

# Late Late's rosy glow

Chat show's impressive return has Maria Walsh charming viewers

Something about Maria: Ryan Tubridy with Maria Walsh last night and, below, Nancy and Baz



By Alison O'Riordan and Eamonn O'Donoghue

EVERYTHING came up smelling of roses in the first Late Late Show of the new season – with Rose of Tralee Maria Walsh describing her coming out as gay as ‘a little bit of a scandal’.

The popular winner told host Ryan Tubridy that she had been ‘openly gay for two years’.

Yet while she says Rose of Tralee organisers have since embraced her sexuality, she didn't reveal it until after winning the competition because ‘nobody asked the right question’.

The Philadelphia Rose said that she would have answered the question if she was asked, ‘Are you lesbian?’ but said she was never

## ‘Nobody asked the right question’

expecting to win, ‘so I didn't expect to come out’. She added: ‘But if it was going towards that way, I would have said it.’

Growing up in Shrule, Co. Mayo, Maria – who works for fashion brand Anthropologie – added that ‘of course’ she wants to be a role model.

‘If all those articles, if they could even help one person come out, my year as the Rose of Tralee would have been a success,’ she said.

The now-single Rose also discussed with Ryan on the 53rd series of the show, her other love – the GAA. Describing the presentation of a Mayo jersey during the Mayo and Kerry All-Ireland football semi-final as being ‘bar the satchet and crown, it was probably the best gift I've ever been given’.

Also on the show last night was Baz Ashmawy with his Irish mammy Nancy Ashmawy, a retired nurse, who talked about their thrill-seeking adventures on their new six-part



by Philip Nolan

**A**T THE end of the last series of The Late Late Show, Ryan Tubridy looked exhausted and, except for a few high-profile guests such as the cast of *Anchorman II*, it seemed as if the only person in the RTE canteen who hadn't been interviewed was the woman making the coffee.

It was nice, therefore, to see the spring back in his step as he bounded down the steps like the Duracell bunny to open what – rather astonishingly – is the 53rd annual outing for the world's longest-running chat show.

For all that we claim to be sick of it, The Late Late still exerts a powerful hold, and while it no longer dominates the national conversation as it did in the days of bishops and nighties, it has a reinvigorated presence thanks to social media.

The series kicked off with an interview with the delightful Maria Walsh, the Philadelphia Rose who took the Tralee tiara last month.

Predictably, a lot of the conversation was dominated by the fact that Maria is gay and she was refreshingly insistent that it's just one part of her identity. When asked if she minded the headline that revealed her sexuality, she shot back by saying: ‘On a Sunday, what else is there to do but come out?’

There was a touching moment when her father was asked how he reacted when she

series ‘50 Ways To Kill Your Mammy’ for Sky 1. The new series, which first aired on August 25, sees the intrepid duo travel the world, with 71-year-old mother Nancy ticking off a bucket list of extreme adventures.

The fearless duo undergo a range of heart-in-mouth activities which include flying a Harvard Bomber,

learning how to jet ski, white water rafting, gambling her pension in Las Vegas, taking a hot air balloon ride over the Sahara and getting up close and personal with alligators.

Last night she spoke about her sky dive and told Ryan: ‘I felt I would like to do a sky dive. Something I always wanted to do, it was great. I

shouldn't have had the panini and a cappuccino. Don't ever do when going to do a sky dive. I didn't do all of them [the adventures], there was a line I wasn't going to cross.’

The former RTE host Baz completed the string of terrifying stunts with his mother which even included getting Tasered. ‘When I thought

## Tubs is back with a spring in his step – and rightly so, in his show's 53rd year

told him. He said he was delighted she told him herself and that he didn't hear it from someone else, and told of how proud he was of her.

‘I hugged her for about ten or 15 minutes,’ he said to much applause, a reminder yet again that the Late Late audience is a barometer of changing public attitudes.

I suspect Maria's sexuality didn't matter a jot to anyone; she just is a lovely woman, luminous, smart and a clearly gentle soul and she was a great choice as the first guest.

A band called Interskalactic – it's to do with Jamaican ska, not milk – performed. They might have been a hit live at the Electric Picnic but they were a bit ‘meh’ on television.

Then it was time for Paul McGinley, captain of the European Ryder Cup team, who always is value for money – he seems to have a permanent smile plastered on his face, so let's hope

it's still there at teatime on Sunday 28 September.

The stars of my new favourite show, Sky One's *50 Ways To Kill Your Mammy*, were next. Baz Ashmawy has been around for a while but his mother Nancy is a new star – her great line on the show, ‘feck it – feel the fear and do it anyway’ has been a highlight of the TV year.

Their relationship is charming; Nancy is a natural, and it was a good idea to keep the mood light for the first hour and a half.

A fairly triumphant first Late Late, so, tempered in mood a little by Joan Burton, billed as the most powerful woman in Ireland, but they needed the usual serious item to balance all the levity.

It feels like there's a new energy to the show; that's going to be hard to sustain from now until May, but so far, the signs are good.

about it, I said if he wants to be Tasered, lets go’ said Nancy.

However the 71-year-old refused to tattoo her son. ‘No way I was going to tattoo him, I drew the line there. I really don't like them.’

Well at least The Late Late Show made its mark.

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