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GRAB SHANIA

Queen of Her Own Actions Country superstar Shania Twain on what LGBTQ+ allyship means to her

By Chris Azzopardi

The first time I connected with Shania Twain in 2017, the country-pop music icon didn't pull any punches, saying "equality should be a no-brainer" as she spoke thoughtfully about her relationship with the LGBTQ+ community. Twain stood firm on that throughout our conversation, speaking out against supremacy ("supremacy of any sort is just poison") and pledging to be the kind of ally we hope all gay icons will be.

In Twain's case, she is in the same unique, bridge-building position as someone like fellow country superstar Dolly Parton — they both excite dads and drag queens, but for very different reasons.

If we're speaking about Twain's queer appeal, look no further than "Giddy Up!," the first song off Twain's sixth studio album, "Queen of Me." It's a song that would sound right at home in some Texas yeehaw gay bar but, like her hit "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!," could just as easily get some conservative, beer-guzzling dad to loosen up as he bellows the country bop's fun, flirty and frankly very gay hook. (At a Shania Twain show, to which I have been, trust me when I say these things happen.)

Twain recently reconnected with me to talk about the new album,

which we did. But our interview landed in places Twain herself said she appreciated as she was able to reflect on how her words — not just the ones she writes — matter.

Aside from talking about what the album's title really means to her and admiring the progress the LGBTQ+ community has made, Twain, native to Canada, spoke candidly about how a comment she made to The Guardian in 2018 about Donald Trump — "I would have voted for him because, even though he was offensive, he seemed honest" — affected what some LGBTQ+ fans thought of her. When I asked Twain about her Trump remark, her manager requested we avoid "political questions." Twain, though, said she would decide for herself whether she was going to answer the question, which she did. The "queen of me" in action.

Chris Azzopardi: So "Queen of Me," let's get right to it. There's definitely a let loose vibe on this album that I think we all can appreciate after the last few years. How would you describe the spirit of this album and how you came into it?

Shania Twain: I'm calling the "Queen of Me" album my happy album because it was literally an exercise during Covid — 'cause I wrote all the songs during Covid. And it was an exercise of just getting myself into a better frame of mind, a more positive frame of mind. Writing lyrics that would make me smile, make me laugh, make me wanna dance. It was like a self-help, well-being exercise to write these songs. And they ended up just being very uplifting. That's also how I narrowed



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down the songs, you know? I wrote three albums worth of songs during Covid 'cause I was just bored and I ended up being very creatively productive. I narrowed it down to songs that took me to that happier place.

CA: The title itself is so you, Shania, because you are sort of the country queen of empowerment. Like you, LGBTQ+ people really have to become the master of our own universes. So I'm wondering, did the title happen to come out of any conversations that you had over the years with any LGBTQ+ people in your own life that you're close to? Or were you thinking of them in the process of naming this album or working through the songs?

ST: I'm close to so many LGBTQ+ people. They've been part of my creative teams over the years, and they're just part of my life. You're all part of my life, you know? You're part of my inspiration. The "Queen of Me" title was directly inspired by self-empowerment. "What am I really the queen of?" I'm just the queen of myself. I'm not the queen of anyone or anything else. I shouldn't have any control over anyone else; no one should have any control over me either. And so I really felt motivated to express it for myself and to share it.

I've had people in my life going through gender confusion and gender change. Just all of the sadness that I've seen that's so unnecessary. I'm just an all-inclusive person. I believe to each his own. And we should all have the right to have that confidence in ourself to be ourself. So, on "Queen of Me," I'm not what you tell me I am. I'm what I proclaim I am. So, don't let anyone tell you what you are.

CA: When I last saw you on tour, there was so much gay energy, from dancers in cowboy hats and chest-baring leopard print to Elijah Wood, the trans person killing it on drums. Your audience is a mix of drag queens and



Photo courtesy of BB Gun Press

conservative dads, and you are one of those rare artists who can bring polarized political communities together. How intentional on your part is it to bring a certain level of gayness to a Shania Twain show?

ST: Let's start with this — when it comes to talent, there's two things [about] people that I want to be around when I'm in a professional or creative environment. I want people with good character, honesty and talent. And so whoever falls in there is in my circle. And so it's more about the inclusivity than anything.

If I was exclusive I would say, "well, I only want this," and I think we would all miss out on a lot of exceptional talent. My criteria is good people and talent. And any LGBTQ+ energy or people that are in my environment are there just on merit. And I think that's more valuable than actually specifically being... I don't wanna be good "for a woman." I don't wanna be respected just 'cause I'm a woman. I wanna be respected, period. And this is where we really make our mark. And I think it's very important.

This is why "Queen of Me" is so the song: "I'm not a girl, I'm not a boy, I'm not a baby, I'm not a toy." These are all the things I'm not, as

being my label. And now let me tell you who I am. And that's personal. I don't know if everyone will relate to that, but that's my feeling about it. I don't want to be strong for a woman; I just want to be considered strong. And that's even in "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" It's an internal thing. It's how I feel.

CA: I'm thinking about your message of inclusivity, which is something we talked about at length in 2017. Then, in June 2022, you sent out a message on your socials for Pride Month saying, "I believe in equality. ...And I stand with you forever." And during our conversation, you really drove that message home. I know you have since apologized for what was perceived as support for Donald Trump when you spoke with The Guardian in 2018 —

[Twain's manager asks that we move on: "We're not gonna talk about politics on this call."] You can ask the question, and then I can decide if I wanna answer it or not. That's fair.

CA: What I'd like to know is how it affected you after that comment was made knowing how upset it made some members of the queer community.

ST: So what I will say: I've always

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rejected anyone who makes someone feel that they are not worthy or they have to be excluded for some personal judgmental reason. And I'm not a politician. I'm not somebody that follows it well enough to speak on it. I regret speaking on it because by doing that — and this goes for everything as well — in that setting, I wasn't able to explain why and what elements, the whole picture.

So realizing after how hurtful it was to even say that, I really regretted it. I thought, "Wow. I would never wanna support a policy that would ever do that." I would never personally do that. I think it's also good to... let's just not judge each other, you know? Let's be open like we're doing, and honest. And understand each other.

So in the greater understanding of it, anyone that criticizes the importance of the LGBTQ+ community does not belong anywhere in my support system. So no. We need more love. We need less criticism, less judgment. And that means for everything, everyone. And everyone has a right to their own opinion. I regret that anyone felt that I would ever have felt that it was OK to exclude LGBTQ+ [people].

CA: As a gay person who has been affected by administrations and also has been a fan of yours since I was a kid, I appreciate you answering that question.

ST: Totally. I so understand that. I think it's important, though, that we separate... our policies are... it's its own realm. And I should never have spoken on it. Period.

CA: It sounds like you don't go through life thinking about how big your platform is.

ST: And that was good learning for me, as well. That's a very good point because as our world expands and our awarenesses expands, the "Queen of Me," that was a big part of defining myself for myself. Saying, "OK, you're queen of your successes and you're queen of your failures. You're queen of your good

judgment and bad judgment." You gotta take responsibility for yourself. And the way I feel now is probably not the way I'm gonna feel in five years from now about certain things. Because the world is evolving all the time. And it's changing. And change with the right intentions is only a positive thing. We need change. We need to evolve. We need to mature.

And this has been a great... it's

probably so many other people. And then in turn affected me in a very positive way. It's good. Reflection does a lot of good. We learn so much.

CA: Is there anything else you'd like to say on that note before we move on?

ST: No, I'm good, and thanks. I'm glad that we got to revisit the question and with a clear objective.



Photo courtesy of BB Gun Press

CA: Let's talk about how Pride is only just around the corner.

ST: Pride is just around the corner. There's so many wonderful things to be said about that. I mean, so much more freedom to be gained in all realms of society. But the LGBTQ+ [community], I admire the courage because I think that the community has taken strides forward. In my own adult life, period, it's been leaps and bounds. I've got so many friends in the creative world. I mean, [fashion designer] Marc Bouwer is one of them. We've been working together for over 20 years. And there was no such community power and support then.

It didn't make a difference for our communication, one to one. We were always friends. There were never any barriers there, one to one. But I was so aware of the struggle. It's just good and very rewarding to see so much advancement. I mean, Kim Petras, for example. So 20 years ago, that's not that long ago; even 15 years ago, even 10 years ago. Would that moment have been possible? Or would it have happened? And Kim is the most — you know, should I say she or they? Correct me so that I get it right.

CA: Kim uses she.

ST: I wanna get it right. Thank you. So Kim is the most angelic person. Genuinely sweet, kind, and I could sense that she was at peace with herself. I hope that that is the case, 'cause that journey has... I haven't

asked her about it. But I know it's been difficult. It takes courage. It's difficult. It's challenging. So I just wanna say that Kim is courageous with grace.

CA: When you think of your longstanding relationship with the LGBTQ+ community, what does it mean to you to be an LGBTQ+ ally now?

ST: It's very important. I write music to communicate. I write music to relate to people. And so I'm trying to build relationships through music and friendships through music with people that I can't know in person. It's my avenue. It's my way of reaching out. And so what I say really does matter to me, and what it means to everyone else that's receiving it. And, I mean, mostly through the music, obviously 'cause I do more music than I do talking. That's my real language, you know? Writing, and writing lyrics. Encouraging and inspiring. That's what I look to music for — for inspiration. When I'm on a tour in a

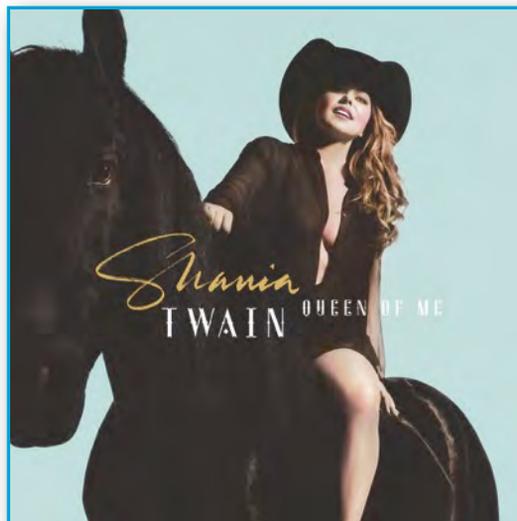
show and I've got an audience there, we are on the same page. We're all from very different backgrounds. We're all different ages. We are all coming from different cultures, realities...

CA: You are the bridge.

ST: But music is the bridge, not me. So what I say is very important in that sense. You know, it's the music that should do all the talking.

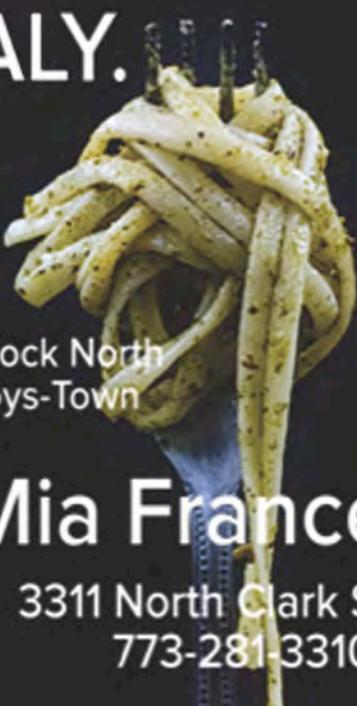
This interview has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl



Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

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GRAB ADELE



The original Adele

By Gregg Shapiro

Even if you don't immediately recognize the name Adele Bertei, you probably know her distinctive and powerful singing voice from the duet she performed with Thomas Dolby on his second massive hit single "Hyperactive." Yes, that's lesbian singer/songwriter Adele Bertei belting it out alongside Dolby. Bertei's musical history began long before that 1984 hit song. Initially active in the Cleveland music sphere of the 1970s, she was also a prominent player in New York's no wave scene, as well as the lesbian band The Bloods. Club folks will also recognize her dance tracks "Build Me a Bridge," in addition to her Jellybean Benitez collaboration "Just A Mirage." But Bertei's art isn't limited to music. She acted in Lizzie Borden's groundbreaking queer indie feature "Born in Flames," and has now turned her attention writing, with her latest book being the 2023 memoir "Twist: An American Girl" (ZE Books). Adele was kind enough to answer a few questions in advance of the book's publication.

Gregg Shapiro: Before we get to
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your books, I'd like to talk about your music and acting careers. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I didn't see Lizzie Borden's 1983 indie movie "Born in Flames" until I wrote about the 2018 VOD re-released and restored high-definition 35th-anniversary version. In it, you played a pirate-radio DJ, and the movie features many familiar faces including Flo Kennedy, filmmaker Kathryn Bigelow, multi-hyphenate Eric Bogosian, and the late actor/writer Ron Vawter. Please say a few words about what the experience of being in the movie was like for you.

Adele Bertei: Lizzie made the film with basically no money and what they call "short ends"; leftover film stock from the film departments of universities. Her core story concept was strong; 10 years after a socialist revolution, oppressions against various groups seem worse than ever, especially of women. What if women banded together to create their own revolution? It was a great role for me, playing Isabelle the radical radio announcer. She's so

March 14, 2023

over-the-top, like a left-wing lesbian Alex Jones. I played up women's rage in that film, and women are not supposed to rage, even though we have more than our share to be angry about... so it was a bold move, to go that far on screen. Women's rage, lesbianism, black and white women working together – all huge risks to present in a film, especially in those days. It was challenging for Lizzie to find black women in New York to work with, and crucial to the story; the divide between black and white women, and the necessity to bridge that chasm in order to change the system in our favor was a major theme. It was fun, and exciting, also because it was collaborative; for instance, I came up with the idea of having the two radio stations go mobile, so they'd be untraceable. Lizzie was open to ideas. She knew where she was headed, but we helped steer the craft. Similar to Mike Leigh films, where he'll set up what he wants to happen in a scene and the actors go for it, most of us improvised our lines. All in all, it was an exciting guerrilla effort. I don't

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think any of us could foresee how prescient it would feel all these decades later.

GS: Your musical life is also fascinating. You were a member of The Wolves (with the late Peter Laughner) and the No Wave band The Contortions. You founded the all-female queer band The Bloods, and you had a popular disco single (“Build Me A Bridge”).

But for many people, you may be best remembered for your duet vocal on Thomas Dolby’s 1984 massive hit single “Hyperactive.” What makes you such a good team player?

AB: My lack of legal protections [laughs]! This only applies to the commercial music business. Being in the Wolves with Peter was my first experience of performing on stage. I wrote a memoir about Laughner, who was a major influence and mentor. The Contortions – we were outrageous, blowing up all musical conventions with aural napalm, reassembling (them) into something monstrous and mesmerizing. And the Bloods, well, being an out lesbian band in the early 1980s was no walk on the beach. Part of the reason I’m writing a memoir these days, and something I often discuss with other LGBTQ people of my age, is how important it is to tell our stories. There are a couple of videos of the Bloods playing a festival in Berlin that prove how powerful we were as a band, musically and performance-wise, but we couldn’t catch a break because of our known sexuality. In the commercial music business, despite having sung on hits, I never made a penny in royalties for my vocal performances, although I did see some publishing royalties for songs I’ve written. I



enjoyed working with Thomas Dolby. I didn’t enjoy the fact that I never saw a royalty on what would be his second biggest worldwide hit record, due in part to my vocal performance. Truths need to be told about how artists are exploited in the business.

GS: It’s hard to believe that you only have one solo album to your name – 1988’s “Little Lives.” How does it make you feel when you look back on that experience?

AB: It’s a long, long story, but let’s just say there’s a #metoo scene involved. My favorite song on that LP is called “Can’t Stop the Dance.” It’s a rendering of the Brecht/Weill song “Pirate Jenny.” I think the power of it scared the willies out of the male record execs. There just might be another LP in the works as we speak.

GS: That would be fantastic! In 2004, as a member of Anubian Lights you released the album “Phantascope.” How did that band come to be?

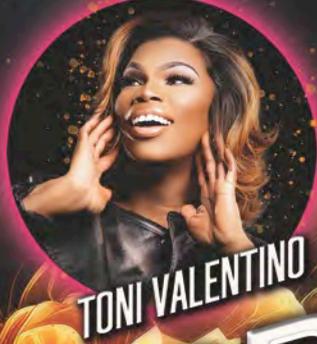
AB: Lydia Lunch was my first female friend when I arrived in NYC in 1977. We remain friends to this day. I came in to help her with co-writing and backing vocals on her LP with Anubian Lights, “Smoke in the Shadows,” met Tommy and Len, and liked what they were doing. So, we

got together and started recording, the sessions culminating in “Phantascope”.

GS: More recently, you have switched gears and can add author to your curriculum vitae. Your first, which you mentioned, was “Peter and the Wolves,” a memoir about your time with the aforementioned musician Peter Laughner. What was it about Peter that made you want to write the book and share the story with others?

AB: Everyone who ever met Peter Laughner has stories about him, many being spurious. All the rock guys who love to idolize people like Peter for the “live fast, die young” ethos he portrayed were constructing this image online that dehumanized him to the point of macabre rock theater. That rock and roll tragedy of a cartoon was not the man I knew and was close to. He was flawed, yes. An addict. But he was also extraordinarily talented, generous, and tender. Multi-faceted and sometimes visionary. Peter’s image was in need of redemption. I gave it to him, as much as I was able, in the book. It was also my way of honoring and thanking him for helping me become a singer, and a writer. He hangs around as my benevolent ghost brother.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13



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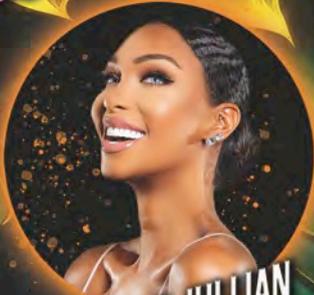
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GS: During your music career, you worked with Nona Hendryx (of Labelle) which made me wonder if that had anything to do with why you wrote your 2021 book “Why Labelle Matters.”

AB: Nona is definitely a hero, and it’s true that I wanted to give her props for the trailblazing work she was doing as early as 1972. I guess I was flummoxed that whenever I would say “Labelle,” people immediately jumped (and still do) to Patti LaBelle with absolutely no cognizance of the fact that the three-women band called Labelle not only existed, but they changed the face of music — for black women, for all women. That band was so brave, brilliant, incendiary. Yes, they are known for “Lady Marmalade” but take a listen to their 1973 LP “Pressure Cookin’.” They broke the mold, invented sonic Afrofuturism even before George Clinton. In fact, after Clinton saw them perform in their brilliant silver spacesuits, he hired Labelle’s costume designer Larry LeGaspi to design for Funkadelic. There’s a history there, and people who love music needed to have access to it.

GS: Your newest book is the memoir “Twist: An American Girl.” The book takes place during a very specific time period: 1965-1972. Please say something about the significance of that time period.

AB: It was a time of upheavals and great change in America. The assassinations started in 1963 with President John F. Kennedy and continued with Malcolm X in ‘65, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King in ‘68. It created such collective fear and instability – different, yet similar, to what we’ve been going through in the Trump/COVID years. Women remained second-class citizens and were not encouraged to be anything but wives and mothers, but second-wave feminism in the early ‘60s woke women up to seeing new possibilities for equality outside of that paradigm. I ran away from a Catholic convent reformatory and hitchhiked to Kent State University in Ohio after four student protestors were murdered on campus. The



Photo ByJeanneVienne

resistance zeitgeist of that time was formative for me in many ways. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young’s “(Four Dead in) Ohio” was the anthem of the times.

GS: “Twist” is set in Cleveland, a city that has had its share of highs and lows. Do you think that Cleveland will ever fully recover to its former glory?

AB: Cleveland has a Dickensian flavor for me, a haunted feeling. It was such an important seat of industry and manufacturing in the Midwest and was the sixth largest city in the country in the early 1900s. That all changed when the manufacturing plants and the steel mills closed down, the unions were all busted, and the jobs went overseas. Segregation between black and white was entrenched and in many ways, still is. The city was immortalized by Randy Newman’s song “Burn On” about the Cuyahoga River catching fire. When I visit today, I see these colossal modern buildings downtown, all glass and steel, apartment and office buildings that no one seems to be inhabiting. Downtown has become a theater set for the tourists visiting the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But when you drive through certain areas, Hough, Kinsmith, Saint Claire-Superior, Clark Fulton, the look of disintegration and poverty is shocking. Warner Road, the neighborhood where I was born, was once a strong Italian immigrant community. The main drag is all boarded up storefronts, broken

windows and wild vegetation taking over through cracks in the roads, sidewalks and the buildings. It’s as if the earth has claimed it back, due to human negligence. And yet, there are amazing cultural institutions there. The Cleveland Orchestra, for one. I could go on... I’m writing a historical fiction novel that takes place in Cleveland. I find the city and its history fascinating.

GS: If there was a movie version of “Twist,” who would you want to see your younger self?

AB: Elle Fanning would have been perfect, but she’s a woman now! Hard to say. I’m not familiar with child actors these days, but whoever she is, she’ll need to be a little toughie with a searching heart.

GS: Have you started thinking about or working on your next book project?

AB: I’ve got three in the works. One is another music book which I can’t announce yet, the historical novel, and “No New York,” the third in a trilogy of memoirs, about the incendiary no wave/post-punk scene in lower Manhattan during the late 1970s into the ‘80s. A revolution of women artists happened there, and it has yet to be documented. I was fortunate to have been a player in that revolution. It’s a story begging to be told from a woman’s point of view.

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GRAB TAN MOM



Dishing with Tan Mom and Adam Barta The Duo Discuss their New Show, #THEDISH, Premiering New Episodes this Month on Tubi-TV

By Paul Hutnick

#THEDISH is a new reality show on Tubi TV that stars Adam Barta and TanMom, along with Here Comes Honey Boo Boo's "Mama June" Shannon, YouTube sensation Cynthia Beaumont and a gaggle of RuPaul's Drag Race dragqueens. As anyone might guess, the series is gimmicky, overly dramatic and wildly absurd – and intentionally so.

"Like all reality shows, we blur the line between fact and fiction," Adam Barta explains. "But what makes #THEDISH different is that we tip in the audience when we do."

The show was inspired by Barta's own botched pursuit at reality stardom. He proudly admits that he has been trying to land his own show for ten years. It's why he got plastic surgery on Dr. Miami and danced drunk with Teresa Giudice on *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*. He sees #THEDISH as his chance for global stardom, however, his thirsty friends, including Tan Mom, do too; and they're literally willing to fight him for the spotlight.

We spoke with Adam Barta and Tan Mom from their homes in Central Florida.

Paul Hutnick: How did you two meet?

Tan Mom: We met at a restaurant in Patterson, NJ, after Adam's first viral hit song with Octomom. At the time, I was partying a lot. I thought Adam was so cute and I didn't know that he was gay! I went to kiss his neck and he was like, umm, what the f- is she doing? The rest is history.

Adam Barta: It was clear that Patricia and I had great chemistry together, just not in that way. Our comedy styles are similar. We both love satire and parody mixed with a dash of cringe. Patricia as Tan Mom has become something of a muse for me.

PH: Is that why you wanted her to part of #THEDISH?

Adam Barta: Definitely. Patricia has the "IT" factor for TV. And in real life, she is pretty fascinating. She is sweet and caring. We both suffer with crippling anxiety. When you see Patricia doing all the crazy antics on TV, it's not so much her being nutty, it's her anxiety showing itself. What I love about Patricia is that she embraces her wackiness and allows it to shine on camera, which is why

she's still relevant and being talked about on shows like *Drag Race* ten years later!

PH: What were your thoughts on being parodied on this season's *Drag Race*?

Tan Mom: I was ecstatic! I love the drag queens and all of their fashions. Amethyst was so great but my favorite was Loosey Laduca as Joan Rivers. I loved Joan. She read me to filth at Howard Stern's sixtieth birthday party.

Adam Barta: I'm a little disappointed Amethyst hasn't responded to us online. We've tried to connect, but with no luck. Maybe she feels bad about making fun of Patricia? Hopefully this can let her know that Tan Mom approves. We would love to have her on the next season of #THEDISH. Also, Marcia, Marcia, Marcia 'cause we love her, love her, love her.

PH: Patricia, you do not have the same love for your co-star on #THEDISH, the rich widow Cynthia Beaumont. Why?

Tan Mom: All I have to say about Cynthia is that the chick has no talent whatsoever.

She pretends that she's rich and she's not. Also, her screechy voice makes menauseous. I gave her a shot at friendship and she f'd it up. If I could, I would happily push her into a pool, housewife Boca Raton style!

Adam Barta: As a producer on #THEDISH, Patricia's hatred of Cynthia Beaumont is a dream come true as it makes for great TV. As a close friend to both, it's disconcerting. I think they simply because they are both from New Jersey and they have Jersey-sized personalities. One thing we get a glimpse at in this season of #THEDISH is how much of a diva Patricia can really be.

PH: What are your feelings for the rest of the cast on #THEDISH?

Tan Mom: They are all wonderful. I love the drag queens, especially Tammie Brown who is hilarious. I think Mama June is a really nice person. Do I consider her an actress? Not at all. She is about as good an actress as I am a singer.

PH: Tan Mom gets into a spat with Mama June in the show. What's that about?

Adam Barta: That fight was kind of my fault. We had Debbie Gibson booked as a special guest on #THEDISH, and Mama June is a huge fan and wanted to be the one to announce Debbie on the show. At the time, Patricia was co-host on #THEDISH and it was really her job to introduce the guest. I completely forgot to let Patricia know that I had



promised June she could do it so when June started, Patricia was not having it and she began yelling like a banshee. I cut Patricia's live feed which made her even more angry. It became a comedy of errors.

PH: How much of what we see on #THEDISH is real?

Adam Barta: The thing with #THEDISH is, it is in essence a reality show, so about 90% of what you see actually did happen. Tan Mom's fights with Cynthia, arguing with June on the Debbie Gibson special and missing the photoshoot were all 100% real.

PH: Oh yes, the photoshoot.

Patricia, why were you so late for your photoshoot?

Tan Mom: I had just got out of the hospital and I was very sick from the anesthesia. Everyone thinks you recover quickly from anesthesia, but as you get older, the body becomes less tolerant to it. I was so sick, but we had planned the shoot for over a week with the crew, so we couldn't cancel.

Adam Barta: In all honesty, and Patricia is probably just learning this now, we could have rescheduled the shoot. What we do with #THEDISH is we take relatively mundane dramas and elevate them. It's like when you are watching the Housewives and they're flipping tables. That stuff wouldn't happen naturally. The producers are in the background riling up the cast. Tan Mom, sick as a dog, was a great opportunity to film some fun footage.

PH: Can you forgive Adam?

Tan Mom: Oh, yes. I've known Adam for over ten years. I've seen him grow as an actor and singer and now as a producer, and what I love is that Adam doesn't take sh-t from anyone anymore. It took a long time for him to get this spot and I couldn't be prouder of him. Adam is family.

Watch new episodes of #THE DISH on Tubi TV. Visit Aquetramedia.com

GRAB A FILM



Photo Courtesy Universal Pictures

In Shyamalan's Latest, a Rare and Affecting Depiction of Queer Parents A rock-solid family comes under attack — but not for its legitimacy

By George Elkind

In the opening minutes of M. Night Shyamalan's new thriller "Knock at the Cabin," a little girl named Wen (played by Kristen Cui) is approached by Leonard, a hulking stranger (Dave Bautista), who offers to help her catch grasshoppers while asking about her life at home and school. Before we meet them, she announces that she has two parents over at the cabin nearby: Daddy Eric and Daddy Andrew — information Leonard, a second-grade teacher, receives with a studied, careful politeness. Her school counselor tells her it's a good thing, she goes on, but the counselor's overly enthusiastic tone conveys the opposite impression: that the performance of open-mindedness isn't sincere.

Minutes later, we meet Wen's parents: Andrew (Ben Aldridge), a wary, adamant human rights attorney, and Eric (Jonathan Groff), a more temperate but quite protective dad who spends much of the film concussed. It's not the legitimacy of their queer-led family that's under threat here — it's the continued existence of the family itself.

Within minutes of its opening, the family's woodland cabin is invaded by Leonard and his three companions, who explain that it's important they find their way inside. After forcing their way through doors and windows, then subduing and tying the couple up, Leonard offers an aggrieved apology as his colleagues tidy up the space, explaining that they didn't know what kind of family they would meet but that they needed to talk to them nonetheless. The motive for the invasion isn't hate, they insist, but a revelation: a shared vision that told them, in quasi-religious terms, that an apocalypse would come if the family refuses to sacrifice one of their own by the following morning.

This collision, of one group bound by possible fanaticism with a family whose ties are cemented by deep love, echoes contemporary politics without lending credence to those skeptical of queer parents. The cohesion of the family, joined by still-scrutinized processes of same-sex marriage and adoption, never comes under question, running counter to most depictions of queer

couples who choose to raise children, especially young ones.

In fact, depictions of such families in U.S. media, both on TV and in film, still seem quite rare. While watching Shyamalan's thriller — which has been argued by some to be a conservative work for its sympathetic treatment of doomsaying extremists — I still struggled to think of films that treated queer family structures as matter-of-factly as this film does. While a movie like "Beginners," released in 2010, may show a queer parent (and in this case a widower) coming out late in life, and something like 1996's "The Birdcage" shows familial relations structured by absenteeism, these films pit queerness — in the classic sense of running against the norm — as destabilizing traditional structures of family life.

Far more common is the figure of the queer homewrecker, a character who, in honoring their own needs, threatens or upends longstanding family ties. (In this, "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," "Transamerica" and "Transparent" all

stand out, suggesting that trans characters remain disproportionately burdened with these associations). Alternatively, there's the affirmative structure of something like Lisa Cholodenko's 2010 film "The Kids Are All Right," which expels an interloper who threatens its key family's stability, thus affirming its queer family structure with a bill of ultimately good health.

For "Knock," though, the queerness of the family, the presence of gay parents, is not the issue — but the response to those around them is. Frictions of queer life are acknowledged in both present-tense moments and in flashback, bolstering Andrew's already justified skepticism of Leonard's home-invading troupe.

In this and other ways, "Knock" accounts for social frictions accompanying queer life without letting them take hold of the film's center. But when they are dealt with, it's often with an unexpected sense of grace. For Shyamalan, a director not known for subtlety, small notes of truth ring out through shorthand gestures, especially in flashbacks.

In one scene of the couple first



Photo Courtesy Universal Pictures

meeting Wen abroad, for instance, the couple claim to be in-laws instead of partners; in another, they endure a strained meeting with visiting parents. While these kinds of depictions — of white, cis and gay, financially stable couples in otherwise traditional family structures — could be considered assimilationist in their rhetoric, "Knock" makes clear that they're not

only rare but welcome, particularly when not presented as some ideal, preferred queer path. Instead, the film's family life is normalized in spite of what they face. In offering a depiction that's far from tokenistic while hardly being radical, "Knock" provides a testament to what we lack — and proof this should happen more often.

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GRAB PAUL



Paul Reiser still rising

By Gregg Shapiro

When it comes to versatility, you'd be hard-pressed to find another actor as adaptable as Paul Reiser. From his acting debut in 1982's "Diner" (which was also writer/director Barry Levinson's first movie) to his performances alongside Eddie Murphy in 1984's "Beverly Hills Cop" and Sigourney Weaver in 1986's "Aliens," Reiser effortlessly demonstrated his range. Since that time, he's also become a fixture on television, co-creating the Emmy-winning sitcom "Mad About You" and keeping us guessing about which side he's on in "Stranger Things," to mention a couple of his many projects. For LGBTQ+ fans, it's his role as Gordon, father of queer writer Hannah (Rachel Bloom) in Hulu's brilliantly funny "Reboot," that may officially earn him a following in our community. These days, Reiser is returning to his stand-up comedy roots heading out on a multi-city tour. He was gracious enough to make time for an interview to discuss his long career. **[Paul Reiser performs at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie on April 15.]**

Gregg Shapiro: Paul, 2022 was the 40th anniversary of your movie debut in "Diner." When you look back on it, how do you feel about the experience?

Paul Reiser: [Laughs] There was an event here that, I think, The Movie Channel put together a couple of months ago to celebrate the 40 anniversary, so a whole bunch of us got together – the actors in the cast. It was kind of staggering to think of it as 40 years. For me, it was absolutely the opening of everything. I was really just beginning. It was much sooner than I would have expected or reasonably hoped to have a break, as they call it. It happened by accident. I literally walked in with a friend and happened to stumble into an office where they were casting this movie, and the casting director thought I might be right (for the part). It was totally an accident and a bit of an education for me. That's kind of how things happen. There is no more reasonable way that things happen. They're often just silly accidents and coincidences and near misses, sometimes not a miss. That opened up everything for me. I had not even

been out to LA ever. So, when I did come out, instead of just being a stand-up who you haven't seen, you're "that kid from the movie who's on the poster" [laughs]. The movie, while not a mega-hit was very well-received critically, and by film aficionados. Over the years I've seen how much it has really meant to and stayed with people. There's an audience, a lot of people, men and women, surprisingly, for whom the film was an important touchstone in their lives

GS: 2022 was also the 40th anniversary of your stand-up debut on "The Tonight Show"...

PR: ... and they were sort of tied together. I was not passed the ball. I was not invited yet to "The Tonight Show," which was my only goal. I wasn't particularly looking to be in a movie. I just wanted to get on "The Tonight Show" as a stand-up. Because "Diner" was coming out, that was the week that they said, "You're not just a stand-up. You're a stand-up who is in a new movie that people are talking about. It literally opened the door from my stand-up, as well

GS: You're currently embarking on a stand-up tour. In the more than 40 years since your "Tonight Show" debut, can you please say a few words about the evolution of your stand-up – for example, are there things that you did jokes about then that you wouldn't necessarily do again now?

PR: It's funny. It's an interesting evolution. My goal was always to be a stand-up. That was really all I had in mind. Because of "Diner," things opened up and suddenly I found myself doing all these acting roles. They were great and I'm very grateful that they happened, but they kind of took me off track a little bit. I'm not in any way complaining. When "Mad About You" started, which was '92, and maybe the year before as we were developing it, I really wasn't on the road. When the show started in earnest, I was just kind of consumed with it. When it was over, I was at a different point in my life. The net result was I didn't do stand-up for what turned out to be 20 years. I didn't mean to, but '92 to I guess 2008 or 9, I just hadn't done it. Other than once in a while going up at a charity event or something, but not regularly performing. What's funny to me now is that people know me from this show or that show but still, a lot of them go, "I didn't know he does stand up," which tickles me. I guess that's fair enough. I haven't been out there. Certainly, the world has changed, and sensibilities have changed. People are much more aware of taking responsibility for what they say onstage, which is good. But for me, personally, I was never someone who walked the edge. I wasn't looking to ruffle sensibilities. I think the biggest change for me is as I've gotten older, your material and your perspective changes. When you're 23, 24, and you're wanting to be recognized, you want to make it, and be seen, it's different [laughs] than when you're in your 60s, and you have grown kids and you've been married for years. "Mad About You" came out of my act. I was talking a lot about having just been married. When I was invited to create a show, I said, "That's the kind of show I would want to do. Something really small and intimate that's just about a married couple." Newlyweds are different than being together five years or ten years and having kids. With many comics, hopefully, your



material changes as you change, as you grow. "Mad About You" was about this man and woman, but we had a lot of feedback and terrific response from gay couples, from men and women. It wasn't just about men and women, it was about intimacy, it was about two people in a confined space. No matter how you slice it, however you come at it, that's tricky. It was an education for me to realize that we were talking about something bigger than we even thought.

GS: In your acting career, you have an incredibly varied resume including sci-fi standouts "Aliens" and "Stranger Things," as well as a number of dramatic roles such as in "Whiplash" and "Fosse/Verdon." Do you prefer comedy or drama, or do you like them equally?

PR: I've never been a fan of these harsh divisions of comedy and drama. For me, the stuff that's always been the most memorable and the most impactful is the stuff that can straddle both. "Mad About You" was absolutely a comedy, but some of our most memorable stuff was when we did something a little bit more emotional. Similarly, when you're in a not specifically comedy thing, sometimes the most impactful moments are when there's a bit of levity, a bit of humor. Because, hopefully, nobody's life is only drama, only comedy. I've always loved the actors that can tip back and forth in a moment's notice. Tom Hanks and Jack Lemmon and Peter Falk. Those are the guys who are funny one second and then touching the next second and then funny, again. That keeps me engaged.

That's what life is. You could laugh at a funeral and you could cry at a birthday party. Anything can go in any direction. I've always loved finding something that enables you to hit both. You can't always do it. (In) "Aliens," certainly, there was no place to tell a joke. The show I'm doing now, "Reboot" on Hulu, is really fun because it's totally a comedy. It's about a comedy. There are funny characters and funny actors, and you're there to make comedy. That's new to me, to do a show about a comedy.

GS: You mentioned "Mad About You," which was rebooted in 2019, and now you are starring in the Hulu series "Reboot." Does this feel like an interesting coincidence to you?

PR: No [laughs]. I've never been a fan of reboots, in general. I always feel like if something's done, it's done. Helen Hunt and I thought long and hard about going back and doing the revisit. We didn't call it a reboot because we weren't trying to start it from scratch. We were just checking in. You haven't seen these people in 20 years, what would that relationship look like now that they raised the child who was a handful and who's leaving the nest? What has life done to these two people and this relationship in 20 years? That was the incentive that we thought would be really fun to explore. I don't know that everything needs to be rebooted. The premise of "Reboot" was just because all these shows were being rebooted. That's how "Mad About You" got to be done again. They came to us and said, "Everybody is looking to redo things that were successful." We resisted until he came upon why we

thought it would be fun to explore. Plus, for us, the fun of working together again was the appeal. We said we'd do it once, and I'm glad we did. Steve Levitan had this idea where these casts are getting back together, but what would it be like if nobody got along? What would people's lives be like? Even though "Reboot" is about the making of a sitcom, it's not so much about the sitcom at all. The actual sitcom is almost never seen. It's about rebooting, to use the term, people's lives. It's about second chances. It's about my character hopefully getting to be a better father to my adult daughter. One character is now sober and trying to be a professional and a grown-up. To go back to your other question about drama versus comedy, what I love about "Reboot" is it's really funny. Everybody in it is really funny. But when I watched it, I was really surprised at how much I cared, as a viewer, about these people. I wouldn't call it heavy drama, but it's not joke, joke, joke. These are funny situations. These are people who I care about. I haven't heard yet that we're going to go back and make some more, but I hope we do because I think there's a lot of stories to be told, and a lot of interesting characters to play.

GS: "Reboot," in which you play Gordon, is in the tradition of writers' room comedies including "The Dick Van Dyke Show" and "30 Rock." How much of your writers' room experience from "Mad About You" comes through in "Reboot?"

PR: It's very lifelike. I always tell people, "You don't have to have worked in television to enjoy the show, but if you have you will definitely get a kick out of it because it's so true to life." Some of this is just in the ethers, in the atmosphere. Writer's rooms famously will lose two and a half hours ordering lunch [laughs]. Or the friction between everybody in a closed room and people offending people. All the dynamics. New sensibilities versus old sensibilities. Those things ring true. What's fun for me is getting to play a guy who's in charge of a show but I don't really have the burden of being in charge of anything [laughs]. It's Steve Levitan's problem. It's nice to just be playing that guy.

GS: "Reboot" includes a touching scene in which Gordon's daughter Hannah (Rachel Bloom), comes out to him. Before "Reboot," did you have an awareness of an LGBTQ+ following for your work?

PR: I'm not aware of "Reboot" impacting that. As I said before, with "Mad About You"

I was heartened and grateful to see how deeply this show, which was about a heterosexual couple, how deeply it resonated with other couples and gay couples. We would hear it all the time. On the street, a guy would say to me, "That's so true! Me and my husband or me and my boyfriend have been having that exact fight." They're not just men/women fights they're two people fights.

GS: It was universal!

PR: It's universal, and that's always been true. That whatever is the most personal will end up being the most universal. That was one of the things I loved about "Mad About You." We can talk about things that were so small and intimate because they actually resonated the most for people. I don't know that I had a particular following or anything, but I certainly like to think that people can come to my stand-up show and nobody's going to get hurt. As I said before, some people enjoy pushing the envelope, but that's never been me. There's no point in doing it if people aren't having a good time and put at ease. I'm not here to make anybody uncomfortable..

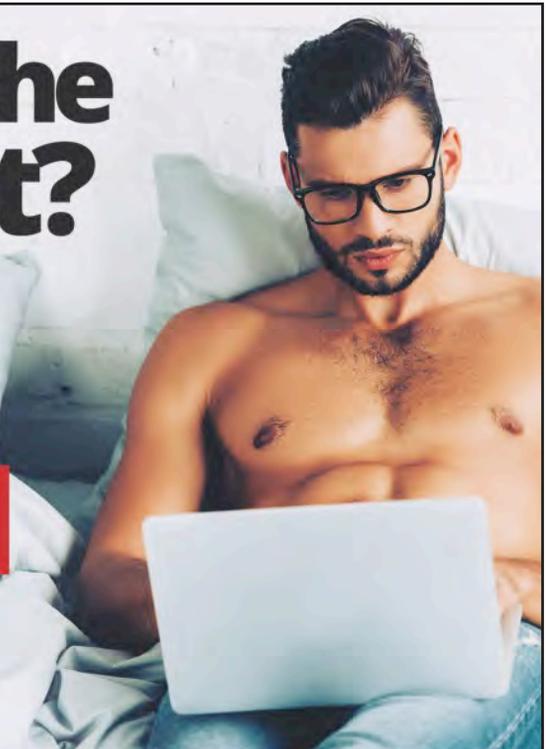
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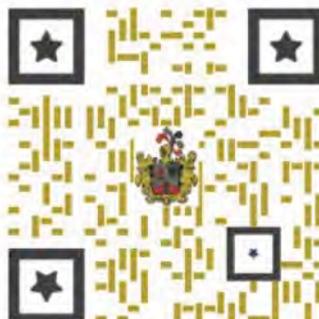
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2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$3 House Shots, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts Everyday Specials: \$5Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlies:** Tune Up Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** . 50cent Wing Night 5pm-10pm, Must Purchase a drink for special. Dine in Only. **Hydrate:** TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. **Jackhammer** \$5 Stoli Cocktails (All Flavors) Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$3 House Shots, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts. Happy Hour Specials 5pm–8pm: \$5 Stoli Mules (all flavors). Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. **Shakers on Clark:** Trivia Night: \$3 Domestic Beers. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. **Steamworks:** Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). **The Sofo Tap:** \$5 Amsterdam Cocktails, \$5 Tallboys Everyday Specials: \$5Jager, \$5 Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:**Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi.

WEDNESDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$ New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Tallboy Beers Specials: Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlies:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. **Jackhammer:** \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons, Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$4Miller Lite Drafts, \$5 Stolis (All Flavors). Happy Hour Specials 7pm–10pm: \$6 Any BIG drafts Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am \$5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. **Shakers on Clark:** Karaoke Night \$1 Off Long Islands. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, All Things Taylor & Ariana 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Britney & Rihanna last Wed of month: all 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. **The Sofo Tap:** \$3 House Shots, \$5 Tito's Cocktails, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)FreeDarts **Touche:**Jockstrap Night. Free Clothing Check.

THURSDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons . Everyday Specials:\$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. **Charlie's:** Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** Bottomless Tacos! \$23.95 5pm-10pm , Must purchase a beverage for special. Dine in Only. **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Miller Lit Tallboys Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$6 Tito Cocktails, Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails. **Shakers on Clark:** Darts Night \$1 off Fireball, Jager, Malort and Well Shots, \$2.50 PBR Cans. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Let's Go Thursdays with Alex Kay & Friends 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. **The Sofo Tap:** \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails\$5 Tallboy Beers Everyday Specials: , \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:** Throwback Thursdays70's& 80's Music & Porn by BijouVideo.

Daily Specials;

FRIDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. Happy Hour Specials: 3pm-6pm: \$4 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p - 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p - 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p - 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays - Strut 10p - 1am, Dancing until close. **D.S. Tequila Co:** TGIF Special \$5 Effen Cocktails and \$4 Hornitos Shots. Hydrate: Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Jackhammer:** \$5 Miller Lite Tallboys \$8 New Amsterdam & Redbull Happy Hour Specials 5-9pm: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons \$5 Chicago Handshake Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's). Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$6 Tito's Cocktails \$7.50 Big Miller Lites. Happy Hour Specials: 5pm-8pm: \$5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 3-7pm, RuPaul's Drag Race Viewing Party 7-9:30pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9:30pm-2am. **The Sofo Tap:** \$3 House Shots, \$7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts Happy Hour Specials: 3pm-6pm: \$4 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tall Boys Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Darts. **Touche:** 3/17 St Patrick's Day Party Best Kilt Legs Contest. 3/24 Cubs vs Sox Fans Faceoff.

SATURDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$6 Lagunitas IPADrafts. Happy Hour Specials: 1/2 Off All Drafts \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-3am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 - 10pm, The Main Event 10pm - 1am Dancing until Close. **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Miller Lite Tallboys Happy Hour Specials 5-9pm: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons \$5 Chicago Handshake Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's). **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 Miller Lite Tallboys Happy Hour Specials: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons. Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's). **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Signature Margaritas Happy Hour Specials: 2pm-5pm: \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$12 Mimosa Carafes, Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games with Sasha & Zamora Love 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **The Sofo Tap:** \$5 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat, \$5 Signature Margaritas, Happy Hour Specials: 12pm-3pm: 1/2 Off All Drafts Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** 3/18 Gear Night with Bluf/Chicago Barber & Boot Black Dress Code in Clubroom BNC 6pm 3/26 RIPE Party Dim Lights, Deep Beats Go-Go Dudes DJ Harry T.

SUNDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$6 Chicago Handshakes Happy Hour Specials 2pm-5pm \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$6 Jack Products, \$4 Domestic Draft, House Shots \$2. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-2am **Charlie's:** Queeriod! Every other Sunday 5pm - 7pm, Singational Sunday Karaoke 7pm - 11pm Mas Leche 11pm - 1am, Dancing until close. **D.S. Tequila Co:** Coyote Ugly Drag Brunch \$50 all inclusive food and beverage package plus Drag Show. **Hydrate:** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. **Jackhammer:** \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$7 Jackhammered Long Islands Happy Hour Specials : 1st Sunday: \$7 Planter's Punch 2nd Sunday: \$5 Dog Bowls (Premium Well) 3rd Sunday: \$3 Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's Tallboy Beers 4th Sunday: \$5 Stoli Cocktails (Any Flavor) 5th Sunday: \$6 New Amsterdam & Red Bull Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's). **Kit Kat Lounge:** Divalicious brunch 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$3 House Shots, \$12 Mimosa Carafes. Happy Hour Specials: 7pm-10pm: \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm **Shakers on Clark:** \$1 Off Any Bloody Mary, Milagro Tequila Mixed Drinks, or Tito's Vodka Mixed Drinks. **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **The Sofo Tap:** \$6 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts Happy Hour Specials: 12pm-2pm: \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 1pm-3pm: \$3 House Shots FREE Chicago-style hot-dogs (while supplies last) Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, Clubroom Opens 6pm, Movie Night 7pm.

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	Artist	Title
1	Coco & Breezy	Just Say ft. Tara Carosielli
2	Joel Corry x Becky Hill	History
3	Elderbrook & Amtrac	I'll Be Around
4	Marco Nobel x Glass Keys x Tyler James	The Fire
5	Drake	Massive
6	Armin Van Buuren	Roll The Dice ft. Philip Strand (Intro Radio Edit)
7	Ownboss x Sevek	Move Your Body (Amitre Instrumental Remix)
8	SZA	Shirt (KREAM Remix)
9	Anabel Englund	Need Me Right
10	Toby Romeo x Keanu Silva x IZKO	WOW ft. ASDIS
11	VIVID & Nazzereene	Secrets (Original Mix)
12	Oliver Heldens x Karen Harding	Oops
13	Leowi	Do You Feel The Same
14	Galantis x David Guetta & MNEK	Damn (You've Got Me Saying)
15	Jordana Bryant	Can I Get It Back (R3hab Remix)
16	Rasmus Hagen x Alius x Achilles	Be Somebody
17	Martin Garrix x DallasK & Sasha Alex Sloan	Loop
18	Audien	Drifting Away ft. Joe Jury
19	Tritonal x Marthy	Back To My Love
20	SILK	Supply The Love
21	Inna	Yummy
22	Hayden James	Good Life ft. Emie (Radio Edit)
23	HUMAN x Tudor	Craving You
24	Benny Benassi & Anabel Englund	Lightwaves
25	AWAKEND & CeCe Mix	Feel The Same
26	Becky Hill & Galantis	Run (Galantis & Misha K VIP Mix)
27	Tungevaag x Lovespeake	I Knew It Was You
28	2Awake	Wanna See You Dance
29	TELYKast With Francis Karel	Better Now
30	Rosa Linn	SNAP (Fargo Remix)

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Touche



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GRAB HOLLY

Presidents' Day is Cancelled

By Holly Maholm



I was standing in front of Donut Time, pretending to be watching over the horse harnessed to one of the delivery chariots, which Recon had parked there while he went inside. In fact, the horse I was attending was Fletcher (a unicorn in disguise), and rather than me preventing him from wandering off, my presence accomplished no more than to provide the two of us a convenient opportunity to chat.

Knowing I would need to do something to "loosen his tongue," I ducked into Donut Time and grabbed two Honey Nut Glazed Crullers, after which I returned and fed him his treats. "Thank you," he responded, and at that moment some activity caught our eye. Out in the distance, and heading in the direction of the pavilion on the Village Green, we saw the first few members of what soon grew into a large, raucous crowd of teenagers. These we quickly identified as the great majority of the students from our local high school. This was most unusual!

We watched as the crowd gradually progressed onto the Green, where it coalesced around the front of the pavilion. As we continued to watch, several persons, who

seemed to be leaders, mounted up the steps to the floor of the pavilion. Though most attention was focused on the leaders, we noticed some additional activity centered on the Civil War Memorial on the far side of the pavilion.

Now... this Memorial was simple and modest, in keeping with the post-Civil War period when it was erected. There was – in the center – a monument perhaps 10-foot-tall, bearing the names of the Civil War dead. (The monument was rendered in the style of an ancient Egyptian obelisk, which was considered – at the time, architecturally – to represent a classical, ancient shape constituting both an "emblem of eternity" as well as a "promise of imperishable memory." It was a style altogether fitting and proper for a memorial to roughly three dozen young men, erected by townfolk who had been personally acquainted with each and every one of them.)

To one side of the obelisk was a flagpole, at the top of which flew an American flag, and near the flagpole was an old, rusted cannon resting on decaying wooden wheels – artifact of that self-same Civil War which it memorialized.

Fletcher and I agreed there was likely to be a speech given, so I unhitched him from the delivery chariot, and – taking hold of his bridle to keep from falling behind – we walked in the direction of the pavilion, where we stopped and waited at the back of the crowd. As expected, the speaker stood forth on the top step of the pavilion, and I instantly recognized who it was.

It was Kaylyn, leader of the Gender Studies teachers at the high school, and the very person who had confronted me earlier about my support for Dave. She brought a microphone up to her lips and began to speak.

"This morning, we all had to listen to the vice principal make another bullshit announcement about another national holiday that shouldn't be a national holiday. They call this one 'Presidents' Day,' and they want us to stop what we're doing and honor two of the worst, most patriarchal and oppressive leaders this country ever had. They expect us to honor our first President, who was the leader of men fighting to preserve the racist, slaveholding colonies in the South, as well as the white power structure in the North, so

that even when we got our independence from the English king, the African-American slaves enjoyed no part of that liberation.

"Next, they want us to honor that other President, who likewise led our country into war, but what did he accomplish except perpetuate white supremacy and that cis-gender patriarchy that continues – even today – to oppress women and Indigenous and Gender Queer people, too!"

She paused, turning to the flag. "We need to rip down this flag that symbolizes so much black and brown oppression! It has to go!" The crowd began to cheer, and there was activity at the flagpole. But my unicorn companion reacted first.

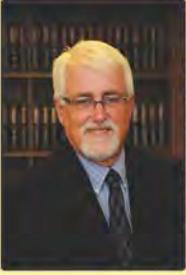
Fletcher (disguised as a 2,000-pound, seven-foot-tall, black Percheron) broke into a trot, then galloped in the direction of the flagpole. The crowd – stunned – fell back in terror to let him through. He did not stop until he arrived at the base of the flagpole (where the rope was undisturbed), following which he began lunging wildly in a circle around the Monument and flagpole, rearing up on his hind legs and bellowing an unmistakable warning which (though unexpressed in words) was clear to all: "Do not come near! I will defend this Monument and this flag with all the violence of which I am capable!"

The crowd drew back and fell silent, paralyzed with fear and confusion.

(To be continued)

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly's book Offered Magic: My Life Among the Unicorns (now available on Amazon) which collects the first 126 episodes of Holly's adventures involving both magical unicorns and her LGBTQ friends. Send a message to Holly at www.hollymaholm.com.

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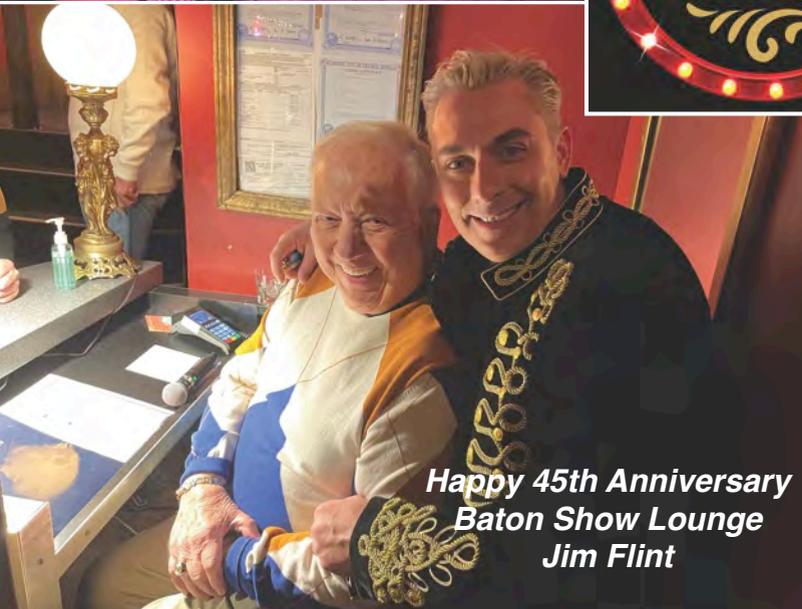
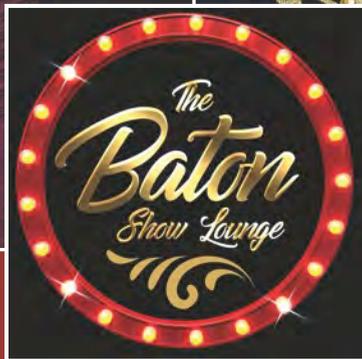


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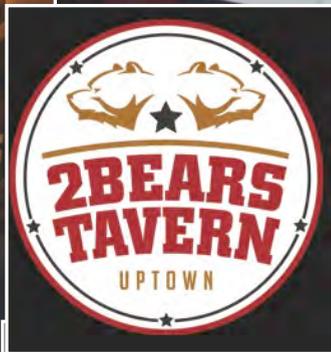
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Photos By Anthony Meade



GRAB A PLANE



The White House

Spring Has Sprung in Washington, D.C.

By Bill Malcolm

Washington, DC is perfect for a long spring weekend. The cherry blossoms are in bloom, the museums have tons of new exhibits, and the weather is perfect in America's most walkable (and gayest) city.

WHAT TO DO

The new Planet Word Museum is interesting. Located in the historic Franklin School, there are two floors of interactive exhibits including my favorite with karaoke and singers including the Supremes. You will find them at K Street at 13th Avenue NW.

The DC History Center in the Old Carnegie Library is fun. Did you know part of DC was given back to Virginia? An Apple Store sits on the first floor. You will find them at 9th Street NW/Mass. Avenue.

All the Smithsonian Museums are free:

The Portrait Gallery includes the portraits of every US President and is in the building as the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The atrium has a café and orchid display.

The Building Museum has an exhibit on gun violence as well as one on affordable housing. The building itself is worth a visit.

The National Museum of the American Indian Museum features the Mitsitam Native Foods Café. Try the tacos or the bison burger.

Across the street is the United States Botanical Garden with a beautiful outdoor display of mid-Atlantic region native plants and an

indoor conservatory.

Take a walk or a run with the Frontrunners. The walkers meet at 9:30 a.m. every Saturday at 23rd/P Street NW for a walk (or run) up Rock Creek Park to the Zoo.

Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures is a new exhibit at the National Museum of African American History and Culture which investigates Afrofuturist expression through art, music, activism and more.

Passport DC runs from May 1-31 and tribute to the city's international culture including open houses on the weekend to all of the embassies. Free food and drink are a highlight. Sample the local culture in countries around the world by visiting their embassy. I have done it twice and it is always a highlight.

NIGHTLIFE

The Number Nine is my go to bar. Located on P Street, it is a must and features two floors which events often held on the second floor. There is something going on every night including a viewing of RuPaul's show.

Trade is my other favorite nearby on 14th Street NW. Check out the outdoor patio in the back. There is always a crowd and special events. The rugby club was there the night I stopped by.

Two new bars will open soon including My Little Gay Pub at 1110 P Street NW.

WHERE TO STAY

I always stay at the Comfort Inn Downtown DC/Convention Center, 1201 13th Street NW in the historic Logan Circle neighborhood. It is handy to the nightlife on P Street/14th Street NW and walkable to the museums and attractions. It is also a bargain in this overpriced hotel market. Book your stay at www.choicehotels.com.

The new Conrad is your upscale choice. You will find them off Mass Avenue near 9th Street in the City Center complex (an outdoor mall with high end shops and restaurants).

The Renaissance at 999 9th Street NW is another possibility. It will soon be a Westin.

WHERE TO EAT

Grab lunch with local ingredients at the Union Kitchen on 9th Street NW. Try the Brussel sprouts and meatball salad.

The Double Eagle Steak House in City Center is excellent for steaks and burgers.

GETTING THERE/GETTING AROUND

I took American Airlines into close in Reagan Airport. They let me take an earlier flight for free and my trip was without incident. They have a new commuter terminal which just opened. Reagan (aka DCA) is one of the best airports in the country (and an American hub). The architecture is stunning and the convenience to the city cannot be beat.



U.S. Capitol Building



Saraswati Sculpture at the Indonesian Embassy

HELPFUL HINTS

You are in the “DMV” (DC-Maryland-Virginia). It is local slang for the area. You can walk everywhere or take Metro. Rental car not needed. Reagan National Airport (DCA) is a 20-minute trip into DC and is the most convenient. However, Metro now goes to Dulles Airport (known for international flights). Baltimore (BWI) is not too far either and you can take Amtrak or MARC trains into the City. Speaking of Amtrak, which is another good option for traveling to DC or for continuing on up to New York

City on the Acela high speed train after your DC trip. The Amtrak Cardinal runs three times a week from Chicago through the mountains and gorges of West Virginia. Book your trip on the Acela to New York City or to DC itself at Amtrak.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Pick up a copy or read on line *The Washington Blade* ([washingtonblade.com](http://www.washingtonblade.com)). *Metro Weekly* is the other publication and is only on line. Both have upcoming events and nightlife ideas. *The Blade* has run my column and also has great political coverage. Washington.org is the official visitor’s site with tons of ideas on what to do.

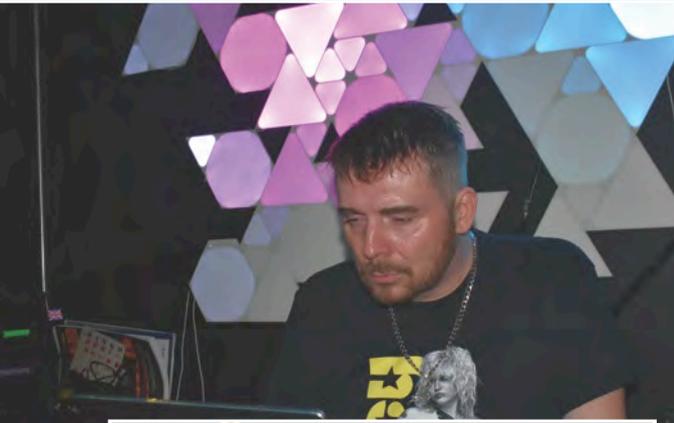
I go to DC four times a year. There is always something new I discover. Spring is my favorite city, and it starts March 1. Book your trip today.

Bill Malcolm’s syndicated LGBTQ+ travel column has appeared in publications around the country and is carried in the IGLTA newsletter. Special thanks to Julie Marshal of Washington.org for her helpful travel



PhotosBy Anthony Meade





ATMOSPHERE

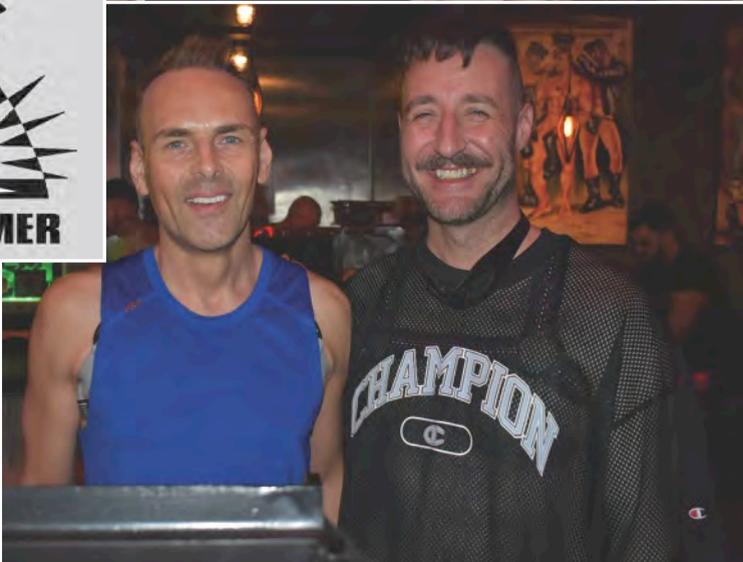


Photos By Anthony Meade





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GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"Oscar Wars: A History of Hollywood in Gold, Sweat, and Tears" by Michael Schulman c. 2023, Harper \$40.00 608 pages



You've often wondered what ended up on the cutting room floor.

What Easter eggs or tiny secrets never made it into your favorite movie? Which budding star's debut role will you miss because someone decided it wasn't worthy? What will never be seen on-screen? So much celluloid, so many scripts slashed, plots mashed, dreams dashed, as in "Oscar Wars" by Michael Schulman, careers trashed.

Nearly a year ago, you almost couldn't go anywhere without hearing about The Slap. Everyone, it seemed, had an opinion about both action and Academy.

As for the latter, says Schulman, the Academy Awards are "a vaunted tradition celebrating a great modern art form. They're an industry party... the closet thing America has to royalty... a marketing play... the Gay Super Bowl." And "they're something else, too."

The Oscars, in a way, are a battlefield where "it can take years to see what the real battle lines were." There's conflict in the Awards, cultural upheaval, and politics. The movies hold up a mirror to us and our society, but what happens behind-the-scenes with the Awards is rarely known by the public.

The first Awards were held quietly, because that's how the Academy began: members at the first meeting were carefully-chosen VIPs, bona fide stars, directors, and powerful studio owners. It's possible, Schulman suggests, that the first Academy Awards process was "rigged."

Through the years, there were many times when the Academy was almost disbanded and the Awards show deleted. And yet, it always rallied because who didn't want that statue gracing their mantle or bathroom shelf? Frank Capra did everything imaginable to get one. So did Bette Davis, even going so far as to have an abortion. Judy Holliday narrowly missed getting the role that gained her an Oscar. Dennis Hopper didn't care if he had one or not, though, and Dalton Trumbo

got his very, very late.

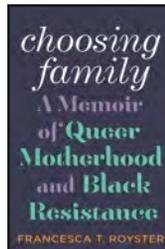
In the near-century of the Oscars, there were comebacks and come-from-behinds, a Red Scare and Snow White. Indeed, the ceremony has thrived despite a ratings system, racism, rock & roll, 1969... and a Slap heard 'round the world.

As addictive as a large popcorn, extra butter, and more fun than a trailer for that next big flick, "Oscar Wars" is a star-powered fan's book, all the way – but it also has something for not-particularly-avid sometimes-watchers, too.

With a heavy tip toward Hollywood, author Michael Schulman adds history and pop culture to his stories, showing how world events affected the movies and vice versa. The Academy hasn't always follow along, though, leaving fans screaming "WHAAAT??" at their televisions once a year on a Sunday; on this, Schulman subtly explains the unexplainable, in a way that anyone can appreciate. His anecdotes put the shiny, sparkly "tinsel" in these Tinsel Town tales.

This is a hefty tome but don't let that be daunting; "Oscar Wars" is so much fun to read that you'll barely notice its size. If you're truly mad for movies, Hollywood, the Red Carpet, or cultural history, this book makes the cut.

"Choosing Family: A Memoir of Queer Motherhood and Black Resistance" by Francesca T. Royster c.2023, Abrams Press \$26.00 264 pages



Check one from each category. Pick carefully. Take one from Column A, one from Column B, or choose what's behind Door Number One or Two. Immediate or long-term, when it comes to your future and your happiness, as in "Choosing Family" by Francesca T. Royster, it's good to have options. The whole idea hit her like a slap. Francesca Royster had never particularly wanted to be a mother. She'd dated boys in school, decided that she liked women better, and eventually came out to her family. No, motherhood wasn't on her radar – and yet, when she saw a sleepy toddler wrapped in her mother's arms at an airport, Royster had the sudden need

to tuck that little head beneath her chin.

She never discussed it with her partner, Annie. The urge "receded to the edges of my thoughts," she says, and they traveled instead, hit middle-age together, cared for sibling's kids, and joked about "breeders." She loved the life they'd built as queer women with community, what Royster calls "queer time." Would she lose that, if there was a baby involved?

She and Annie split, took time to think about the future, but came together nightly to talk and plan. Royster spoke to the "Mothers" – ancestors and goddesses from other cultures – and she thought of the kids near her hometown of Chicago who needed families.

Her female forebears had raised children, their own and others', in situations that were fluid. Surely, two queer women could, too. And so she and Annie applied to adopt and after a nail-biting wait and a near-loss, they brought home their daughter, Cece, who became a fierce, smart, loving little girl who's cherished by the family that her mothers have assembled. "I... know that there might come a day when Cece won't feel as comfortable with this motley group that is our chosen family," Royster writes. But "...by living our lives as truly as we can... we can change the world that she inherits."

Not that it will affect your enjoyment at all, but the subtitle of "Choosing Family" is a bit confusing. This book is more about "queer motherhood" than it is about "Black resistance" and that's okay. The best, most meditative, most meaningfully-worded parts of author Francesca Royster's story are in becoming a mother to her child, and in tales of Royster's own mother and other steely female ancestors who left their prints on her.

Resistance? No, that's irresistible, especially to anyone pondering raising children.

Anchored by the turning of the word "family" upside down and reclaiming it from white heteronormality, then, readers are led – indeed, treated – to what Royster and her partner created B.C. (before child) and afterward. Theirs is a made family that includes blood relatives, absent relatives, and relatives-because-we-say-so.

That's icing on a work-in-progress cake for readers who are considering doing the same thing, formal or otherwise. "Choosing Family"; is also for those who've done this work, created the family they want, and it's all good. Picket fence and two-point-five kids or not, check this.



Photos By Anthony Meade



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**I PROMISED MYSELF TO
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March 23 – April 30, 2023
AT THE CHOPIN THEATRE**



Hell in a Handbag Productions is pleased to continue its 21st season with the Chicago premiere of *I Promised Myself to Live Faster*, an intergalactic queer extravaganza featuring closeted extraterrestrials, high stakes pursuits and nuns from outer space, featuring text by Greg Moss and Pig Iron, originally created and conceived by Pig Iron Theatre Company and directed by JD Caudill*. *I Promised Myself to Live Faster* will play March 23 – April 30, 2023 at The Chopin Downstairs Theatre, 1543 W. Division St. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

This space epic tells the tale of our

reluctant hero Tim (**Robert Williams**) who's been put through an emotional ringer these past few months. Tim's life takes a radical turn when an order of intergalactic nuns charge him with a quest: retrieve the Holy Gay Flame from the clutches of the evil emperor to save the race of Homosexuals and restore the balance of power in the universe. Once Tim is captured by the fabulously androgynous Ah-Ni (**David Cerda**), Tim goes places he never dreamed in this ridiculous and delirious allegorical adventure.

Tickets are now on sale at handbagproductions.org

**RAVEN THEATRE'S
CHICAGO PREMIERE OF
RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN
EXTENDED THROUGH
APRIL 2, 2023**



Due to popular demand, Raven Theatre's critically-acclaimed Chicago premiere of *Right To Be Forgotten* has added an additional week of performances, extending through Sunday, April 2, 2023. Written by **Sharyn Rothstein** and directed by **Sarah Gitenstein**, this smart and timely story about human forgiveness in the age of the internet is playing on Raven's newly-dedicated, 85-seat Johnson Stage, 6157 N. Clark St. (at Granville) in Chicago.

The internet never forgets, and Derril Lark's mistake at 17 haunts him online a decade later. Desperate for a normal life, he goes to extraordinary lengths to erase his indiscretion. But freedom of information is a big business, and the tech companies aren't going down without a fight.

Secrets, lies and political backstabbing abound in this riveting new drama about one man's fierce battle to reclaim his privacy by Primus Prize winning playwright **Sharyn Rothstein** (By the Water, Northlight Theatre).

For Tickets or more information, call **(773) 338-2177**.

**STEPPENWOLF THEATRE
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PREMIERE OF "LAST NIGHT
AND THE NIGHT BEFORE"
April 6 – May 14, 2023**



Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the nation's premier ensemble theater company, is pleased to continue its 47th season with the Chicago premiere of **Donnetta Lavinia** Grays' *Last Night and the Night Before*, a moving exploration of love – Black, queer, familial – and what must be sacrificed to raise a child. Directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton, *Last Night and the Night Before* will play April 6 – May 14, 2023 in Steppenwolf's Downstairs Theater, 1650 N. Halsted St. in Chicago.

Last Night and the Night Before will feature ensemble member **Namir Smallwood** with **Ayanna Bria Bakari, Sydney Charles, Kyla Renee Jones, Aliyana Nicole** and **Jessica Dean Turner**.

Monique and her daughter Sam are on the run. From what, they will not say. Showing up on their family's doorstep in Brooklyn, the surprise visit raises more questions than it answers. As the specter of their abandoned life in Georgia creeps back into focus, the family is forced to consider what must be sacrificed to raise a child in an often-cruel world. **Donnetta Lavinia** Grays's heartbreaking and poetic portrait of love – Black, queer, familial – is a bold tribute to the enduring promise of tomorrow.

Tickets are now on sale at steppenwolf.org and the Box Office at **(312)335-1650**.

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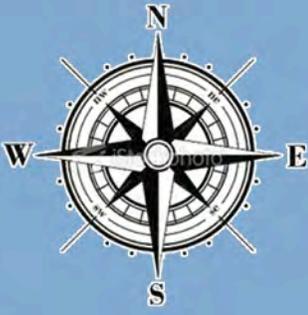
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