



Bif the Bride

Following a whirlwind romance, Vancouver rocker Bif Naked ties the knot with TV Week's own Ian Walker

BY ANNA DUPAS ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY BY REINEANDJANA.COM



Persistence pays off.

That's the lesson to be gleaned from the nuptials of punk princess **Bif Naked** and local sports scribe **Ian Walker**, who tied the knot in a traditional, 30-minute ceremony on September 29 at St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church in downtown Vancouver.

After meeting at a gym, the buff TV Week columnist and *Vancouver Sun* sportswriter waged a tireless, months-long campaign to date the diminutive Vancouver singer, who's known for such chart-topping hits as "Daddy's Getting Married" and "Spaceman." But she kept turning him down.

"I hadn't dated anyone in about two years, nor was I intending to date anyone ever again. I didn't have time," declares Naked, a.k.a. **Beth Hopkins**, in a pre-wedding chat. "[And] I was not particularly interested in a boy who did bench presses with boardies and flip-flops on. It was the last thing I could have ever envisioned myself building a friendship with, never mind dating."

But as the two stood at the altar on that drizzly September day at precisely 3:33 p.m., hands clasped, wiping away



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tears and exchanging traditional vows before 120 family and friends, they could hardly have looked more different. According to the fresh-scrubbed Nova Scotia-bred boy, 34, who wore black tie and tails, and the New Delhi-born punk rocker, 38, whose sleeveless ivory gown exposed a patchwork of tattoos, appearances can be deceiving.

"We are very different people, but the same," insists Walker. "Her parents are United Methodist missionaries and mine are Salvation Army ministers, so I think we have the same moral grounding." Naked's mother, who served as maid of honour, concurs. After meeting Walker for the first time, she'd clutched her daughter's hand and said, "You two are the same person."

Even so, these two kindred spirits might never have united if not for Walker's dogged determination. The singer had rebuffed three previous invitations for a date, but finally relented, at the prodding of her manager, to accept Walker's offer to see a performance of *Aladdin*, starring former wrestler Bret "The Hitman" Hart, at Queen Elizabeth Theatre last November.

"I had dressed very event-appropriate in dress pants and a blouse," she recalls. "So Ian Craig Walker pulls up in this low-to-the-ground BMW thumping with hip-hop, gets out of the car and basically says, 'Yo, B, what's up?' I remember standing there holding my little Fendi clutch and going, 'What have I got myself into?'"

It got worse. Before the show, Walker ordered a double vodka to quell his first-date nerves. "That was a red flag for me," Naked says. "I thought, 'I will not be going out with this guy again.'" She very pointedly ordered a glass of water. Walker, on the other hand, ordered another double vodka.

Then, miraculously, something changed. It could have been the way the sportswriter bounced up and down in his seat like a hyper kid, the way he kept elbowing his date excitedly or the way he flashed her a boyish grin after putting



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on his reading glasses — but “I looked at him and it hit me,” recalls Naked. “It hit me. It had to do with the emotion of Ian being so naturally himself. He was just a little infectious ray of sunshine. It basically makes me *verklemt* even to tell the story.”

After their inaugural date, Naked left for Europe on a month-long tour. And while she liked Walker more than she'd initially expected, she still didn't anticipate they'd end up an item. “It's not that I was so hell-bent on finding a good Hindu husband. It's just that I never envisioned myself with a Kitsilano surfer boy who had never had curry and did not know who Shiva was.”

Fate intervened last December when the two crossed paths at a Bodog Fight that Naked was emceeing. “I saw Ian in the press kit and he waved at me, and I basically forgot myself in the middle of the ring and waved back like a 10-year-old, much to the consternation of my management,” she remembers. During the break, she offered him a candy. As Walker tells it: “Here's Bif Naked, wearing a miniskirt, giving me a candy. I thought I was the coolest guy in the world.”

Shortly after, the two took a weekend trip to Whistler, where Walker, very properly, had booked separate hotel rooms. There, he discovered that Naked routinely sleeps on the floor to snuggle with her two pampered pooches, one of whom has severe spinal problems. As Naked recalls: “Ian didn't bat an eye. He never made me feel like a crazy person.” After the trip, Walker immediately moved into the singer's downtown condo, which she'd previously allowed him to set foot into only once. The reason for the sudden co-habitation? “It was my cooking,” she says. He has a different answer. “It was her naked.” She rolls her eyes in mock exasperation.



This past spring, Walker proposed to the sultry songstress before a group of close friends at Il Giardino restaurant on Hornby. "The maître'd comes over with a very big dinner plate and on it was a little blue Tiffany's box and sat it right in front of me," says Naked. "Then Ian got down on one knee, and the first thing out of my mouth was, '**** off!' I was like, 'This is not happening!'" Walker chuckles at the memory, then plants a gentle kiss on his beloved's heavily inked upper arm.

The kissing is still very much in evidence at the couple's Indian-inspired wedding reception at the elegant Maurya restaurant on West Broadway, where Bif and Buff, as they're jokingly called, munched Hindustani food to a backdrop of bhangra music. Indeed, it seems the twosome is coosome on almost everything — except the honeymoon. Unable to agree on a destination, Naked says, "I'm like, fine, you know what, you Kitsilano jock, I'll take you to Disneyland." They finally settled, she states, on Puerto Vallarta. "I thought it was Playa del Carmen," he counters, before adding



wryly, "We're still debating."

That aside, as September 29 came to a close and the duo bedded down, it wouldn't be hard to guess the content of the evening's pillow talk. "Before we go to sleep," Walker reveals, "We always say, 'Thank you for today.'" And after a wedding as special as theirs, there'd be no more appropriate time to say it. ■

Above: The couple's private Bollywood-themed wedding reception was held at the sumptuous Maurya Indian eatery on Vancouver's West Broadway.

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