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WORLD news

CZECH REPUBLIC

A knife-wielding man lunged at the Russian lesbian-themed band t.A.T.u. during a concert late last month in the Czech Republic. Bodyguards tackled him as he headed for singers Julia Volkova, 18, and Lena Katina, 17.

According to *Sky News*, the girls have had bottles and a knife thrown at them at past performances. "There have been incidents, but there is no point worrying that you are going to get killed when you go on stage," Volkova said.

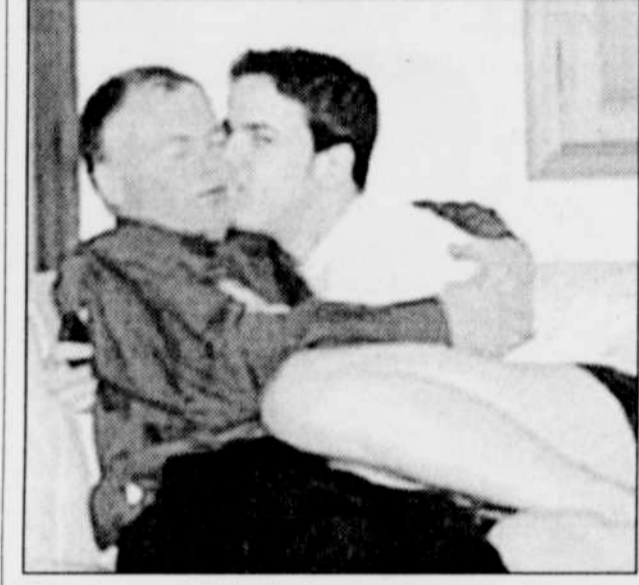
t.A.T.u.'s single "All the Things She Said" has hit No. 1 around the world, and the video has been banned by the British Broadcasting Corp. and ITV1 because Julia and Lena passionately kiss and make out throughout the clip. The singers repeatedly have suggested they are lovers, but Russian journalists claim both have boyfriends whom they keep hidden so as not to endanger the band's lesbian image, which is seen as advantageous.

Hill area, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported March 4. The perpetrators are believed to be "gangs of drunken young men" who think gay cruisers "are unlikely to contact police."

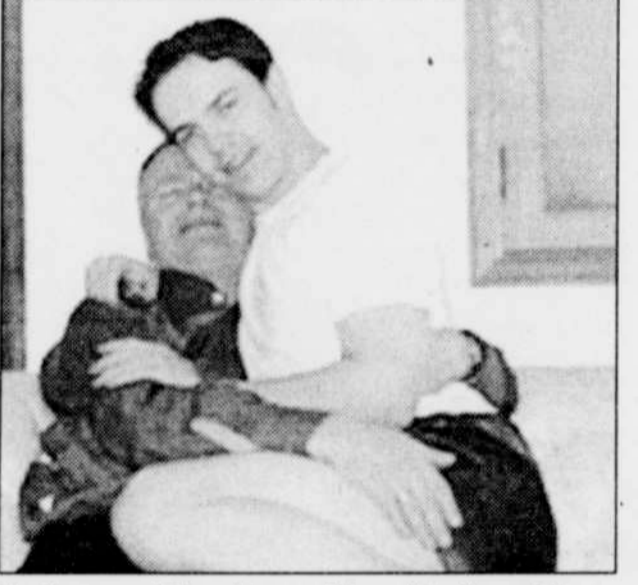
"There may be people who see men who use this area as easy targets," said Chief Inspector Gavin Buist of Gayfield Police Station. "It's a particularly unpleasant and predatory crime. There may be a perception that because this is an extremely well-known cruising area, then the victims will be less likely to come forward."

Buist said the stepped-up police presence is not aimed at reducing cruising.

"These patrols will continue as long as they're required and if the resources are available at the time; however, it's important to stress we're not trying to hound members of the gay community away from this area," he said. "The primary reason is to make sure people are safe."



The *Sun* published photos of British Member of Parliament Clive Betts, 53, at his flat with Brazilian "rent boy" Jose Gasparo, 20



UNITED KINGDOM

British Member of Parliament Clive Betts, who represents Attercliffe, Sheffield, England, came out Feb. 25.

The 53-year-old told *The Star*: "In the end I am going to feel I am easier with myself, more comfortable and will not have to keep wondering whether people are speculating and whether any relationship I do have now or in the future becomes the subject of prurient interest in a way that is unhelpful to me doing my job. I think the fact that public figures have come out shows the public that there are people in responsible positions who are gay and helps perhaps to remove the stigmatization. People have been tremendous in their reactions. No one has said it will affect their relationship with me and how they work with me, and I'm extremely grateful for that. People have been very supportive."

Betts said he is dating a man in his 20s.

Another newspaper, *The Sun*, quickly revealed that his boyfriend is Brazilian "rent boy" Jose Gasparo, 20, who worked for an escort agency and still is pictured on its Web site. The paper said the two men have known each other for only two months, during which Betts hired Gasparo to work in his House of Commons office.

Betts "has signed the [\$157]-a-hour rent boy as a research assistant and is trying to get him a Commons pass," *The Sun* said. "The relationship has sent shock waves through security circles."

Betts later told *The Star* that Gasparo has given up both prostitution and the Commons job and that the two will continue their relationship. Britain has had 12 other openly gay or bisexual MPs, 10 of whom remain in office.

George Michael was prohibited from wearing an anti-war T-shirt during his performance on the *Top of the Pops* show March 7, his spokeswoman told U.K. media. The gay pop star did a cover of Don McLean's anti-war song "The Grave."

"There was a heated discussion between George and the producers," his spokeswoman said. "He wasn't happy about this at all."

However, the British Broadcasting Corp. said the story is false.

"During rehearsals and in the recording he was wearing a black sweatshirt with a jacket on top," a network spokesman said. "At no point was he wearing one of the ['No War, Blair Out'] T-shirts [that members of his band wore], he was not asked to take anything off, and he was not told that he could not wear it."



George Michael

A rash of gay-bashings in Edinburgh, Scotland, has led to increased police patrols around Royal Terrace Gardens in the Calton

Former Welsh Secretary Ron Davies abandoned his campaign for re-election to the Welsh National Assembly on March 9 following newspaper reports that he had gay sex in a cruisy-wooded area.

He originally denied an item in *The Sun* that he groped a construction worker March 3 at a Bath, Somerset, highway cruise spot called Tog Hill and insisted he had been nowhere near the location that day. After the newspaper rigorously defended its report—and said it had photos other than the one it published, which showed Davies emerging from some bushes—he admitted stopping at the site on more than