the new normal family and shows that families now come in all sorts of forms.

It is particularly apt that Matt has joined the cast of *The New Normal*, since in real life he has three surrogate born sons of his own with his publicist partner Simon Halls.

In recent years, there has been an explosion of public interest in surrogacy and so it should come as no surprise that *The New Normal* characterizes the creation of a two-dad surrogate family. The comedy

show gives gay parenting and surrogacy further visibility and it gives confidence to other prospective gay dads in particular that they too can have a family of their own.

Family life is changing and surrogacy enables families to be created in ways that wasn't possible ten years ago. Celebrity endorsement of surrogacy inspires others and Matt's personal experience of surrogacy, together with his high profile role in *The New Normal*, makes him an important role model for surrogacy. He joins the ranks of other celebrities who have turned to surrogacy to have a family in the last couple of years, including Elton John and David Furnish, Nicole Kidman, Sarah Jessica Parker and Elizabeth Banks.

THE LEGALITIES OF SURROGACY

Celebrities undoubtedly make surrogacy look easy. They look fabulous and they speak compellingly about the joy and happiness their surrogate born children provide and others would therefore be forgiven for thinking that the process is straightforward. Unfortunately, their silence on the legal front can lull others into a false sense of security. Surrogacy often raises complex legal issues because there is no international harmonization of surrogacy laws around the world. Some countries ban surrogacy altogether whilst others only allow it on a legally restricted basis, as is the case in the UK.





Surrogacy can create all sorts of legal problems, from an inability to obtain travel papers through to a complete lack of legal status for a surrogate born child. This can leave intended parents and surrogate born children exposed and legally vulnerable and subject to often outdated and cumbersome legal processes to try and obtain the legal status and protection they need as a family. These complex legal issues mean it is vital to obtain expert legal help from the outset to ensure intended parents can put a viable legal action plan into place and this is consistently highlighted here in the UK by the English Family Court.

There is still much work to be done to improve awareness about surrogacy and garner greater social acceptance of this as a family building option. There remains a lack of consensus about surrogacy around the world and this creates a confusing legal patchwork of law and policy and all manner of legal pitfalls for intended parents. Celebrity endorsement of surrogacy by the likes of Matt Bomer can help win social and legal changes.

GLSEN RESPECT AWARDS

Last month, Matt and his partner Simon, were given the Inspiration Award from the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a gay student advocacy group. Accepting the award, Matt said "GLSEN gives visibility and authenticity to kids all across the country".

During his acceptance speech, Matt spoke about his own experiences of growing up gay saying "When I was in high school, there was no outlet for you to speak your mind. So, I did what any self-preserving 14-year-old would do - I signed up for the school play and also the football team to cover my tracks". He went on to say "When that happens, when you aren't allowed to speak about who you are, one of the most authentic parts of who you are, which is who you love or who you're attracted to, feels invisible".

Hi partner, Simon, added "Both Matt and I are incredibly impressed by the great work that GLSEN does for kids who might normally not have somewhere to turn. Even in this day and age, LGBT kids still need all the support that we can give them". Their public endorsement of GLSEN's work will no doubt give GLSEN's profile a boost and it clearly marks out Matt's recognition as an LGBT role model.


Simon also spoke about his and Matt's three surrogate born sons, Kit, Walker and Henry saying, "Having kids teaches you so many things, and one of the things we both have learned in our parenting journey is how loving and accepting and open children's minds and hearts are. Unfortunately, in some parts of the country, some kids are taught at an early age that being different is somehow bad or wrong or worthy of ridicule.... Kids aren't born to be bullies, they're taught to be bullies".

COMING OUT

Matt's decision to publicly come out as gay earlier this year was low key. During a magazine interview he said, "I never really endeavored to hide anything. But there were times I chose not to relegate my history to the back page of a magazine, which to me is sort of akin to putting your biography on a bathroom wall". He went on to say "I had somebody from the military approach me a few weeks ago just saying how this helps people, affects people. It brought me to tears" and that young gay lives "need saving, certainly in this day and age as much as ever- no matter how much we think we've progressed".

Matt also spoke compellingly about equality saying "What we really have to do is stop the adjective before the job title - whether it's 'black actor', a 'gay actor' or 'anything actor'. Everybody thinks that equality comes from identifying people, and that's not where equality comes from. Equality comes from treating everybody the same regardless of who they are. I hope the media and the press catches on to that because it's time to move out of 1992".

CELEBRITY STATUS

Matt's fame, success, remarkable good looks and popularity with his fans makes a potent combination. He represents popular culture and it gives him a great platform to make a difference in this world. He is now well placed to help bring about greater equality and acceptance of surrogacy, gay parenting and alternative family structures and highlight the need for legal changes to make surrogacy more accessible and achievable for others around the world. Family life is changing and celebrities like Matt have an important part to play looking ahead. Matt is a role model for surrogacy and the LGBT community and as he is only too aware, there is still much work to be done. 

Louisa is internationally recognized as a leading expert in fertility, parenting and surrogacy law and has litigated some of the most well known fertility law cases in the UK. Louisa is a partner and head of the fertility law team at Porter Dodson Solicitors. For more information visit www.porterdodsonfertility.com.

