

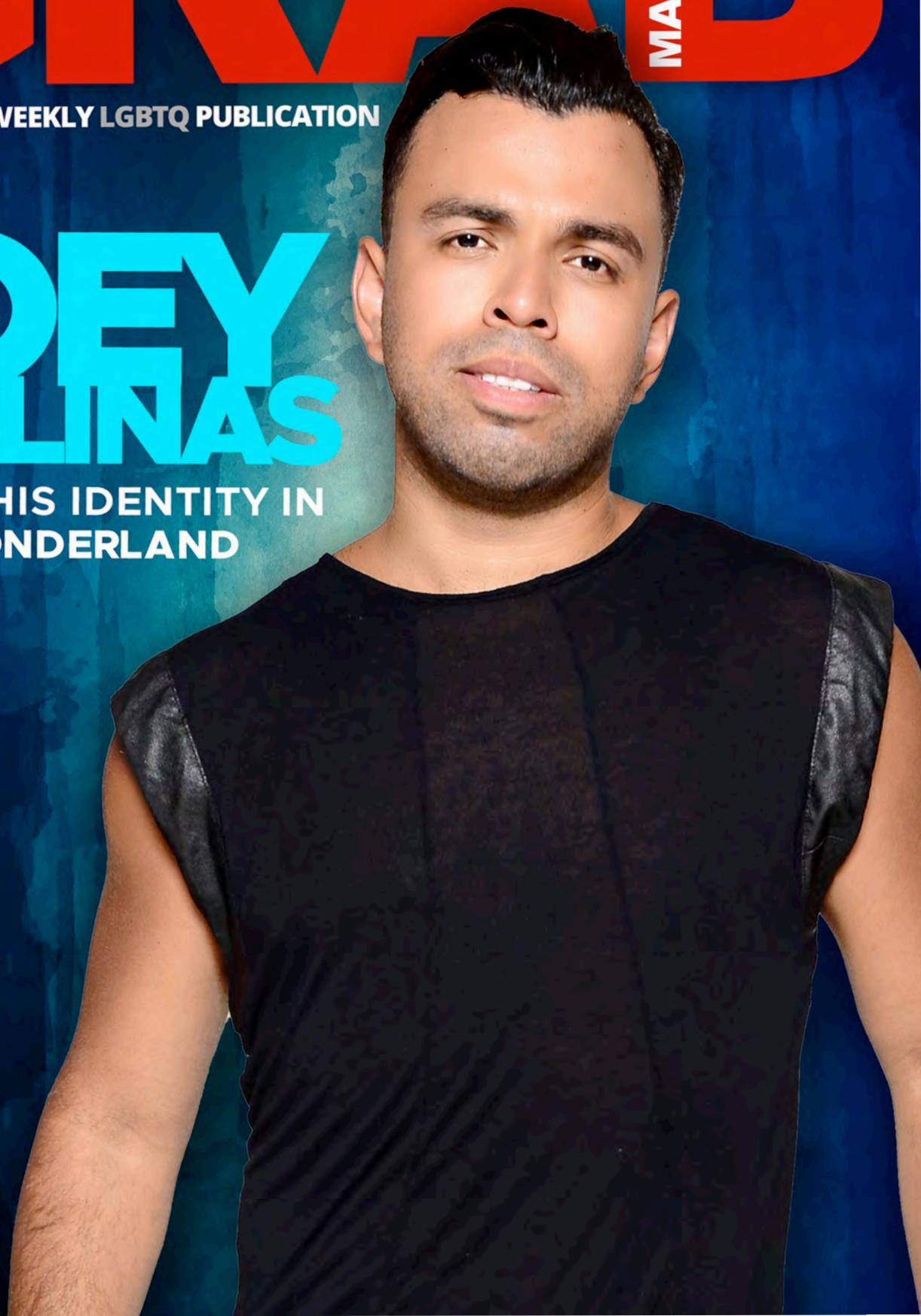
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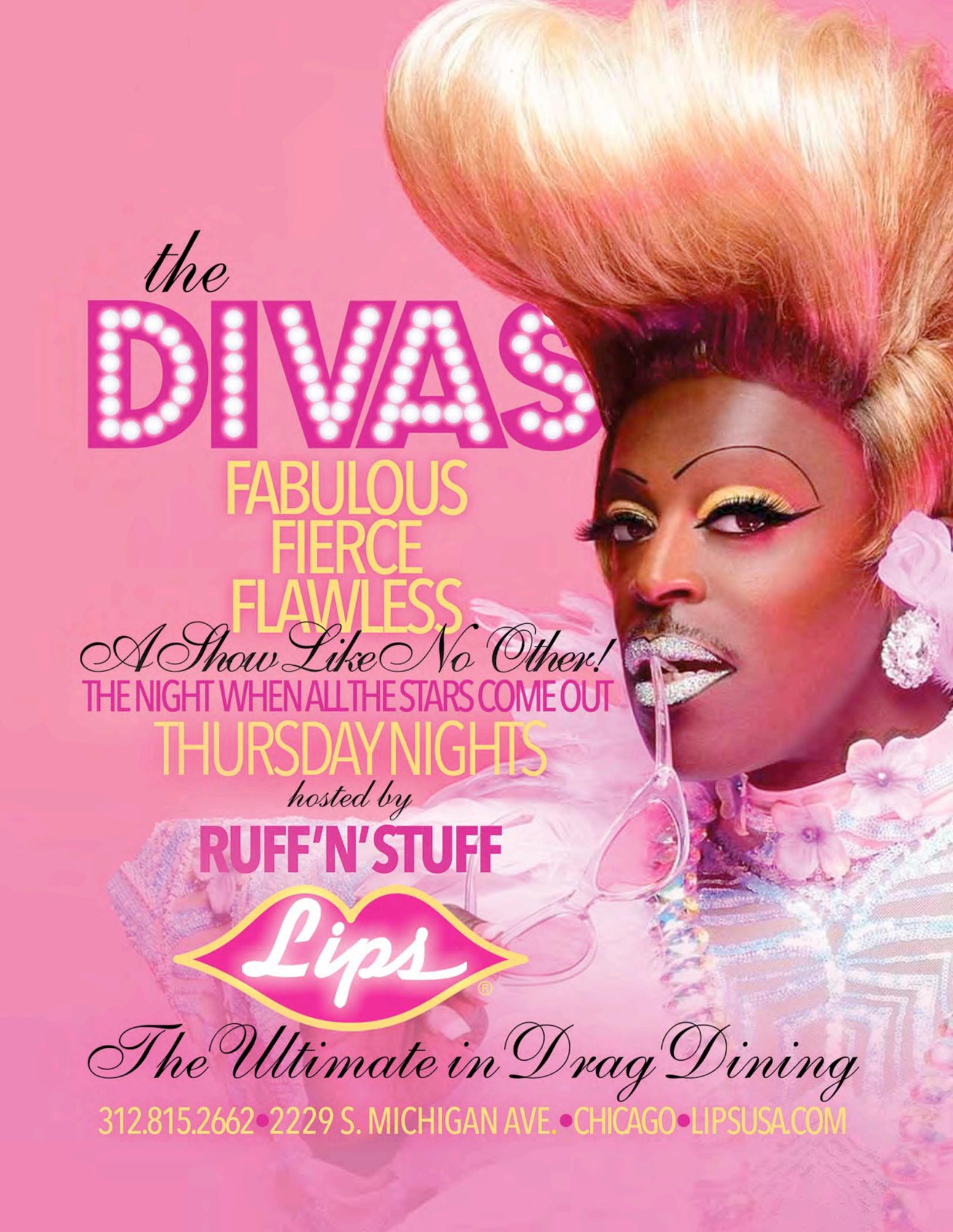
GRAB **MAGAZINE**

CHICAGO'S BIWEEKLY LGBTQ PUBLICATION

JOEY SALINAS

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WONDERLAND





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CONTENTS

THIS ISSUE

JOEY SALINAS
6



NICO TORTORELLA
10

TRAVEL:
ATLANTA
16



RODDY AND JOEY
18

NEXUS DANCE CHART	24
POSITIVE THOUGHTS	26
GRAB A FILM	32
GRAB MUSIC	34
GRAB NEWS	36
Bar/Restaurant/ Directory/	38 & 40
MAP	41
CLASSIFIEDS	42

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GRAB JOEY

COVER



Joey Salinas Finds His Identity in Wonderland

By David Luhrs

Joey Salinas was born and raised in northern Virginia, the oldest of four children. He was of the latchkey generation, so spent a lot of time alone in his bedroom with his music. Mariah Carey, George Michael, Aerosmith, and Janet Jackson were his favorite pop artists and they remain a strong influence in his sound.

Much of Joey Salinas' music today explores the many facets of his identity. He is a strong believer that representation matters and his songs reflect his own unique perspective as a gay man of Latin descent.

This month, he releases the music video to "Wonderland," the third video release from his Identity: Chapter 1 album.

influence to what I do. Like, in the title track, Identity, those in the LGBT community can relate to having different identities or personalities that they've had to put on depending on their stage in life or the people they were surrounded by. The same can be said for people of color. Some of us find it hard adjusting to the environment.



David Luhra: Are you Joseph, Joe, or Joey?

Joey Salinas: Anyone that refers to me as Joe or Joseph is either family or has known me a long time. I started going by Joey when I became comfortable in my own skin. Most everyone calls me Joey these days.

DL: What have you learned about yourself from this album?

JS: My Latin soul will always peek its head in all my music. I can't help it. I love soul and rhythm! But I'm a gay man, too, and both add

DL: You explore the importance of finding love in "Wonderland." Why is finding your other half so important?

JS: I think it's important to know that you're not alone in the world. Being in love is something that some don't have the luxury of enjoying. Some never find it. So, it's special when you do. There was a time when all we saw on TV and in films was heteronormative situations, and for many LGBTQ people, the thought of finding love and even getting married was a fantasy. Thankfully, the tide has turned, and it's become more normalized that we can all love. It's that magical feeling that I wanted to capture in Wonderland. I sing finding that special someone in the song, but the song's true meaning is about the feeling itself.

DL: Have you found him?

JS: I have not, but I know he's out

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there. It'll happen when it happens. I'm not rushing it, but I will welcome it whenever it does make its way into my life.

DL: Tell us about shooting the video.

JS: My first two videos were high energy videos with lots of choreography and fast cuts. For "Wonderland", the only mid-tempo song in the Identity: Chapter I EP, I wanted to have my artist moment. My goal was to show grand epic scale backdrops that illustrated the vibrance of life. So much of it was shot in nature settings: in the forest alongside a lake and in some of the reserves. And then there was the Waterwall. That wall looked so majestic when I first saw it; like an amphitheater!

DL: Why so much water in the video?

JS: Water gives life. I wanted to illustrate the vibrance and life that you get from being in love. I'm pretty much a water nymph myself.

DL: Do you sing in the shower?

JS: I love singing in the shower! I love long showers. I come up with a lot of my best material while I'm under the water! I have a song off my first album called "Feel It" that I completely came up with while in the shower.

DL: What would you be doing right now, if it wasn't for your music career?

JS: If I wasn't in music, I'd be in film or choreography. I'm a multifaceted artist. I love all aspects of production.

DL: If you could change anything about the industry, what would it be?

JS: I think the music industry can be hard to maneuver, sure, but artists have more leverage to work with these days; more control and ownership of their career.

I would love to see the momentum continue.

DL: What is the best advice you've been given?

JS: To just do it; never wait. I have four albums under my belt, with a fifth on the way. I'm releasing videos and other content. I'm growing my fanbase and support system by the day. I'm not waiting.

DL: Final message to fans?

JS: I appreciate all the love and support! I hope that I'm able to connect with you through my art and provide some form of escapism with it. Who knows? Perhaps I can take you to your Wonderland!

Follow Joey Salinas on Facebook @JoeySalinasMusic and on his YouTube channel.



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GRAB NICO



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After 'Younger,' Nico Tortorella Is Ready for the Future of Masculinity

The queer nonbinary actor on giving men permission to cry, their gay superhero on 'Walking Dead' and feeling 'settled in my skin'

By Chris Azzopardi

For six seasons, queer nonbinary actor, activist and author Nico Tortorella has starred as Josh, the delightfully brooding (straight) tattoo artist, on super-queer TV Land dramedy "Younger." Created, executive produced and written by openly gay "Sex and the City" helmer Darren Star, the LGBTQ-inclusive series focuses on a single mom (Broadway's Sutton Foster) who undergoes a makeover to appear, well, younger (much, much younger) in an effort to land a publishing job after her husband leaves her. Hillary Duff also stars, with Debi Mazar in, blessedly, a

lesbian role. For its seventh and final season, the show moves from TV Land to ViacomCBS streamer Paramount+.

On Zoom from their home in upstate New York, Tortorella imagined the possibilities for a pandemic-set season of the show (Josh would be doing ... what?!), discussed the future of masculinity on TV in a post-Josh world, and geeked out about starring as gay zombie fighter Felix Carlucci in AMC's "The Walking Dead: World Beyond."

Chris Azzopardi: The pandemic doesn't exist in the world of

"Younger," though the final season was shot during it. If the pandemic would have happened in the show, what would Josh be doing? How would he have handled this moment?
Nico Tortorella: Well, tattooing would have been off the books, right? At least legally. I think he may have been tattooing himself? (Laughs.) And potentially Kelsey and Lauren, who, you know, would all be in Josh's pod. I think Josh would be reading a lot. And, you know, Josh is a parrot. So him and Clare would probably potentially be living together with Gemma during the



Photo Courtesy Paramount+

pandemic. Who knows? I mean, if there was a pandemic, do they get back together if they're spending all that time (together)? Does it blow up? And does she move back to Ireland? Does Josh go back down to West Virginia to spend time with his family?

CA: Basically, it would've been a completely different season.

NT: Totally different show, yeah. It would've been great.

CA: After playing Josh for seven seasons, do you have a different kind of interpretation, or appreciation, or perspective on straight bro culture and the guys who inhabit that space?

NT: Great question. I think that in terms of the medium of filmmaking in general, there's a responsibility to write characters that are more than the stereotype. And I think that Darren has always done a really good job of that. But I think the way Josh came to life on this show in terms of his emotionality and his heart and his openness — on paper, Josh is a straight bro, right? But he's so much more than that. And it has been such an honor to bring that character to life. Just to see Josh cry. We need to see more men cry. We all

do, right? I'm excited for the future of masculinity in general, the ways in which art can expand that notion and just the collapsing of binaries and divisions that exist in everything.

CA: Do you have any real life examples of that and Josh's influence on culture when it comes to breaking down these masculine norms?

NT: I think that "the normal" fan of this show is a woman my age, right? Or a bit older. And I've had people come up to me, specifically men, who will say, "Ah, man, my girlfriend watched the show, and I started watching it because it was on..." because they can't admit that they started watching this show without them, right? But they found truth in this character and these storylines. And that's just chipping away at the work that is being done and needs to be done.

CA: So here we are seven years later. A lot of time has gone by. You've done a lot in between the beginning and end of "Younger." How has the show changed your career?

NT: Oh, man. It opened so many doors for me, both in the literal sense of my career and it allowed me to tap into

other projects in film and television but also in publishing. I think I got a taste of the publishing world, and it was something that I had always imagined doing, but never really understood how to get there. And I got just a basic education of how the publishing world operates, and I was able to write a couple books, and I have a third one on the way.

At its core, "Younger" is optimistic, and these have been some trying years, you know? Think about everything that we've lived through politically and socially over the last seven years, and how much the world has changed. And having this foundation of "Younger," this summer camp that I got to go to every year, pretty much on the dot for three, four months, there was just this reminder of hope that was instilled because of this show. I think it's so important that we have those outlets. Whether or not you work in the industry, you can turn your television on and find something that brings you (happiness). It's not even just television, but how important it is to seek joy. "Younger" really brought that to life for me.

CA: Now that "Younger" has wrapped and I'm guessing you have some

extra time, what does that mean for the future of your career?

NT: I'm on the "Walking Dead." We'll see what happens in that universe. But I am really excited about this next phase of my career. It's interesting going from half-hour comedy to hour-long action-based drama. That transition was and has been intense both times. But I don't know exactly what I wanna do next. I think I'm luckily in this position where I get to make that decision instead of having that decision made for me. And I know for sure I want to be more involved creatively, from a production standpoint. I wanna be in a writer's room. I wanna direct. I am in love with this medium of art, and I wanna give myself more to it on a show or film — probably a show, because everyone's making television now — that is driving the message that I carry with me everywhere in my life, you know?

CA: What's been the most gratifying part of bringing a queer superhero to life on "Walking Dead"?

NT: We need more queer superheroes! This is just the tip of the iceberg. And I think it kind of goes back to what we were talking about earlier: flipping these stereotypes on their heads. There are so many ways in which Felix could have been written or could have been played. And there is a brute masculine force to Felix that is opposite, potentially, of what we would come to expect from a queer superhero. Then underneath that is this just fuckin' raw emotionality and heart.

Moving forward for superheroes, or really just any queer character on television or in film, I'm excited for a future where we don't rely on the violence that queer people experience in order to tell their stories. I wanna just see queer people go to the grocery store. I just want to see them live their lives in ways that other characters have been written, you know? And that goes beyond queer characters. Everyone deserves that space. You know, I watched "Ramy," and that's the first time we've seen a Muslim character really come to life in television, or a (Muslim) family, for that matter. Think about everyone else in every other story that's worthy of voice and time. There's so much more that we can be doing. We're getting there, but we still have a lot of work to do.

CA: As Pride season approaches, I want to take a moment to reflect on this odyssey you've been on in regards to your sexuality since we



spoke in 2017. How do you feel in your skin now versus when you first came out five years ago, in 2016?

NT: I feel quite settled in my skin in a way that doesn't feel tired. The word "settled" kind of has a weight to it. I'm complicit in it, but I feel really comfortable with the person that I am. Even just being off social media for the last few months, there is ... I'm currently living through this ego death of sorts, and so much of my public persona and character in the last few years have been driven by this voice and this

message. To let that go in a public space has been really interesting. Not that I have let it go forever, but even just in the last few months I have focused on myself and what it means to me, rather than the access to other people. This year has been really difficult and introspective, just in terms of queer identity in general. Like, how much of our queer identities are actually tied to the relationships that we have or don't have with other people? I have been living in a house with my partner (fitness and health expert Bethany

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Meyers) for the last year-plus, and there have been no external relationships. No secondary partners. No tertiary partners. Nothing. I mean, I'm kind of always living in this queer spiral, but how does the definition of queer change when we don't have access to "other"?

What this year really has done for me, and this is just an extension of this queer spiral that I have constantly been living in, but: (What) is our ability to see queerness in everything that exists, rather than just our gender or sexuality? (Laughs.) I mean, going back to going to the grocery store: What is queer about going to the grocery store, you know? Like, specifically, in a conservative neighborhood that I live in, in upstate

New York: How can I bring that with me? And what does that mean in the larger environment that I live in? It's been beautiful, honestly, but, you know, difficult at times.

CA: I've always appreciated that you have been frank about your sexuality and open in all regards. And when it comes to being a queer person inside of a grocery store, it's like, queerness can just be an extension of who you are sometimes. That can be the statement.

NT: Even just having queer conversation over this last year has been limited, and it's refreshing to get on a call with someone who gets it. So, thank you.

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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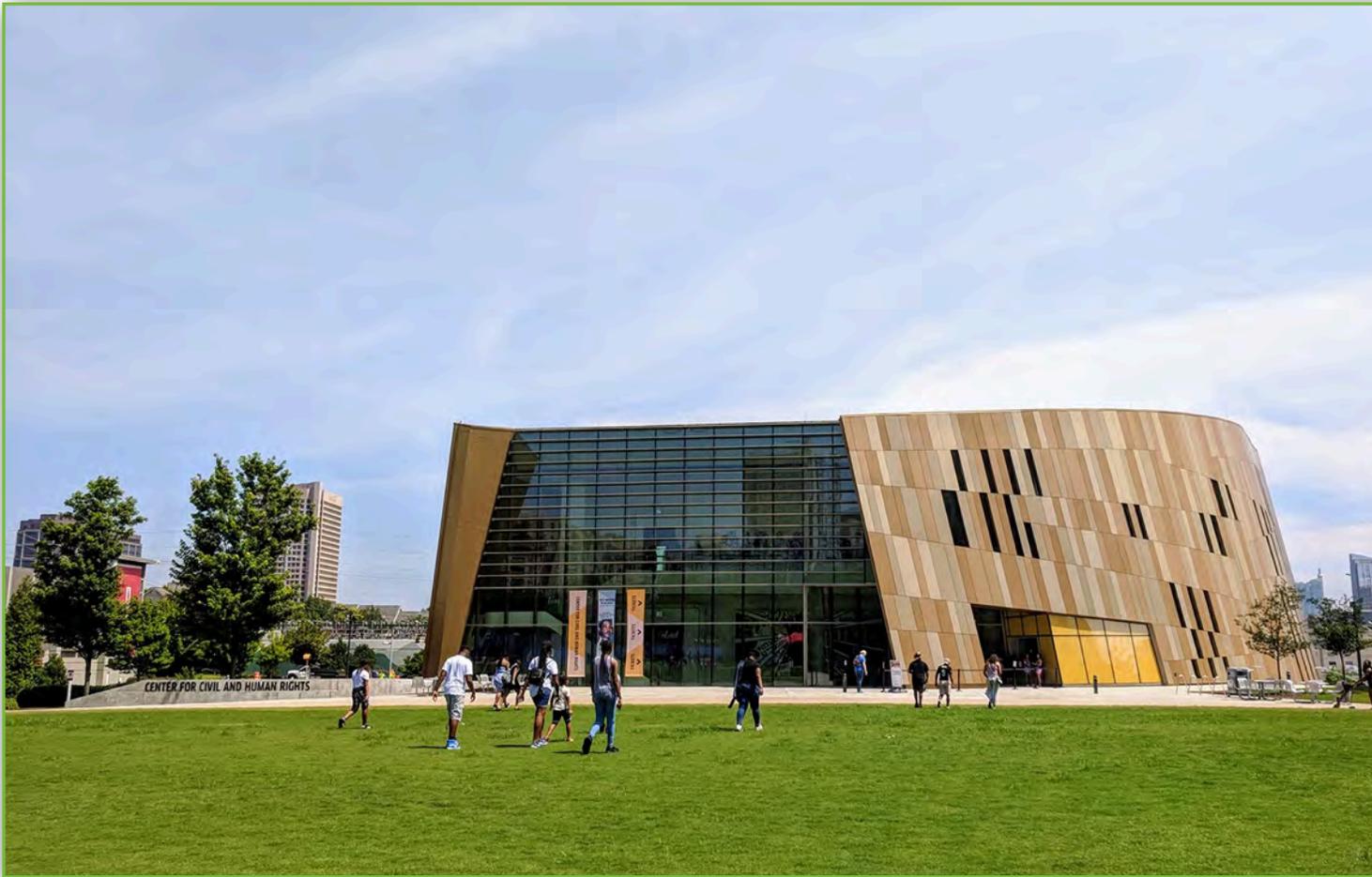
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GRAB A PLANE

TRAVEL



Pride Journey: Atlanta, Georgia

By Joey Amato

Almost everyone has been to Atlanta at some point or another. Whether for a conference or just passing through the Hartsfield-Jackson airport, the busiest airport in the world, Atlanta sees more than 100 million visitors per year. As the largest city in Georgia and one of the largest in the country by population, Atlanta has exploded to become an economic powerhouse. Skyscrapers are popping up throughout the city and many Fortune 500 companies have a presence in the region. Of course, the city is known for their hometown favorites: Coca-Cola, Delta Airlines and Turner Broadcasting System, which was founded by none other than Ted Turner, who's name is everywhere in Atlanta. Turner has a downtown street named after him as well as 3 namesake restaurants – **Ted's Montana Grill** – just in the Atlanta city limits.

Not too far from the downtown restaurant is Centennial Olympic Park,

home of the 1996 summer Olympics. The park is adjacent to three other incredible attractions: the **Georgia Aquarium**, **World of Coca-Cola** and **National Center for Civil & Human Rights**.

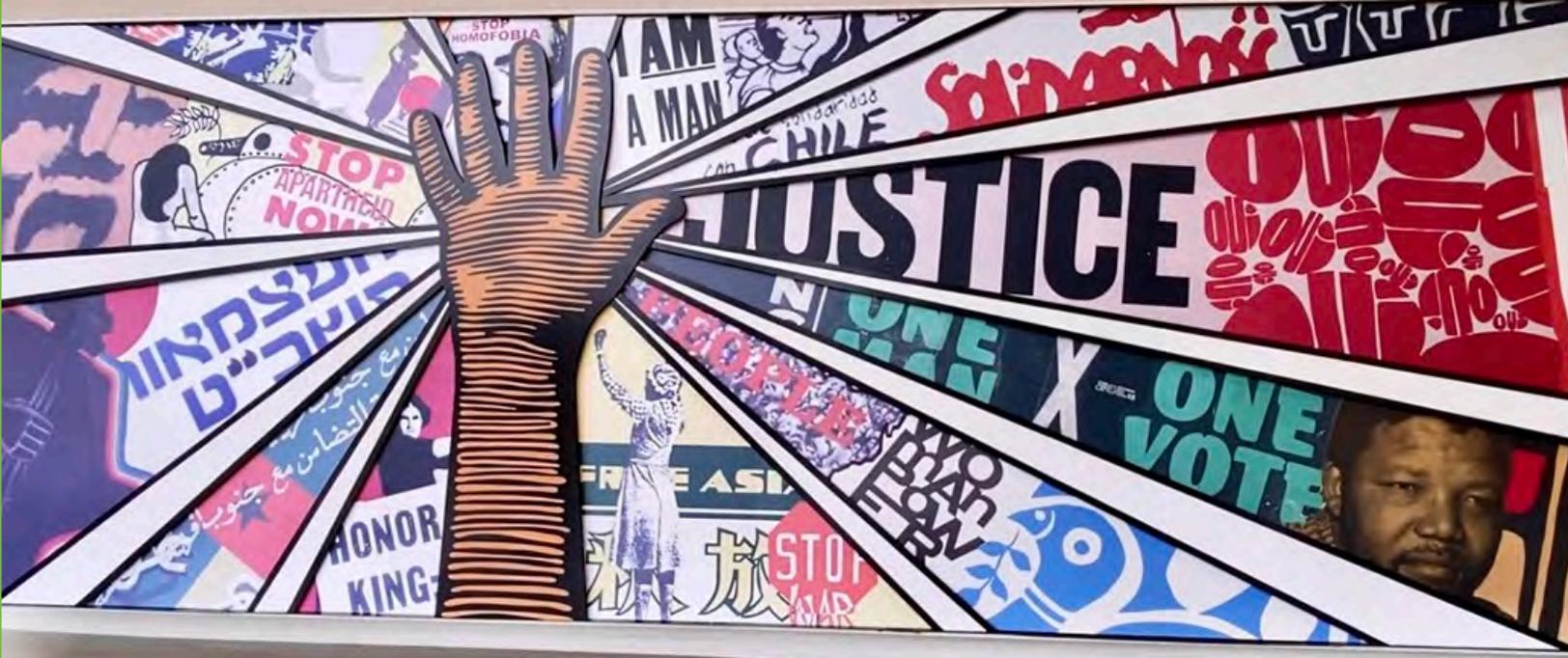
On this visit, I decided to first swing by World of Coca-Cola, which gives visitors a wonderful overview of the history of the brand, talks about the secret formula and of course offers the opportunity to sample Coca-Cola products from around the world. If you time your visit right, you may even get a chance to take a picture with their mascot, the Polar Bear.

Next, I stopped by the National Center for Civil & Human Rights, a museum I had visited in the past. This time I was given a tour by the Executive Director for the LGBTQ Institute at the museum. Although the Center doesn't have a specific LGBTQ exhibition, it does talk about the fight for LGBTQ

rights throughout the years. The Center also houses the largest collection of papers and artifacts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and has recently expanded their offerings to include a human rights training program for law enforcement officials as well as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) experiences for workplaces.

One of my favorite things about Atlanta is MARTA, their public transportation system. It is one of the most efficient and inexpensive in the country, easily connecting travelers from the airport to all parts of the city including Buckhead, where I was staying for this visit.

While the Buckhead neighborhood isn't known for its LGBTQ nightlife, it is however known for its abundance of luxury shopping. Lenox Square is one of the most upscale malls in the country and boasts retail boutiques including Fendi, Louis Vuitton, and Prada. Don't



forget to bring your credit card!

The reason I chose to stay in Buckhead is because I wanted to check out the brand new **Kimpton Sylvan Hotel**. The mid-century modern property is a short ride, or 20-minute walk to the MARTA station and features a rooftop bar, daily social hour with complimentary wine as well as a 24-hour fitness center with Peloton bikes for those looking to work off some calories. Speaking of food, I would highly recommend the Charred Cauliflower + Cucumber from Willow Bar located just outside the hotel lobby.

The Kimpton brand is known for being one of the most LGBTQ-inclusive hotel brands in the country so whenever I have the chance to stay at one of their

properties, I usually do. They are also a global partner of IGLTA.

This September, Atlanta will host the **IGLTA Global Convention**. The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association will welcome guests from around the globe to midtown Atlanta for possibly the first in-person LGBTQ convention since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Registration is now open through the IGLTA website. I've been to this convention numerous times and can't wait to see all my friends and colleagues in the same room once again.

Midtown Atlanta is the epicenter of LGBTQ culture and nightlife in Atlanta. There is no lack of bars and restaurants here. Some standouts include **Joe's on Juniper**, **Blake's on the Park**, and **My**

Sister's Room, a two-story lesbian-owned dance bar which has become a favorite among Atlanta's LGBTQ community.

The Midtown neighborhood is also known as the cultural hub of the city with over 25 different arts and cultural venues and more than 30 permanent performing arts groups residing in the area including the Grammy-winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the world-renowned **High Museum of Art**.

Not too far away is **Zoo Atlanta**, an AZA accredited facility home to over 1,000 animals. Having a deep love for animals, I decided to take the elephant encounter, a one-hour experience that gives visitors a behind-the-scenes look at how zoo staff care for these majestic animals. During the program, we learned about the elephant's behaviors and even had the opportunity to feed them. In this case, Tara was especially fond of the lettuce that I was giving her.

After touring the zoo, head over to **Guac y Margys**, an LGBTQ-owned restaurant located along the Atlanta BeltLine's Eastside Trail. Everything I tried here was on point, from the house made guacamole to the slow roasted pork tacos. If you are in the mood to sample a variety of different cuisine, check out **Ponce City Market**, located in the historic Sears, Roebuck & Co. building. The indoor/outdoor market offers dozens of dining and retail options including my favorite, Botiwalla Indian Street Food.

Atlanta is truly a multi-cultural destination that needs to be explored in its entirety. Venture away from the tourist-focused neighborhoods and meet the locals. You are sure to find surprises around every corner.

To learn more, visit <https://discoveratlanta.com/>



GRAB RODDY AND JOEY

MUSIC



On Man On Man: An interview with Roddy Bottum and Joey Holman of Man On Man

By Gregg Shapiro

In his own right, gay modern rock icon Roddy Bottum is a living legend. His association with influential bands including Faith No More (remember “Epic” and “We Care A Lot”?) and Imperial Teen (remember “Yoo Hoo”?) put him in a class by himself. His latest musical project, Man on Man, with boyfriend Joey Holman, may be his most personal, as well as his queerest. Take the song, “It’s So Fun (To Be Gay),” for example, which includes the line “Birds do it, bees do it/We do it too,” or the overt and graphic sexuality of “1983” and “Daddy.” Add to that an impressive variety of musical styles and the duo’s eponymous Polyvinyl Records debut ranks among the best of 2021. Roddy and Joey were kind enough to answer a few questions about the new album.

Gregg Shapiro: For those not in the

know, how did the two of you meet?
Roddy Bottum: We’re both musicians and we both live in New York. Joey had reached out to me about an Imperial Teen song that he liked. He was doing a recording and he was asking about a recording technique that Imperial Teen had used. We started to talk and soon after we had that conversation, I was performing in a band called Nasty Band and we were doing a big show. Joey came to the show and we met then and started hanging out.

GS: How long ago was that?

RB: Almost two years (ago).

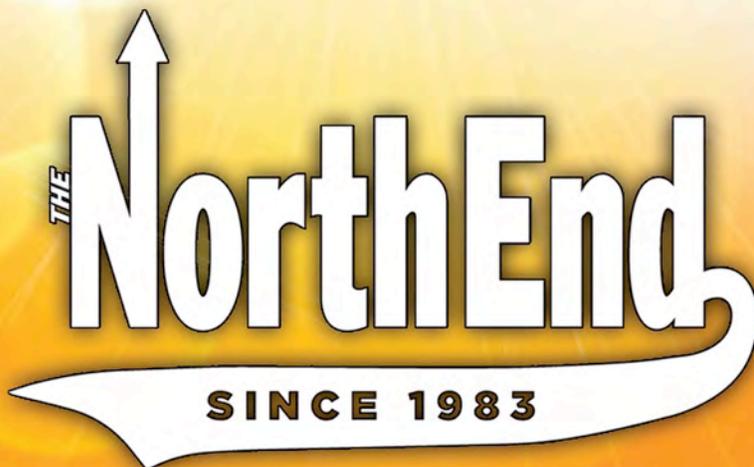
GS: What can you tell the readers about the genesis of Man On Man, including the name of the duo?

JOEY HOLMAN: The genesis was us going out to California during the beginning of COVID. Roddy’s mom was sick. His family is from L.A. We thought it would be best, considering that we didn’t know what was going to be happening, to get out that way in case something serious happened with his mom. We rented a car and we drove west. We were in the middle of Texas and Roddy said, “Wouldn’t it be cool if we just made a few songs while we’re in quarantine?” That was the beginning of it. After writing probably three or four songs, we were taking a lunch break and we were talking about what our project was going to be called. I just said Man on Man, and it stuck.

GS: Great name, seriously! Can you



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please say a few words about your songwriting process and if it differs, at all, from the way you wrote songs in your other bands?

RB: It was an interesting journey writing music together. Though we're both musicians, we hadn't written together before we went to California. It's kind of a stretch. I always admire when couples do things together in any realm. Creatively though, it's especially intense. I've never created and written with a boyfriend before, so that was completely new. We had to develop a language and mutual respect and a way of listening that was different than just being in a band with friends. There are so many more levels and more nuances involved in a relationship.

JB: I always say that writing music with a partner is like going to college for your relationship. You learn how to communicate in different ways. I think the creative process, in general, brings out a lot of your personality that is usually kind of tucked away. It's a unique thing to be creating with somebody else. A very specific thing to do with other people. Very rarely do we get to see that side of a partner while they're in the middle of the creative process. The main thing that was different for me is the only music I played before was in a Christian band when I was in my 20s. The process was pretty limiting. With Roddy and me, we made it clear in a lot of our conversations that, even before we had a band name, that we would feel free to express ourselves however we wanted to. That was a new thing for me. To feel open to talk about gay sexual content or to be open about my love for another man even. It felt really good!

GS: The song "Daddy" makes

reference to "fuckin' quarantinin'," "Kamikaze" contains a virus reference, "Beach House" has the line "stressed out and stuck in." Would it be fair to say that the album is a product of the pandemic?

JH: Yeah, definitely. When we got to California, we got to a little house in Oxnard, which is 15 miles north of L.A. We had to quarantine there. We knew this going in. The journey of what we had gone through, traveling from New York to California, formulated what we



were dealing with and what we knew was coming. Being in that house alone together and letting it all sink; the most dominant themes and things that were going on were those of the pandemic. The weight and the magnitude of what was coming and what we were in the middle of. In the middle of that, too, we were dealing with a lot of grief. Joey's mother passed away a couple months before that, and my mother was getting sicker and sicker and she eventually passed away. In the middle of that, too

in the same sort of capsule of songwriting, creativity for our inception, the uprising was happening. It was just a lot of intensity. The record, for sure, is like a time capsule that reflects on where we were at that time and how we were getting through it, and what togetherness as a couple meant in that space.

GS: What would it mean to you if the year-round Pride anthem "It's So Fun (To Be Gay)" was embraced as such at global Pride events?

JH: I think that would be a dream for us. We're in the process of making a video for that song. We had a long conversation last night that reenergized our understanding of what Man on Man is. We want people to feel they're completely fine if they don't identify as straight or if they don't subscribe to a certain gender or whatever it is. Non-straight people are completely A-OK. We're going to be donating our first day/launch day Bandcamp sales to an organization called Born Perfect, whose goal is to end conversion therapy. That really speaks to the whole point of the song. We have so many moments of feeling stress. Most of our lives we see very clearly that the world is mostly straight. Sometimes for gay people, queer people, anybody that's not straight, the takeaway can be that this world is not for me. We often need to be reminded of the beautiful moments that we have as a community, as a family. For me, it's the most

rewarding experience to be able to be with my community. The truth is that it's very fun and it's really beautiful and we would love for people to adopt that as a worldwide Pride anthem [laughs]!

RB: For sure! We're so proud of what we do and we are so proud of our community. To push that into the realm of the whole world and our community feels really strong.

GS: If Man On Man was invited to

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perform the Pride festival circuit in a post-pandemic world, is that something you would consider?

JH: Hell, yeah!

RB: Yeah, in fact we're going to insist on it!

GS: It's only March, but "Two At A Time," which includes the wonderful lines – "Look ahead at all the possibilities/Living to the best of our abilities/Windows open, yes to visibility," not only sounds like the perfect summer song for the beach or blasting from open car windows, but also one with a vision of a post-COVID-19 world. Am I on the right track?

RB: Certainly, yeah. That's what we're aiming for. I think when we were in the throes of the pandemic, and all of the sort of intensity that I was talking about before, it was our goal, everyone's goal in the world today, right now, to get through this. I think we, as a world, are so much looking forward to the possibilities of getting through this all.

That's where our heads were at in the making of all our songs.

GS: I also love "1983" which sounds like a future tea-dance classic. Is there a remix in the works and what would it mean to you to hear it blasting at tea-dance in Ptown, Key West, and Fire Island?

JH: OK, first of all, your questions are amazing! I just want to say that.

GS: Thank you!

JH: I love you! I think it's funny, even before we were talking about finding a label or whatever, we were already in the mindset of doing remixes. We have a lot of friends who do that. It's very likely that we would be doing something like that in the future. I think there's a lot of powerful melodies and music lines that I think would make for amazing remixes. (For "Daddy" alone, I feel like there could be 50 different remixes of that song. Roddy's synth lines in "1983" make me want to punch a wall, they're so good. I freak out. When I first heard



them, my whole body was vibrating. I would love to hear those lines in a remix.

GS: It makes me think of New Order.

RB: When you asked us about writing music as a couple, that was a big part of it. As we were writing music together and as we were creating our different parts and sharing them with each other, as a couple, as I'm making music with the man I love, a lot of it was showing off. I really wanted to impress Joey when I was making my parts, in a way that I've never made music before. Like there was a lot at stake. I really wanted to impress him and make him love it in a different way.

GS: It sounds like you did exactly that.

JH: It worked!

GS: Even though the album opens with the heavy rock of "Stohner," it's the moments of full-on beauty, in songs such as "Lover," "Please Be Friends," "It Floated" and "Baby, You're My Everything" that dominate the record. Can you please say

something about that juxtaposition?

RB: Making the record, we traversed a lot of different musical moods in our creativity. I keep going back to this, but it was such an intense time. We couldn't help but be super introspective and thoughtful and pensive and super sensitive about the world and where we were. Because the record is such a time capsule and a reflection on what we were all going through as a community, I think we tended to, particularly in the sequencing of the record, let it follow the course of writing and the course of history that happened. When we started with the COVID, none of us knew what was going on. As stuff sunk in and we started to realize what we were dealing with, shit got real serious real fast. It definitely informed our songwriting at that point. Like we were saying earlier, the record is a reflection of the time and what happened. The fact that the record ends on these tones of beauty and reflection makes sense because it's in conjunction with what we were going through at the time.

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	Artist	Title
1	MK	Lies ft. Raphaella
2	Dom Dolla	Pump The Brakes (Short Radio Edit)
3	Markus Schulz x Ethan Thompson & Soundlax	Make It Last Forever
4	Anabel Englund x MK	Underwater
5	Alan Walker x Salem ilese	Fake A Smile (R3HAB Remix)
6	Silk City x Ellie Goudling	New Love ft. Diplo & Mark Ronson
7	Bombs Away	Love Magic
8	Paige & Nihil Young	Mercy ft. Sarah De Warren (Radio Edit)
9	Elderbrook	Body
10	Lucas & Steve x Blackstreet	No Diggity
11	Love Harder x HUGEL x Tobtok	My Bed ft. RBVLN
12	Felix Cartal x Kiiara	Happy Hour
13	Zookeeper	Think Of You ft. Marlhy
14	Martin Garrix x Tove Lo	Pressure
15	CamelPhat	Easier ft. LOWES (Radio Edit)
16	Jonas Blue x AWA	Something Stupid (Radio Mix)
17	Siedah Garrett vs Eden Prince	Do You Want It Right Now
18	Glass Animals	Heat Waves (Oliver Heldens Remix Edit)
19	Lost Frequencies	Rise
20	Diplo & Sonny Fodera	Turn Back Time
21	Klingande & Wrabel	Big Love
22	Sunnery James & Ryan Marciano	Let It Lie
23	Franky Wah	Not In Love ft. LOWES
24	Melsen	You
25	Sam Fischer & Demi Lovato	What Other People Say (R3HAB Remix)
26	Becky Hill	Last Time
27	Niiko x SWAE	I Ain't Going Home
28	Captain Cuts x AJ Mitchell	Stuck In My Head (NITE MIX)
29	Noizu	Summer 91 (Looking Back)
30	RAYE ft. Rudimental	Regardless
31	Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike x DVBBS x Roy Wo	Too Much
32	Clean Bandit	Higher ft. iann dior (Andrew Marks Radio)
33	Prince Kaybee x Msaki	Fetch Your Life (Radio Edit)
34	Harry Styles	Watermelon Sugar (Tommie Sunshine & Breikthru Remix)
35	Moodshift	Heartless
36	Joel Corry x Raye x David Guetta	Bed
37	JUBEL	Weekend Vibe (VICE Remix)
38	Robin Schulz	All We Got ft. KIDDO (Lodato Remix)
39	Fenix	Bring You Back ft. Chris Willis (Original Radio)
40	DJ Snake & Selena Gomez	Selfish Love

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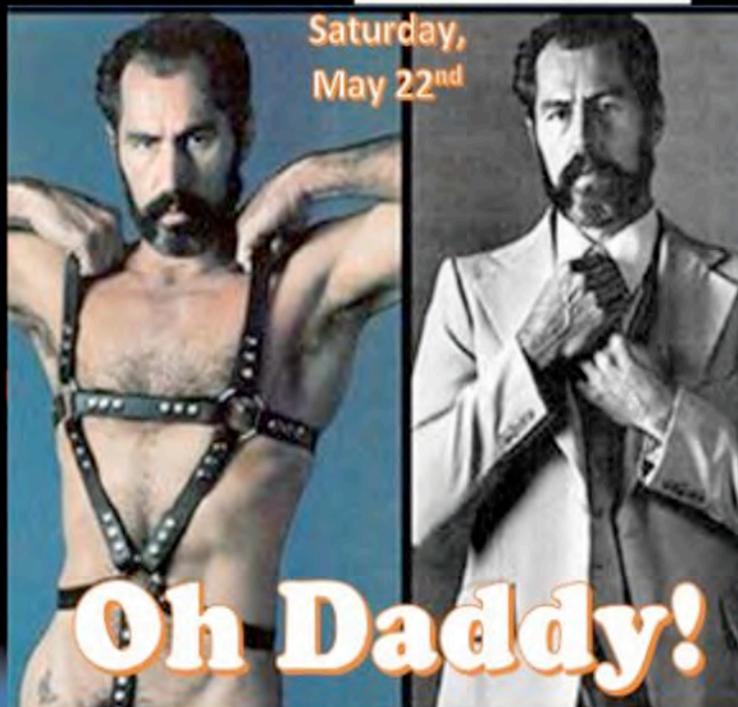


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POSITIVE THOUGHTS

HIV

I Had to Get Past the Stigma of Having HIV. Then I Had to Do the Same for Mental Illness.

By Mariah Wilberg

I was 19 years old and pregnant when I received my HIV diagnosis in 2006.

“This is punishment,” I thought, just rewards for the survival sex I turned to on the streets of Minneapolis as a homeless, runaway teen. I already felt unlovable because of my history of sex work. Now it felt like the love I had to give would be literal poison.

My abusive partner, who tested HIV negative, reinforced these fears. He said I was lucky to have him. Without him, I’d still be on the streets selling my body, he said. And nobody else wanted a dirty, diseased bitch.

When he went to prison, I fell apart. I had no support system. I relapsed almost immediately, and I wasn’t being the mother I wanted to be for my newborn daughter.

I stopped taking my HIV meds. It was so easy to take them when pregnant to keep her from being born with HIV, but then so hard to take them just for myself. Besides, the other drugs I was taking — cocaine and ecstasy — made me feel good. Unlike the HIV medications, which were a constant reminder of my unworthiness.

When my daughter was 8 months old, I was arrested for selling drugs. Out on bond, I impulsively fled from Minnesota to Texas. My daughter was safe at my parents’ house, and I figured, “I already have a death sentence, so I’ll be damned if I spend my last years, the rest of my life, in prison.”

After I missed court, my parental rights were terminated and a felony warrant was issued for my arrest.

I buried my HIV deep and locked it away, telling no one. The one time I re-engaged with HIV care while on the run, a roommate discovered my pills and told our mutual friends and my then partner. I convinced them she was

lying to hurt me — and in the garbage went the HIV meds.

After four years as a fugitive, I was on my way home to visit my family for the holidays. I had just told my daughter I would see her in the morning over the phone; I was never to see her again, as of yet.

We were pulled over after that phone call, and I spent the holidays in jail, instead of with family. I was sent to prison shortly after.

There, I received an AIDS diagnosis. I was 25 years old. I could no longer afford the luxury of denial; it was killing me. In group therapy, I told my secret to a group of women I had come to know and love.

I saw no fear, no disgust. “It could have been me,” they said. “Thank you for sharing, I now think differently about HIV because of you.”

My life suddenly made sense. I had the power to transform my pain into purpose. “I’ve made it this far so that I can help others,” I thought. In prison, I began to learn how to love myself. All of me.

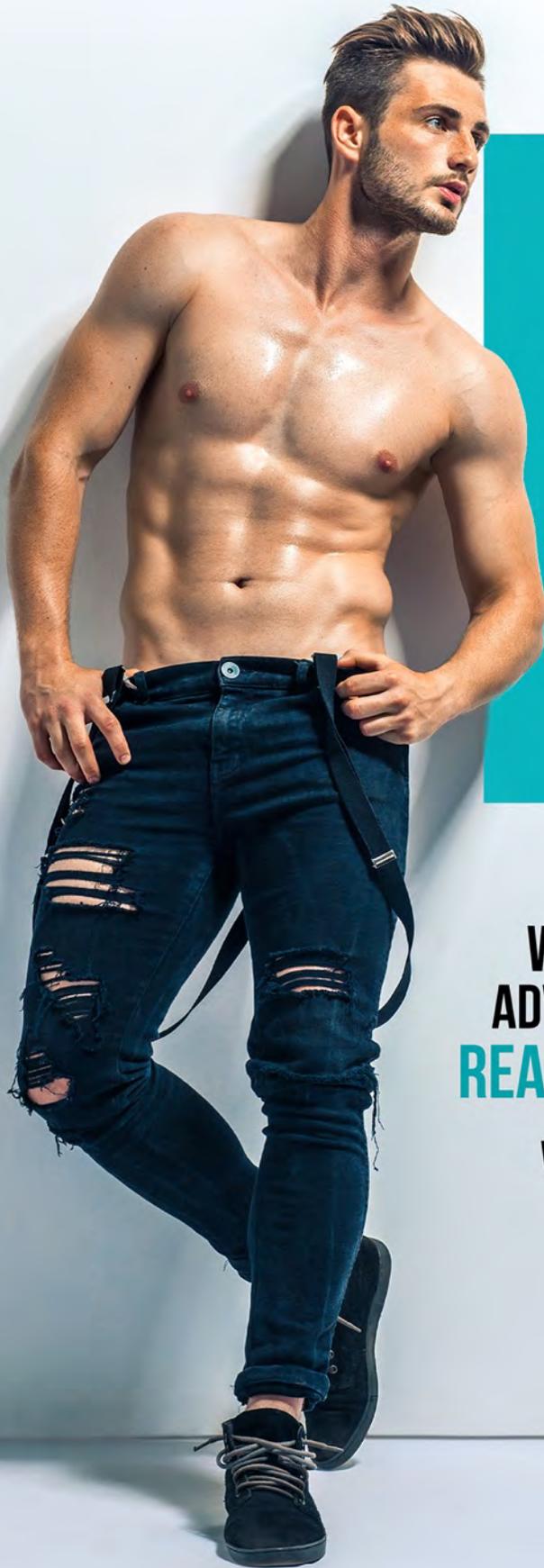
When I left prison in 2013, I knew I was done with closets. I settled down



in St. Paul and was quickly embraced by Minnesota’s HIV community — my community. I became a volunteer HIV educator, which quickly turned into a paid position. Learning that my undetectable viral load meant I was unable to transmit HIV through sex was the final blow to my internalized stigma. I could love without fear! I started dating, this time, sharing my status.

I was relieved to find that most people were receptive after learning more about HIV. However, it didn’t all go smoothly. After disclosing my status to a potential partner, I noticed some red flags and stopped talking to him. In retaliation, he put my picture, name, and HIV status on social media. It was my community that kept me safe, holding me tight as I received death threats from strangers online.

That was the worst-case scenario I always feared, but I was strangely relieved. Because I realized then that

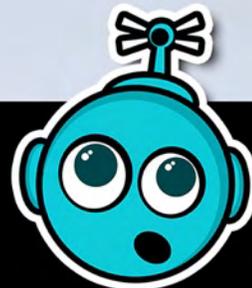


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the fears were far worse than the reality.

Months later, I met my husband. He chose science over stigma, and we recently celebrated our sixth anniversary. I wanted to make sure all people living with HIV knew the truth about their bodies. So I incorporated the most recent science about treatment as prevention into the presentations I did as an educator and prevention worker.

Later, as a communications specialist for the state of Minnesota, I led us to be the third state to sign on to the undetectable equals untransmittable (U=U) campaign. I also coordinated a U=U transit campaign with millions of views. Since 2019, I've been leading the implementation of END HIV MN for the state. Not only am I done with HIV stigma in my own life, but I am also privileged to work alongside my community on statewide efforts to reduce stigma for everyone.

This is my dream job! It's the reason I sacrificed, spending seven years of full-time school on top of full-time work to earn a bachelor's and master's degree.

Yet as work-from-home dragged into the fall of 2020 because of the COVID pandemic, my dream job started to feel more like a nightmare.

I was wracked by guilt as the pandemic upended much of my work. Projects were moving slowly or put on hold as staff reassignments and a hiring freeze turned my coordinator position — designed to lead project teams across departments — into a one-person show.

I felt like a constant failure, like I was letting my community down. I was isolating myself, scared to leave the house, uninterested in video calls with family or friends. I didn't think I was depressed. I told myself, "I can still get out of bed. I'm still going to work. I'm not sad, I'm just overwhelmed. Everything is just so hard." I was drinking more and more, mostly to escape the feelings of failure and get some sleep.

Then I suddenly developed an aversion to alcohol and quit drinking around the new year. I've done that before in the past, cycled through times of heavy drinking and total abstinence. I was overdoing it anyways, so I didn't give it much thought. Besides, my husband and I are saving up for in vitro fertilization, so stopping was a good thing.

Sleep was elusive without the alcohol. My thoughts would race, magnifying my every fear. It might start with, "Should I have worded that email

a little differently?" It always ended with, "You are failing, everyone secretly hates you, and you're terrible at your job."

Objectively, I knew that wasn't true. I was even participating in the Emerging Leaders Institute for the State of Minnesota. But logic was no match for these feelings.

Then came the panic attacks. I usually have maybe one a year — now I was having one every few days. My heart was racing, sometimes resting at over 120 beats a minute. I couldn't understand why my anxiety, usually limited to overthinking, was now showing up in my body.

I was worried about money. My husband lost his day job during the pandemic. Ever since, he's working around the clock to grow his own automotive detailing business from part time to full time.

Even though I knew winter is a slow season for detailing, I became suspicious of the fact that he wasn't pitching in as much financially.

And then, Aha! Suddenly, it all made sense. The panic attacks, the insomnia, the racing heart — "It's my body telling me something," I decided. "I know what it is now. My husband is hiding something."

I became fixated. I was investigating him, looking for evidence to back up my fears. I found none, but that didn't dissuade me. My brain wove snippets of phone calls and meaningless events into an intricate story of a double life. I thought he was using our home security cameras to listen in and spy on me, to monitor whether I had learned his secrets.

I finally confronted him. He was adamant and believable in his denials. And a month prior, we were excitedly discussing the types of parents we'd be together. But I still had a gut feeling that something was wrong. Very wrong. I was so confused.

It felt like he was speaking to me in subliminal messages, trying to hurt me. I spent hours researching gaslighting, trying to understand why I was doubting my own perceptions. When he spoke to me, I sensed an underlying malice, hidden meanings. I finally told him that I wanted a divorce.

He stayed on the couch, where he had already been sleeping for days. I went upstairs to our bedroom and saw the smoke detector on the dresser, from months before when I watched him take it off the wall because it was chirping.

Only this time, I wondered if he was planning to set the house on fire and kill me for insurance money.

That's when I knew something was very wrong — with me. My husband wasn't gaslighting me; my own brain was. I realized I hadn't eaten in days and had barely been sleeping. But I was neither tired nor hungry.

I asked my husband to take me to the ER. When I got there, my heart rate was over 180 beats a minute, and I had an immediate EKG test. Even as he held my hand tightly, I was flipping back and forth between understanding I was having a medical issue and fearing that he was orchestrating this, to get me admitted and out of the way.

Those thoughts only stopped after a medication to rebalance my neurotransmitters dissolved under my tongue.

As I calmed down, they told me I was experiencing mania. The fear and confusion, paranoia, altered perceptions and false beliefs were symptoms of psychosis. The doctors said that had I wandered in alone in the state I was in, I would have surely been admitted. But since I had a support person with me, I should continue taking the medication they had just given me and follow up next week.

As we finally got home after a very long night, I Googled my new meds. Zyprexa (olanzapine), an antipsychotic. I noticed a visceral reaction in my gut. I've been here before, confronting stigma in a pill bottle.

A little over a month later, I am still confirming the suspected diagnosis of bipolar disorder, with a full neuro-psychiatric test scheduled later this spring. My new provider strongly suspects that I am living with attention deficit disorder as well.

I am not afraid of these new labels; rather, I am empowered with this new lens. It puts so much of my life in perspective: running away from home, the homelessness, the sex work, my HIV diagnosis, my incarceration, my relationship with drugs and alcohol, my yo-yoing body weight.

Did I only gain 15 pounds during pregnancy from the HIV meds alone, or was I manic also? After my baby was born, was I really just a bad mom, or was it more likely that I had experienced postpartum depression?

Looking back, I have more empathy for my younger self. I don't believe in regrets — I am exactly where I'm supposed to be in life. But I do wonder if my child would be with me now, as I so desperately want, had I been diagnosed at a younger age.

I now see how my internalized stigma of mental illness prevented that earlier diagnosis. I channeled all my symptoms into two socially acceptable

categories: I am anxious, or I am overwhelmed.

Once I recognized the stigma, I was set free. I have no desire to climb into a closet. Instead, I immediately knew that I would — I must — be open and transparent about this part of my journey. I know that our stories triumph over stigma. HIV taught me that.

I hear the stigma informing my friend's gentle questions. "Are you sure you want to be open about this?" "Don't you want to take some time and think about it?" and "As long as being open doesn't hurt other areas of wellness — like employment."

They are not trying to silence me — they are my friends. But they worry about what I'm up against.

Unstable. Dangerous. Crazy. These are some of the many labels that society assigns to people living with mental illnesses or differences, people who aren't neurotypical.

But these do not describe me, not at all. I will not participate in stigmatizing myself. Just as I learned to reject labels like "dirty" or "diseased," I reject these labels, and the idea that I should keep this a secret.

I love myself, and my brain. The same gifts that have allowed me to build a life and career I am proud of are

the same things that got dialed up too high during my episode. I wouldn't trade my brain for anything. I believe it is different, but not ill.

Others in my life reacted warily to my suspected diagnosis and new mental health meds. "You probably don't need to take them forever," they said. "Aren't you worried your personality will change?" "You're probably not actually bipolar."

But so far, my new medication, the antipsychotic, makes me feel great. It hasn't changed my personality or dampened my gifts. Rather, I feel like the best version of myself.

Gone are the racing thoughts, torturing me into the night. I am sleeping well, and I have no panic, no racing heart. I trust my husband again, even when he's working late. Since starting them, I feel even-keeled, more optimistic, more motivated, and I am happier than I have been in a long time.

For now, I'm sticking to prescribed medications and nonalcoholic beverages. I'm getting out of my own way and giving the doctors a chance to diagnose and treat the conditions that I've obviously been self-medicating my whole life.

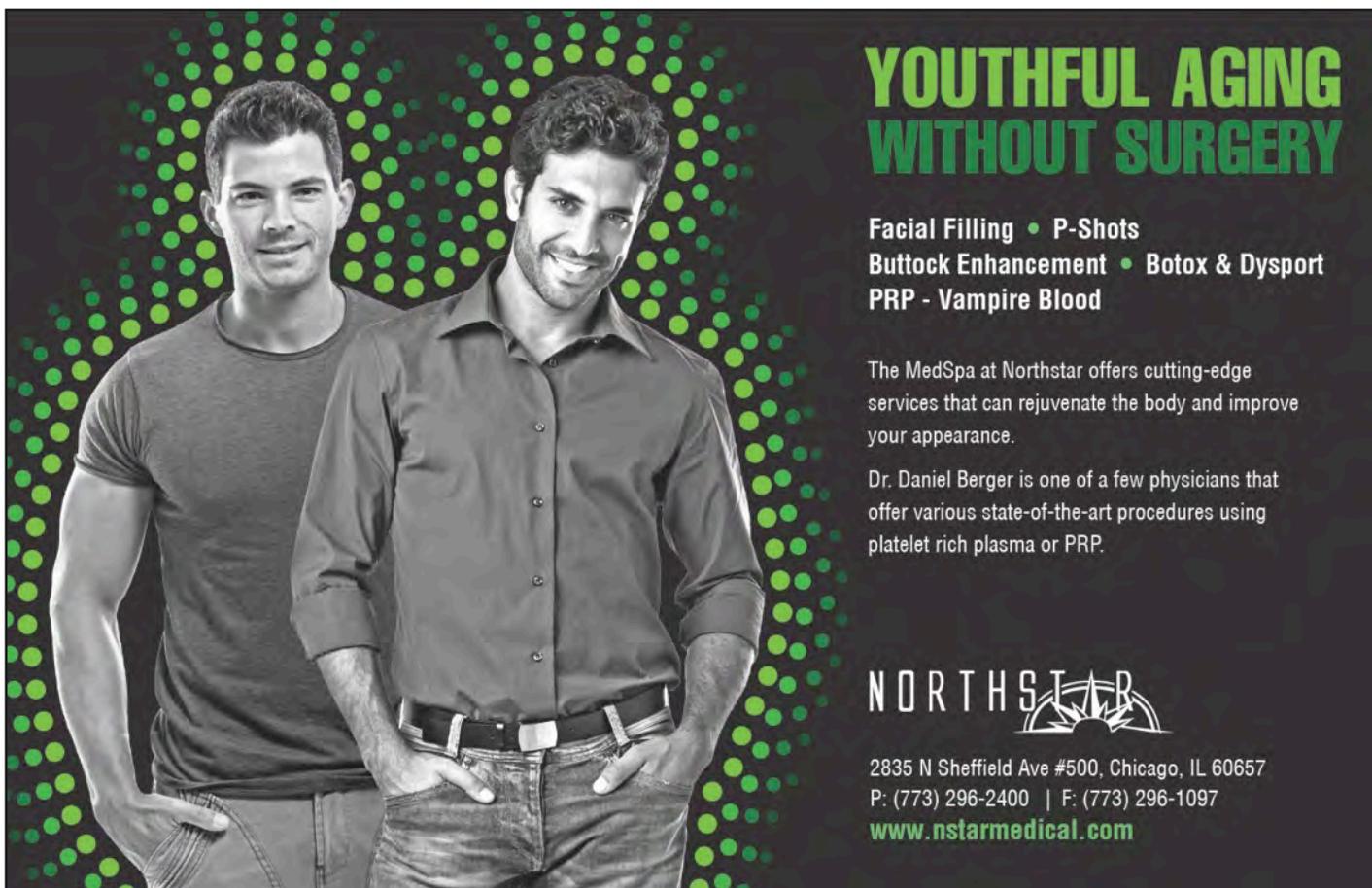
I see how my trauma history is negatively impacting my relationship

with my loving and incredibly patient husband. So I've also started EMDR therapy, which helps reduce the impact of trauma on your life.

I will accept whatever diagnosis aligns most closely with my symptoms, while also understanding that human diversity is rich, the line between "normal" and "ill" is subjective, and we don't fit neatly into checkboxes or categories.

This pandemic and isolation are hard for us all. Please, seek help if you need it. Don't let stigma stand in your way.

Mariah Wilberg utilizes her lived experience with HIV, trauma, homelessness, survival sex, substance use, mental illness and incarceration to inform an award-winning career in public service that spans from public health to justice reform. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ+ wire service. Visit their websites — <http://thebody.com>, <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com> and <http://poz.com> — for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.



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GRAB HOLLY

Trannies Who Run with the Wolves

By Holly Maholm

Not long ago, a book was published that celebrated the fearless and independent qualities which females sometimes display. That book ("Women Who Run with the Wolves" by Clarissa Pincola Estes) is admirable and true, so far as it goes, but today would be severely criticized (not to say "cancelled") for being transparently "transphobic," failing, as it does, to consider the case of "transgender women" (whom we more familiarly – and affectionately – refer to as "trannies.")

Now, thinking of Cindy, and recalling the many aspects of her character ("savage" when she needs to be, "unrelenting" when trying to get her way, and yet "noble and protective" when anyone she loves is in danger), I believe a follow-up volume – telling the story of Cindy – could be written, entitled "Cindy, and the Wolves Who Run with Her."

Cindy had just revealed her expectation that Roger and the other Christian bigots were planning to assault her the very next day! She continued, "When I've gone jogging recently, I've been followed by a drone, and there's

only one drone I know of. It's got to be Roger and his bunch getting ready to jump me when I'm jogging. The circuit I run takes me through a part of the State Park, and there's usually no one there that time of day. I'm sure that's where they'll spring their ambush."

She fell silent, and both of us struggled to formulate a plan in response. I spoke, "We can expect Roger and the others to be prepared to beat you up. They'll outnumber you, and they'll have bats and ax handles. But the last time they confronted a tranny – me – I had a unicorn – well, a rescue horse painted to look like a unicorn – for backup. That didn't turn out so well for Roger or his drone. Anyway, I think the best way to 'even up' the sides is for you to have your own four-legged backup."

Cindy scowled, "How is that going to work? Do you have rescue horses trained like 'attack dogs?'" "No," I replied, "but we have lots of horses to choose from, several of which are pretty scary – even without fangs. Look, give me some time to work on this. Don't tell anyone. Just be ready to jog your usual route at the usual time tomorrow. I'll take care of getting you some backup."

I gave Cindy a quick hug and rushed off to the stable, where I collected Victor and Fletcher, after which we hurried to the Horse Rescue, where our Queen was resting. For the next several hours our

fric weighed alternate plans for repelling the attack of the Christian bigots, while at the same time keeping the involvement of the unicorns a closely-guarded secret. At last we agreed a plan.

I met Cindy next morning and explained to her my plan. She readily agreed, and later that afternoon she got into her jogging outfit and started off down the usual street at the usual time. Then... halfway through her run, she reached the point where her path would take her into the State Park, where she would be alone and unprotected.

I met her there – I riding Victor (disguised as an enormous, black Percheron) and holding a lead to another, equally forbidding Percheron (Fletcher in disguise). I called to Cindy, "Okay! Jump up! He's obedient to his rider, but still... he'll



scare the hell out of those creeps!" She pulled herself up onto Fletcher, and I handed her a "war hammer" borrowed from the Legionnaires. "In case you need this!" I offered.

Then, a vital part of the plan commenced. Fletcher – with Cindy holding on for dear life – turned and ran in the opposite direction. There was nothing Cindy could do to cause Fletcher to slow down or stop. Soon both were out of sight.

I slipped down from Victor, and we were joined by Scallywag, Sassy and Tinsel (all unicorns in disguise as horses). Sassy stood next to me, where she activated her supernatural power to disguise me... as Cindy! Next, Cindy (me in disguise) started jogging into the Park, followed by the four horses. Soon, I saw the ambush party in the distance, as they emerged from the woods. As I drew near, the four unicorns altered their disguises from "horse" to... "Dire Wolf!" Instantly, I was surrounded by a convoy of four enormous, menacing wolves (!) each baring razor-sharp fangs and flashing yellow, merciless eyes!

The reaction of the bigots was instantaneous: Roger wet his pants; the others screamed like schoolgirls, turned and ran. Once Roger had followed them, the unicorns resumed their "horse" disguises and escorted me home.

My only remaining duty was to apologize to Cindy for the unruliness of her mount. However, when she heard how the creeps had run at the sight of a Percheron, she was happy and grateful. *(To be continued)*

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Volume 2 of What Would a Unicorn Do? (now available on Amazon) which contains additional episodes of Holly's on-going story of her life among the unicorns, plus additional articles and a short story of a transgender woman confronted by Satan! Send a message to Holly www.hollymaholm.com.

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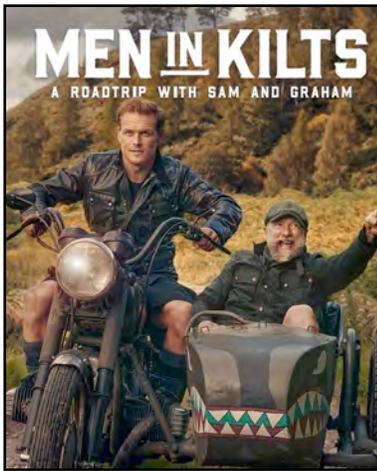
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GRAB A FILM

By Delven Shaw

MEN IN KILTS is a sexy look at Scotland.



If you love travel movies, this is for you. If you love *Outlander* and all things Scottish, this is a don't miss. And if you love **Sam Heughan** and **Graham McTavish**, spending time with them as they tour their native country is a delight, often wearing kilts.

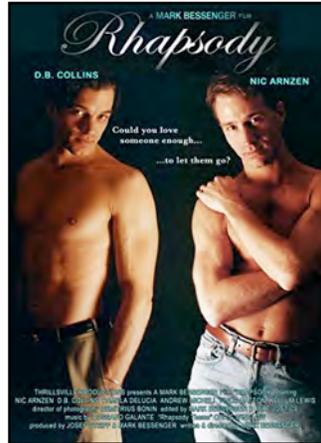
In a series of short episodes, now on *Starz*, we see Sam and Graham learn the history and background to various things unique to Scotland. There is an episode on sports (*The Highland Games*) along with cliff climbing and biking. Another episode is spent on culture – weaving, clothing, the kilts themselves. Clips of 'Outlander' are thrown in to illustrate dances and feasts that need a larger cast.

Of course, we spend time in jails and with weapons, and conclude with the Battle of Collodan in a very moving piece which brutally illustrates how the Highlanders with their swords were no match for the new rifles of the British army. Any history lover will love this episode – the bagpipes and the language are filled with sorrow.

'Outlander' – a worldwide sensation based on the best-selling books by *Diana J. Gabaldon* – centers on an English combat nurse (Caitriona Balfe) from 1945 who is swept back in to 1743 where she meets and loves Jamie Fraser, played by Sam. Their passionate relationship – which includes lots of nudity- has driven the show over many seasons at this point.

Do we need to mention that Sam – whose star turn in *Outlander* has taken him to international superstardom – loses a bet and goes skinny dipping in the Irish Sea to get you to watch *MEN IN KILTS*?

GAY BINGE TV has some interesting tidbits.



If you are looking for queer films with lesser pedigree – and lesser price – *GayBingeTV.com* has some interesting possibilities, especially among the short films.

YOUR HEART IS HOMELESS, written and directed by **Darren Brake**, featuring **James Buttlig** and **Peter McPherson** who connect in a shocking, sexy, and ultimately bloody way. It is an exciting twelve minutes.

Another exciting couple are **Jeff Fey** and **Álvaro de Juan** whose love affair is interrupted by deadly news in **MY BROTHER**, another short – this time 23 minutes. When Alvaro returns to his hometown, the scenes with his parents are heartbreaking and true. Beautiful work all the way around.

Less successful is the full-length film **RHAPSODY**, the making of which is more interesting than screenplay. Filmed with Chicago actors in 1992 by **Mark Bessinger**, the footage was considered lost until a few years ago when it was found, remastered, and released. Alas, that did not make the story any stronger.

Nic Arnzen, who went on to have a strong career in Hollywood, plays a young musician who has writers block and cannot finish his masterpiece. When he meets Bill (DB Collins), it seems like life may indeed have a happy ending. But alas, Bill has intimacy issues, and a weekend away in a winter cabin (which is supposed to be without electricity, but which looks like a mansion on Chicago's north side) cannot repair him or save the couple.

It is great the film got completed, and some went on to highly successful professional careers in the arts. But *RHAPSODY* on its own is less satisfying than its shorter counterparts on the site.

MONDAY is dangerous and delightful



The iconic press photo of Sebastian Stan's naked ass on an Athens street decorated for Christmas is the perfect introduction to **MONDAY**, an adventurous rom-com of love and betrayal with two fantastic leads. The film begins with pulsing disco music as Chloe (**Denise Gough**), who is to return to the states the next day, cannot get through to her boyfriend. When she turns and sees Stans, she throws herself into his arms and their adventure begins till they end up naked making love on the beach.

We know this plot – two strangers desperate for love, with the deadline of returning home to the US then next day coloring everything. But Mickey and Chloe make it fresh as they return to kiss and clench again and again, their lives unexpectedly intertwining. Their naked motorcycle ride through the streets of Athens must have been a blast to shoot.

The plotting of **Rob Hayes** and **Argyris Papadimitropoulos** screenplay is terrific, the locations exotic. The two stars – especially her – will make you laugh just before ripping your heart out. Papadimitropoulos also directs.

Monday is fun, sexy, and a good time. It is currently featured on NetFlix and the IFC Channel.

<https://youtu.be/jVBlelh22z8>

For more great films, search the Raves at Delven Shaw's two minute reviews at delvenshaw.com.

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**dodie RELEASES HER
ACCLAIMED DEBUT ALBUM
“BUILD A PROBLEM”**



dodie shares her eagerly anticipated and already acclaimed debut album *Build A Problem* via her label doddeodde. The album includes the singles ‘I Kissed Someone (It Wasn’t You)’, ‘Hate Myself’ and ‘Cool Girl’ and is available to buy in CD, vinyl, deluxe CD, deluxe vinyl and cassette formats.

“*Build a problem*” is a line pulled directly from ‘Hate Myself’. dodie found herself with a bit of a problem because she’d already named her previous EP, 2019’s top 5 *Human*, and the songs she found herself writing for the album really added up to the same idea; the flawed, emotionally erratic, wondrously complex conundrum

that is being alive - and *Human* was taken. But this line seemed to add up to a similar concept; the moments and actions in life that build within us all problems that we don’t even realise we have until we look back and go, “Ohhhh, that’s where that came from.” dodie, whose past is still infiltrating her present and her future, explores all of this and more on her musically ambitious and dreamily intimate record named - what else? - *Build A Problem*.

At just 25, dodie has already done a lot of living. Some of that has played out online as she made a name for herself as a singer and writer, amassing millions of fans with her disarmingly honest videos and affecting, intimate singing style. She has scored two top-ten EPs, headlined and sold out London’s Roundhouse, and the Hollywood Palladium and New York’s Terminal 5, and become an ambassador for Depersonalisation charity Unreal. It’s hard to believe only now is she releasing her debut album.

She wrote most of the songs on the album over the past two years. “I think I was going through a crisis actually,” she says now. “I was very unsure of who I was and I was trying to figure it out in music. So I think it’s quite unstable of an album - but it’s definitely honest.”

Though the themes are very heavy and the music is at times

painful, *Build A Problem* is not a difficult album to listen to. The way that dodie crafts songs means she is meticulous about what she puts into a piece; she’s not a throw it all at the wall and see what sticks kind of songwriter. There is a vein of hope running through the record, a way of dealing with the hard emotions at play. “It sounds so lame,” she says of what she wants the album to achieve, “But what I really hope for is understanding. I would love people, whoever they are to listen to this album and be like, I get it. I relate to this.”

“I’d like people to come away from this album knowing what I can do” she says. A single listen to *Build A Problem* shows she has matured into an exceptional musician, using ancient modes, writing complex string arrangements and imbuing each song with a sense of charming intimacy.

By her own admission, dodie may be a work in progress; problems have been built, mistakes have been made, but with *Build A Problem*, she’s proven that she is an artist for the ages.

Build A Problem is available to buy in CD, vinyl, deluxe CD, deluxe vinyl and cassette formats, via doddeodde.

For more information visit <https://us.dodie.co/>

**DARK-POP ARTIST BRITTAN
SMITH SHARES A WORLD
FOR THE MISFITS IN LATEST
TRACK “FIEND”**



Brittan Smith is the latest dark pop crave everyone has been yearning for. The emerging artist has released his latest single, “*Fiend*,” on all DSPs today. The electro-pop track, produced by **Yanni AP** and **Brittan Smith**, is part of a collection of singles encompassing the world of his forthcoming debut EP, *Going Rogue*. A key goal for Brittan Smith is to spark conversation, and through the release of “*Fiend*,” Brittan Smith finds

personal solace in our polarizing world.

“*Fiend*’ is about someone not knowing a thing about you, yet judging you on the surface or for the labels they believe you carry. Alternatively, I hope as people walk away from the song they are inspired to think about those they condemn as fiends in their life and realize that they’ve felt judged without someone knowing them. Maybe we should all give each other a chance, do the uncomfortable and dig deeper.” - Brittan Smith

Emerging from the prairie lands of Kansas with an avant-garde, rockesque - pop sound Brittan Smith, now a Los Angeles based musician, is crafting dramatic musical worlds bathed in neon. A vocalist from a young age, Brittan turned to his mother in the car one day while jamming out to Bon Jovi and said “I’m going to be a rockstar.” He has been on that artistic path ever since. With inspiration from artists such as Lady Gaga and Chester Bennington, Brittan Smith began to craft his sound while maintaining a message of

embracing all the things that make you unique.

Growing up in the Midwest had its challenges - Brittan being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and someone who deeply struggled with depression and anxiety faced hardships like much of the youth of his generation did. With this, Brittan chose to fuel his art and focus on expressing the different ways music can be used to connect people. His first release “*Tension*” was in 2018 and since then he has continued to cement his sound while also delivering stunning visuals. His most recent releases - “*Eyes On The Road*” and “*Cyborg*” - have garnered over 25k streams collectively.

Brittan Smith is ready to amplify his message and filmmaking background with his forthcoming EP *Going Rogue* set for release later this year. He intends to introduce his audience to an entire alternate universe with interconnection between videos, song themes and future albums.

Brittan Smith’s latest dark-pop track “*Fiend*,” available on all streaming services today.

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Northalsted Plans to Hold Market Days in August 2021 Festival Organizers Seek to Expand event to Three-Days August 6, 7 - 8

The Northalsted Business Alliance plans to host Market Days August 6-8, adding a Friday night edition, the first in its 38-year history. As vaccinations increase and Illinois begins planning for stage 5 reopening, organizers of the iconic event are in full preparation mode. Chairperson Mark Liberson commented, "The committee is hard at work selecting performers, signing contracts, and making plans for an exciting weekend in Chicago this summer."

Since the first Market Day in August 1982, the LGBTQ+ positive event has grown from a handful of folding tables and chairs on the sidewalk, to a half-mile long, annual summer ritual on Chicago's North Halsted Street from Belmont to Addison, featuring all-day lineups of live music and international DJs on 5 stages, 300 vendors, arts, crafts, wares, summer food & drinks, dancing in the street, and more. A \$15 recommended donation for entry supports the festival entertainment cost, local charities, neighborhood programming, and maintenance in the community.



Northalsted Business Alliance President **Ramesh Ariyanayakam** shares his optimism for hosting this year's event. "We look forward to the possibility of welcoming neighbors and visitors alike to this iconic event. While planning is underway, we will remain in continual contact with the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois and monitor the CDC guidelines to be flexible in our approach to meet all necessary requirements to produce a safe event."

Where: Halsted St. from Belmont to Addison
When: (anticipated) August 6, 7, and 8, 2021
Why: Celebration of community and culture in Chicago's Proudest Neighborhood
Who: Northalsted Business Alliance & Chicago SSA#18
Admission: suggested \$15 donation, all ages
Website: marketdayschicago.com
Contact: info@northalsted.com (773) 883-0500

Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame Announces Online Nominations



The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame has announced that it has made its entire nomination process available online. Those wishing to nominate individuals, organizations, businesses, or "Friends of the Community, may now do so without having to download print and fill out forms. All steps of the nomination process are now available on the Hall of Fame's website. Nomination criteria and nomination forms, both downloads and online submissions are now available at www.chicagolgbthalloffame.org/nominate.

To nominate someone for the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame now only takes a few clicks of your mouse. Anyone can nominate an

individual, organization, or business for the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame. The goal is to honor people and entities that have made significant contributions to the quality of life or well-being of the LGBT community in Chicago or the city at large.

To allow everyone to take advantage of the new, online nomination process, the deadline for nominations has been extended to **May 28, 2021**. The nominations will be reviewed by a committee comprised of current Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame members, after which a slate of inductees will be chosen.

Kathy Caldwell, the board's co-chair stated, "It is important to continue to recognize the achievements of Chicagoans, past, and present, especially since so many of the community's original movers and shakers have passed on. We need to ensure that their achievements are not forgotten."

The ceremony for inductees will be held in October 2021. At this point, it has not been determined whether it will be an in-person ceremony or a virtual one. Last year the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame held its first virtual induction ceremony for its 2020 inductees.

The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame is the first city-sponsored hall of fame dedicated to LGBT people,

organizations, community organizations, and allies in the United States. It was founded in 1991 as the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame.

From its founding in 1991 until 2016, the Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame relied on financial and staff support from the City of Chicago. The first Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame ceremony took place during Pride Week and was held at Chicago City Hall. Mayor **Richard M. Daley** hosted the ceremony and afterward, photos of the inductees were displayed in City Hall. The city ceased funding the Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2016 under then-mayor **Rahm Emanuel**. At that time, it was rechristened the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame and has since been supported and maintained by the Friends of the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, with approval from, and the cooperation of, the City of Chicago. The Hall of Fame has no physical facility but maintains a website that allows anyone to visit the Hall of Fame at any time. For more information, email inquiry@chicagolgbthalloffame.org, visit the organization's website chicagolgbthalloffame.org or its Facebook page, [facebook.com/groups/56108152083/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/56108152083/).

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