

#NYCTW 2018 – Topher Brophy – For the love of a dog

One of the best things about social media is that it helps you meet and correspond with people you otherwise could never reach.

I ‘know’ Topher Brophy from Instagram, and although he lives in the US, I have not yet been able to meet him in person, but nonetheless I know he is just over there in Brooklyn!

Last year during Tartan Week I was filming Kilted Yogi, Finlay Wilson, in Times Square. After we had finished, an Italian came up to us, desperate to meet Finlay as he ‘knew him from Instagram’. Wilson has a massive following on [Instagram](#) and all forms of social media for his cheeky yoga moves – in a kilt.

The well-known theory that everyone in the world is only six or fewer steps away from each other was first suggested almost a century ago, and now with social media it is much easier to prove, and occasionally action.

When thinking about this year’s trip to New York for Tartan Week, I realised that almost without knowing it I had begun following [@TopherBrophy](#) this American living in Brooklyn with his family which includes Rosenberg the dog. So I did what any good Instagrammer would do. I messaged him to find out more about him.

Brophy describes himself as an empathist and Dog Dad Artist. From his [photos](#) you might see what he means.

Chantal Adair is his partner and mother of his ‘human child’ Topper who features in the photos too. Chantal has over 40,000 followers on [Instagram](#) and you can read below how it was through adopting Rosenberg that they met.

Brophy has his own Scottish connections however... and I found out that I have actually met Brophy's Scottish connection – who happens to be the Scottish actor Alan Cumming.

Topher and Alan posed for Chantal in kilts – and yes the dogs, Rosenberg and Lala, wore kilts too.

Alan is well known for the love he has for his special wee dog Lala who goes almost everywhere with him. She was at the photo call we did ahead of his residency with Club Cumming at The Hub during the Edinburgh International Festival in 2016. (She didn't sing though...)



**I asked Topher a bit more about himself
You describe yourself as an empathist and Dog Dad Artist. How do you describe yourself when someone at a dinner party asks what you do?**

I'd use the same words ☐ so let me elaborate on them.
The term Empathist, doesn't exist in the English language, but to me it defines someone who is overly concerned about the happiness or unhappiness of other people or animals.
I wasn't always this way... Before I became a Dad, I was going through a very difficult time. I wasn't emotionally connected, and as a result, didn't have fulfilling relationships. I was unhappy, but didn't realize it. Unknowingly, I developed an addiction, to playing competitive sports. I spent all my time, training and competing in rugby, polo, fencing, weight lifting, dressage, tennis, yachting and squash. It

became so obsessive, that I herniated a disk in my back. To avoid surgery, I was forced to stop playing everything at once.

"With my security blanket taken away, suddenly, I spent a lot of time alone.. After soul searching, therapy, meditation and many self help books, I realized my problem- I was a narcissist. At this point, I realized I needed meaning in my life and caring for someone else would be healthy for me.

"This is when I started the adoption process for Rosenberg. Becoming a Dad has been the best thing for me. Until that point, I didn't understand myself, but because i had nothing to compare it to, didn't understand why.

"By caring for this sweet fluffy angel, I have tapped into my emotional compass and finally feel complete. His needs always come before mine, and this mindset, has been the catalyst for caring about the collective needs of humanity.

"This is now my mission and life's work. Empowered by our bond, Rosenberg and I feel its our obligation spread messages of compassion, open-mindedness and tolerance, and the benefits of animal companionship to as many people as possible. Our photographs and videos are the hook, and we are using them as a portal, or Trojan horse, to do this.

Can you tell us how you came to be such a presence on Instagram? What is your back story?

"This happened purely by coincidence. Shortly after I adopted Rosenberg, people told us we looked alike. I didn't take it seriously, but it kept happening, so as a joke we dressed up in matching outfits and people crowded around us, and were so happy..

"We felt it was our calling to spread this happiness to a much wider audience, and because Instagram combines photography with social media, it was the perfect medium.

"This is what led us to find our photographer, creative director and stylist, Chantal Adair, aka, @thedogstyler.

"Chantal is the real talent behind our art, she is a true creative genius. I am an average guy, with an extremely handsome son, who was lucky enough to find a visionary photographer, who is now my wife, and the mother of Rosenberg, and our human child, Topper Tinsley.

What are you trying to do with the use of social media – is it purely commercial or is there a more philosophical message?

"My life has been transformed through the companionship with my animal son, and I feel there are many people who are suffering right now, that can also be helped by this.. It's my duty to tell my story, but it's way bigger than me.

"Homo sapiens have been co-existing and dependent on K9's for thousands of years. They have been our hunting partners, guard dogs, alarm clocks, and close friends. T

"here are solid arguments that we've even evolved to them, as they have evolved and been domesticated to match our needs. They are our partners,

as a species, and should be universally treated as such. They have so many amazing things to teach us, among them, to help us “live in the moment”.

“As humans, with big brains, we are aware of our own mortality, which contributes to our neurosis and anxiety, which take us away from living in the present moment. Because animals aren’t self aware, they are infinitely present, and in a constant constant state of nirvana.

Being close with them, influences us to see the world through their perspective, which eases our anxiety and helps us make every second count!

“This is why having an animal companion helps us live longer lives. Our bond with animals is also an important reminder that humans are part of nature, and are in no way superior to it. Our faulty superiority complex, in my opinion, is a contributing factor in our destruction of the environment, which needless to say will lead to unimaginable consequences.

“Animals live in harmony with their surroundings, so this is another important lesson we can learn from them.

Do tell us about Rosenberg’s pedigree. What kind of dog is he and tell us about his personality.

“Rosenberg has wisdom well beyond his years and is a very old soul... he possesses a sense of tranquility, confidence and wisdom that lead me to believe he is the reincarnated spirit of a relative I lost when I was very young.”

(Have you always had dogs?)

“I actually grew up with three cats and a parrot... and at one point, we also had 10 ducks.. I’ve always been an animal person, but Rosenberg is my first pup!”

What links do you have to Scotland (if any!)

When I was 19, i visited Edinburgh and had a transformative experience.

I toured the city, then traveled around the countryside, and met countless amazing people, who were genuinely friendly and very warm to me.

At this time, i didn’t have much confidence, and being surrounded by friendly people helped me open up and feel good about myself.

I am a born and raised New Yorker, and as much as I love the city, because it’s so big, people are guarded, which is in stark contrast to the Scottish people, who seem to have such a gregarious manner. My wife

is also part Scottish, which makes my son Scottish as well, i'm excited to now have a literal as well as an emotional connection to the country and culture.



Rosenberg, Topher, Alan Cumming and Lala

Finally how do you know Alan Cumming?

"We've always been huge fans of Alan's.. He's an extraordinarily talented artist, a humanitarian and an extremely down to earth, sweet caring man. We came in contact on instagram, then we invited him to collaborate on photos with us. He was delightful to work with, a true gentleman. We had so much fun, and his animal daughter Lala is an enthralling and elegant little lady.

"As always, the Dogstyler handled all the clothing and styling. I will say we really enjoyed wearing a skirt ☐

Where will you be on the day of the parade itself?

Rosenberg and I are doing some work for a charity that day, so sadly, we won't be able to make it to the parade itself, but i promise we will be there in spirit!

"Happy Tartan Day to everyone in Scotland and all over the world!!!!

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