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TORONTO'S GAY & LESBIAN NEWS

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#763 JAN 23—FEB 5, 2014

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RELOCATES**
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Dark knight

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COMING IN FEBRUARY

EXCLUSIVELY ON



MEET THE QUEENS



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- RuPaul



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LGBT HEALTH

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The Trans Men's Surgical Support Group is an 11-week group for trans men who are waiting for, healing from, or have completed bottom surgery. **The group begins the first week of February (day/time dependent on participant availability).**

To register, contact Laura at 416-324-4100 x 5096 or lkrahn@sherbourne.on.ca.

GENDER JOURNEYS STARTS FEBRUARY 12!

Gender Journeys is a group for people considering gender transition. The group provides information and community for people with changes across the gender spectrum. **The group will begin February 12 and runs for 11 weeks at Sherbourne Health Centre. Registration required. Contact Yegi at ydadui@sherbourne.on.ca or 416-324-4100 x 5078.**

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Please join the LGBTQ Parenting Network for our Family Day Extravaganza! **Monday, February 17th, 2014, 11:00am-3:00pm at Sherbourne Health Centre, 333 Sherbourne Street. Please RSVP online: www.lgbtqparentingnetwork.ca.**

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Dykes Planning Tykes and Daddies & Papas 2B will run Wednesday Evenings from **February 19 to May 7, 2014 from 7:00-9:30pm at The 519. Visit lgbtqpn.ca/familyplanning for more information and registration.**

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FLUID STARTS MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24!

Need a safe space to talk about sexual fluidity and attraction to more than one gender? Check out Fluid! Fluid is an 8-week group for sexually-fluid, bisexual, pansexual, bi-curious, omnisexual, questioning and other youth (under 29) who don't fit neatly into categories around sexuality. Discussions, art, games and fun. Snacks and TTC tokens provided. **Mondays, 7-9 pm, February 24 to April 14, 2014. To sign up, email soynatalyn@gmail.com or call 416-324-5077.**

WANT TO KEEP UP WITH SOY?



XTRA

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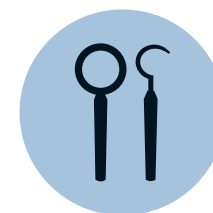
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VINCENZO FLORAMO

INTERNATIONAL

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ALEJANDRO SANTIAGO

👉 online at
dailyxtra.com

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Chris Kluwe, role model



EDITORIAL
ROBIN PERELLE

Whether or not we can ever definitively prove that homophobia caused Chris Kluwe's termination, the now-former punter could teach his coaches a thing or two about being a team player.

Kluwe is the former Minnesota Vikings football player who shook the sports world in early January with his allegations that he was cut not for poor performance, but for his vocal support of same-sex marriage in the run-up to Minnesota's 2012 referendum.

He says he doesn't regret speaking out, even though it likely cost him his job. "It's the basis of a sound society," he tells me. "People have to be free to live their own lives."

He says he'd want others to speak out for him if his rights were in jeopardy — even if it cost them their jobs too. The consequences reinforce the need to speak out, he says. If we live in a world where people can be penalized for expressing their views, shouldn't we "commit to making it better"?

"What kind of world do we want to live in?" he asks. "Is it one where we are free to speak out on important social issues? Or is it one where everyone is tip-toeing around things and worried about saying anything at all

because they're worried about losing their job?"

Kluwe blames the National Football League's older coaches and administrators for the less-than-warm welcome gay athletes and their more outspoken allies may receive. Though he doesn't think homophobia is pervasive in the league among players — whom he generally describes as young and supportive, cycling up from college with new attitudes — he says some coaches may be less open-minded.

"I think problems would come from coaches and administrators because they tend to be older individuals [with] a certain mindset," he says.

Kluwe suggests the key to changing these coaches' attitudes lies in showing them the player potential they're failing to capitalize on. If coaches need players to play at their full potential to win as many games as possible, then maybe they'll be more receptive to the argument that players play best when they're free to express themselves fully.

"I've talked with former players who came out after they finished playing," Kluwe says, "and their message was that 'I didn't feel like I could be myself. I felt like it affected my playing because I was always worried that someone's going to find out who I am. Is today the day that someone discov-

ers my secret?"

"You can't play to your full potential that way," he says, pointing out the obvious.

Nor can you play to your full potential when your coaches label you a "distraction" and turf you for having the courage to stand up for others.

The Vikings deny that Kluwe was released for his activism. They maintain that the decision was "strictly based on his football performance." I'm skeptical. Given Kluwe's consistent performance throughout his career and the record-high net average yards he punted in what turned out to be his last season with the team, I think his vocal advocacy for gay rights tipped a previously dormant scale out of his favour.

Asked if he would encourage others to speak out, despite the consequences he faced, Kluwe doesn't hesitate. "Yeah, there might be consequences for speaking out. Yeah, there is a possibility that you could lose your job. But at the end of the day, if you feel strongly about the issues — you feel that people should be treated with respect and you're willing to fight for that — accept the consequences," he says. "If you're not willing to risk what you have, then your heart's probably not in it."

I know it's only January, but I've already found my straight ally of the year.

Robin Perelle is the managing editor of Xtra Vancouver. Go to dailyxtra.com for her full interview with Kluwe.

FEEDBACK

Peloso memorial

I do think that severely depressed people should see a physician and be put on anti-depressants ["Hundreds Turn Out for Peloso Memorial," *Xtra* #762, Jan 9]. In the same way that anti-HIV drugs have gotten better over the years, anti-depression drugs are getting better as well. Only today, I read about how joint Israeli-US research is pointing the way to more effective anti-depressants. Of course, the drugs should be coupled with psychotherapy from a qualified practitioner.

ALEX S
TORONTO, ON

Perhaps he was blinded by grief and not thinking straight, but how bizarre for Smitherman to take a swipe at a former political opponent who has been nothing but gracious in the wake of this tragedy. It also shows how self-centred Smitherman is to be referring to his own legacy while eulogizing his late husband.

KEVIN BROWN
TORONTO, ON

Manor Hair Lounge closure

The 519 welfare centre on Church Street is a drag on any neighbouring business ["Manor Hair Lounge Closes, 7-24 Video To Move Into Its Space," *dailyxtra.com*, Jan 10]. The 519 is a magnet for street people — including alcoholics, drug addicts and mentally ill people who often harass gay people as they walk by. A number of restaurants located across from The 519 at Church and Dundonald streets have failed. This



includes the recent closure of The Vic Public House at 580 Church St. Most people who go to a sit-down restaurant do so to have a relaxing meal and a pleasant time. Who wants to sit on a patio and pay for overpriced food and drinks if they are constantly asked for change by street people or if they get depressed looking at the street people lined up in front of The 519 for its soup kitchen or its health bus? Now that 7-24 Video is moving near The 519, I hope they don't meet the same fate.

BRENT S
TORONTO, ON

Steven Boone

The judge is an idiot: if the sexual partner was advised, there is nothing illegal in the act ["HIV-Positive Ottawa Man Must Remain in Solitary Confinement," *dailyxtra.com*, Jan 17]. The article said the partners were informed and condoms were available, but the other person did not want to use them. So where is the justification? The judge is going beyond the law and corrupting the legal process with personal prejudice.

MICHAEL TOWER (FACEBOOK)
OTTAWA, ON

The outcome that we seek is this — gay and lesbian people daring together to set love free.

Xtra is published by Pink Triangle Press, at 2 Carlton St, Ste 1600, Toronto, M5B 1J3.



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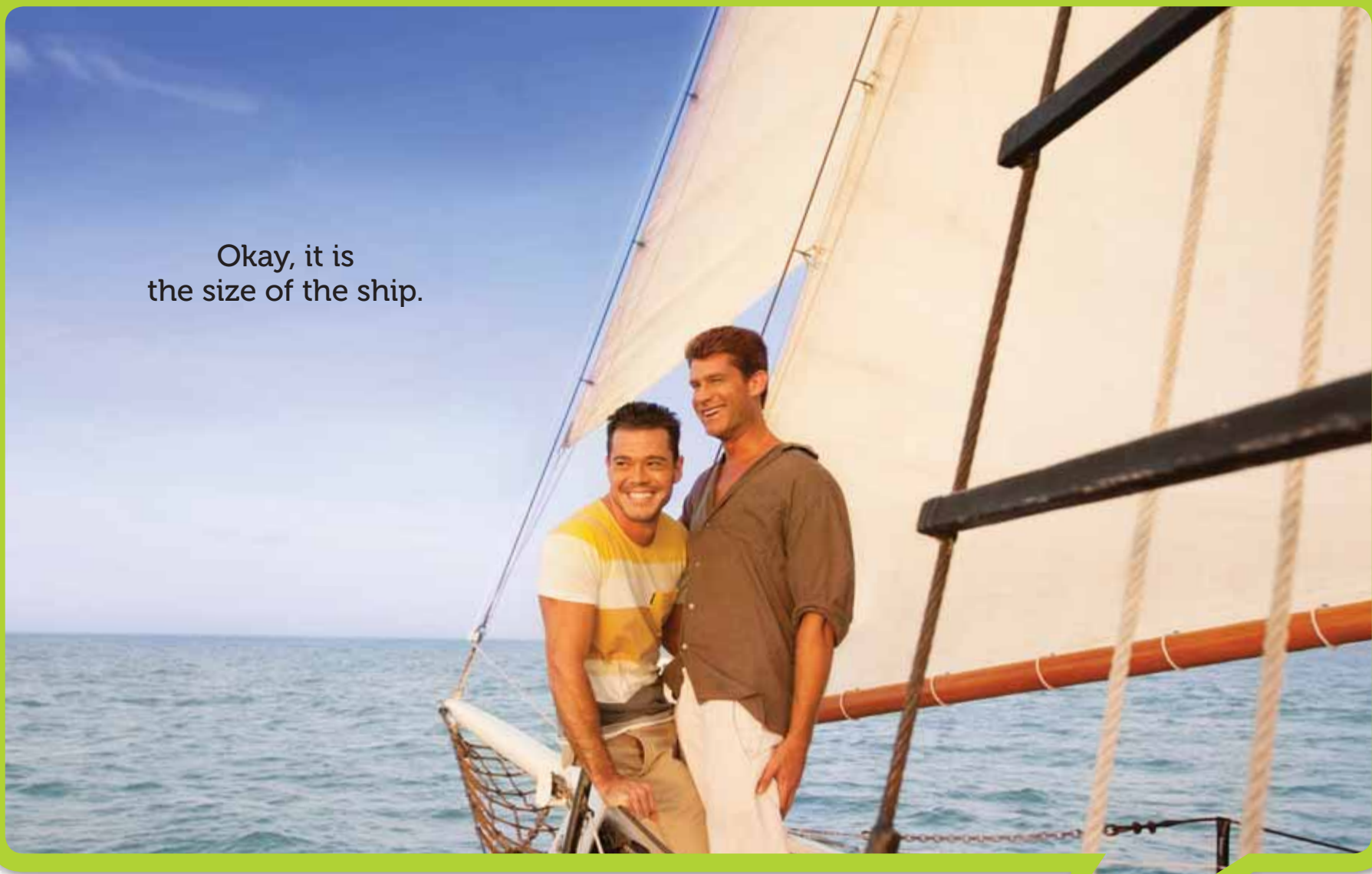
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Xtra!

XCETERA

FROM THE PTP ARCHIVES

XTRA #523, NOV 11, 2004

Our cover boy, the "mischievous and morbid"
Greg Kearney, discusses his first published
collection of short stories, *Mommy Daddy Baby*.
Turn to page 20 of this issue to read about
Kearney's debut novel, *The Desperates*.

OLYMPIC SNUBBING

SOCHI NO-SHOWS

Our head count
of politicians
not going to the
Olympics—so far.



Stephen Harper
Prime Minister,
Canada



Barack Obama
President,
United States



Joe Biden
Vice-President,
United States



Elio Di Rupo
Prime
Minister,
Belgium



Kris Peeters
Minister-President,
Flanders



François Hollande
President, France



David Cameron
Prime Minister,
United Kingdom



Joachim Gauck
President,
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Prime Minister,
Israel



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commissioner

Sushi

A BIWEEKLY HELPING
OF POP CULTURE,
SERVED À LA CARTE



Ricky Martin

Newly single pop star
who ranks #1 on *Out*
magazine's 100 most
eligible bachelors list.



The Bachelor

The main man on the
new season of ABC's
show is anti-gay
commentator Juan
Pablo Galavis.

Miami FC

Football
team
Galavis
played
for before
retiring in
2008.



2008

Year the
Oscar-winning film
Milk was released.



Milk

Name of one of
the contestants
on Season 6 of
RuPaul's Drag Race.

6

Number of Oscar
nominations
Dallas Buyers Club
received this year.

**'A hard-partying,
homophobic
cowboy'**

Description of
Ron Woodroof,
the main character
of *Dallas Buyers
Club*.



30 days

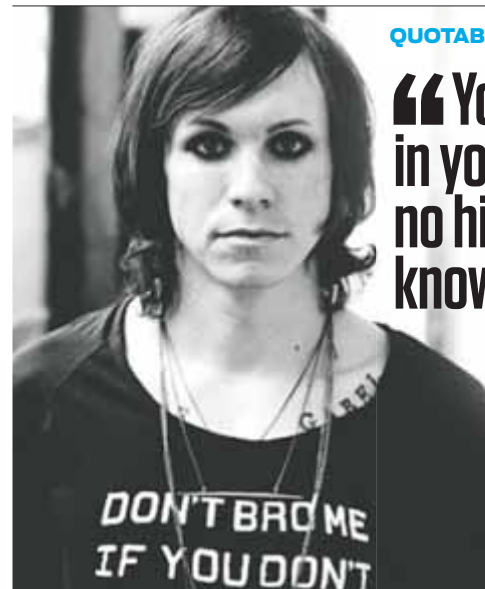
Amount
of time
Woodroof
was given
to live after his AIDS
diagnosis in 1985.

1985

The year Tears for
Fears's single "**Shout**"
was declared song
of the summer by
Billboard magazine.



QUOTABLE



**“You've got no cunt
in your strut / You've got
no hips to shake / And you
know it's obvious / But we
can't choose how
we're made”**

— lyrics to Against Me!'s new song
“Transgender Dysphoria Blues.”
The band's lead singer, Laura Jane
Grace, came out as a trans woman in 2012.

**RFK Center:
Ugandan
president to
reject 'fascist'
anti-gay bill**

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Toronto photographer to document LGBT lives in Russia

Kristy Boyce wants to learn more about day-to-day life for queer Russians

**SOCHI 2014
ELAH FEDER**

As Russia gears up for the Olympics, Toronto photographer Kristy Boyce will be quietly setting up shop in St Petersburg and embarking on the latest and riskiest endeavour of her What Dyke Looks Like project: capturing the faces and stories of LGBT Russians.

The project's main focus to date has, as the name implies, been on dykes. Aiming to disrupt mainstream notions of dykeness, Boyce has photographed more than 100 women and genderqueer folks over the past three years, everyone from two-spirit elders to femmes in pin-up girl poses, but all North Americans. She's now taking that project to Russia.

There's some precedent for this project. In September, *muff* magazine published portraits of Russian lesbian couples commissioned from photographer Anastasia Ivanova. Unlike Ivanova's photos, however, Boyce will broaden her project's scope to include the full LGBT spectrum of identities, as the community collectively endures and resists bigotry and oppressive laws.

Of course, she'll have to get through the border first.

“I've always known that there's a possibility... that they may not even let me into the country.”

A simple internet search would quickly alert immigration authorities to Boyce's plans, but it's too late to stuff her internet presence back in the closet. She just hopes Russia will be too busy with the Olympics and putting on a human-rights-friendly face to bother with her.

Boyce's girlfriend is supportive, but not everyone is convinced this is a good idea.

“My dad's not impressed. My grandmother just keeps saying, ‘You don't come from a family with money, so if something bad happens to



Toronto photographer Kristy Boyce is the creator of the What Dyke Looks Like project.

“I've always known that there's a possibility... that they may not even let me into the country.”

you, we don't have \$10,000 or \$20,000 dollars to get you out.”

But with her experiences as a freelance photojournalist, including stints in Zimbabwe and Ghana, Boyce feels equipped to manoeuvre through Russia.

“I have been in neighbourhoods referred to by locals as Sodom and Gomorrah... but you know, you've got someone local who you trust, and away you go,” she says, adding that extensive research and local contacts are key. The trick is casting a broad net without drawing the attention of the government.

She'll also need to be careful within the LGBT community. Even prominent gay activist Nikolai Alexeyev fell under suspicion in August when he suddenly started airing more Putin-friendly views and dismissed “Western hysteria around LGBT rights in Russia.” (His fall from grace was complete a few weeks later when he went on anti-Semitic tirades on Twitter and Facebook.)

As for the safety of her subjects, Boyce will protect the identities of those who request anonymity and will let the rest assume the risk of open participation.

“I'm not labouring under any assumption that I know what's better for Russian gays than they do,” Boyce explains, “because they know what life is like there and what the risks are.”

She notes that some of her contacts in Russia are very out, even kissing their partners in Facebook photos, so it's hard to know what day-to-day life is really like for LGBT Russians in the current climate. Of course, that's largely the point of the project.

“There are a lot of conflicting stories we're hearing out of Russia. I don't think I'll know even a percentage of what the reality is until I'm actually there.”

Manor closes

7-24 Video to move into its space

NEIGHBOURHOOD
ROB SALERNO

Video rental business 7-24 Movies and More has found a new home in the Village, although its gain is the loss of The Manor Hair Lounge and Day Spa, which was closed abruptly to make room for it.

As previously reported, the owners of 7-24 decided to close the current location at 501A Church St because of high rent and the declining nature of the movie rental business. They plan to relocate to 584 Church, on the block north of Dundonald. The unit was formerly occupied by The Manor; its much smaller floor space means that the rent is more affordable.

"We'll offer the same range of movies; we're keeping everything," owner Mary Bu says. "We're just shrinking the cases [to fit more into the smaller space]; that's the only thing we'll change."

Bu says she's very happy she was able to keep the business in the Village.

She's signed a five-year lease on the new location.

"This community is still very supportive of this business," she says.

The space 7-24 is vacating will eventually become the new home of Starbucks, currently a few doors down the block.

As for The Manor, the business owner, who is also the landlord, decided to close shop at the beginning of the year to make room for 7-24. Employees of the spa were given less than a day's notice that their jobs were gone, former manager Chris Ryan says.

"He didn't really give any of the staff notice or explanation," Ryan says. "I don't think it was ever their intention to own a spa in the area. I think it was their intention to develop the building, but when it didn't get developed, they ran a spa."

Ryan says eight people worked at the spa, and all have since found employment at other salons. X



Mary Bu, the owner of 7-24, explains to a customer that the business is moving just a block away. ROB SALERNO

LOCAL NEWS

Four bisexuality-related projects underway at CAMH

In the research world, as in real life, bisexual people have often found themselves invisible — lumped alongside their gay or straight companions, depending on their partner at the moment. But a research team at Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental

Health is working to help change that.

The Re:searching for LGBTQ Health team, led by Lori Ross, has focused a significant amount of its resources on looking into a part of society that, until recently, has rarely been studied on its own. Of the group's 10 active projects, four are related to bisexuality, looking at issues as diverse as mental health, sexual behaviour and drug use.

"When you look at 'LGBT,' the 'B' has been very neglected," Ross says, adding that the existing body of research indicates bisexuals have it worse than their gay or straight peers in several areas of health. "Mental health outcomes in par-

ticular," she says. "Depression, anxiety, suicidality, drug use... I'm interested in how social exclusion fits with that."

"For gay and lesbian people, having a community buffers the effects of homophobia; a lot of bisexual people don't have that community."


Ross — co-author of a book called *Where Is the 'B' in LGBT Parenting?* — is the lead researcher on a study of postpartum depression among "visible and invisible sexual minority women." In other words, it compares the outcomes for new mothers who are in homosexual relationships with those who have been with same-sex partners in the past but

are having babies with partners of the opposite sex.

The study will follow its subjects from late-term pregnancy into the first year post-childbirth and should wrap up in about two years. Having previously worked on a smaller sample study, Ross's hypothesis is that invisible sexual-minority women will experience higher rates of postpartum depression.

"The exclusion experienced by invisible minorities isn't well understood. For women, the moment of getting married and having a baby is the ultimate heterosexual moment. The invisibility is really acute."

Ross is also co-authoring a new study with Nathan Smith, who works as an associate professor in educational psychology at the University of Houston. Their research will look at 600 bisexual men in three cities to determine the specific predictors of HIV risk among that group. The study will collect data about participants' behaviours, attitudes and stresses through an online questionnaire and should conclude in less than a year. — Saira Peesker

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'No visit scheduled' with Nigerian president

While a number of media reports say that a state visit by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan has been cancelled because of an anti-gay law he signed recently, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs says that "no visit is scheduled."

"As Commonwealth partners, Canada and Nigeria enjoy a shared interest in expanding opportunities for economic, social and security cooperation between our two countries. No visit is scheduled. However, we look forward to the opportunity of welcoming President Jonathan to Canada at a future date," reads the Foreign Affairs statement sent to *Xtra* by email.

When *Xtra* asks if there was ever a visit planned for February and then cancelled, as suggested in a *Nigerian Monitor* report, the same statement is re-sent.

The *Nigerian Monitor* report cites unspecified sources in the capital city, Abuja, as saying that Nigeria's high commissioner to Canada, Ojo Uma Maduekwe, was allegedly told to advise Jonathan that authorities cancelled his planned visit in February. *Pink News* carried a similar report, adding that Jonathan's media advisor, Reuben Abati, indicated there would be a response from Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Ministry on the matter.

With the signing of the anti-gay measure into law came reports that dozens of people have been arrested in the country. Last week, a man in



Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan.

the northern state of Bauchi received 20 lashes after an Islamic court found him guilty of breaking laws against homosexuality, acts he reportedly committed seven years ago, the BBC reports.

According to the provisions of the law that Jonathan recently signed,

anyone who "registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organizations, or directly or indirectly makes public show of same sex amorous relationship in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable to conviction to a term of 10 years imprisonment." —*Natasha Barsotti*

HIV-positive Ottawa man must remain in solitary confinement

Steven Boone's application to get out of segregation has been denied.

Since May 29, 2013, Boone has been held in solitary confinement at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC). He was convicted in October 2012 of attempted murder of three men, three counts of aggravated sexual assault and administering a noxious substance (his semen).

During a two-day hearing in December, Boone's lawyer, Paul Champ, argued that neither the jail nor the Crown provided a lawful reason for his client's long-term solitary confinement. Champ told *Xtra* he was hoping to get Boone out of solitary by Christmas, but the court didn't make a ruling until late in the day Jan 16, and it was not in Boone's favour.

"Given that I find it would be unsafe for an inmate to be placed with the applicant in the same cell and that it is necessary for the applicant [to] remain alone in a cell at night, the application is dismissed," Justice Robert J Smith wrote in his ruling.

The ruling referred to Boone's "abilities to manipulate young men into having unprotected sex" and the fact that he had engaged in unprotected sex while at the jail. "I find that if the applicant is placed with a cellmate there is a very high risk that the applicant would manipulate the cellmate into having sexual intercourse and a high risk that this cellmate would [contract] HIV putting any such cellmate in a dangerous situation if placed with the applicant,"

Smith said in his ruling.

In December, Champ acknowledged that Boone had had unprotected sex while at OCDC but pointed out that his client was open about his HIV status, that he requested and received condoms and lubricant from the jail's nursing staff, and that it was Boone's sexual partner who wanted to have unprotected sex.

"According to the logic of this ruling, any inmate who is HIV-positive and having sex behind bars should be placed in solitary confinement," Champ said in a statement emailed to *Xtra*. "There are serious human-rights implications, and I will be reviewing this decision closely and discussing [it] with my client." —*Adrienne Asch*

RFK Center: Ugandan president to reject 'fascist' anti-gay bill

A release issued by the Robert F Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights says Uganda's president has called the current draft of an anti-gay bill "fascist" and has promised to reject it.

A three-person delegation from the centre met with President Yoweri Museveni Jan 18 in Entebbe, Uganda, to discuss the legislation, a conversation that Archbishop Desmond Tutu joined by telephone, according to the release. Kerry Kennedy, president of the RFK Center, and Tutu had written to Museveni last month to express their concern about the bill, which lawmakers passed Dec 20.

At the Jan 18 meeting, Museveni said he plans to consult with his party and would like to introduce new legislation that seeks to protect minors from being coerced into sexual activity. The centre's delegation "strongly advised" that such a bill should focus on reinforcing already-existing child protection measures, not discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, and should respect rights to freedom of expression and association.

"I am pleased that President Museveni has upheld his promise to reject any piece of discriminatory legislation," Kerry Kennedy says. "While we are concerned with plans to move forward with a new bill, we urge the President to ensure it will not discriminate against LGBTI people nor imperil the legitimate work of human rights defenders in the country." —*Natasha Barsotti*

Gays welcome in Sochi, Putin says, but 'leave children in peace'

Russian President Vladimir Putin says that homosexuality is not a crime in the country and that gay people should feel "at ease" at the Sochi Winter Olympics, but they should "leave children in peace, please," the *Moscow Times* reports.

Putin made the remarks at Kranaya Polyana, an Olympic venue outside Sochi, the report says. The president has repeatedly issued assurances that there

will be no discrimination against gay people, who, he says, enjoy "the same rights and freedoms as everyone else."

In recent weeks, Russian authorities have released members of the Pussy Riot band, businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Greenpeace activists in what many observers see as a bid by Putin to offset ongoing criticism about the country's deteriorating civil liberties. Earlier this month, Putin also issued a less restrictive order than the one handed down last August governing demonstrations during the Winter Games.

But authorities must sign off on any public gatherings or protests before they can take place in designated areas, while the number of people allowed to participate in protests will be restricted. —*Natasha Barsotti*

Protester with rainbow flag detained in Russia during Olympic torch relay

Russian security guards detained a protester who unfurled and briefly waved a rainbow flag as the Olympic torch relay made its way through Voronezh, a city to the north of Sochi, where the Winter Games are set to begin in February.

In a video that captured the incident, Pavel Lebedev is briefly seen jumping and running with the flag as the relay passes by before being wrestled to the ground by two security officials, who leave him on the sidelines. He gets to his feet, holding the flag aloft, then another man in uniform, believed to be an Olympic official, leaves the passing relay and grabs him. Two more officials then bundle Lebedev to the side of the road, where a policeman detains him.

Lebedev later told the Associated Press that hosting the Games in Russia flies in the face of Olympic principles. —*Natasha Barsotti*

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Gays welcome at Sochi, Putin says,
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Love hurts

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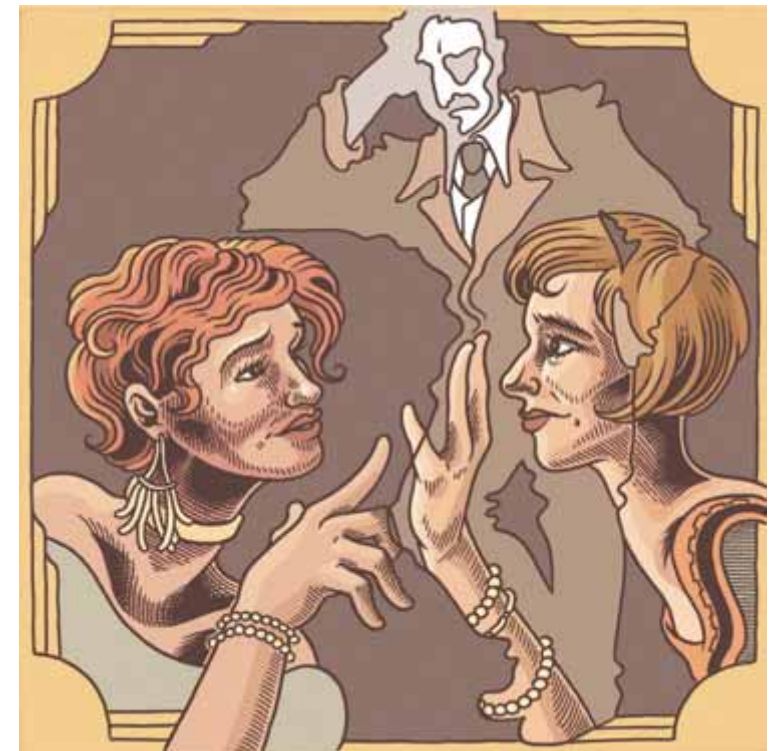
HISTORY BOYS
MICHAEL LYONS

A sad friend bemoans various relationship woes. Nothing is going right, so I somewhat callously advise that they break up. "But we're in love," my friend claims, as if that makes the pain all right. "Love" is a word thrown around as an all-powerful, cure-all social cement. Platitudes abound: love heals all wounds, love will save the day, love conquers all. As a younger queer person I found myself, closeted and repressed, in the throes of my first unreciprocated boy-crush on a guy my friends were all convinced was straight. I found solace in that great fount of knowledge, the melodramatic anthem "Love Hurts."

This age-old aphorism represents eons of broken hearts, jealous lovers, miserable families or violent obsessions distilled into countless disconsolate songs, stories and plays. Queer people have often felt the pain of love more poignantly, trapped in places where expressing our love could lead to ostracism or violence. That's why when Mabel Hampton, the subject of my last column, went to see *The Captive* at New York City's Empire Theater in 1927, she was enthralled by the play.

The Captive is a translation of French infantryman turned playwright Édouard Bourdet's *La prisonnière*. The domestic drama follows Irene de Montcel, a smart, beautiful, independent Parisian woman. Irene and her younger sister are daughters of a tyrannical ambassador who is taking a position in Rome, though Irene is set on staying in Paris and won't say why. Their father demands she accompany him, threatening to cut her off from family and finances. Irene convinces him that her childhood friend Jacques intends to marry her and persuades Jacques to go along with the scheme.

Jacques breaks off his romance with Françoise, a beautiful socialite, just before being visited by a Monsieur D'Aiguines. During this conversation, one of the most affecting in the play, the truth is revealed. Irene has been spending all her time with Madame D'Aiguines (who never actually makes an appearance). They are in love. "They are shadows," D'Aiguines warns. "They must be left alone to dwell in the king-



The Captive is a translation of French infantryman turned playwright Édouard Bourdet's play *La prisonnière*. ERIC WILLIAMS

dom of shadows!" Jacques confronts Irene about her relationship, and she promises that she can escape it with his help, that they will marry.

A year on, Irene and Jacques live a functional but ultimately loveless marriage. Jacques finds himself seeking out the company of Françoise, and the sudden appearance of Madame D'Aiguines shakes Irene's passive existence. "For a year I've been living with a statue, and that woman had only to reappear for the statue to come to life, to become a human being capable of suffering and trembling!" Jacques says. I don't want to ruin the ending, but a bouquet of violets arrives for Irene, a door slams, the curtain falls.

Hampton went back to see *The Captive* multiple times, noticing gay men and women attending the show together. She brought friends, one of whom introduced her to the woman cast as Irene, Helen Menken. "Boy, I felt so proud!" Hampton recalled. "And she says, 'Why do you like the show?' I said, 'Because it seems a part of my life and what I am and what I hope to be.' She says, 'That's nice. Stick to it! You'll be all right.'"

Fortunately, Hampton saw *The Captive* before the police raided the show and two other productions in February 1927. According to an account by *The Captive's* leading man, Basil Rathbone, a plainclothes police officer stopped the actors before their entrance and said, "Please don't let it disturb your performance tonight, but consider yourself under arrest!" After the curtain, 41 actors, directors and producers ended up actual captives and the play's successful run was ended prematurely.

These days, police wouldn't give a play like *The Captive* a second glance. I am free from adolescent heartache and am able to write publicly about my old crush, whom I eventually got over, though I felt a smug victory when I ran into him and his boyfriend at Pride a few years ago. While pangs of love sometimes anguish my shrivelled, jaded heart, at least I can listen to cheesy oldies and find more sympathetic shoulders than my own to cry on. Love hurts. X

History Boys appears in every issue of Xtra.

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**LOVE
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Strange creatures

Burma's brave LGBT community refuses to stay silent as the Southeast Asian country undertakes a historic political transition

BY CARLOS SARDIÑA GALACHE ■ PHOTOS BY VINCENZO FLORAMO

Last year, on a sweltering evening in July, a dozen old men sat around a podium in a cavernous hall in Mandalay, the second largest city in Burma (also known as Myanmar). A group of crossdressing men wearing shimmering outfits approached the podium to pay respect to the men by kneeling on the floor. The group at the podium included some of the eldest gay people in Mandalay, and they were receiving homage from the local LGBT community.

Burmese society places great importance on seniority, and the LGBT communities are no exception. But the ceremony serves another purpose. Because the gay veterans don't have children, at their advanced age they have more difficulties than heterosexual men, who have offspring to help make ends meet. Thus the ceremony also provided an occasion to give the men donations collected among the local gay community.

Many members of the Mandalayan LGBT community attended the ceremony, as well as several families with children. The fact that such an event takes place at all might give the impression that LGBT people are socially accepted in the country, but Burma is far from being a paradise for queer people. Only two weeks before the event, police detained 12 gay men in Mandalay. The men had reportedly been hanging out and chatting near the luxurious Sedona Hotel, a known meeting point for gay people in the city. A report from the Asian Human Rights Commission says the police allegedly beat and humiliated the men — including forcing them to

do “frog jumps” — in order “to correct their behaviour.” Police then released them on bail.

Such incidents are not new in a country where homosexuality is technically illegal. A penal code passed during British rule forbids “unnatural sex acts,” and no government has abolished it since Burma attained its independence in 1948. Yet only a few days after their arrest, the gay men who had been detained did something with no precedent in the country: instead of being cowed by the abuse or staying silent as the police had demanded, they spoke out at a press conference and denounced the abuses they had suffered.

A few months later, the country's new LGBT Rights Network publicly called on the government to do away with 19th-century laws that allow officials to discriminate against the LGBT community.

Burma has been undergoing a process of political transition ever since the generals who ruled the country with an iron fist for five decades decided to establish a quasi-civilian government two years ago. This transition has brought the relaxation of censorship in the media, the release of hundreds of political prisoners and the mushrooming of civil society organizations that would have previously operated clandestinely.

The LGBT communities are also organizing, giving birth to an incipient movement to reclaim their rights.

Perhaps the most famous LGBT-rights advocate is Aung Myo Min, a 47-year-old man who was able to return to the country last year after 24 years in exile for his political activism. Shortly after his return, he founded Equality Myanmar, an organization with offices

in Rangoon (also known as Yangon), the former capital and the country's biggest city, and Mandalay.

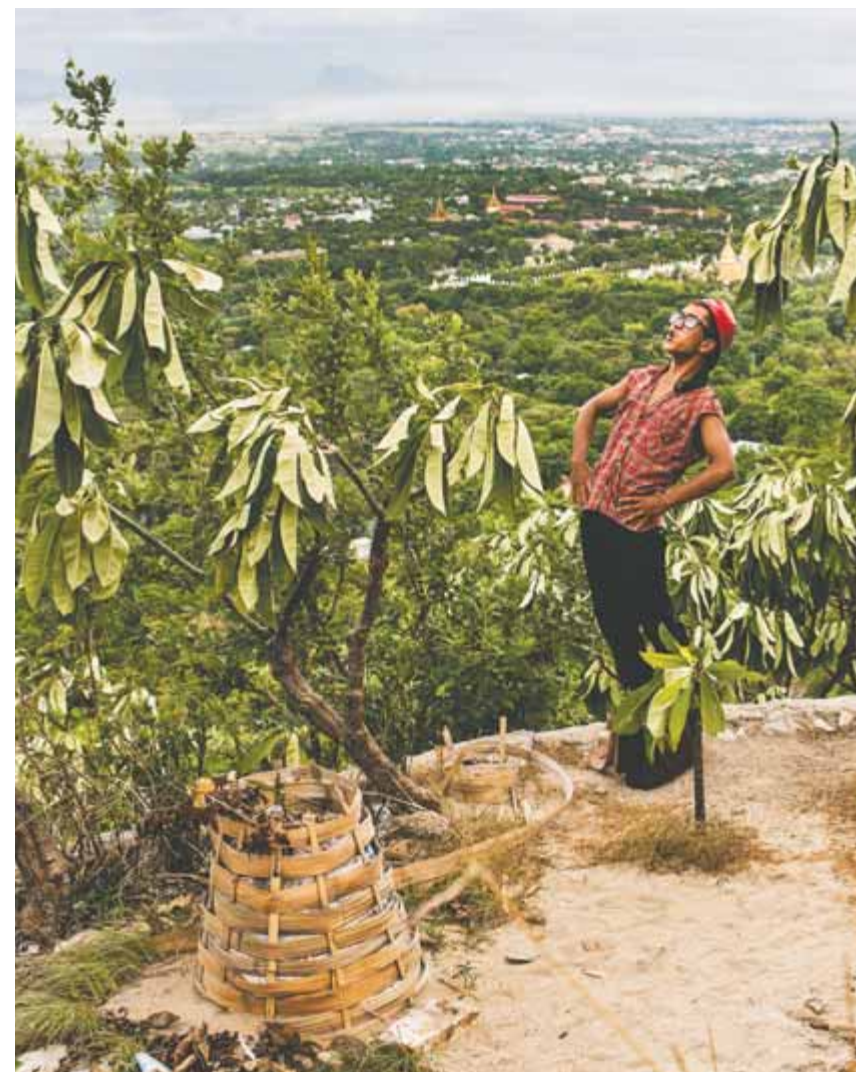
His is the first organization to work on LGBT rights in Burma; albeit, its scope is not limited to this. The NGO has been quite active since its inception: “In April, we were able to set up the Burma LGBT Rights Network, including small organizations from 13 areas across the country,” Aung Myo Min says.

He says the fact that the people detained in Mandalay decided to speak out indicates that something is changing in the Burmese LGBT community. “I see the empowerment from zero to hero, from nothing to something. Even if we face legal failure against the police, this kind of thing makes everyone more motivated and encourages them to stand up.”

But the LGBT communities don't have to surmount only legal obstacles and those set up by the police. Burma is a Buddhist-majority country where religion plays a big role — the prevailing mentality is deeply conservative, largely because of 50 years of almost complete isolation under the dictatorship. According to Aung Myo Min, many Buddhists regard LGBT people as “strange creatures” who are being punished in their present life for sins committed in previous incarnations.

Under these circumstances, a gay scene is almost non-existent. Other than in Rangoon — where some discos host monthly gay nights — few gay or lesbian spaces exist in the country. In Mandalay, a much more conservative city, there is not a single gay bar.

But there are festivals devoted to the *nats*, popular spirits much worshipped



and sometimes feared in the country, to which many people give offerings to improve their luck. In these festivals, intoxicated men dance dressed as their particular *nat*. Usually only men dance, impersonating both male and female *nats*, and the *nat* festivals have turned into meeting places for gay people.

Zin Min Htun, a 32-year-old makeup artist from Mandalay who prefers to be called by the feminine Ma Pwint, knows the world of the *nats* well. He also knows

how a gay man has to struggle in Burma. He realized he was gay at the age of 12. When he was 21 years old and at university, he decided to come out of the closet during a *nat* festival. Dressed as a female *nat*, he went to the festival to dance, but his father found him there and took him home, where he beat him for hours and kept him locked in his room for a week.

After that, he went to live in another city and pretended to be heterosexual. But after three years he moved back to



ABOVE: **TJ** shouts out “*Chit tai*” (I love you) from the top of Mandalay Hill, a complex of Buddhist temples. He’s shouting to his boyfriend, a boy he met on the internet who lives in the capital, Rangoon.

TOP RIGHT: **Harry** (second from left), a 17-year-old lesbian from a working-class family in Mandalay, with her friends from a local organization that promotes LGBT rights. The 17-year-old says she’s found a second family at the organization, where she is respected for who she is.

RIGHT: **Pouk Pouk**, dubbed the “fairy godmother” by some of her friends, is one of Burma’s most famous fashion designers.

LEFT: **Ma Pwint** is a crossdressing makeup artist from Mandalay who often dresses as a *nat*, or Burmese spirit, and dances at festivals across the country.

FAR LEFT: **Harry** says she’s always felt ridiculous dressing in typical girls’ clothes.



Mandalay to come out once and for all. He now lives with his parents, an old and conservative couple who still cannot bring themselves to accept his homosexuality, and is one of the best-known faces in the local gay scene. He dances often in *nat* festivals across the country.

Life is not any easier for lesbians. “Harry,” a 17-year-old student from Mandalay who volunteers in a local NGO promoting LGBT rights, also faces challenges at home. Her father, a cab driver, does not accept her homosexuality and her mother and grandmother accept it only reluctantly; her mother contents herself thinking that at least Harry is not in danger of getting pregnant, and her grandmother believes that this is just a phase that will pass.

But Harry does not have any doubt about her sexual orientation. This thoughtful and mature tomboy has always “felt ridiculous” dressing as a girl and feels “free dressing as a boy.” She

loves to play football, a sport reserved for men in Burma, and claims that she feels at home only in the NGO headquarters. “It’s like a second family” where she is respected in a way she rarely experiences elsewhere. In any case, she believes that lesbians are slightly less discriminated against in Burma because many people believe that tomboys will be men, widely regarded as superior to women, in their next reincarnation.

In this environment, some prefer to wait before being open about their homosexuality at home. That is the case for “TJ,” a 19-year-old boy who left his home village in Magway Division two years ago to study English in Mandalay. His friends in the city know his sexual orientation and support him, but he has not come out to his family. “I know my parents will understand me when they find out, because they love me so much,” he says in his soft voice, “but I will wait until they ask me to tell them.”

Not all LGBT people in Burma lead anonymous lives. One of the most famous fashion designers in the country is Pauk Pauk. The designs of this 42-year-old trans woman are demanded by actors, pop stars and women of Burmese high society. But her path to success has not been easy. It took her from the town of Mogok, where her mother ran a hairdressing business in which Pauk Pauk first learned the ropes, to Milan, where she studied design before eventually rising in the profession.

Pauk Pauk has suffered insults because she is different and at times has been under constant threat of sexual harassment. But now she is in love with an actor from Rangoon who fully accepts her as she is: “I’ve always felt like a woman, a Burma woman who has never sought easy sex, but rather a relationship of love.”

While Burma might be years from displaying the proverbial tolerance toward LGBT people found in its neighbour country, Thailand, incidents like the arrest in Mandalay are starting to generate some debate about LGBT rights among the public at large.

Discussions about same-sex marriage are not on the agenda, but there are people who are ready to bring them to the table: “I don’t know about others, but I’m ready for that. I would say that the debate should be activated,” says Aung Myo Min, with characteristically cautious optimism.

In the meantime, LGBT Burmese live their lives negotiating with their own identities in an environment where role models and support from others is scarce. And they struggle to find their place in a society where they are still looked upon as “strange creatures.” X



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Out in the City

“There’s just such a void in recent literature around the meth craze.” Greg Kearney ▶20

STRIKE A POSE

Are you a closet voguer? Do you have an inner schoolboy dying to come out? Is it time to sport your bizarre side on the outside? Harbourfront Centre’s #artlive Vogue Ball is your chance. Hosts Mother Trouble and Father Titus, from House of Nuance, answer a few essential newbie questions.

I’m new to the ball scene. What do I need to know?

Don’t be nervous and don’t be shy. People worry they have to dress a certain way or know certain language. The truth is you just have to be brave enough to attend. After that, it will all start to make sense.

Any tips for a low-cost, high-glamour look on a budget?

Two simple rules: The glue gun is your salvation. Glitter is your enemy. Open up your mind because almost anything is possible.

Someone’s throwing me shade. What’s the best way to respond?



Lady Ice Nuance shakes at the Bizarre Ball last summer. JACKLYN ATLAS

On the runway, darling! As the song says, all queens think they’re fierce. But the runway is the truth-teller. Storm that shady bitch when she steps on the runway and have the judges pick you as the top dog. Then she’ll know to eat it without you saying a word.

I live in a very tiny apartment with roommates. What’s the best way to work on my runway walk?

One of our babies, Chili Nuance, is walking a runway all the time. He puts on his music and pumps it out

in the street. The streets are the biggest runway of all. And all the ice this time of year teaches you to adapt and learn to handle shady opponents. But the better question is why aren’t your roommates walking with you in your very tiny apartment? Shady fuckers. — Chris Dupuis

The #artlive Vogue Ball is Sat, Feb 1, 8pm at The Brigantine Room at Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W. harbourfrontcentre.com

Celebrating a year of sex-positivity

Sapphic Aquatica will soon celebrate a year of providing a rare space where women and trans people can get their freak on, with amenities ranging from a well-equipped dungeon area to a flirty hot tub.

When Fatima Mehtab, the party’s organizer and host, took over the party about a year ago, it was little more than “a date on a calendar, with nobody backing it or promoting it” and was known primarily as a lesbian event.

One of the biggest improvements to the party has been its shift from a women- and trans-women-only event to one that welcomes women and all trans folk (or, to put it simply, everyone except cisgender men). Over time, Mehtab started to “feel that it was a little transphobic to say some trans people could come but not other trans people, and not genderqueer people,” so for the summer of 2013 she adjusted the mandate. As the party’s inclusivity increased, so did its attendance, and Mehtab is eager to make further improve-

ments to the party going forward.

In addition to Oasis Aqualounge’s four floors of fun and debauchery, heated outdoor pool and playrooms, Sapphic Aquatica’s anniversary party will feature a performance from the drag duo Jasai & Chocolate; prizes, courtesy of The Stag Shop on Church Street; and DJ Nix spinning hip hop and R&B. Those who make a cash donation to Supporting Our Youth (SOY) will be entered for a chance to win a Dream Rabbit Vibrator. Mehtab plans to incorporate a fundraising element into future events as well.

Regular Sapphic Aquatica attendees will be interested to learn that beginning Feb 23, the event will move from the last Tuesday of each month to the last Sunday. —Jeremy Willard



Some regular Sapphic Aquatica attendees. JASNA FILIPOVIC

Sapphic Aquatica’s First Anniversary Party is Tues, Jan 28, 8pm–2am at Oasis Aqualounge, 231 Mutual St. oasisaqualounge.com

Picking up the slack

Like Ylvis’s song “The Fox,” regular lesbian club nights tend to burst into existence and then disappear all too quickly. But that’s not the case with two newish Toronto monthlies: Bush Beat and Back to Church.

Bush Beat is a laid-back west-end party that features music from a variety of genres and eras, with a focus on retro dance tunes (1980s and ’90s), and often draws a somewhat older crowd (30 and up). Like Back to Church, it is open to all queer people but is geared more toward the ladies.

Bobby Valen, owner of the Henhouse, where the party happens, encouraged Jenny Watson to create this regular monthly event after seeing the success of her Pride 2014 happening, Bible Camp. Watson enlisted her girlfriend, Jess Tollefsen, to help organize the party. “It’s a great, creative thing for us to do together,” Watson says. “There aren’t enough

women’s nights in the west end, so it’s nice having a space for that.”

Back to Church is a very different kind of party, which focuses on newer dance hits, tends to appeal to a younger crowd, and takes place smack in the middle of the Village. Brittany Leigh, the party’s promoter, says, “In terms of music, the Church Street crowd likes stuff that they know, like top 40.”

As its name suggests, the party was created, in part, as a response to parties ending or moving away from the Village. Anushki Bodhinayake, resident DJ of Back to Church, explains, “After Slack’s closed, I noticed that more and more lesbians were leaving Church Street and moving to the west end, and I thought it was so sad, so I came up with the concept of Back to Church, because I wanted to bring people back to Church Street.” — Jeremy Willard

Bush Beat takes place the second Saturday of each month at Henhouse, 1532 Dundas St W. henhousetoronto.com

Back to Church takes place the second Friday of each month at Church on Church, 504 Church St. churchonchurch.com



Brittany and Anushki, from Back to Church.

DESPERATE TIMES

Toronto author Greg Kearney's first novel is hilarious, harrowing and — dare we say? — heartwarming

BY SCOTT DAGOSTINO

Canadian novelists are trapped in “a caste system,” Russell Smith argued recently in *The Globe and Mail*, in which all attention is paid to literary awards and promoting only a few potential prize-winners. This blockbuster mentality can lead only, he fears, “to a homogenized literary landscape and no place at all for the weird and uncategorizable.”

This would be a tragedy for Canadian literature and for Toronto writer Greg Kearney, whose first novel, *The Desperates*, is weird, uncategorizable and deserving of a place on any award shortlist. Is it Kearney's fearless look at cancer, AIDS, crystal-meth addiction, awkward rim jobs and personal failure that will keep *The Desperates* off the CBC's mainstream radar? Or is it the fact that he somehow makes all of this hysterically funny? Propriety be damned, Kearney is that rare writer who drags us to the darkest of places while making us laugh the entire time.

“The book is all about frenzy,” Kearney says, keenly observing how a person's carefully cultivated persona, illusions, even sense of self can be utterly stripped away in the throes of drug abuse, sexual obsession or, worst of all, love.

In 1998 Toronto, 19-year-old Joel is painfully realizing that he's not particularly good at anything, much less a career as a phone-sex operator, but it's over the phone that he meets Edmund, who he immediately decides is the love of his life. Edmund is a middle-aged widower “quietly, even contentedly, dying” but surprised to find himself vital again, thanks to the just-introduced cocktail of anti-viral drugs. Meeting diva-obsessed hustler Binny introduces him to the thrills and terrors of a crystal-meth spree as the two of them search for Toronto's most punishing top.

Kearney says that his partner, while reading the drafts, “was really resentful towards Binny, who I just find so charming. Wrong or right, Binny's survival skills have sustained him, he knows his appetites, and there's really no subterfuge with him, which I adore. I loved riffing off him and pouring all my arcane 1980s pop lore into him.” While the ritual Joel endures to remove the evil spirit of Fleetwood Mac's Christine McVie is the book's silliest set-piece, there's a lot of “diva realism”

for fans, and Kearney was careful with his name-dropping. “You have to be!” he says. “I'd be read to filth by my peers if I fucked any of them up!”

More importantly, Kearney was cautious in depicting an era that's had disturbingly little attention. Edmund represents a huge group of gay men battle-scarred from the AIDS crisis and looking for release.

“There's just such a void in recent literature around the meth craze,” Kearney says. “It's briefly touched upon in *How To Survive a Plague* and other documentaries, but there's been no comprehensive text or work of fiction on this... and I have a rare perspective in that I was on the sexual frontlines totally sober.”

While he avoided the meth pipes offered to him, Kearney says, the parties that featured them “were way hotter, initially at least, than most turgid, awkward group-sex scenes.” Crystal meth has been a scourge to the gay community this past decade or so but, as Edmund experiences in the book, immediately liberating, too.

“Marc [Côté, the book's editor] was quite happy to have it be a cautionary tale on every front, but I kept thinking, ‘What would Mikiki think?’ [A former HIV-positive prevention officer at the PWA Foundation], Mikiki works in HIV/AIDS and harm-reduction and his politics are flawless. I needed to make sure it was sex-positive, that Binny was depicted as a sex worker with some agency and not just some vampire, that the drugs were rendered accurately.”

It's this compassionate fairness that permeates *The Desperates*, even as Kearney makes savage fun of his characters' failings. Joel's grandmother, for example, is a character he loves “who's based pretty clearly on my own maternal grandmother, who was just a bilious old hag,” he says with a laugh.

By novel's end, Kearney has left most of his characters stripped of all their delusions, defences and even dignity, but it's only in that place that real life can begin for the ones who survive the experience. Even its author is left with nothing.

“I'm not sure what to do next,” Kearney says. “I feel like I've used up everything in my jewellery box for this novel. There's really no autobiography left to mine at this moment. It's all there.” X



THE DESPERATES

By Greg Kearney
Published by
Cormorant Books
Available at Glad Day
Bookshop
598 Yonge St

Greg Kearney's debut novel, *The Desperates*, is a fearless look at cancer, AIDS, crystal-meth addiction and awkward rim jobs.
ALEJANDRO SANTIAGO





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Host with the most

How to throw the greatest (and gayest) award-season get-together



TORONTO AT NIGHT
RYAN G HINDS

As queer-folk, we have an inalienable right to a good party. Everyone loves a good Pride/Halloween get-together, but what really separates the party-hosting wheat from the chaff is award season. January to March finds us in full swing: the Golden Globes, the Grammys and the big-daddy-top of them all, the Oscars! After last year's behemoth, where the likes of Adele, Barbra Streisand and Shirley Bassey held us in thrall, it's time to gear up both predictions and recipes. All queers worth their salt will either be attending or hosting a party.

A good award show treats its nominees with respect and class, but a good award-show party should treat its attendees with respect and humour. If you're hosting on Oscar night, put some thought into your menu; if generous helpings of Bayou boeuf à la 12 Years a Slave seems likely to offend socially conscious guests, consider Gravity-defying cake for dessert. If you want a boozy night, get creative and serve up Blue Jasmine cocktails, Wolf of Wall Street whiskey sours, or Captain Phillips jolly roger shooters (complete with skull-and-crossbones shot glasses). For added messiness, have a shot every time some hapless winner or presenter does the "Now I'm going to turn the wrong way before they lead me offstage" dance.

Fortunately, oscar.com has a handy printable ballot sheet to help plan your party, so why not pick up a couple of movie passes to award whoever scores highest? Decent prizes liven up Oscar's sometimes tedious proceedings, so non-official categories like First to Trip on Dress, Who Will They Leave Out Of the In Memoriam Section?, Fakest Tears and Best Shade Throwing (particularly fun during the red-carpet portion), will help your soirée be the belle of the ball.

Speaking of the red carpet, dress codes are *de rigueur*. Some choose black-tie formal, while others like to go with ideas from that years' nominated movies. Depending on how savvy your friends are, dressing in costume as your favourite celebrity who died this year or as best Oscar-night fashion ever (you'll get lots of Chers, Björks and Sally Kirklands) also work well.

Even the most devoted cineaste among us knows how ridiculous award shows are, but that's all part of the fun; anyone expecting moments of importance needs to check herself. I was surprised at the recent outcry surrounding Jared Leto and Michael Douglas's acceptance speeches at the Globes. Actors making speeches at the GGs are drunk and nervous, and even if they weren't, expecting intelligence or activism at the Golden Globes is like expecting foie gras from McDonald's. These are the people who gave Pia Zadora an acting award! Some of the voters don't even cover film full-time, so it's like accepting an award from the people who publish grocery-store flyers. Another key to a good award show party: don't take things so seriously! We are celebrating make-believe, so make it fun and whimsical.

The Grammys, on the other hand, are notoriously hard to plan a party around. Think the Oscars run long? The Grammys have 82 categories, and even allowing for the ones that aren't broadcast, that's a helluva lot. When you factor in performances, tributes and in memoriam — in addition to nominees and speeches — it becomes an almost nightmarish abyss of award-show hell. My advice is to save your energy for the Oscars and invite only other award-show junkies and hard-core music fans... and open the bar early, because it's going to be a late night.

Beneath the fun, frivolity, glam gowns and sappy speeches, what are all these silly award shows actually celebrating? It's not movies or music; it's our shared experiences in the dark. These are things best shared with others, so it's only fitting

we come together with friends to celebrate them. For the other days of the year, we do so in theatres, in clubs or bars, in the car with the radio, or by sharing stuff online; but now it's time to break up the monotony of a Canadian winter with a little homemade glamour and revelry. Get those invites designed and sent, polish up the silverware and make sure you've got a big-screen TV! My fellow queers, it's time to exercise our undisputed right. May I have the envelope, please? X

Toronto at Night appears in every second issue of Xtra.



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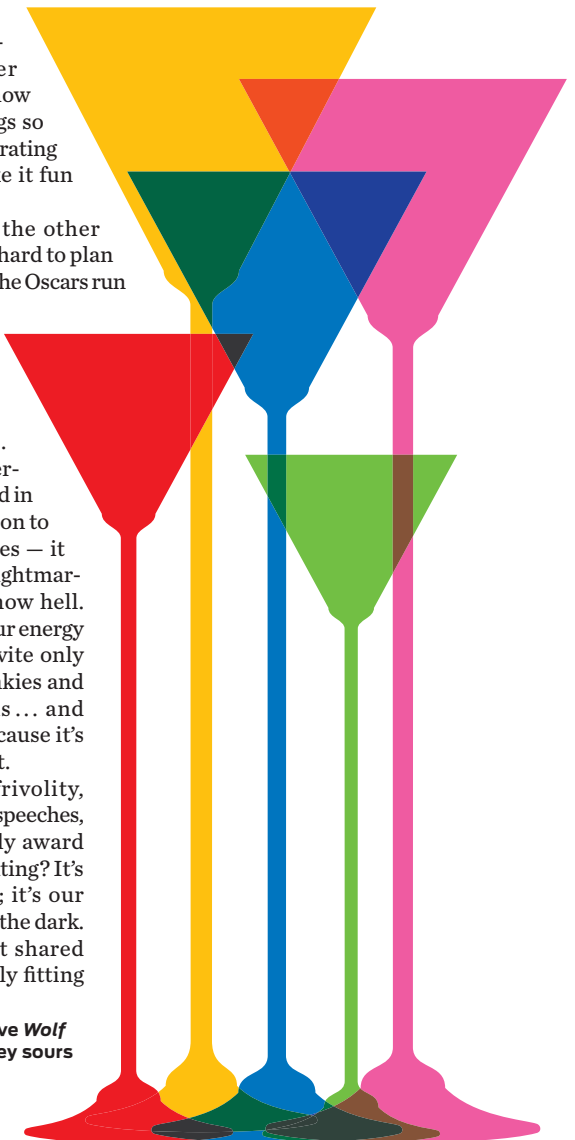
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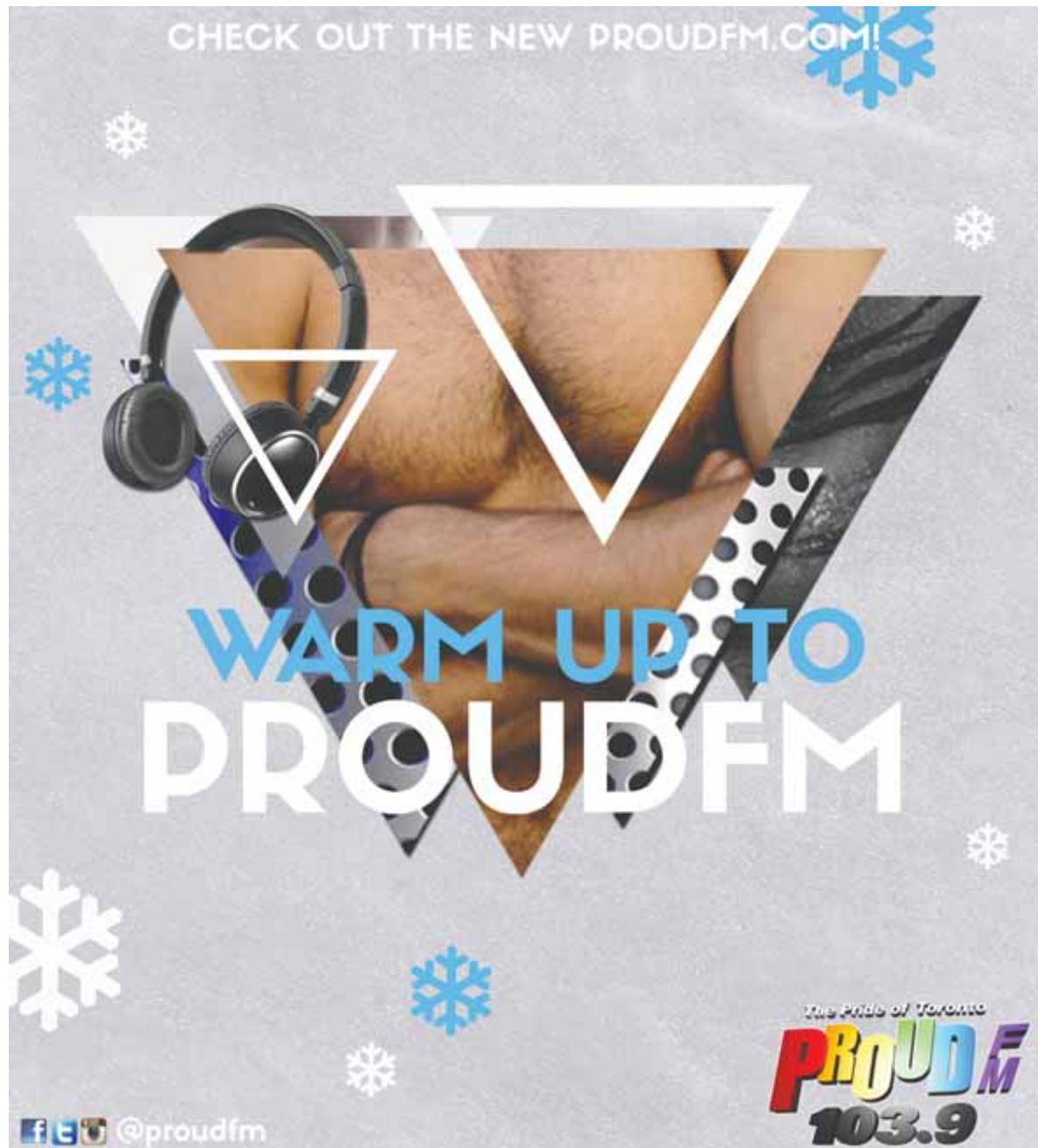
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WHAT'S ON



Dina Martina — Flying Beaver,
Fri, Feb 14 & Sat, Feb 15

FOR MORE EVENT LISTINGS, GO TO DAILYXTRA.COM

COMEDY & CABARET

Chris Tsujiuchi: Back in the Saddle

After his successful three-night holiday run at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, the cabaret marvel returns to the Pubaret with special guests. Sun, Jan 26, 8pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. \$10 advance, \$15 door. pubaret.com

Queer as Fuck

In a departure from the usual standup-comedy format, this month's event comprises stories, sketches and characters from such performers as Marco Bernardi, Danz Altwater and the Haus of Bot. Wed, Jan 29, 9:30pm. The Steady, 1051 Bloor St W. PWYC. thesteadycafe.com

Write On

This open-mic series provides a platform for queer people of colour to flaunt their talents, from spoken word to dance. For more info, contact writeonopenmic@gmail.com. Thurs, Jan 30, 7:30pm. Glad Day Bookshop, 598 Yonge St. \$5. gladdaybookshop.com

Jeni Walls as Jeni Walls

After the success of her show *Liza Live!* Walls performs as herself for the first time in four years, playing her favourite pop and rock music and answering the question "Who

is Jeni Walls?" Fri, Jan 31, 7pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. \$15 advance, \$20 door. pubaret.com

Comedy, Cabaret and Coffee Talk: The Anniversary Show

Brassy cabaret juggernaut Ryan G Hinds holds court with musicians Vivek Shraya and Chelsea Manders and stripper Dainty Box. Fri, Jan 31, 9pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. \$10 advance, \$15 door. pubaret.com

Dina Martina

The cult drag sensation returns to Toronto with a new show full of malapropisms, unattractive costumes and unnecessary dancing. Fri, Feb 14 and Sat, Feb 15, 7 and 9pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. \$20 advance, \$25 door. pubaret.com

HEALTH & ISSUES

The 519 Legal Clinic

A free, accessible service for low-income people. Volunteer lawyers provide legal advice, referrals and help with forms and letters. The confidential and private visits are first-come, first-served. Bring any necessary documents. Every Thursday; registration 6–6:30pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. the519.org

LGBT Rights in India

A panel presentation on the recent decision by the Indian Supreme Court to criminalize homosexuality. For more info, contact juliapyr@yorku.ca. Mon, Jan 27, 12:30–2:30pm. Osgoode Hall Law School, Rm 1001, 92 Scholars Walk, York University. Free. osgoode.yorku.ca

SOY Monday Night Drop-In

Queer youth ages 14 to 29 gather to watch movies, participate in art projects and special workshops, and seek the support of Supporting Our Youth's community mentors. For more info, contact jcaffery@sherbourne.on.ca. Every Monday, 5:30–8pm. Sherbourne Health Centre, 2nd floor, 333 Sherbourne St. Free. soytoronto.org

Bisexual Men of Toronto

A peer-support and discussion group focused on community and solidarity. Tues, Jan 28, 8–9:30pm. Sherbourne Health Centre, Rm 1077, 333 Sherbourne St. Free. torontobinet.org

Positive Routes to Recovery

A peer-led support group for gay men working through substance-abuse issues. Takes place the first and third Tuesday of each month. Tues, Feb 4, 6–8pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. pr2r.org

FTM Support Group

Trans men share their experiences in a supportive environment. Takes place the first and third Friday of each month. For more information, contact ftmtoronto@yahoo.ca. Fri, Feb 7, 7:30pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. the519.org

LEISURE & PLEASURE

Being Gay in the Canadian Forces

Lieutenant Stephen Churm talks about his experience as a gay man in the Canadian Armed Forces. RSVP by Thurs, Jan 30 to meet@thefraternity.org. Mon, Feb 3, 5:45–9pm. Courtyard Marriott, 475 Yonge St. \$35 members, \$40 guests, \$20 students. thefraternity.org

Queer Confessions

A new monthly reading series focused on LGBT memoirs. Thurs, Jan 23, 7pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Donation suggested. queerconfessions.com

Queer Swing Dancing

The queer swing dance club, Swingin' Out, offers a 45-minute lesson for beginners. For more info, contact swinginout@yahoo.ca. Every Thursday, 6:30pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. PWYC—\$6. swinginout.ca

#artlive Vogue Ball

A ball that's sort of like a competitive fashion show, but with more dance and fierceness. Features commentary by Mother

Jeni Walls — Flying Beaver,
Fri, Jan 31 MARINA DEGTEVA



TKO OC-Pucci Monroe-Hall and music by DJ John Caffery. Sat, Feb 1, 8pm–2am. Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W. \$10. harbourfrontcentre.ca

On Dreams and The Green Cat

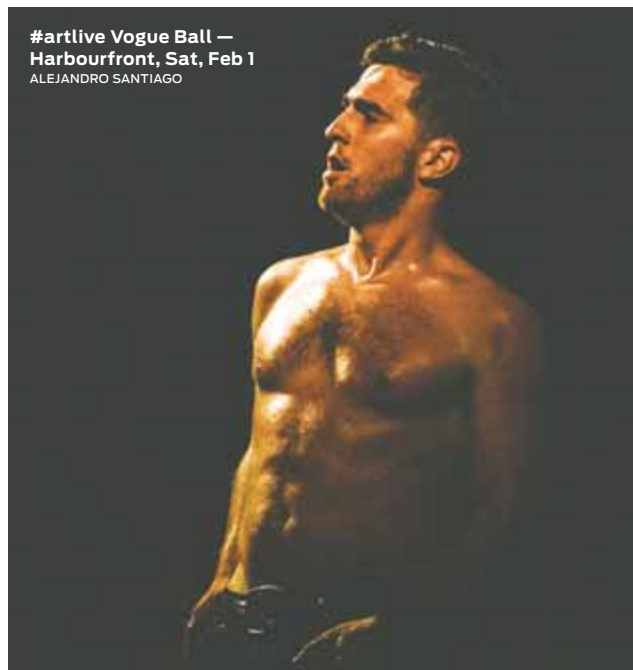
An exhibit of new art work focusing on André Ethier's depictions of "unlikely narratives in various stages of unfolding" and Ron Gill's images of couples. Runs until Sat, Feb 15. Paul Petro Contemporary Art, 980 Queen St W. Free. paulpetro.com

THEATRE

Manon, Sandra and the Virgin Mary

In parallel monologues, the pious Manon contemplates her purchase of an extravagant new rosary, while Sandra, an irreverent drag queen, tries to decide what she will wear tonight. Runs until Sun, Feb 2, various showtimes. Buddies in Bad Times, 12 Alexander St. PWYC—\$32. buddiesinbadtimes.com

#artlive Vogue Ball —
Harbourfront, Sat, Feb 1
ALEJANDRO SANTIAGO



Idiot's Delight

A host of eccentric and international figures — arms dealers, showgirls, revolutionaries and lovers — spend a weekend in the Italian Alps while dark clouds of war roll in. Runs until Sat, March 1, various showtimes. Young Centre for the Performing Arts, 50 Tank House Lane, Distillery Historic District. Cost varies. soulpepper.ca

Roar: A Solo Play about Beefy, Burly, Brawny Love

A workshop presentation of Spencer Charles Smith's new play about the spectrum of identities in the bear community and Smith's unapologetic desire for bearish men. Wed, Feb 5 and Thurs, Feb 6, 8pm. Videofag, 187 Augusta Ave. PWYC. videofag.com

Untitled Feminist Show

Young Jean Lee's Theatre Company presents a play almost entirely without words and entirely without clothing. Without gender signifiers, its six performers "define themselves

for themselves" in a "celebration of possibility." Runs Wed, Feb 12–Sat, Feb 15, various showtimes. \$39. harbourfrontcentre.com

The 35th Rhubarb Festival

For two weeks, Buddies in Bad Times and the surrounding area become a hotbed of artistic experimentation, featuring new works in performance art, dance, music and more. Runs Wed, Feb 12–Sun, Feb 23, various showtimes. Buddies in Bad Times, 12 Alexander St. PWYC—\$20. buddiesinbadtimes.com

SEX & BURLESQUE

Men 4 Men: Touch Exchange

Men explore sensuality by giving and receiving full-body touching. For more info and to register, contact phillipcoupal.ca. Sun, Jan 26, 1–6pm. Awaken Studio, 270 Carlaw Ave, Unit 102. \$45. phillipcoupal.ca

Pansexual Playground

DJ Johnny B Goode spins electro pop and dance remixes, while people of all sexual orientations and gender identities enjoy each other's naughty bits in a relaxed, sexy atmosphere. Sun, Jan 26, 8pm–3am. Oasis Aqualounge, 231 Mutual St. \$30. oasisaqualounge.com

Chubs at the Tubs: Winter Edition

Big handsome gay men and their admirers get cruisy in the 12-man Jacuzzi, relax in the sauna or play a round of pool. For more info, contact bearsinexcess@gmail.com. Sun, Feb 2, 3–8pm. Spa Excess, 105 Carlton St. \$6–42. spaexcess.com

Be Mein Valentine

The burlesque troupes Skin Tight Outta Sight and Boylesque TO present two nights of Weimar era Berlin-themed Valentine's naughtiness, with performances by the Stocking Stripping Lederlads and the Teutonic Terrors in Uniform. Thurs, Feb 13, 8pm and Fri, Feb 14, 9pm. The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. \$25–40. gladstonehotel.com

CLUB SCENE

Thurs, Jan 23

Crews & Tangos Thursday The Butch & The Bitch, with Tyler Uptight and Daytona Bitch, at 9pm; DJ Craig Dominic in Tangos and Vocal Rehab karaoke, with Elyse, in the Zone, both at 10pm; Drama Queens, with Ivory Towers and guests, at 11:30pm. Crews & Tangos, 508 Church St. No cover. crewsandtangos.com

Stumpgrinding DJ Mary Mack on decks for dancers and prancers the fourth Thursday of every month. Buttons, patches and screen-printed T-shirts with queer-empowering slogans for sale. 10pm. The Beaver, 1192 Queen St W. No cover. beavertoronto.com

Tangos and Club Lite Friday, with DJ Relentless, in the Zone, both at 10pm; Bitchapalooza, with Daytona Bitch and special guest, at 11:30pm. Crews & Tangos, 508 Church St. No cover. crewsandtangos.com

Sat, Jan 25

Cue POC DJs Sissy Fuss and WizQid spin old and new school while celebrating WizQid's birthday. Hosted by Hiba Al-a-Mode. 9pm. Cold Tea, 60 Kensington Ave. No cover.

Surprise Party DJ 4est spins '80s and '90s at the west-end party, where a lucky, random winner gets a surprise gift and a stack of wrapped goodies to open from Cardinal Rule and Amsterdam Brewery at midnight. 10pm. Cardinal Rule, 5 Roncesvalles Ave. No cover.

Pop Machine DJs Shane Percy and Aural spin disco, top 40 and debauchery-encouraging dancefloor faves. 10pm. WAYLA, 996 Queen St E. \$5 before 11pm, \$10 after. waylabar.com

Crown Jewels — WAYLA, Fri, Jan 31

Fri, Jan 24

LGBT Salsa Social: Winter Warm-Up January installment of a new monthly salsa party. The new round of classes starts officially Feb 2, with a mini beginner lesson included with entry. 8pm. Glad Day Bookshop, 598A Yonge St, 3rd floor. \$5. lgbtdance.com

Crews & Tangos Friday Fierce and Flawless, with Ivory Towers, Katherine Hytes Dior and guests, at 8:30pm; Indigo Vibes, with DJ Roxanne, in

Crush TO: Under the Sea The all-inclusive party for sex-positive, like-minded people calls for merfolk, fishy fashion and marine-themed accessories. Burlesque and drag shows, with private consent-monitored booths. Hosts Jesse, Caitlin and Khadeja provide a safer space for all. 10pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$10. id-tap-that.com

Eurovision DJs omgblog.com, Miss Margot and Jeff Freeman are back

for one night of pure Euro dance, Italo disco and electro. 10pm. Henhouse, 1532 Dundas St W. No cover. henhousetoronto.com

Fly 15th Anniversary DJs Stephan Grondin and Shawn Riker spin house and tech birthday beats for the big one-five. 10pm–5am. Fly, 8 Gloucester St. \$15 advance. flynightclub.com

Sissyboy Hissyfit DJ Orange Pekoe spins danceable pop that won't stop for lovers, BFFs, FWBs and friends you want to sleep with. Performance by MC Jazz. 11pm. The Beaver, 1192 Queen St W. \$5. beavertoronto.ca

Squirt.org Best Men's Ass Contest Sofonda Cox returns to host with Devine Darlin, while the butt-exposing boys onstage compete for \$300 in cash prizes. DJ Mark Falco on decks. Midnight. Woody's, 467 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Sun, Jan 26

Underbear: Frozen DJ Stephen Knight spins for minimally clad men in tighty whiteys and styling briefs at this underwear party hosted by Brad Hill and James Forrester. The Clothesline is back, with underwear from Andrew Christian, Cellblock and more at discount prices. 4–10pm. Black Eagle, 457 Church St. No cover. blackeagletoronto.com

Beaver Karaoke Choose from the 131,000-plus songs from Adam's geeky library. Belt out a tear-jerking ballad or get others singing along with pop faves. 11pm. The Beaver, 1192 Queen St W. No cover. beavertoronto.com

Mon, Jan 27

WAYLA's '90s Trivia Night Kaleb Robertson and Miss Fluffy Soufflé share hosting duties at the retro quiz event, with dance moves, audio clues and more. Madonna, Nirvana and Fly Girls galore. 7pm. WAYLA, 996 Queen St W. No cover. waylabar.com, kalebrobertson.ca

Gay Dodgeball Night DJ Blue Peter on decks for the return of the boys you won't be dodging in the bar. 8pm. Woody's, 467 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Tues, Jan 28

Gay Trivia Gina Hamilton and Bunni Lapin are quiz mistresses for this weekly event, with lots of fun prizes to be won. 9pm. O'Grady's, 518 Church St. No cover. ogradyschurch.com

Varsity Tuesday Sofonda Cox hosts the amateur So You Think You Can Strip? competition, with a \$100 cash prize. 11pm. Remington's, 379 Yonge St. \$5; no cover with student ID before 11pm, \$2 after. remingtons.com

Wed, Jan 29

Dirty Bingo Gina Hamilton hosts the weekly game night while talking dirty to her guests and giving out prizes. 8pm. O'Grady's,

518 Church St. No cover. ogradyschurch.ca

Punk Rock Bingo Punk-rock drag queen Jenna Syde performs for the dauber-crazy drinkers. Proceeds go to various Toronto charities. Hosted by Daddy-O. DJ Triple-X on decks for the afterparty. 9pm. The Beaver, 1192 Queen St W. No cover. beavertoronto.ca

Thurs, Jan 30

Ladyplus Party DJ Todd Klinck is on decks for the meet-and-socialize event for T-girls, their friends, allies and admirers. Spontaneous T-girl go-go shows and private VIP dances throughout the night. 8pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$5 before 11pm, \$10 after. club120.ca

Fri, Jan 31

El Convento Rico Friday Russella, Devine Darlin and Sofonda Cox take centre floor, performing drag for the mixed crowd; 11:30pm and 1am shows. DJ Level spins top 40, dance and Latin faves. 9pm. El Convento Rico, 750 College St. elconventorico.com

Crown Jewels: A Tribute to Grace Jones DJ Aural spins all-Brit pop, paying homage to Ms Jones. Mahogany Brown is onstage for a tribute performance. 10pm. WAYLA, 996 Queen St E. \$5. waylabar.com

Fly Pop DJ Sumatation spins top 40 and dance faves to warm up the winter-chilled crowd. 10pm. Fly, 8 Gloucester St. No cover before midnight, \$4 after. flynightclub.com

Sat, Feb 1

The #artlive Vogue Ball House of Nuance marks a new year of live art, with DJ John Caffery throwing down runway beats and Mother Trouble Nuance hosting. Dress code (encouraged): authentic self, whether it's taffeta or lederhosen. 8pm. 235 Queens Quay W, Brigantine Room. \$10. harbourfrontcentre.com

Tramp DJ Jacqie Jaguar spins the girls-who-love-girls party for

AX CHNY — Courthouse, Sat, Feb 1

DANNY DAN



Eurovision — Henhouse, Sat, Jan 25 JAMES LOURENÇO

female-identified folks, friends and respectful admirers. 10pm. The Steady, 1051 Bloor St W. No cover. thesteadycafe.com

AX CHNY DJ Alex spins K-pop, J-pop, top 40 remixes, EDM and vocal house as AX pays tribute to the year of the horse. Performance by Sofonda Cox and the AX Maximus go-go dancers. 10pm. Courthouse, 57 Adelaide St E. \$10 advance; \$5 door before 10:30pm, \$10 until 11:30pm, \$15 after. meetmeatx.com

Rise DJ David Picard on decks for the boys, beards, bulging biceps and a few girls, too. Hosted by Chris Munro and Dale C. 10pm. Church, 504 Church St. \$5 before midnight, \$10 after. facebook.com/churchonchurch

Pitbull: FK Winter** DJs Sumatation and Dwayne Minard spin house and dance beats at a beach-themed edition sure to ease the midwinter blues. 10pm. Fly, 8 Gloucester St. \$10 advance. flynightclub.com

Tapette DJ Phil V hosts the afterparty for the Tapette poster-boys photoshoot. Come see the new French faces and dance like you're in France. 10:30pm. Henhouse, 1532 Dundas St W. \$5. henhousetoronto.com

Short Circuit DJ The Robotic Kid and guest spin deep house, tech and nu disco for the edgy electronic crowd. 10:30pm. Black Eagle, 457 Church St. No cover. blackeagletoronto.com

Sun, Feb 2

Chubs at the Tubs By popular demand, the celebration of big, handsome men and their admirers is moved forward, with guys coming from all over to enjoy the boys and the bathhouse. 3–7pm. Spa Excess, 105 Carlton St. \$6–39, plus \$5 deposit (returned at checkout). spaexcess.com

Mon, Feb 3

Singular Sensation: A Musical-Theatre Open Mic Amateur crooners perform their favourite show tunes with a live band every Monday night. Hosted by Jennifer Walls. 10pm–1am. Statlers, 487 Church St. No cover.

Tues, Feb 4

Reveal Me Daytona Bitch hosts a burlesque social of virgin vixens and professional peelers the first Wednesday of every month. 8pm. Rivoli Back Room, 332 Queen St W. \$10. aprofessionaldistraction.com

Wed, Feb 5

Zipperz/Cellblock Wednesday The Toronto Wranglers get stomping, 7–10pm; Toronto Drag Kings take the stage for the weekly drag-king show, 11pm–1:30am. Zipperz/Cellblock, 72 Carlton St. No cover. facebook.com/zipperz

Submit your event listing to listings@dailyxtra.com. Deadline for the Feb 6 issue is Wed, Jan 29.

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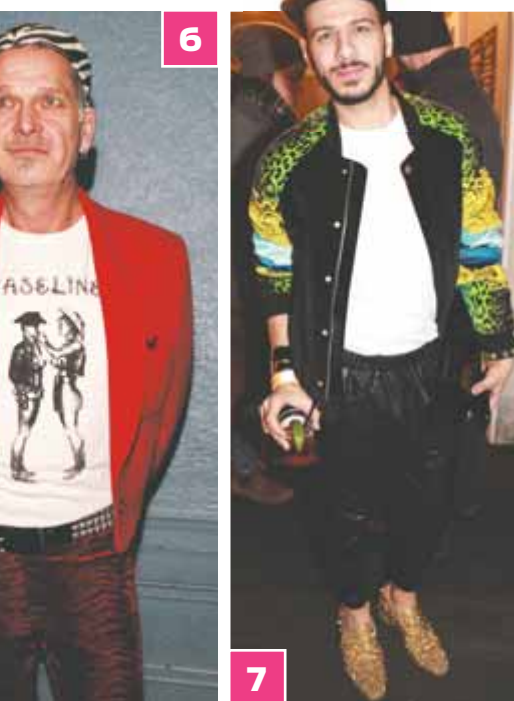
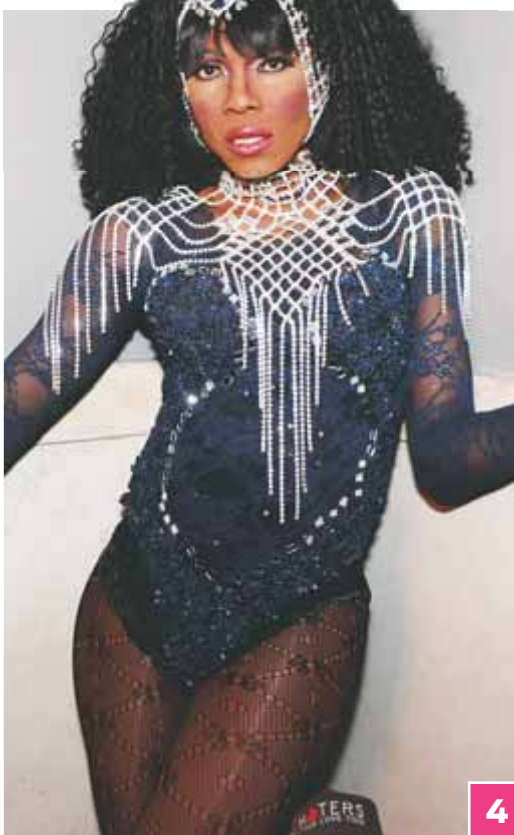
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XPOSED

ANNA
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1 ▶ Be warned: everything is happening in this column. Where to start? How about with (from left) OUTv's **Wilma Fingerdoo**, **Scarlett Bobo** and **Brooke Lynn Hytes** at *RuPaul's Drag Race* Battle of the Seasons? Stiletto fascinators, Barbie-pink fans, thunderbolt pants and a Swarovski full-body stocking outfit that would cause catfights between Mariah and Britney. This is the level that was brought to Battle of the Seasons. My word, it's hot.

2 ▶ I didn't want it to get too queenie — the column's been a little queenie lately, I know — but it's just so hard to get good photos of normies. The queens give good face, as they say. At Battle of the Seasons, we saw some really beautiful and ecstatic revellers, like **Michelle** and **Karla**.

3 ▶ Every now and then we capture a tender moment like this one, between a clothing-optional **John Caffery** and **Jinkx Monsoon** at Battle of the Seasons. This is the kind of caress we wait in the shadows, like snakes in the garden of Eden, to capture.

4 ▶ There is some serious Donna Summer vibe reading from every pore of **Devine Darlin's** body, which is just the kind of vibe we were hunting at Battle of the Seasons. The pearl overlay is a lovely finishing touch to an ice-capades-worthy ensemble. But the hair and bedroom eyes really sell the Donna Summer easy-breezy attitude.

5 ▶ **Pandora Box** is just one of the many talented and drag-alicious performers from *Drag Race's* Battle of the Seasons. It was really off the chain, with drag royalty coming out in their finest.

6 ▶ **Peter's** outfit is so on point, I feel like I need to write it down to replicate it on one of my butcherier nights out. First off, serious kudos to him for pulling off two shades of red in the jacket and pants and making it work. The touch of zebra print up top works with the old-school Vaseline top, too. On *Star Search*, he'd get the full five gold stars.

7 ▶ Haters need love, too, as **Salern's** hat proclaims. The only thing I'd change on this outfit is the cran and soda in his hand. It should be something with a stem or on the rocks; nothing in between for this swagger. I love the pants, I love the shoes, I love the jacket and the hat; just needs some big Rick Ross glasses and a bourbon and this little number is finger-lickin' good.

8 ▶ Fast forward a few hours past Battle of the Seasons and we found ourselves at **Myles Sexton's** debut collection, inspired by Thailand's jewel bug. The jewellery and even this lovely gown on **Vanessa** (pictured with the designer) were made using the bug as adornment. So, so sexy. Myles is always nailing it.



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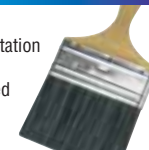
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BODY BREAK

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Checking in with Jeremy: Week 2

I'm a couple weeks into my four-month workout campaign at Evolution Fitness and still pear-shaped.

My first session with my personal trainer, Sam, included a lot of squat-curl-presses (a difficult manoeuvre that combines squats — lots of comical almost-twerking involved there — and shoulder presses), which turned my legs completely to jelly, making it very difficult to walk for several days. By the end of the session, I was not only still pear-shaped, but jelly-legged. Some kind of jellied pear — maybe a chutney. It seems appropriate, given I spent much of the session talking to my hulking trainer about my grandmother, a notorious jam enthusiast. Don't ask me why.

Never fear: we didn't expect my physique to improve much after only a couple weeks. Sam is guiding me expertly through my workout twice a week, from cable rows to planking — god, I hate planking — and I have

improved somewhat. I no longer walk like a drunkard after doing squat-curl-presses (though I get a bit red in the cheeks after thrusting my ass out so whorishly), I'm able to lift more weight all the time, and I relish cardio.

The mantra of my nutritionist, Dr Abs, seems to be "You are at the beginning of a long journey," which is sort of amusing — I feel a bit like Bilbo being coerced by Gandalf to join the dwarves in raiding Smaug's hoard — but his enthusiasm for nutrition is so impressive and contagious that I've already embarked on the first leg of my journey to Lonely Mountain. Besides which, he made it very clear early on that he would brook no challenges to his dietary decrees, stating matter-of-factly, "You will eat what I tell you to eat!" Through his stern guidance, I've increased my protein consumption (ahem), tried to make my first meal of the day the largest (each meal decreasing in size as the day progresses) and adjusted



After a couple weeks of training, Jeremy no longer walks like a drunkard after doing squat-curl-presses.

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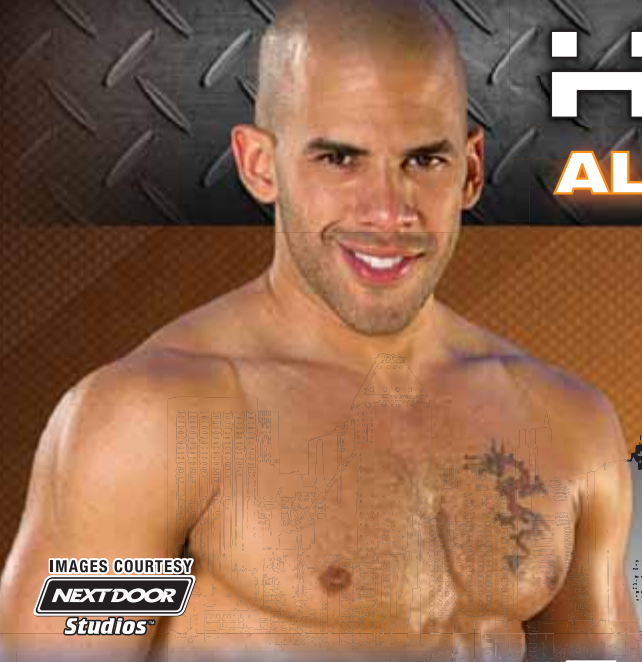
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