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Electoral culture shock



GUEST EDITORIAL
TRISH KELLY

It's Pride Sunday in Vancouver, Aug 3. Coffee in hand, I start the day off with an interview on CKNW radio talking about my recent run and withdrawal from Vancouver's upcoming municipal election. The rest of my day will consist of writing op-eds and planning several forums on diversity and representation in politics. Pride for me today is about asking what's next for our community.

We've come a long way, it's true. Not only do we host the best annual party this city holds; we have also made strides in representation in Vancouver politics. Back in 1986, Gordon Price was elected to city council as Vancouver's first openly gay councillor. In 2002, Ellen Woodsworth, an out lesbian, and Tim Stevenson, an openly gay man and former MLA, were elected to city council. Currently, we have Trevor Loke on the parks board, Stevenson still on council and, if we all vote, Vision parks board candidate Coree Tull, founder of the Double Rainbow Dodgeball league, may join Loke.

With this smattering of queer community representation in municipal politics, why is it significant that I am no longer in the race? What does it say about politics that as a queer candidate, my history as a sex-positive artist and activist made me a target for a smear campaign?

I think it says something we can't skim over.

I think in my case there are some sexist biases that compound my vulnerability: our society is still uncomfortable with women who claim their sexuality and regularly shames and silences women with accusations of sexual promiscuity. But I also think my short-lived run shows queer candidates stand a chance as long as they

don't evoke sex as part of their queer identity.

In the vetting process, I gave Vision Vancouver a detailed list of the types of sex-positive work I have done, including editing and contributing to several gay and lesbian erotica publications and doing burlesque in pre-camera-phone times, but it did not occur to me to make these things a big part of my candidate bio. In a nomination race with nine candidates, I was the only one with actual experience working on policy with the parks board. That seemed more important. And ultimately,

As gay-friendly as we think our city is, a monologue of mine from a Fringe Festival play that I wrote and performed in 2000, in which I talked about the invisibility I felt as a young single person and admitted to a kind of self-love that included masturbation, became what a blogger titled "Another Nail in the Coffin for Vision Vancouver."

I did not feel a need to focus on my sex-positive, queer life because I was told by Vision that it would not be an issue.

But Vision was wrong. It became an issue. As gay-friendly as we think our city is, a monologue of mine from a Fringe Festival play that I wrote and performed in 2000, in which I talked about the invisibility I felt as a young single person and admitted to a kind of self-love that included masturbation, became what a blogger titled "Another Nail in the Coffin for Vision Vancouver."

To see this in print in the context of a queer newspaper is mind-blowing. In our queer culture, where sexual acceptance and celebration are foundational values of our community, it seems absolutely bizarre.

We have built for each other a beautiful, loving community, and the edges seem to be expanding for us, allowing us more representation in the broader societal context. And we keep sending out scouts beyond the edges, each one carrying a little bit more of who we are and testing acceptance. This time we have been told that sex-positive performance art is too much of who we are and may even undermine our ability to make decisions about off-leash dog parks or playground equipment.

I'm not knocking our existing LGBT

representatives who have challenged the narrow frame of acceptance and electability. They have fought hard to get us where we are. I actually worry for them that the attention I am drawing to this issue may make the voting public — the ones Vision anticipated would not accept a parks board commissioner who has talked about desire — realize that these champions of our community actually have sexual lives.

As a community, one of the gifts we have to offer other communities is our knack for celebration. We use spectacle and celebration to show others how good it can feel to overcome shame together, in community. Until the masses lining our parade route understand that our pride is not just spectacle, but an embodied statement that sexual expression and agency are everyone's birthright, our queer politicians will never really be safe.

We still have a long way to go to true equality.

Trish Kelly is a performance artist, community activist and co-editor of With a Rough Tongue: Femmes Write Porn.

FEEDBACK

Whatcott's Pride

Vancouver Pride and the actual Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster should jointly sue Bill Whatcott and his "followers" who participated in this ruse ["Anti-Gay Activist Slips into Pride to Hand Out Fake Condoms," dailyxtra.com, Aug 6]. It seems trivial, but considering the Supreme Court of Canada's judgment against him, this would seem to be a blatant case of contempt of court — the Supreme Court, no less!

Whatcott even admits it: "The Supreme Court found me guilty of hate speech and I have been breaking that ruling ever since, and this is part of it," he told *Xtra*. "I'm still out there. I'm loud and not ashamed of my moral and theological protest. This is spiritual warfare. This is a war against the Supreme Court of Canada and the homosexual agenda."

So I say take his word for it and take him (and his fellow co-conspirators) to court.

DAVID MYERS
VANCOUVER, BC

This is disgusting. If you're going to be a bigoted asshole, at least have the balls to be honest about it. Fucking coward.

BILL BARKER
FACEBOOK

Is that a closet door creaking open? It sounds like Bill Whatcott was having such a good time at the parade that one of these years he may be marching in it for real. Maybe not, but I wouldn't be surprised.

IDIZZYI
DAILYXTRA.COM

All he really managed to do was spoof himself.

SARAH
DAILYXTRA.COM

He spent four grand to hand out anti-gay literature to a queer and queer-allied crowd. Not exactly the best bang for the buck.

GORDON NORE
FACEBOOK

It's quite hilarious, really, that they spend all this money and time at gay pride trying to dissuade gays who are celebrating being gay to not be gay, while being disguised as gay.

MICHAEL BERARD
FACEBOOK



For the 99 percent who didn't get his disguised message, he was a positive addition to the parade. And for the other one percent, he provided a living, breathing reminder that the fight isn't quite over yet.

Attempts to institute protocols that might prevent him from returning to the parade would mostly discourage real people from creating fun and random floats, and it probably wouldn't prevent a hard-core protester from making his/her way into the parade.

STEPHEN SAMUEL
VANCOUVER, BC

This guy gives us accepting, good Christians a really bad name. I am a gay Christian. Nowhere did Jesus say homosexuals shall be persecuted. He said God is a loving God. So this minister is not only a coward, but a liar and manipulator, which is against the 12 commandments.

JASEONWILLIAMPHIPPS
DAILYXTRA.COM

Good luck, Trish

Happy to see you haven't freaked out about this and wrapped yourself up in martyrdom, but consider this as a place where more work needs to be done. Bodes well for your political future --- good luck. ["What Trish Kelly's short political run says about electable queers," dailyxtra.com, Aug 8].

PS: Really annoys me that a city that wallows in fantasy sexuality on TV, the internet, advertising, fashion, and just walking down the street, can't stand to have the subject discussed seriously, personally and realistically by a live human being.

DON HIX
DAILYXTRA.COM

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

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XCETERA

IN MEMORIAM

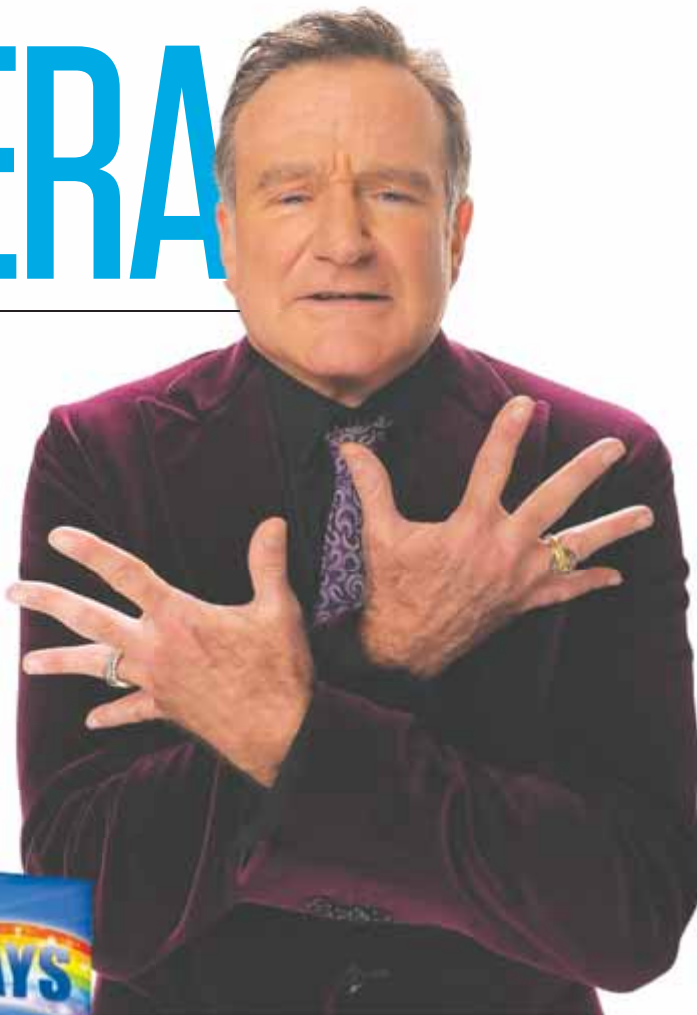
SHAZBOT!

A few of the late Robin Williams's memorable lines:

On the biblical first couple: "I feel like Adam when he said to Eve, 'Back up, I don't know how big this gets.'"

On the Vatican and gay sex: "The pope is always like, 'Homosexuality is an abomination.' Time out! You're dressed like Freddie Mercury's stunt double. . . and your purse is on fire."

On Good Morning, Vietnam: "You know, this whole camouflage thing, for me, doesn't work. You know, you go in the jungle, make a statement. If you're going to fight, clash. You know what I mean?"



GOD LOVES FAGS

BILLBOARD BLITZ

The Facebook God of Love is duking it out with the Westboro Baptist Church's God of Hate, raising \$40,000 to spread his message of love via billboard in the late Fred Phelps's home town, Topeka, Kansas.



BOOBIE PRIZE

Non sequitur nuttiness

"The gay pride parade in Columbus is 500,000 strong — why? Because the women go topless."

— Dr Patrick Johnson, director of anti-abortion group Personhood Ohio, who wants the state's lawmakers to ban the public baring of breasts



THINKSTOCK.COM

SEX SURVEY SAYS ...

ORGASMIC TALES

75%

Lesbians who say they reached the big O during sex with familiar partner

As opposed to...

62%

Straight women

And...

58%

Bisexual women

The study, in which more than 6,500 people between the ages of 21 and 65 took part, was published in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*.

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BERTJAN POT

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DAILY ^{dailyxtra.com} **Xtra**

Festival criticized for pro-Israel ad

Three films pulled, festival head says review underway

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
NATASHA BARSOTTI

Three filmmakers pulled their films from this year's Vancouver Queer Film Festival (VQFF) following its decision to accept advertising from a pro-Israel advocacy group, Yad b'Yad.

Patty Berne (*Sins Invalid*), Can Candan (*My Child*) and Coral Short (*We Don't Want to Marry*) issued statements criticizing inclusion of the ad in the festival's guide. Mik Turje, another director whose film *Hands in the Dirt* was screened at the festival, also wrote a public letter to the VQFF — as did a number of advocacy groups, including the Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG), a student-run social justice centre; Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA); and queer, trans and intersex people of colour organizations (QTIPOC) — expressing disappointment about the publication of the ad in the festival's guide.

The ads, they say, are part of a bid to “pink-wash” Israel's image to distract attention from its treatment of Palestinian people and instead focus on the country's gay rights record. They have variously called on the festival to apologize for including the ad, develop a policy about pink-washing, adopt a boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) strategy toward Israel and undertake self-education about Palestinian human rights.

Salaam Vancouver, a queer Muslim group, and Trikone Vancouver, a queer South Asian group, also withdrew as community partners of the festival because of the inclusion of the ad in the guide.

“As a queer organization and me as a South Asian queer, I really don't want us to be used to justify the settler colonialism in Palestine which is pinkwashing. We need to make sure that our queer organizations know what's going on so they know they are being used,” Trikone's Fatima Jaffer told *Xtra*.

Salaam Vancouver's Imtiaz Papat, who spoke briefly before the screening of Moroccan film *Salvation Army*, stresses that his group is not calling for a boycott of the festival, but wants the festival to change its approach.

In his letter to festival organizers, Candan says he withdrew his documentary because the festival had not taken a “public and vocal stand against the Israeli government's unacceptable policies.”



Out On Screen's executive director Drew Dennis says the feedback the festival has received is being tracked and will be part of discussions that will take place this fall.
OUT ON SCREEN

Acceptance of the ad is not a signal that the festival has taken “a position about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict,” says executive director Drew Dennis in a July 28 statement on the festival's website. (Full disclosure: *Xtra* ran a similar Yad b'Yad ad in its July 31 issue.)

“The feedback we've heard loud and clear has highlighted for me that VQFF does not currently have an advertising policy equipped to deal with the complexities of this issue,” Dennis writes.

Dennis says the festival's board and staff do not review every single advertisement before publication.

The organization's board and senior leadership team are undertaking a review to make sure

its advertising and programming honour its mandate to celebrate queer lives through film, Dennis notes, adding that much of that work will take place in the fall. (See Guest Column on page 10)

In her statement, Berne says she appreciates the VQFF's effort to think through what she calls its “organizational lapse,” and that it's now trying to develop a protocol about the ads it accepts. But, she says, the deeper issue is that community members have approached the festival before about its internal education on Palestinian human rights. She suggests that the festival's acceptance of the ad seems to indicate that they have not engaged in those discussions.

Dennis says the festival has received a wide range of feedback about the complexities of the issue, and recalls that last year's festival programming included a panel discussion entitled “Why and Why Not? Cultural Boycott?” that debated the merits of boycotting Israeli cultural products.

“This is a conversation that the organization has been having, and will continue to have,” Dennis says. “I've been listening, listening and listening to so many viewpoints. All of that is being tracked and will be brought forward to discussions in the fall.”

Dennis says the mandate of the organization is to bring communities together to provide a platform for safe, open and respectful dialogue with a diversity of viewpoints.

Turje, co-director of the short *Hands in the Dirt*, decided not to withdraw the film from the festival “as an act of good faith” that the issue will be addressed in the fall.

Turje acknowledges that the VQFF has no position on the issue, yet says in a Facebook post that “choosing neutrality in a situation of oppression is a form of complicity.”

The Gaza crisis is a queer issue, Turje argues, because the “project of pinkwashing” involves LGBT people and cultural producers have a responsibility to use media for social justice. “Though the mandate of the VQFF may end at celebrating queer lives through film, your moral obligation does not,” Turje says.

Dennis says it's been reassuring to have conversations with directors like Turje. “They recognize the value of being able to bring their film, their topic, their issue because there are so many conversations that we can be having around the films.” Asked if the festival intends to adopt any of the policy approaches outlined by the film directors and advocacy groups, Dennis reiterates that the festival has heard the feedback and concerns, and those will be part of board discussions.

Dennis notes that funds received from the ad will go to Just Vision, an organization which says its goal is to help foster “peace and an end to the occupation by rendering Palestinian and Israeli nonviolence leaders more visible, valued and effective in their efforts” through film and multimedia platforms.

Yad b'Yad's volunteer chair Jonathan Lerner says the group is “deeply hurt” by the festival's decision to “treat our ad and our ad revenue differently,” and calls the action discriminatory. X

With files from Nathaniel Christopher.

For more on this story, go to dailyxtra.com.

Who's in Burnaby's new coalition?

Gay-policy opponents small part of BFC: spokesperson

POLITICS
NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER

Two leaders of the 2011 battle against the Burnaby school board's anti-homophobia policy are running for office in the municipal election this November.

Former Parents' Voice president and spokesperson Heather Leung and former school trustee candidate Helen Ward are running for school board and city council as part of the Burnaby First Coalition (BFC), which was established to challenge the ruling NDP-affiliated Burnaby Citizens' Association (BCA).

BFC mayoral candidate and spokesperson Daren Hancott describes the new party as a pro-business, pro-sustainable development and pro-outreach alternative. "I'm going to try and do something that needs to happen to ensure that Burnaby is better represented at city hall," he says. "In general, I want

to change the culture with transparency, accountability and cooperation."

Hancott, who abandoned his campaign for the Conservative nomination in the Burnaby North-Seymour federal riding to run for mayor, says he had no knowledge of Parents' Voice's stance on LGBT issues or the contentious debate that took place prior to his current campaign because his children were enrolled in private schools.

"I believe everyone is equal, and that is the premise of our policy," he says. "I don't know what happened in the past or the politics of it. We had discussions on lots of issues, and that's not an election issue as far as I'm concerned. We are a multi-issue party. That issue has not come up in any of the meetings I have had with the general public, door knocking or during policy formation."

Parents' Voice formed to fight the passage of Burnaby's anti-homophobia pol-

icy for schools. Despite several protests that attracted hundreds of opponents, the policy was unanimously adopted by the BCA-dominated school board. BCA subsequently won the mayoral race and took every seat on the school board and city council for the second election in a row.

Hancott downplays Parents' Voice's involvement with the new coalition and says they are not a "big part" of BFC.

"I would say that human rights, dignity, acceptance and respect are pretty big issues," says BCA trustee Larry Hayes, who was chair of the Burnaby school board in 2011. "And guess what, Mr Mayoral candidate: these are your people. Your team are people who have shown to have those Neanderthal ideas. So I think it's something he certainly should be taking a lot more seriously."

BFC school board candidate Heather Leung, former president of Parents' Voice, did not agree to *Xtra's* request for an interview. In her campaign biography she says she will protect parental rights and the moral integrity of children and ensure parents are notified in advance of any controversial lessons,



Former Parents' Voice candidate, Helen Ward, who is running for city council with the Burnaby First Coalition, says the school district's anti-homophobia policy should be amended.

NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER

speakers or events taking place in their child's classroom.

Leung does not define what might count as controversial, but in June 2011, she described the passage of Burnaby's anti-homophobia policy as "the darkest day of the Burnaby School Board history."

"It is an irresponsible act to pass this policy," she told *Xtra* at the time. "Administration, regulation and strategy in this policy — it opens a big window for the pro-gay community to recruit, recruit, recruit our children into their camp. In the meantime, they ignore the health risks behind it and the medical-expense burden in this country."

Hancott says that even though Leung's statement was neither useful nor helpful, she has a right to her beliefs. "Heather is a parent and her kids are in Burnaby schools, and all parents are entitled to their beliefs."

While Hancott deems the passage of the anti-homophobia policy a "foregone conclusion" and says he has no plans to revisit it, BFC council candidate Helen Ward says it should be amended to clarify the rights and duties of parents with respect to the education of their children.

"The incursion of the state into the family sphere is increasing," Ward says.

For more on this story, go to dailyxtra.com

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QUEER CONTENT AT VLAFF 2014



Bad Hair

Venezuela/Peru/Germany, 2013. Dir: Mariana Rondón

Junior is nine years old and has stubbornly curly hair. He wants to have it straightened for his yearbook picture, like a fashionable pop singer with long, ironed hair. This puts him at odds with his mother Marta, a young, unemployed widow. Already overwhelmed by what it takes to survive in the chaotic city of Caracas, Marta finds it increasingly difficult to tolerate Junior's fixation with his looks.

FRI, AUG 29 | 7 PM | THE CINEMATHEQUE
SUN, SEPT 7 | 3PM | THE CINEMATHEQUE



Quebranto

Mexico, 2013. Dir: Roberto Fiesco

Coral Bonelli began life as "Pinolito," a child actor in the rough- and-tumble film industry of 1970s Mexico. The son of a mariachi and an actress, he was a natural performer—a passion his adoring stage mother, Lilia, soon steered into a winning film career. After the movies gave way to the demanding cabaret circuit, "Pinolito" announced he would henceforth be a woman—surgery and hormone treatments to follow. With the aging Lilia standing by, Coral copes with social prejudice and an already unforgiving show business environment.

TUES, SEPT 2 | 9:15 PM | THE CINEMATHEQUE



The Way He Looks

Brazil, 2014. Dir: Daniel Ribeiro

Leo is a teenager like any other, grappling with his first feelings of sexual attraction while trying to wrestle a bit more independence from his over-protective parents. The only difference is that he is blind. When a new student Gabriel arrives in class, a whole new world suddenly opens up right in front of him. As Leo becomes aware of his feelings for Gabriel, it is hard for him to know if the arm Gabriel holds out to him is just one of friendship or something more.

THURS, SEPT 4 | 7:15PM | VANCITY THEATRE
FRIDAY, SEPT 5 | 9PM | THE CINEMATHEQUE



New West stages fifth Pride

Street party draws thousands

PRIDE
NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER

New Westminster's fifth annual Pride festival drew thousands, with organizers and participants describing the event as the Royal City's biggest and best to date.

The Aug 8 to 16 festival, which included more than 20 events, culminated with a party on Columbia Street, featuring three performance stages and three beer gardens that extended from the bars onto the street. Event organizers estimate that the Aug 16 street party attracted more than 10,000 people, compared to the 1,300 who attended last year's festival.

Between 2010 and 2013, the festival was held at Tipperary Park near New Westminster City Hall.

"We knew we were going to be growing, and the idea was really to give the City of New Westminster and the businesses down here a real opportunity to move and grow with us," says New West Pride board member Shelly Reinhart. "We had people in the city say, 'You know what? I think it's time you move from Tipperary Park where there's more room because you're going to bust out,' and Columbia Street is the perfect place to do it."

The new event, which was free and open, allowed organizers to integrate Pride with Columbia Street businesses and passersby. Tyler James Nicol, man-



Miz Adrien charms a young fan at the New West Pride festival Aug 16.
NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER

ager of Gamedeals Video Games, says the event doubled his Saturday sales.

"We've had people of all ages come in, from older gamers to brand new kiddie gamers, who were all just brought down from the Pride party here," he says.

Nicol notes that Gamedeals supports many LGBT and LGBT-inclusive events in the area. "We're really happy to be a part of that community because the nerd community is so vast and you cover all these things, so there's no reason to not include as many people as possible in it."

The Health Initiative for Men

(HIM), which has supported New West Pride since 2010, used the event to spread the word about its new clinic at 40 Begbie Street in New Westminster.

Acting mayor Jonathan Cote, who read the Pride proclamation, thinks the newly expanded celebration represents the best of the city.

"New Westminster has just embraced Pride over the last five years, and the business community and all the residents really become engaged," he says. X

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OUT

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Local festival, global issues

Out On Screen responds to heated debate over ad

**GUEST COLUMN
DREW DENNIS**

The Vancouver Queer Film Festival turned 26 this year. The festival featured 86 films from around the world, a special focus on women-directed cinema, and a spotlight on LGBTQ rights in Russia. The festival provides an opportunity for Vancouver's queer communities to come together for discussion, reflection, celebration, and yes – disagreement.

In this year's program guide, we accepted and ran an ad from a local volunteer-run group. The advertisement depicted an Israeli flag flying alongside a rainbow flag, and sent congratulations on our 26th year.

I have heard from some that the ad is celebratory and represents bridge-building between Jewish and LGBTQ communities. I have heard from some that this ad has felt hurtful in light of the tragedy occurring in Gaza. We've heard loud and clear

from folks who feel that, by accepting this ad, we've strayed from our values as an organization. And we've heard loud and clear from those who can't imagine why a local film festival would take a position on this issue. Within our own organization, there exists a diversity of viewpoints; our own internal conversations have been robust.

We've received letters from community groups, activists, filmmakers, and individuals. One letter reminded us of the famous ACT UP motto: SILENCE=DEATH, explaining that choosing neutrality in a situation of oppression is a form of complicity. Some letters have expressed frustration, calling the ad pinkwashing, and asking that we formally sign onto the academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Another letter asked if we'd be having this conversation if it were another country's flag flying beside the rainbow flag?

Three filmmakers chose to can-

cel their film screenings, and while disappointed, we honoured their requests.

As a leader, there are many times when I do not have all the answers. This is one of them.

Many of us in Vancouver – including me – live with much privilege. As someone who is queer, as someone who is transgender, I know what it is to own a body that is inherently political. I know what it feels like to be called upon to take a stand, to draw a line and to make a decision that isn't easy. I know what it feels like to feel the strength of others – my allies, my friends, even those whom I've never met in places I've never visited – as they have drawn a line and risked their own lives in support of someone like me.

Our board of directors and our leadership team will be convening in the fall to review our own internal policies and review processes. Our goal will be to chart a clear way forward, with decisions that ensure our programming and advertising honour our mandate and uphold our values.

We're listening and considering all feedback we receive; if you'd like to share your thoughts, please email me at feedback@outonscreen.com.

Telling our stories and celebrating queer lives is the Vancouver Queer Film Festival's raison d'être. We're activists. We've never shied away from difficult conversations – but I have to say, this one feels different. Our staff and volunteers are being drawn into debates on social media, and friendships are being tested. The discussions are intense, political, personal. This is tough. And like most things in life, the things that really matter often are. This will require open minds and open hearts.

I am continuously impressed, honoured, and proud of our team, who brings such dedication and care to this discussion, and am appreciative of Vancouver's queer and trans communities for holding our feet to the fire – especially on the big issues.

Drew Dennis is the Executive Director of Out On Screen, the non-profit organization that produces the Vancouver Queer Film Festival and the Out in Schools anti-homophobia/anti-transphobia program



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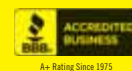
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How did we ever do it?

Bending the rules in pursuit of good times



**STILL GO
KEVIN DALE
MCKEOWN**

It must be difficult for a club-going emo boy in 2014 to imagine the semi-secret world my generation inhabited when we wanted to be among our own. We had more clubs, tubs, and pubs available to us — about twice as many by my calculation — but they were also harder to find and more protective of our privacy.

Unmarked storefront entrances led to tiny lobbies where you'd wait for Dennis or Doug or Big Bird to buzz you through to the next level of heaven or hell. You brought your own booze and paid dearly for your mixer.

It was an underworld where we groped about in search of friends and lovers, barely believing that what we were doing was now legal. We bent and snapped many other rules in our pursuit of good times.

It was a scene made possible by the entrepreneurial skills of a handful of gay men, and except for the formidable and beloved dyke Charlie Brown, who managed several of these clubs, it was an all-male proprietorship scene until The Quadra. These men were also looking for friends and lovers and figured out that to do that we needed out-of-the-way places to gather.

Current oral tradition is that The Montreal Club, an upstairs hideaway on East Hastings, may have been our first gay “club,” modeled on the “Joe-sent-me” booze cans that proliferated through the '30s and '40s. It was a going concern in the early '60s, which is when and where young John Mikulik got his first taste of the business — until the owners' mounting unpaid bills finally closed the doors.

John went on to a real-life career in retail and later real estate, but in the late '60s he was lured back to the wild side and took over the lease on the recently-opened New West Steam Baths. Again, previous management's unpaid bills played a role.

About this same time Keith Rotsey had, with the help of a rumoured sugar-momma, launched the B&B (the Betwixt and Between) at the south end of Richards Street, and by 1971 had got himself into a situation that culminated in a drive-by shooting that left a bullet hole in the club's



John Mikulik (pictured) was among the handful of gay men who managed the semi-secret world of clubs that provided a generation with the spaces to meet friends and lovers. ANDREW GILMORE

front door. Keith was understandably anxious to get out of town and John and partner Jim Brand were able to take over the lease at a very sharp sticker price.

John and Jim called their new hot spot The Playpen, which became an instant sensation as Vancouver's first leather-scene hangout. They were among the founders of The Border Riders, our first gay bike club, which continues to meet monthly at the PumpJack.

The club's first Labour Day Weekend Slave Auction was memorable. At least 800 sweaty guys came and went over the evening in a venue that was probably licensed for no more than 100.

“Everyone was taking their clothes off, it was so hot, and so many guys were sitting up on the bar to get out of the jam that we had to keep pushing them off because the lag bolts holding the bar in place were coming out of the concrete,” John remembers.

“I can still picture us pulling out of the parking lot in our new Lincoln after closing, with the truck bulging with cash!” he adds.

The Playpen South was also the home of Vancouver's first “back room.” John installed a powerful fan to air the

place out (the pot smoke billowing out into the back alley kept the neighbours happy). He also built a convenient ledge against one wall, and turned out the lights. I'll never tell what went on there, but Mona Lee might.

“The shit we got away with back then,” John says with a sigh. “How did we ever do it?”

John and Jim got away with a lot of other shit in a couple other locations. In 1975, they opened the Playpen North. Within the year Vance Campbell was exploring his own options at his Thunderbird Cabaret, just south of Robson on Seymour, and the next thing we knew the Playpen boys had themselves a Playpen Central.

North and Central came and went fairly quickly, but the South thrived through to 1982 when its doors closed.

Nobody today could get away with the shit that was practically routine for our pioneer club owners and managers. While they did it for the money, and some like John and Jim were good businessmen, they also did it so we would have places to find our friends and lovers. **X**

Kevin Dale McKeown was Vancouver's first out gay columnist in the early 1970s. Email stillqq@dailyxtra.com

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VANCOUVER'S GAY & LESBIAN NEWS

THREE MILLENNIA OF GAY HISTORY

Documentary filmmaker Harry Sutherland believes that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. And while that particular aphorism may have originally been the rallying cry to remember the atrocities of the Second World War, it can be just as easily applied to the struggle for gay rights.

“It helps get us to that next level, where everybody around the world has the same basic human rights. By exploring how we got into this situation in the first place, it will hopefully prevent us from getting into it again,” Sutherland says of his ambitious Out of History project to document the struggle for gay rights over the past three millennia.

Despite the gains made in recent decades, particularly in the West, Sutherland points to the recent resistance in other parts of the world that he believes is a dangerous slope.

“We can’t ignore what is happening in Russia and Uganda,” he says. “What Putin and Museveni are doing is giving a formula for other dictators around the world to copy. We have to show them that it isn’t going to work, and to do that, we first need to understand where the struggle for our rights came from.”

Sutherland says he’s been thinking about this project since the mid-1970s, but it wasn’t until he learned of a par-


ticularly heinous incident from the 18th century that he realized how little we actually know about gay history.

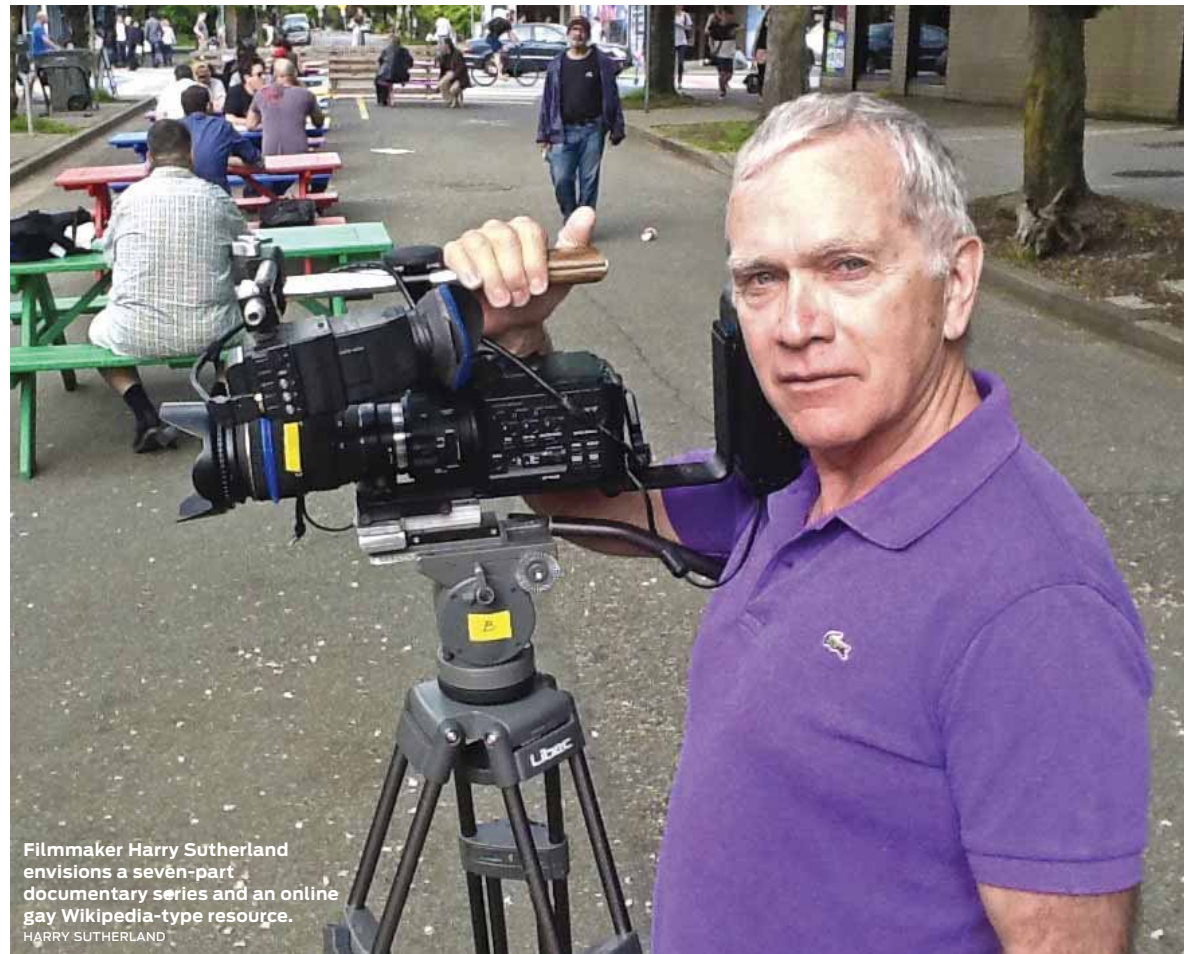
“I came across a 1730 court report of 30 men who were killed in Amsterdam because they had engaged in homosexual activity,” he recalls. “I started doing more and more research and discovered there was this huge story that had never been put together.”

Sutherland wants the project to include up to seven documentary films and an online element that he envisions as a Wikipedia-type repository.

Working backward through history, the first film will tackle the period from 1869 to 1969, which, he says, will allow him to create a more dramatic piece since it includes the period of photography and film development. “It also includes the first use of the word homosexuality to describe a community and will allow us to explore the gains and losses during that time,” he explains.

Sutherland is crowd-funding seed money for the project. He says the time is right to uncover the events and people that have contributed to the creation of our present-day LGBT community and to ensure we don’t lose what we have fought so hard to achieve. — Mark Robins X

 Read more about Sutherland’s project at outofhistory.com.



Filmmaker Harry Sutherland envisions a seven-part documentary series and an online gay Wikipedia-type resource. HARRY SUTHERLAND

Fest hosts women in film

Canadian women in film need to get political and ensure federal taxpayer-supported film funds are being equitably handed out so that the stories of 52 percent of the population are adequately told, the Vancouver Queer Film Festival’s Gender Equality Revolution panel on women in film heard Aug 18.

Women in Film and Television Vancouver executive director Carolyn Combs says Please Adjust Your Set, which gathers statistics on women’s participation in the industry, shows 34 percent of producers, 26 percent

of directors and 21 percent of writers in the Canadian industry are women.

Those figures are lower in the west, are better in Ontario, but plummet to zero in Quebec, Combs says.

She says gender balance is generally good in entry-level positions but shifts toward men as people move into decision-making positions.

Combs was joined on the panel by director Sydney Freeland (*Drunktown’s Finest*) and filmmaker Iranian-American filmmaker Desiree Akhavan (*Appropriate Behaviour*), whose films were screened at this year’s Queer



“If 50 percent of the population is not getting their films made, just think about how many stories are not being told,” says Carolyn Combs (left), of Women in Film and Television Vancouver, with filmmakers Sydney Freeland (centre) and Desiree Akhavan. JEREMY HAINSWORTH

Film Festival.

Akhavan, whose work premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, says male directors have encouraged her to go ahead and make a “shitty” film just to

keep going. “A female director would never say that to me,” she observes. “My career would be ruined; I’d be in director jail.”

Both Freeland and Akhavan say they

can get meetings with film backers but add it can be difficult for women to move past that point at times.

“They ask if you just want to make LGBT movies,” Freeland says. “What they are asking is, ‘Are you going to move beyond this?’”

Filmmaker Elaine Carol says she no longer bothers pitching work to Telefilm Canada, the federal cultural agency devoted to the development and promotion of the Canadian audiovisual industry. “I know the answer is going to be no,” she says. “My films would not be shown if it weren’t for this film festival and DOXA,” Carol adds.

“Canadians need to get political,” Combs suggests, specifically referring to Telefilm Canada. “That’s taxpayer dollars going to film production and they’re not going to 52 percent of the population,” she says. “We have to start demanding that.” — Jeremy Hainsworth X

Courting controversy

The Fringe's queer love affair

The queer history of the Vancouver Fringe Festival's three decades may have generated some controversy along the way, but it has been groundbreaking for both audiences and queer artists alike.

Despite concerns over censorship and even the possibility of arrests at other cities's festivals, in its infancy the Vancouver Fringe never felt those same pressures. "We always felt Vancouver was much freer and had fewer constraints from the morality police, and the Fringe always felt like an opportunity to flaunt it," says Joanna Maratta, the festival's founder and first executive director.

"Even when some of the more controversial shows, like *Fuck Machine* and *The Happy Cunt*, started heading west, we engaged with the City of Vancouver and asked them what they were going to do, and they totally backed away," she says.

Despite a 1993 headline in the now-defunct conservative magazine *BC Report* that described the Fringe Festival as "smut imitates art," such criticism was infrequent and never taken seriously. Instead, the Fringe let its patrons decide which shows lived and died, an attitude that continues today.

"We had lots of shows about sex, drugs and rock and roll, and some of them were really good and some were really bad," Maratta says. "The attitude was that even if it was bad and distasteful, you still had the opportunity to do it, but we left it up to audiences to decide what they wanted to support."

At the turn of the new millennium, when queer artist Michael V Smith pushed boundaries by convincing spectators to get naked in his 2002 show *Privates: A Public Unveiling*, he saw an evolution in his audience.

"Years ago when you put on a queer show at the Fringe, it was mostly a queer audience that would show up," Smith

says. "People get it now. Audiences have a better understanding of queerness, and the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian lifestyles dramatically changed how queer shows are seen. There are some real positive elements to it, but there has also been a loss to the queer edge."


Colin Thomas, a gay theatre critic who has been covering the Vancouver Fringe from its inception, agrees. "There is still a great deal of adventure going on at the Fringe, but it is perhaps not quite as edgy as it once was."

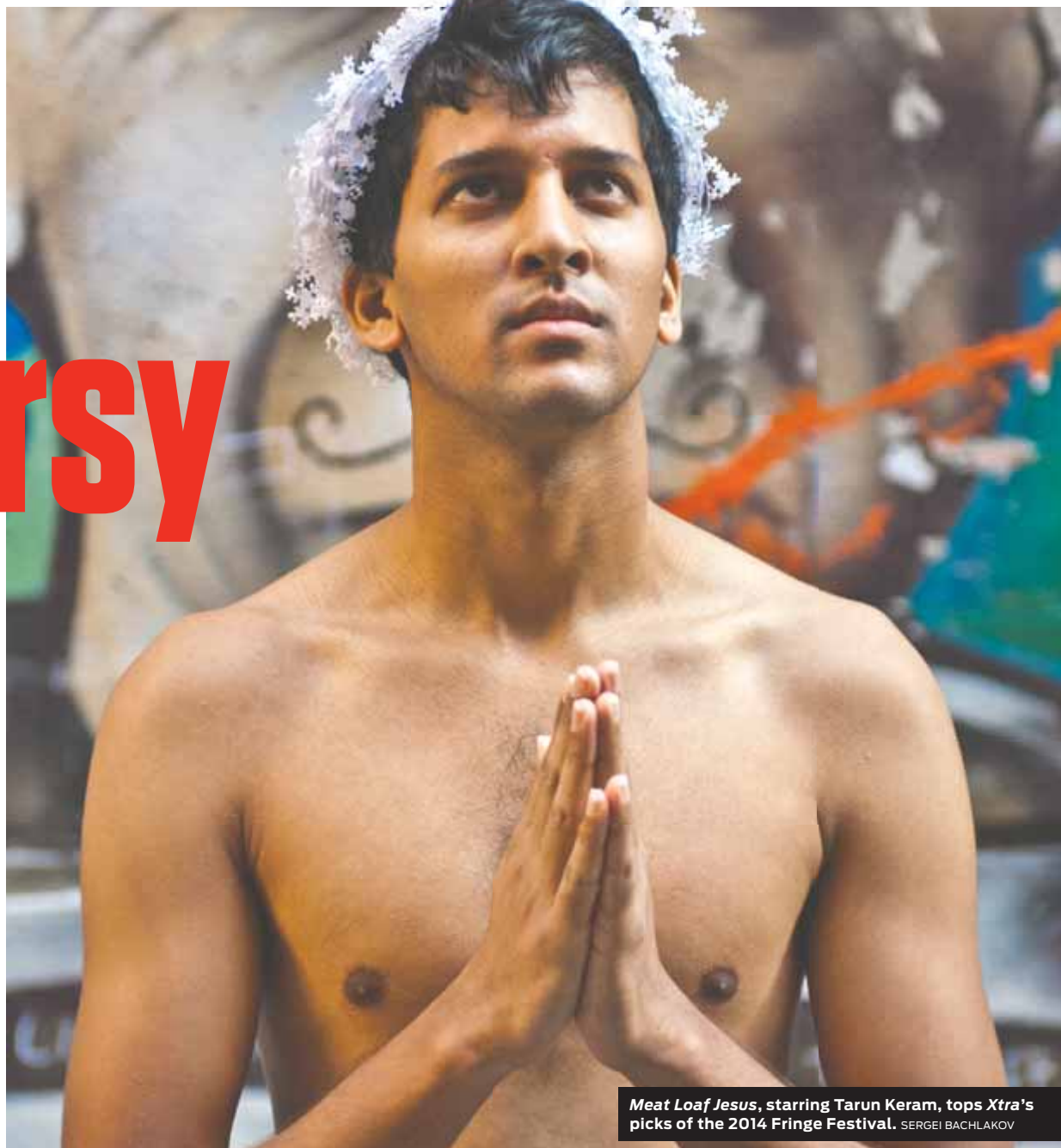
By the late 2000s, Berend McKenzie brought his controversial and outrageously funny *Get Off the Cross, Mary* and his autobiographical *Nggrfg* to the Fringe not to be deliberately provocative, but in an attempt to find a sympathetic venue to present his work.

"Places like Buddies in Bad Times in Toronto or the Arts Club in Vancouver would have never touched those shows with a 10-foot pole," says McKenzie, who used the festival as a proving ground for *Nggrfg*, which eventually went on tour outside the Fringe circuit.

David Jordan has been at the festival's helm for the last nine seasons. He, too, points to a sexual evolution of queer shows at the Fringe. "What we're seeing with more frequency are sex-positive shows like *Bi, Hung, Fit and Married* and Cameryn Moore's *Slut (R)evolution*," he says.

As a non-juried festival with shows chosen each year by lottery, the number of queer offerings will continue to vary, but given its goal of offering inclusive and uncensored theatre, our stories will no doubt continue to play an important role at the Vancouver Fringe.

 For show times and more information, go to vancouverfringe.com.



Meat Loaf Jesus, starring Tarun Keram, tops Xtra's picks of the 2014 Fringe Festival. SERGEI BACHLAKOV

XTRA'S PICKS OF THE 2014 FRINGE

Never mind what Jesus would do, what about Meat Loaf? In Damian Rumph's semi-autobiographical drama *Meat Loaf Jesus*, the two larger-than-life characters become the centre points to a queer coming-of-age drama.

Meat Loaf Jesus tells the story of three teenaged friends living in a small suburb of Edmonton. Hanging out at the local teen gathering spot, Mark suspects that Alex might be gay, too. In a drunken frenzy one night, the two hook up while Meat Loaf's "Heaven Can Wait" plays in the background. As Alex begins a downward spiral after the encounter, Mark is desperate to help.

"This is a great story of '80s kids who

had no gay role models. Mark does his best to help Alex, but he has no resources," director David C Jones explains. "That idea of not having anyone to turn to for help still resonates today for many young gays."

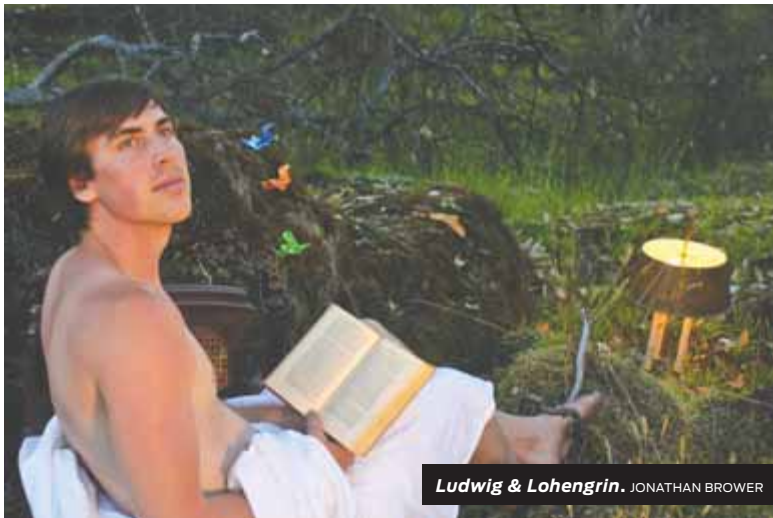
For Rumph it was a spiritual connection to music as a young man in Edmonton that inspired him to write the play with the unusual title. "Music was my religion, and for most of my life I listened to Meat Loaf," he says. "For me, music became my spiritual connection to the world, and I began to think about how to connect Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell* album into something greater."

Here are some other shows you won't want to miss:

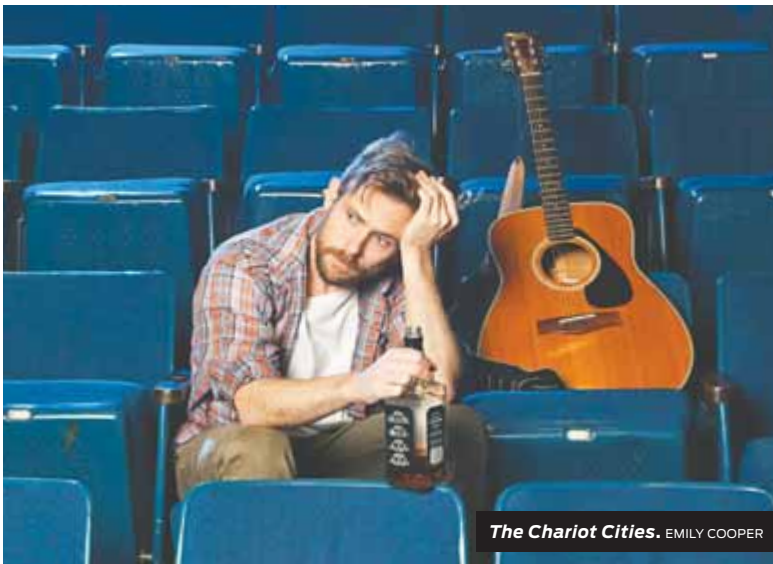
In *Ludwig & Lohengrin*, Calgary artist Kyal Rakoz brings the historically inspired story of King Ludwig II to the stage. Renowned for his patronage of the arts, the gay Ludwig struggles to



...didn't see that coming. ROBIN NIELSEN



Ludwig & Lohengrin. JONATHAN BROWER



The Chariot Cities. EMILY COOPER



Roller Derby Saved My Soul. RICHARD GILMORE

reconcile the desires of the heart with societal expectations.

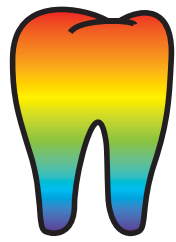
Unspoken truths, broken hearts, substance abuse and damaged souls may sound like a classic soap-opera story line, but *The Chariot Cities* is actually inspired by the work and lives of musical families like Canadian music legends the Wainwrights. They're getting clean, coming out and going home.

Television's favourite fairy-tale granny, Beverley Elliott, takes a personal and

irreverent look at her life, from small-town Ontario to Vancouver's gay bars and onto the set of *Once Upon a Time*, in her one-woman autobiographical show ... *didn't see that coming.*

Roller derby and superheroes collide in Nancy Kenny's one-woman show *Roller Derby Saved My Soul*. Nominated for a 2014 Canadian Comedy Award, it tells the story of a shy 30-something geek who falls in love with both the sport and fellow player Diana. X

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Raziel scores some hang time with the dapper, smooth-sounding members of the Queer as Funk dance band. DANNY GRAY FOX

Old Hollywood meets New World

Fashion, drag and funk affairs to remember



BLITZ & SHITZ
RAZIEL REID

Vancouver designer Evan Ducharme's latest line draws inspiration from Old Hollywood and a New World.

Ducharme debuted his Fall/Winter 14 collection at East Van Studios, and his muse was none other than gay icon Norma Desmond eternally ready for her close-up even while living in a dystopian New World Order.

According to the press release, Ducharme "decided to interpret the futuristic dystopian society of *Metropolis* through the eyes of *Sunset Boulevard*'s Norma Desmond by comparing a cataclysmic decline in society to the performer's nostalgia-ridden descent into madness."

The front room of East Van Studios had us packed in like very chic sardines, but the bruises from all that label bumping were worth it once we finally got to the runway. Ducharme is a master at making simple and luxurious coats. The dark hues and heavy fabrics represented the oppression of the New World, with a burst of glamour breaking through.

Following the show, I went from Norma Desmond to *Mommie Dearest* herself Joan Crawford as portrayed by Lady Jem at the third installment of her monthly Cool Moms at Café Deux Soleils.

It's the party that's hotter than menopause! One really must give it to Jem. She may get drunk and shame-

lessly heckle new queens as they break in their stilettos on stage, she may hate white people, and she may force you to resort to begging to get on a guest list for Cool Moms (she wanted my money but I told her I only pay in pseudo-fame), but when all is said and done she remains one of the most passionate and inventive performers on Vancouver's stages.

Jem started the show outside Café Deux Soleils on the back of a truck with a piano. She livestreamed her Vanessa Carlton number on a projector as she was driven around Commercial Drive.

Sure the video froze and the sync was off because the music started playing in the café later than Jem played it off her iPod, but she gets an A for effort. It was unlike any drag performance I have ever seen and totally worth the eight dollars I refused to pay.

Jem was joined by Shanda Leer, and Evita Versace who had me in tears during her Dixie Chicks performances. I get so emotional when I'm wine drunk. What can I say? Cool Moms turned me into my mother.

Café Deux Soleils has huge windows that open on to the street, and as the queens performed, a crowd gathered to watch. Jem managed to stop making racist comments long enough to tell them off for freeloaders.

Later, we all went to Club 23 West for Bootyburg, the new monthly by Paige Frewer, creator of the Man Up parties at The Cobalt. The three-level

house party features DJs Blondtron and Ponyboy with special guests like Taffi Louis (Truckerdisco) and Jenna Rae Jacobson (Hershe).

Bootyburg isn't strictly lesbian, and brings in a more diverse crowd than Man Up. There were tons of boys, gay and straight, partying with the ladies.

The club was almost as unique of a blend as a scene I filmed for a TV show called *Girlfriend's Guide to Divorce*. I needed some cash and already had a dick in my mouth, so I signed on to be an extra.

I was cast as a gay guy at a bar. Such a stretch! The casting directors made sure they had every gay stereotype covered, then shoved them onto the same set. It was a bunch of different types: Buff West End jocks with East Van hipsters, and because why the fuck not, two leather daddies in full gear sitting next to a nerdy twink.

One of the leather studs was none other than Vancouver Queer Film Festival's (VQFF) event organizer Quinn Peters. He was so committed to character he even brought a bottle of poppers!

VQFF's Funk 'N Grind party at The Imperial had a solid turnout and the band members of Queer as Funk looked dapper and sounded smooth.

The self-professed monarch of nightlife Mario Diaz was in attendance but I didn't say hi. He is so basic. His film *Club King* that was screened at the festival was like a never-ending promo video. I might've been able to bare it if he were only interesting!

Now Quinn on the other hand, there's a promoter I'd watch a documentary about. His leather costume did include a yellow scarf, after all ... X



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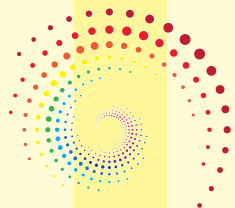
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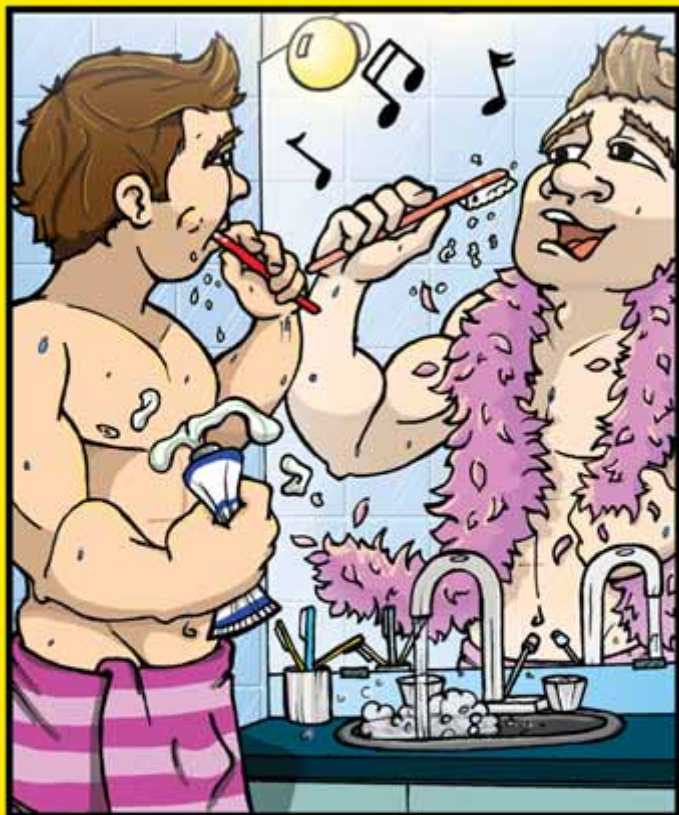
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Thurs, Aug 28

Prostate Cancer Study The BC Cancer Society is looking for gay or bisexual men, who have been treated for prostate cancer, to take part in a study. Email the research team at PCAstudy@hotmail.com

Bard On The Beach For its 25th anniversary, Bard on the Beach brings back two favourites: A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest. Shows run until Sept 20. BMO Mainstage, 1695 Whyte Ave, Vanier Park. Tickets \$33-\$47. bardonthebeach.org

Fri, Aug 29

Kootenay Pride The cities of Nelson and Castlegar host this annual celebration of diversity and unity on the Labour Day long weekend. The festival runs until Sept 1. For the full event schedule, go to kootenaypride.com

Showgurlz: Cartoon Cosplay Drag Show Peter Breeze hosts the monthly dress-up extravaganza with Vancouver's finest drag performers. 8pm. The Rio Theatre, 1660 East Broadway St. Advance tickets \$10/in costume at riotheatretickets.ca or \$12 at door.

Sat, Aug 30

Phantom Of The Night This is a full-on sex-positive, kinky play party for all. 9pm-3am. Club 8x6, 1775 Haro St. Tickets \$30 at door or \$25 in advance at eventbrite.ca. Search Facebook for "Phantom of the Night."

Man Up A community appreciation party features a goofball queer Karaoke session, and a classic Man Up dance party with DJ Many Bothans. 9pm. The Cobalt, 917 Main St. Cover \$5. thecobalt.ca

Rough Trade 6: Hunks & Funk This is an all-night, disco beats affair with DJs Jef Leppard and Cherchez, hosted

by Shanda Leer. 9pm. The Fox Cabaret, 2321 Main St. Cover \$10. Search Facebook for "Rough Trade 6."

Madhaus Monthly: Alternative Classix Party The popular party will now occupy two rooms, showcasing the skills of DJs Pandemonium, R-Lex, Taffi Louis and Trevor Risk. 9pm-3am. Club 23 West, 23 West Cordova St. No cover before 10 pm, \$7 after. Look for "Madhaus Monthly" on Facebook.

Sun, Aug 31

Hershe Bar DJ Soulfunkee (UK, Hong Kong) returns with new beats, and tag teams with Miss M, spinning a mix of house, EDM and hip-hop. 10pm-2am. Red Room Ultra Bar, 398 Richards St. Tickets \$12 early bird, \$15 advance at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St; Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Dr; or flygirlproductions.com

Mon, Sept 1

United Big Roger Events ushers in September with a late Sunday night/early Monday morning party, with the beats of Grammy-nominated DJ Tony Moran (NYC) and an opening set by DJ Del Stamp. 1am-7 am. Encore Dance Club, 1058 Granville St. Tickets \$40 advance at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St or ticketzone.com. \$50 at door, bigrogerevents.com

Vancouver Poetry Slam presents Hannah Johnson Poets compete for the Top 8 spots of the summer season. Hannah Johnson is this week's feature poet. 7pm. Café Deux Soleils, 2096 Commercial Dr. Cover \$6-10 sliding scale. cafedeuxsoleils.com

Wed, Sept 3

10th Annual BOLDfest Lesbian lives and culture will be celebrated at this four-day conference that attracts



Organizers Claire Robson and Pat Hogan get ready to celebrate lesbian lives and culture at BOLDfest 10. CHRIS MANN

lesbians aged 45+ from across Canada, the US and Australia. Conference begins with a Harbour Boat Cruise and continues until Sept 7. The full schedule of events is at boldfest.com

Unleash Your Inner Diva With VMG The Vancouver Men's Chorus stages open rehearsals every Wednesday in Sept, so don't be shy and get involved. 7:30pm. Vancouver Academy of Music, 1270 Chestnut St. vancouvermenschorus.ca

Bingo For Life Try your luck at Celebrities' and Joan-E's weekly fundraiser which, to date, has raised more than \$300,000 for Friends For Life. 8-10pm. Celebrities, 1022 Davie St. \$10 donation at door for bingo cards. celebritiesnightclub.com

Thurs, Sept 4

Vancouver Fringe Festival More than 700 performances by 89 artists over 11 days await you at this celebration of theatre that runs until Sept 14. For a full schedule of shows, artists, prices and venues, visit vancouverfringefestival.com

Fri, Sept 5

Salt Spring Pride British Columbia's third largest pride celebration is back, celebrating its 10th year with a Queer Youth Movie Night, Meet & Greet, Pride Parade, Rainbow Warriors Dance, Potluck Picnic

and more. Festivities run until Sept 7. For a complete event schedule, check out salspringpride.com

Sat, Sept 6

Vancouver Dungeon Party Metro Vancouver Kink event includes a temporary branding session with Polar by donation from 5:30-7:30 pm, followed by the dungeon party 8pm-1 am. Maritime Labour Centre, 1880 Triumph St. Cover \$20. metrovancoverkink.com

Entertainer of the Year Fundraiser Assist the Monarchs to raise funds for the Regalia Fund for Reign XI. Join Martin Rooney for Karaoke and a special drag show featuring Miz Adrien, Whoopsie Daisy Fuca Rose and Plastikta Von Wrap. 7pm. Olympia Pizza & Restaurant, 10257 King George Hwy, Surrey. \$5 donation. Search "Let's Sing and Dance" on Facebook.

Brain Candy Release your inner club kid at this science-fiction themed, dance-rave/drag show/costume contest. Shanda Leer, Anna Propriate, and Junita Werk host, plus the Baddest Bitch of East Van Peach Cobblah and Miss Cobalt 2014 winner, East Van blood bath Valynne Vile. 10:30pm-2:30 am. The Fox Cabaret, 2321 Main St. \$10 cover. foxcabaret.com

Submit your event listing to oitc.vancouver@dailyxtra.com. Deadline for the Sept 11-24, 2014 issue is **Wed, Sept 3.**



United's hot bods and beats are set to usher in the month of September. BIG ROGER EVENTS

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1



2



3



4

26TH VANCOUVER QUEER FILM FESTIVAL

An enthusiastic community gathered for the much-anticipated Vancouver Queer Film Festival that showcased 86 films over an exhausting, 11 days. The spotlight shone brightly on women — who helmed half of this year's screenings — and Russia, with its increasing crackdown on LGBT citizens since the 2013 enactment of a federal gay propaganda law.

1▶ Wendy Oberlander, Luna Nordin, Cari Green and Julia Clark 2▶ Jason Wong, Ryan Murdoch and Hiram Cabera. 3▶ Jen Sung, Gwen Haworth and Metha Brown. 4▶ Jojo Hui and Roan Reimer. 5▶ Michael Connidis and Roy Parish.



5

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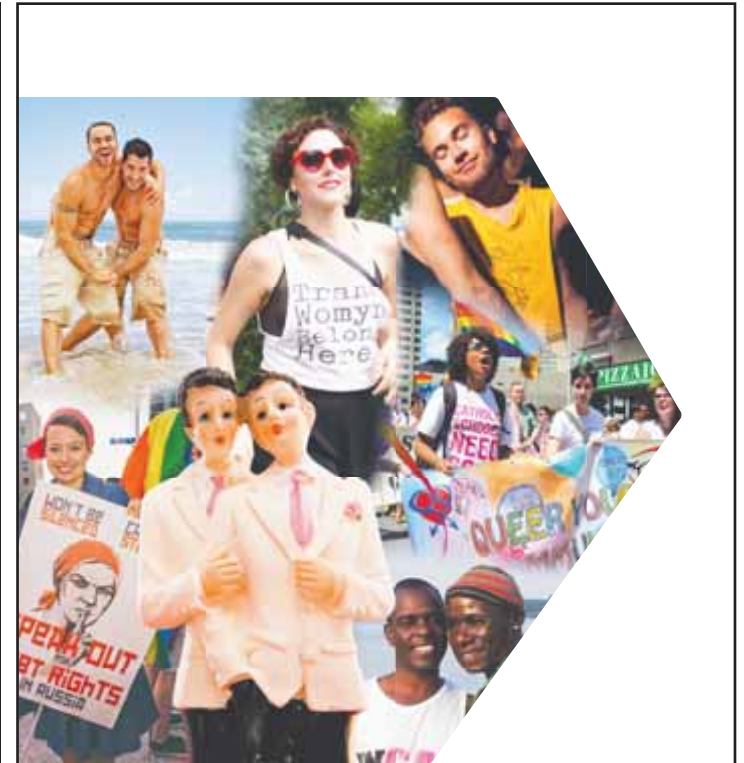
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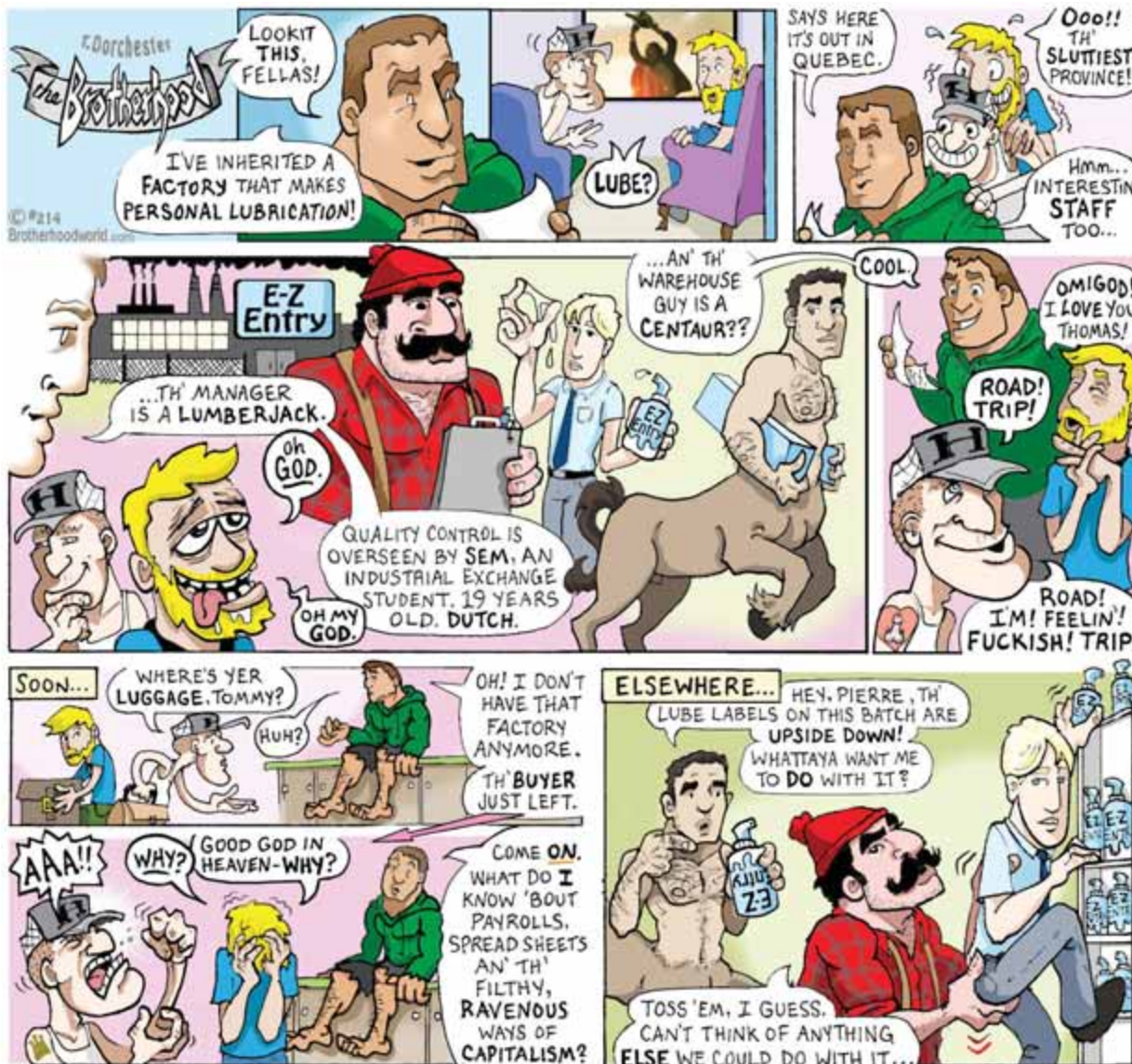
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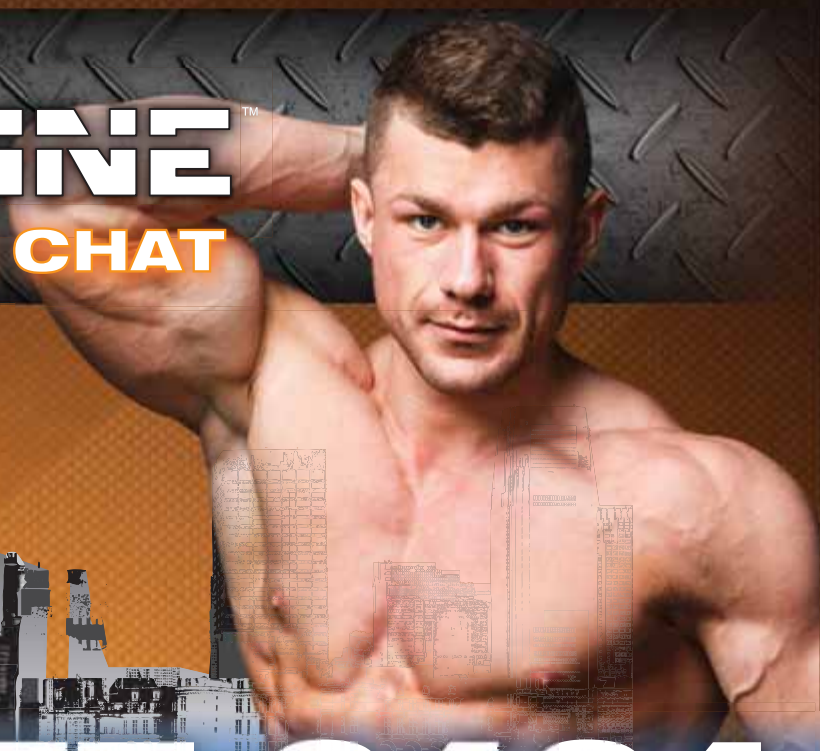


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