

# JASON FORD

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It's a dark, stormy night on the streets of Soho. Rain glistens on cobbles as shop and restaurant owners shut up shop for the night. Distant sirens whir and helicopters wheel overhead. A cat screeches as a lid clatters off a dustbin. Poppy Delevingne glances furtively over her fur-hooded shoulder as she lights a cigarette on her way back from a fashion launch.

In a steam-strewn alley just off Dean Street, a mysterious figure in black stalks between the shadows. He reaches into a holster at his side, and a familiar column of light bursts forth with a heady thrum...

Meet Jason Ford! He's not actually a vampire or a jedi, but he IS one of Soho's most intriguing and beautiful creatures. Together with partner in crime Mark, he's behind the area's most notorious den of debauchery, Sweatbox.

They're also known for their fabulous parties, which involve pyrotechnics and pornstars, not to mention their wedding at Concrete in Shoreditch, which involved semen-spattered artwork and an actual horse.

One of Jason's main passions is, refreshingly, sci-fi and all things geeky. Dylan Jones had a chat with him about how geek culture ties into gay culture, as well as some of the sociopolitical implications of sci-fi and the superhero genre.



**So Jason – what do you think is the best way to describe the gay ‘geek’ subculture?**

I don't know if you can sum up gay geek culture in a short pithy description. Everybody knows what a twink is, but there isn't one common denominator for geeks. If they're like me, their Instagram is a mix of thirst trap photos and photos of their limited edition Disney Parks exclusive Stormtrooper handcuffs!

**Why do you think it exists?**

I think the appeal for many people is that 'geek' books, comics, films and television focus on the outsider, the other and that is something that LGBT+ people can identify with, and read as metaphor for our own struggles in life. We know what it's like to feel different or out of step with the rest of society, and through these heroes we're able to explore our own heroism.

**What are the similarities between gay culture and geek culture?**

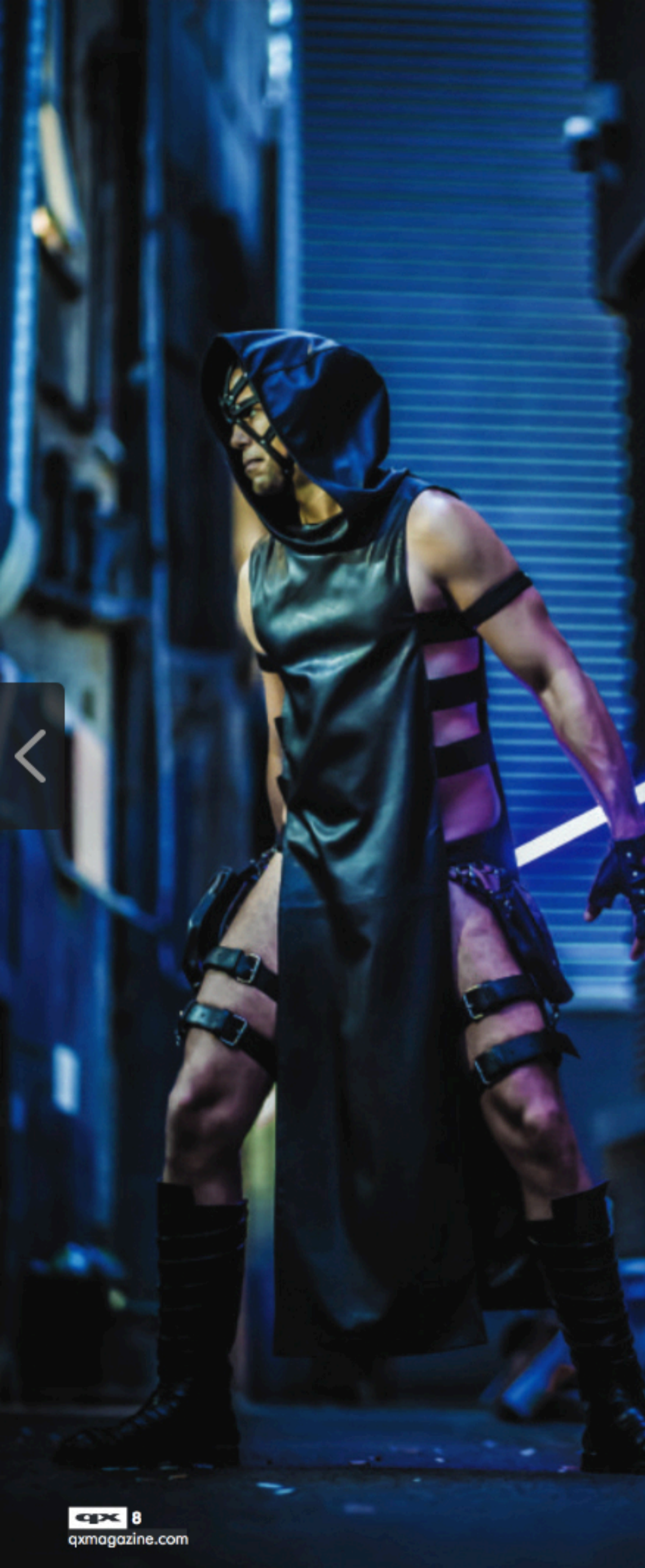
The similarities are endless. Geeks have their own points of reference, their own language, their own films and television series that speak to them.

Through this, they're able to connect with a larger group of people who feel the same way. A simple comment like 'don't let the Muggles get you down' can be the basis of a beautiful friendship! Much like other gay subcultures, it's also very tribal.

Just as there are your Bears, Twinks, Twunks, and Muscle Queens, there are Trekkies and Potterheads and Whovians. All with their own codes, geek-Polari and a sense of belonging.

**What do you think of some of the comparisons critics have made, and references TV shows have made? For example, mutants' rights in X-Men being a metaphor for gay rights, and vampires "coming out of the coffin" in True Blood.**

I love a good metaphor and I think that was one of the first things that resonated with me about the X-men comics. In particular they can be read in so many ways. Professor X and Magneto can be seen as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X by one reader whilst also being read as a metaphor for the LGBT+ struggle. True Blood was so wonderfully camp, while at the same time fully accessible to a straight audience, who I would like to think took away some of what it is like to be LGBT+ in this post Will & Grace world.



**We're STILL not seeing substantial gay characters or storylines in superhero and sci-fi movies. Why do you think that is?**

While the superhero genre has made many leaps forward, it is still pretty traditional in terms of the way it defines heroism and bravery. Deep down, it still considers these 'manly' traits. They're only now beginning to embrace feminist and empowering roles for women. It certainly needs to try harder in terms of opening it up to other forms of heroism. Right now, the only gay we get is either pretty 'masc' or a straight view of playing gay, like Deadpool getting pegged by his girlfriend (which was very funny nonetheless). We need more queer heroes. Comic books themselves are more advanced and experimental than movies (they cost less so it's less of a gamble). But I'm sure we'll get a truly queer hero sometime soon.

**We know you're a huge Star Wars fan. What appealed to you so much about it?**

Star Wars was the first film my parents took me to see in the cinema. And I was hooked from the minute I saw Darth Vader stride onto the rebel ship, cape billowing in the wind, respirator on full. Nothing makes me happier than the sound of his laboured breathing! Or his billowing cape. I think Star Wars has informed everything from my way of thinking to my fashion sense. When I buy clothes, it isn't 'does my bum look big in this?', it's 'is this serving Sith Lord realness?' One of the happiest days of my life was meeting Carrie Fisher and being able to tell her that her portrayal of Princess Leia gave me the strength to stand up for myself, to be brave and to fight for what I believed in.

**What do you think of the direction the Star Wars franchise is headed?**

Well like most gay men, I think more of anything is better, so I am loving having so much Star Wars on the horizon! I'm probably in the minority here, but I thought Rogue One was better than The Force Awakens or as I call it, Star Wars 2.0. My true love is the animated Star Wars series – Clone Wars and Rebels. The beauty of a TV series is that you have so much more time to unfold a story, and the animated shows do this beautifully.

**There are interesting themes around race in sci-fi – particularly in Star Trek – what do you make of that?**

This has always been something that Star Trek has done with great skill. It is no small feat being the first television show to feature an interracial kiss! Roddenberry's vision of the future has always been one of positive representation and inclusion. My father hated sci-fi films when he was growing up, because in the 50s and 60s you never saw anyone of colour in the future and he thought that they had finally managed to wipe us out. It wasn't until Star Trek came out and here was a proud woman of colour, who was also an officer, that he began to enjoy science fiction and to think that there might be a future. And that folks, is why representation is important! From the very beginning, Star Trek went out of its way to push the public to confront their issues with race. I've always felt that science fiction - when it's at its best - is a powerful educator.

**Who's your ultimate favourite fictional character?**

Darth Vader. Hands down my favourite fictional character. Of course, asking a geek to pick his favourite fictional character is an awful thing to do when we generally have about five or six fictional characters we are invested in at any one time!

**And who's your biggest geek crush?**

I think I'd have to go with Luna Lovegood from Harry Potter at the moment. Luna is my spirit animal. She's odd and she's okay with that.