

## 10. Connor Jessup, Drama King

"I LOVE THE POLITENESS HERE," says Connor Jessup, on vacation in Japan, a country where the 21-year-old Canadian actor feels completely at home. "Under the surface is an enormous boiling pool of repression and angst, and I find those contradictions very interesting."

If you see Jessup's work this year—starring in either the second season of ABC's *American Crime* or the upcoming film *Closet Monster*—you might sense similar boiling pools beneath the two scarred gay teens he plays. In the former, he's a high schooler who accuses a fellow classmate of rape; in the latter, he's a closeted senior who internalizes his parents' acrimonious divorce and a graphic hate crime he witnessed as a child.

*Closet Monster's* mood is lightened slightly by the addition of Buffy, a companion to Jessup's character, Oscar,

who comes in the form of a talking hamster voiced by Isabella Rossellini. More than just a comedic device, she counsels Oscar through his father's homophobia and the unbearable crush he has on an elusive boy named Wilder.

"I think she's clearly a fractured part of his psyche," Jessup says.

Heavy stuff, but that doesn't concern him. "I like working in drama," he says. "I don't think you're suddenly going to find me overwhelming the comedy market."

Besides, he's dealt with worse. "My first show was called *The Saddle Club*," he says of the Australian kids series he appeared in when he was 13. "Every episode ended with a different character singing a song. Mine was called 'You Can't Outfox a Fox.' It's still the most salient nightmare experience of my entire life." —MIKE BERLIN