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Sir Ivan: Billionaire with a Twist



Gary Spencer cruises into Long Island in style to chat to the unmistakable Sir Ivan, a billionaire with a twist, whose dedication to doing good for the world is both charming and inspiring, but most of all, extremely entertaining.

"We will be sending a Range Rover or the Peacemobile to collect you from the station and take you to the castle." This was the wonderfully polite and concise message I received the day before I set out to meet the ever charismatic, philanthropic billionaire and of course EDM billboard star, 'Sir Ivan', otherwise known as 'Peaceman'. I have caught glimpses of the Peacemobile, and as much as I would love to jump out of it at my favorite NYC restaurant or nightclub, I was dreading the art limo wrapped in multi-colour hippy icons pulling up for me in this tiny enclave of Long Island known as Bridgehampton.

I too have an ego, but also a British heritage, which means a little bit less is more, so it was much

to my relief when a suitably finished British racing green Jaguar soft top pulled in to the parking lot.

“Good morning Sir,” was my greeting from Nathaniel, a trusted staff member of Sir Ivan’s household that was charged with the duty of collecting and delivering me to his boss. Immaculately dressed on this hot summer day in jacket and tie, he made me feel almost too casual for my meeting. As we exchanged small talk winding through the tree-lined Water Mill lanes I was tempted to ask, “so how crazy do the parties *really* get?” However, knowing that I wasn’t the first journalist Nathaniel had ferried, and that after two years he wouldn’t enjoy having to look for a new employer, I decided to just stick to, “wow, this countryside reminds me so much of rural England!”

Ivan Wilzig was born the son of Siggie and Naomi in Clifton, New Jersey, in the mid 1950s. Miraculously, his father, Siggie B. Wilzig, managed to survive the horrors of Auschwitz in wartime Germany, and move to the USA, where he eventually took over two traditionally anti-Semitic businesses: one, an oil company; and the other, a commercial bank, both of which he grew into major successes.

Today, Ivan Wilzig is known as ‘Sir Ivan’, and he lives in a castle, which is set on five stunning acres in the Water Mill countryside. The Castle took 18 months to plan, build, and decorate, and was mainly orchestrated with Sir Ivan’s brother, Alan, who worked on the drawings with the architect. It boasts an outdoor infinity pool with underwater speakers, gym, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, nightclub, movie theatre, and all sorts of secret dens and dummy walls that lead to even more adventures. In fact, it’s everything you would expect from a commercial banking billionaire’s home, except that Sir Ivan stopped banking a long time ago, and became a pop star on the dance charts!

Sir Ivan is much more casually dressed than I had expected as he calls out and strolls over to shake my hand. He’s wearing black shorts and shirt, and has the demeanor and tan of an ultra successful man that lives in the Hamptons, or owns a castle, even. He explains the ‘Sir’ title came about when he and his brother built the castle, and what started out as a family joke ended up sticking as his stage name. Peaceman became his nickname because once he shed his banker suits, he started wearing capes with a large Swarovski peace sign on the back.

“Well I didn’t ask the Queen of England to build me a castle, so I sure wasn’t gonna wait for her to knight me! And anyway, I was always far more of an entertainer than I was a banker,” confirms Sir Ivan, explaining he had been an exceptional dancer as a child, and was only able to follow his childhood dream of being a singer years later, after his family had sold their substantial banking and oil businesses. “After being artistically and creatively repressed for so long as a banker, once I was free of that world, everything had to be a creative project. With favorite films such as *Robin Hood* and *King Arthur*, it’s natural that I also wanted to own a castle.”

By remaking and covering various anti-war and peace songs from the '60s and '70s, Sir Ivan has managed to return some very impressive dance chart positions, which has subsequently grown his celebrity persona to fuel various charitable foundations like his own foundation, The Peaceman Foundation, that seeks to benefit the victims of hatred and violence, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder victims, and the LGBT community. Sir Ivan would later go on to tell me that the LGBT teenage community has a four to five times suicide rate compared to the straight teenage community.

His first recording success was a cover of John Lennon's *Imagine*, the first time any artist had covered a Beatles track and managed to turn it into a dance anthem. It reached number 31 in 2001, and spent nine weeks in the Billboard Chart. His biggest hit to date is *Hare Krishna* (2011) that went Top 10 on the dance chart, and continued charting for a whopping 13 more weeks. Two more songs he recorded went Top 10 in *Music Week* in the UK: *Live For Today*, and *La La Land*. His 2015 release, *Kiss All The Bullies Goodbye*, also spent many weeks on the Billboard Chart. All very respectable numbers for a man who spent much of his life on corporate Wall Street, and is now in his mid 50s.

"There's no question that my love of dance music came from my disco days; that high energy makes people wanna dance. Sure, Studio 54 was the coolest club to get into at the time, but there was an even cooler club that gay friends of mine would go to called The Saint, where people danced under a real planetarium. I went one time just to see what they were talking about, and it was really out of this world," he explains.

What's even more impressive is that through his enthusiasm and financial clout, Sir Ivan probably uses more producers and engineers than any of the major labels, and can even attract world famous talents to collaborate with, such as DJ and producer, Paul Oakenfold, and singer, Taylor Dayne, to work on his projects, such as *Kiss All The Bullies Goodbye*.

2015 was a very busy year for Sir Ivan; he made a one-hour documentary titled *Sir Ivan - I Am Peaceman*, which was released on DVD last August on Amazon; and another of his legendary costume parties at his castle on August 22nd to celebrate the success of The Peaceman Foundation.

On completion of our chat, Sir Ivan took me on a tour of the castle, and in doing so, we spent a lot of time at the pinball table, which was naturally castle-themed. It was here I realised that Sir Ivan really does have a boyish enthusiasm for life, and is really only looking to have fun, and also try to bring fun into other people's lives. Everything is all very much tongue in cheek, and he has that charming ability to be able to laugh at himself, a rare trait in someone who is so lavishly wealthy.

We ended our meeting at the very top of the castle, amongst the turrets looking out over the five acres of greenery, with extended views to Robins Island and the Peconic Bay. Our final discussion was how children do indeed carry the burden of their parents' pain, and how that not only drove him on, but in Sir Ivan's own special way, he has used his influence and wealth to try and make this world a better place for others who may have suffered. He is indeed Peaceman – a real life Superhero.

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