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GRAB ANTHONY



Gay in the Ring Pro wrestler Anthony Bowens has major wins for queer visibility under his belt

By Chris Azzopardi

Queer people everywhere are experiencing heightened discrimination, but if there's hope to be found, it might just be in, of all places, the wrestling ring. That's where Anthony Bowens recently experienced a tremendously heartening show of allyship during Pride Month, when the openly gay Black pro wrestler was showered with support from thousands of wrestling fans.

During an All Elite Wrestling (AEW) Rampage event in June, Bowens responded to QTV on-air personality Harley Cameron, who suggested that Bowens couldn't resist her if he tried, by telling her she must have been "kicked in the head too many times by a kangaroo" as a kid. It took her a minute to figure out what he was alluding to — that he's gay, ladies, and coupled with his boyfriend of seven years, Michael Pavano. Then, a full crowd showed their solidarity with Bowens when they chanted "He's gay!"

Bowens, who came out as bisexual in January 2017 and then

later as gay, made history in 2022 when he and Max Caster, a tag team in AEW (a rival of WWE) known as The Acclaimed, won the company's world tag team championship for the first time. The win made Bowens, 32, the first openly gay wrestler to win an AEW championship. His raw, tearful emotions were captured after their victorious moment on video, when Bowens offered hope to those struggling with who they are: "I never thought I'd be able to have a moment like this. I never thought I'd be able to live my dream because there was a time when I was very confused and I didn't know how to accept myself," he said at the time. "And now I cry because I'm a champion."

During our recent interview, Bowens spoke about being surprised by the recent pro-gay chant, his vastly different experience in the locker room these days and being the example he wished he had as a kid.

Chris Azzopardi: When I watch the "He's gay!" chant, it gives me

hope for the queer community and for this next presidential election — maybe there are fewer homophobic people than I think.

Anthony Bowens: It looks grim, but at the same time, it's not. A lot of people have humanity, they're human beings. They appreciate, respect and love other people. But that segment was something very unexpected because I had never approached it in that way before. My type of activism is, I show up and I am trying to be as visible and successful as possible and to try to lead by example. I've always been that way. When I played baseball, I was never the team captain, but I was a team leader. I showed up, I played hard, I contributed, I supported everybody. They supported me. And then I go home. I figure that's just who I am as a person, and that's how I do it every single week on TV. I try to represent as best as I can.

But I also don't want to shoehorn anything. I want it to be something fun and something special. And when they presented that to me in



"Absolutely." This seems like the perfect time to do it. It was Pride Month. I didn't know how people were going to react. I thought it would just be like a "cool." But to have an entire arena chanting at you, "He's gay," in a positive way, it was so much fun. It was unexpected. But I think the aftermath of it was the best part because it touched so many different people. I was expecting it to be, excuse my language, a shitshow of just negativity considering what's been going on in the world. So much positivity, so many messages from other athletes, from just other people in general that looked at that as a moment of hope for them. Something that I really didn't have when I was in the closet and trying to figure out my sexuality and trying to figure out if I had a space within professional wrestling if I came out. So I am honored that I could do something like that for other people. And hopefully it's something that will connect with them and they can understand that there are doors and avenues available to them to live your dreams, whatever that may be.

CA: What are some of the reactions that you received after the chant?

AB: A lot of gratitude and a lot of thank yous. Because no one's ever said it in a wrestling ring. No one just ever said it. And I found that, now that I think about it, kind of strange. I don't know if it's out of fear of what the reaction would be or if they just didn't want to cross that bridge, but it's like, "This is who I am." Everybody can be themselves in any other way possible every single week, so why can't I, and why can't everybody else? So now that we've crossed that bridge, hopefully there's a lot more doors open for a lot more LGBTQ athletes in professional wrestling. We're in a lot better place than where we were when I first started, because there's a ton of open LGBTQ wrestlers out there. Some on television, a lot of thriving [ones] on the independents. So hopefully we continue to grow and get more in, because there are a lot more in other sports and entertainment.

CA: Some wrestlers, like Nyla Rose, the first openly trans

woman to sign with a major pro wrestling company, have been met with some vitriol. Wrestler Rick Steiner, for instance, went on a transphobic rant and was banned from WrestleCon. It seems you're having a different, more positive experience, but as somebody who's part of the community you must also be aware that not everyone's having that same experience.

AB: Absolutely. I always say that I am lucky in the sense that I could navigate a lot of parts of life without worry, because sometimes people don't know, and other people don't have that privilege. If I give a piece of advice to somebody who may not be living in an area where being LGBTQ+ is welcome, that advice could potentially harm them. And I don't want to put anybody in that kind of position. So it gets to be very hard.

I can't speak to Nyla, I don't know what her experience is, but I do know that there are always horrible people out there. And I'm not clear from hate either, because two years ago in Long Island somebody was yelling out, calling me the F-word. I



Photo Courtesy of AEW

didn't hear it in the ring, but it came out over the broadcast and it caused a bit of a hoopla. But he got reprimanded, and I believe he was escorted out. A lot of people now are policing that when they hear stuff like that. There's plenty of independent shows where somebody's yelled out something homophobic, and fans are just like, "Get out. You're not welcome here."

CA: Did you ever expect your "Scissor me, daddy ass" catchphrase would become the phenomenon that it has?

AB: No. It's something that I said on a whim live on television. I just thought of it five minutes before I said it, and the next thing you know it just exploded. And I cannot believe the amount of scissors that people create themselves. They spend all night creating custom scissors to bring to the arenas, and we got the foam finger. It's crazy.

CA: What's your earliest memory of how you felt watching wrestling?

AB: It was about the pageantry and the aura that it had around it. It's a different kind of energy and a

different kind of vibe than any other form of entertainment. You have a live audience and you've got physicality, you have athleticism, you got millions of people watching you at home. You've got different characters, you've got storytelling. I loved everything about it. And did I know I was going to be a wrestler one day? No. Did I think it was possible? Also no, because I didn't know how. I just knew that I loved it, and it's just a very unique form of entertainment. When I started questioning my sexuality, there wasn't much to relate to in terms of what I was watching.

CA: Did anyone help you feel that you could be a wrestler?

AB: Really no one. Darren Young came out I believe in 2013, and I had just started wrestling then. Other than Darren, there wasn't anybody really, because a lot of times, anything that was remotely LGBTQ was used as comedic fodder. So there wasn't really much, which is all the reason why ... that's what kept me in the closet a lot longer. It drove me even more to be successful because I would like to be that

example. And I'm fortunate enough to do that every single week now. The community needs somebody to look toward in this particular space.

CA: Knowing your struggle, what did it mean to you when you became the first gay champion in AEW history?

AB: It's mind-blowing. It was one of the best nights of my life, to be honest with you. The one thing that stood out after I won was, throughout all the confetti and all the people cheering, I was able to look up and somehow saw my dad cheering me on. It was a great night, and it meant a lot to me, and it meant a lot to a lot of people. And I still have a ton more goals that I'd like to achieve because there's never been a gay world champion, and hopefully one day. Max and I are doing a lot of cool things together as The Acclaimed; maybe we'll be a tag team forever, maybe there might be a time where we split off. I have no idea. But if that does ever happen, that's what I'm gunning for.

CA: What does it mean to you to know that a younger LGBTQ+

generation is looking to you as an open door? How do you process that?

AB: It means a lot because I may not have went through what other people have gone through, but what I went through was shitty. A lot of mental anguish, a lot of feeling like the weight of the world was on my shoulders. A lot of stress. A lot of fear, a lot of anxiety. I just wish I could go back and tell younger Bowns that everything will be OK. All I could do was cry. I didn't know what my future would be like. I'd pulled into my garage and I just sat in the car for 30 minutes and just wept. I felt like it was hopeless.

CA: How old were you?

AB: I was in college, probably about 18, 19 years old, maybe 20. I had a great support system around me, my friends and my family, but none of them can truly relate to what I was going through, none of them are LGBTQ. So it was a very, very rough time. But again, I wish I could go back and tell my younger self that. And also I hope that I could help people not feel that way. So hopefully this journey continues to connect and reach people across the world so they can feel a little less hopeless than I felt.

As a closeted gay kid, the locker room in school was one of the scariest places for me. For you, what is it like sharing a locker room with other wrestlers and being open about your sexuality?

I've had zero issues. I think that was one of the things that impressed me most about All Elite Wrestling before I signed — how inclusive the locker room was. We had [trans and genderfluid wrestler] Sunny Kiss there and Nyla Rose that were already contracted before I arrived. And it impressed me so much how much they walked around judgment-free, and they were just themselves. They weren't altering their personalities at all to fit in. They were just themselves. And I thought, "Wow, this is cool." So I've never had an issue with anybody on the roster. I feel very comfortable. I was very comfortable talking about my personal life. I could talk about my boyfriend and about past experiences, and everyone welcomes it. And I don't feel out of place at all.

In the past, maybe when I first started wrestling in the independents 10 years ago, the locker room talk was very different [and it] would make me feel uncomfortable to even bring anything up.

CA: You mentioned your boyfriend, Michael, who joins you on a YouTube channel called "Michael & Anthony," where you parody a lot of trash TV together. How did that start, and what is it like to work with your boyfriend?

AB: The YouTube channel was actually kind of the catalyst to helping me come out in the first place. We made a little video back in 2016 that went viral and it helped grow the YouTube channel. We would do couples vlogs for a while. We just couldn't figure out what our niche was content-wise. And then the pandemic hit, and we were watching a show called "Love Is Blind." Michael's very good at impressions, and he was making fun of one of the people on the show, and he was like, "Why don't we make a parody of this and put it on YouTube?" And I was like, "That sounds fun. We have nothing else better to do, we're stuck indoors." So we put that up and it got a million views. So we thought, "Huh, well this is maybe something that we should go to." We've kind of backed off it a little bit. We're in here in Los Angeles, and he's really starting to get his acting career jump started. So he is really focused on that. And I've been traveling ridiculously. We just bought a home together.

CA: Now that you've broken major ground with your career, what would you like to see as the next frontier in wrestling when it comes to visibility for queer people?



Photo By Joshua Shelton

AB: I think more representation in general in sports, because I think that would be the best thing for moving things forward. Because everyone, they love sports, they love soccer, they love football. It's such a massive thing. And if we had a lot more out successful athletes that are just proud of being themselves, and we can normalize this experience as opposed to it being this whole big ordeal of coming out and then, "Well, can they adjust?" Of course they can adjust. We're great athletes; we just happen to be gay or bi or whatever. It doesn't matter.

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.

GRAB BECCA

Becca Mancari deserves a big hand for “Left Hand”

By Gregg Shapiro

Is there anything more exhilarating than experiencing the creative growth of an artist you admire? Becca Mancari is such a perfect illustration of that. Over the course of three albums, including the modern Americana of their 2017 debut album “Good Woman” to the daring and haunting experimentation of the follow-up, 2020’s “The Greatest Part,” Mancari proved themselves to be a musician who took risks. Their new album, “Left Hand” (Captured Tracks), and its title cut, which is as challenging as it is accessible, crosses multiple genres, including jazz and spoken word. Even as they continue to develop their craft, Mancari never excludes the listener. Instead, they deliver innovative pop songs, including knockouts such as “Don’t Close Your Eyes,” “It’s Too Late,” “Over and Over,” “Don’t Even Worry,” “I Had Dream,” and “Eternity,” that keep us coming back for more. Becca was kind enough to make time for an interview before the album was released. [Becca Mancari performs on Sept. 14 at Thalia Hall.]

Gregg Shapiro: The last time we spoke in 2020, about the release of your album “The Greatest Part,” we were still in the early days of the COVID pandemic. Did you come through it all right?

Becca Mancari: [Laughs] I came through it changed. I think I came through it a very different person than I was when I was in it and who I was before.

GS: Changed for the better?

BM: Yes. The first time I went to therapy was during the pandemic. The first time I was actually able to

see certain things in myself and others in good and hard ways. A lot of agency. A lot of realization. A lot of growing up. Changed forever. **GS: Did the shutdown have an impact on your ability to promote that album?**

BM: [Laughs] yeah, Gregg, it was pretty brutal. The most brutal part was not being able to play the music live in front of people. That’s the biggest thing I care about, actually, in making music is performing it. Being able to reach my fans and talk to them in real-time. That was difficult, of course. As an indie artist, that’s what we have to do to grow. In the same breath, there were a lot of people that streamed music. There were actually a lot of amazing opportunities at radio overseas in the UK and then at Spotify in New York. In hindsight, everything has meaning, everything has a moment. It depends on how you choose to look at it.

GS: I’d like to begin talking about your new album “Left Hand” by asking you to say something about the inclusion of the voicemail message from your grandfather Louis Mancari Sr. on “Homesick Honeybee,” because it really stayed with me.

BM: I’m glad it did because I want him to stay with everyone forever. He’s still with us. He’s 93. He’s this

incredible Italian man. First generation. His family was from Calabria, Italy. He’s a blue-collar Democrat, born in Delaware. Just the most amazing, loving person who is a complicated person, too. He was the first elder in my family to accept me for my queerness. He said to me, “You are loved.” He was born a Catholic and lives as a Catholic. He said, “God is love. I know that that is what I believe and so, of course, I accept and love you.” He’s the best.

GS: Zac Farro, who produced your 2020 album “The Greatest Part” returns on the song “It’s Too Late” – what do you like best about working with Zac?

BM: Everything! I really do. He’s the most fun person to be around. He brings an energy that I am almost addicted to. It was really hard for me not to do the record with him (as producer) and I’d love to do another record with him someday. But I think that it was a great opportunity for me to grow and learn and even learn from what we did together. “It’s Too Late” was the perfect bridge and we were really excited to do that song together because it felt like the right song for him to play drums on. We tried to redo the drums in the studio, and I went back to the original. I think that once you get Zac as a drummer, it’s very difficult to replace



Photo By Sophia Matinazad

him. What an honor and a privilege to be his friend. Always a great collaboration.

GS: Julien Baker, who could also be heard on “The Greatest Part” album, is back on “Over and Over.” What makes her a good collaborator?

BM: She’s such an honest, kind person. I think she really values art and friendship, and she values it at a level where it’s about relationships. I originally wasn’t going to ask her because I thought, “Oh, man, I don’t want to twice, that’s too much.” Then, the people who I was supposed to work with, we couldn’t get together in time. I knew that she was into engineering, she actually went to school for that, so I asked her if she wanted to practice her engineering and engineer her own vocals [laughs]. She said, “Of course, I would love that. Come over.” We did it in her little studio and she was able to practice on me. How cool is that?

GS: Everybody wins! Brittany Howard, with whom you performed as two-thirds of Bermuda Triangle, can be heard on “Don’t Even Worry,” which she co-wrote with you. What’s it like working with Brittany?

BM: It’s like working with a genius. I don’t know if I know anybody that’s better at making music than Brittany Howard. I told her that. Not only is she my best friend, but she’s somebody that I look to and learn from. She is somebody that is touched by whatever you called musical gods; I believe that. She’s so in her strength and in her truth. She’s never afraid to share light on a project she believes in. She’s taught me to work really hard, too. It’s not like it’s an easy thing. We’ve always talked about that. She said, “Becca, I don’t know how long it will take you to achieve what you want to achieve, but I know it will happen. You just have to not quit.”

GS: Strings could be heard on some songs on “The Greatest Part,” but on “Left Hand” you have an actual string section on the songs “Don’t Even Worry,” “Mexican Queen,” “Eternity,” “I Needed You,” and “To Love The Earth.” What appeals to you about having a string section on your songs?

BM: To be honest, Gregg, that is something that I never thought that I was going to be able to have. I worked with Jordan Lehning, he’s who arranged all the winds and strings

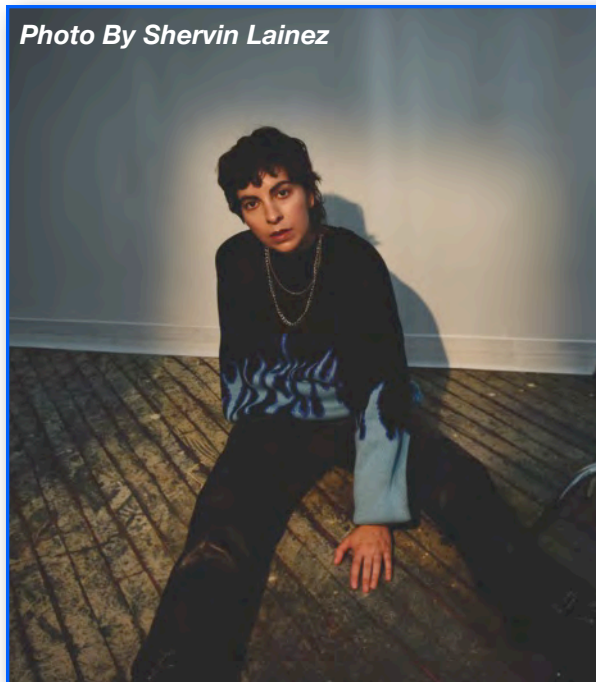


Photo By Shervin Lainez

and recorded them at his place. He’s a really big fan of mine. We’re all fans of each other. This is like a small community at the end of the day. We all lift each other up. The first time I heard the music, I wept. A kid like me couldn’t imagine having something like that. It’s true. I never thought that was part of my story. Something that Jordan did was open that door for me. He knew it, he knew what he was doing. He wanted to give that as an offering towards art. That is what we serve, the song. When we got together, those were the songs he picked, and we decided on together. Then we worked closely with him. He has no ego. He’s like the best person to work with, as well. Going back to the question, when we got the offer, I said yes, of course. When I

wrapped my brain around what it would bring, I wanted it to feel like a story, like another world. I love cinematography. Movies are my second love and art form. I wanted it to feel like you were in this other world with me, and I really think we did that.

GS: The string section, as well as the woodwinds, on “I Needed You” take the song to a whole other place. The line, “I’m the same age as you when you had my brother,” made me wonder if the song is addressed to your mother, and if so, do you know if she’s heard it?

BM: [Laughs] I hope not! My parents don’t really listen to my music. They sometimes sneak it in once in a while if I get a really big article or somebody tells them, “Becca’s got something going on.” For me, with them, it’s a very misunderstood kind of relationship. But it’s something that I have had to write about because it is what has happened. There’s no hate in my songs either. That’s something very important to me. “I Needed You” is such a beautiful moment for me in that the realization is, did she need me like I needed her? We were hurting each other and how do we heal while

we still have time? There’s the line, “I wish I would have met you when you were 19.” My mom was a different person when she was 19. It’s very emotional. That song is tough, but it’s loving. I wish she could see it as a love song to her because that’s what it is.

GS: The synths and the beats on “Don’t Close Your Eyes” sound like they’re custom-made for a dance remix, something that would sound good spinning at Women’s Week in Provincetown in October. What would it mean to you to be a dance diva?

BM: [Laughs] Oh my God! That would be incredible. You know what’s fun about that song? I actually play the drums on that

song. I am not a technical drummer! For that song, I brought in my friend Daniel Tashian who works with Kasey Musgraves. He is an absolute legend. We became friends because his daughter played the young version of me in the music video for “First Time” from my previous record. That’s how he heard my music. I knew who he was – he’s a Grammy Award-winner and legendary songwriter. We ended up co-writing for “Don’t Close Your Eyes” and we became very good friends. He’s been like my godfather. He opened the door for me and told me to walk through it. He was one of the first people to say, “I think you should produce your own record and I’d love to help you do a song. You can do this, and you should keep doing this.” I love the drums on that song, and it makes me happy that you like that.

GS: The gorgeous “To Love The Earth” sounds like a love letter to the planet. We just lived through the hottest July in recorded history and I wanted to ask you to please say a few words about your concerns for the planet and what kinds of action, if any, you are taking.

BM: This is how my brain works. Getting so involved in understanding exactly what’s happening, but I also know that that’s something that’s a privilege. Over the course of my life, realizing what’s happening to the planet. You know what’s interesting, Gregg? This is why I wrote the song, too. When I was a kid growing up, and this isn’t even just on my parents, this is on the community of radical, right-wing Christianity. There’s a belief that the earth is going to burn up because that’s literally what we’re taught as kids. We’re taught that God’s going to come back, and the earth is going to burn. So, go ahead and drive your SUV, the planet’s going to burn anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.

GS: It’s almost as if they’re hastening the destruction of the planet.

BM: Yes! One hundred percent. For me, the song “To Love The Earth,” is to say “I want to be here, right now.” It’s a hymn to loving what’s in front of me. Being present and being part of humanity. Loving it for what it is. Loving my neighbor as myself.

Things that I really believe are arcs of love and arcs of spirituality. I still have spirituality. I’m not an atheist. I still believe in the unknown deeply. For me, that’s the universe and the planet that we’re on and being part of it. I really wanted to double down on that on this record. Even the visuals are part of the earth. I wanted to feel like Becca’s here and I’m not leaving. I’m staying. I’m part of the problem and I’m also part of the solution, and what a joy that is.

GS: Earlier we talked about touring. I live in Fort Lauderdale.

BM: I used to live in West Palm. I think we talked about that in our previous interview.

GS: Yes, we did. I know that a lot of artists don’t want to come here to perform. But the governor won’t be here forever. He’s going to go away. Could you see yourself adding Florida tour dates?

BM: I want your Florida people to know that I love Florida. I have a deep love for it. It’s part of my life. I lived there for almost five years. I love the community. I’m also mixed – I’m Puerto Rican and Italian. That’s a really common thing down there to be a mixed kid. I really felt seen and loved by the community there. I think it’s so misunderstood. There’s so much amazing music and art and queer people. Puerto Ricans and Cubans and Dominicans and Haitians. Everybody is so amazing there in a lot of ways. I think I could sell some tickets there and I want to try that. That’s definitely a future goal.



GS: You already have a full tour schedule this fall. What are you most looking forward to about playing these new songs for a live audience?

BM: I’m really investing in this tour in a big way. I’m financially investing in it. I am buying my own playback rig. Basically, it’s like having your own sound system that you are bringing with you for your ears. It’s such a huge investment, but I think these songs really call to us – my team and my band – leveling up. We are doing that. We’re practicing for a month straight. We’re really going deep into this. I think my goal, Gregg, is that I want people, when they spend their hard-earned money, to come to a show where it makes them feel similar to when you go to the movies. You get to set off for a bit and be part of something. You get to go to another place with the artist in another world. I want to create that atmosphere as much as I can on a budget. Make the best sounding, sonically appealing new show that we can. Then I can’t not talk. I can’t not tell stories, so that’s always part of my show. I just want to connect with people. I love what I do, and I think that’s my place in it.

GS: Well, I hope you are the “Barbie” of concert tours this year.

BM: [Laughs] thank you!



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GRAB BRANDON



Photo Courtesy HBO

On His Own Shoulder Brandon Scott Jones just wants to help young queers feel seen

By Chris Azzopardi

This year, Brandon Scott Jones is showing up in the most random of places. There's his series regular role in "Ghosts," portraying the spirit of American Revolutionary officer Captain Isaac Higgintoot, who is gay. There's his part as Drew's BFF Curtis on "The Other Two," HBO's abundantly queer absurdist comedy, which just announced that its latest, third season would be its last. And earlier this year, he could be seen on the big screen alongside Nicolas Cage's Dracula in the horror-comedy "Renfield," now streaming on Peacock.

The Maryland-born actor, who has also appeared in "Isn't It Romantic," "The Good Place" and "Can You Ever Forgive Me?," recently chatted about the niche queerness of "The Other Two," finding comfort in LGBTQ+ media in his youth and how he hopes that his latest projects are doing the same for others.

Chris Azzopardi: "The Other Two" really is so perfectly stupid and yet so moving at the same time.

Brandon Jones: Let's make that the tagline. Wild how they strike that tone. It's cool.

CA: It's not an easy thing to pull off, but this show does. When was the moment you knew you could make a career out of being funny?

BJ: This isn't going to sound funny, but I remember I was on a family vacation and my mom, dad, sister and I were driving through deep Georgia on our way to Florida, and it started to torrentially downpour, and my mom started screaming at my dad to pull off the road, and my dad kept gripping the steering wheel, screaming that he couldn't see. He's like, "I can't see!" And I remember thinking to myself and turning to my sister and we're like, "We're going to die." And thinking to myself, "This is terrifying," but very funny to see my parents do this in front of their children.

CA: I can see this as a sketch on a comedy series.

BJ: I can 100%. Literally, there's no chill in the back, and my sister and I

were just sitting there, stone-faced, like, "Oh god." I have a memory of being like, "Oh, I want to write about this." So that was the first time I thought, "Oh, maybe I enjoy comedy." I've been lucky enough that I've gotten to work with people in my past doing lots of comedy that have brought me in to do other projects that maybe more people were able to see, and then also just trying your hardest to put yourself out there. And I remember the first time I put my comedy writing live on stage, and to see the reaction to that, then the reaction on the business side to that, was really, really encouraging.

CA: When you got the script for this season of "The Other Two," what was the scene you couldn't wait to shoot?

BJ: Oh, god, there's a couple. One, I think you get to see some different levels of Curtis where he's sort of been very silly in a lot of fun ways and a good friend. We got a little taste of his good friendship with Cary last season, but this year we

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had two separate moments that Drew [Tarver, who plays Cary] and I both called “the hard scenes,” and we called them the hard scenes because they're definitely a little bit more emotional for the two of us. I think in addition to all the comedy that we get to play, there's a scene or two toward the end of the season that we were both excited to really sink our teeth into.



Photo Courtesy HBO

CA: “The Other Two” really does know queer culture inside and out. What’s it like to be able to go so deep into niche LGBTQ+ culture within this show?

BJ: It's really fun. It is a very queer focused, queer-forward show in a lot of ways. I mean, for example, last season when Cary had this hole pic come out. I think the idea of taking a picture of your hole to send someone and then accidentally blasting it to the world is a thing that starts out as something very relatable, but is also probably a fear we all have, a little bit.

I think trying to stay involved [and in] that world and understanding also the lens through which we look at it — which is sometimes through the entertainment industry — I know me and Drew, as queer actors, you get to see all of these little nuances of [how] people want you to be a certain way, they want you to act a certain way, and that usually corresponds with pop culture.

CA: While doing this interview, it’s hard not to think about the first episode of this current season — navigating the promo of a TV show. That must seem very meta to you right now. Who’s the person on your shoulder as you go through this today?

BJ: It is funny to be doing interviews or hosting things on TV and also then doing them in real life. There is that meta element to it. It's almost... I'm the person on my shoulder; it's still this constant back and forth that I have with myself of, “Am I being enough of the person that I want to be? Am I not being enough of the representation?” And you kind of feel the weight of it a little bit, not to add self-importance or self-indulgence, or some sort of ego to it, but I think there's people that have inspired me and there's so many different people that you want to be like, and I think you just wonder if you're falling short sometimes.

CA: Can we get a spinoff of the “Gay Minute,” your show within a show this season?

BJ: Do you want a full half hour of “The Gay Minute”? I would totally do it. Just a sad, real-time show of this person trying to film it.

CA: As someone who’s aware of the representation you bring to the TV and films you’re in, what media helped you feel seen?

BJ: When I was younger, I really loved “Will and Grace,” and I didn't know, necessarily, a world outside of that. It was really fun to see those characters come up, but then a lot of the stuff that I really, really identified with, I didn't even recognize to be

queer culture. I was a big Madeline Kahn fan. I was a big Rosalind Russell fan. I would watch these madcap heightened movies — “Clue” or “Bringing Up Baby.” And all of these things that I now recognize as an adult, it's like, “Oh, wait, I wasn't alone in liking those things.” Do you remember “Me and My Shadows,” the Judy Garland TV movie?

CA: Yeah. You thought you were the only person who saw it?

BJ: I thought I was the only person who sat there and saw it. It was a two-night event, and I did not miss either night. It's this thing that, as you get older, you find other people that also did that, and you're like, “Oh, all of this.” I sank myself into these things, and I was doing it for a reason, even if I didn't fully know what it was. And it becomes so personal.

CA: Looking at your career as a whole, when did you understand that the roles you choose are important and they matter?

BJ: I don't know if there's ever been one point, but I know that it's been really nice between this show and “Ghosts” to see the fan reaction on Twitter of people either recognizing queer moments or, on “Ghosts,” I have a coming out [arc], which it's been very nice to see the reaction to

that. So I don't necessarily know if I personally have that following, but I know that you still want to put out the authentic version of yourself for that person that might find you and might identify with who you are. I think that my experience of coming out, and as I was growing up and getting older, it can be lonely, and I used to sink myself into film and television to quell that, and so you hope that whatever performance you're giving, whatever interview you're doing, there's an authenticity there and that you're bringing that experience to hopefully help others as well.

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.



Photo Courtesy HBO

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GRAB CHARLES

A most unusual leading lady: An interview with Charles Busch

By Gregg Shapiro

Is there anything Charles Busch can't do? With a curriculum vitae that includes Tony Award-nominated playwright, actor, cabaret performer, novelist, filmmaker, and visual artist, Busch is simply brimming with talent. With the publication of "Leading Lady: A Memoir of a Most Unusual Boy" (Smart Pop/BenBella, 2023), Busch can now add memoirist to his long list of accomplishments. Bursting with details both personal (the loss of his mother Gertie at a young age, his close relationship with his Aunt Lil, his coming out) and professional (his amazing performance career, his interactions with entertainment legends), Busch takes readers into his confidence and generously shares his life experiences. Charles was gracious enough to make time for an interview in advance of the release of "Leading Lady."

Gregg Shapiro: Charles, why was now the time to write your memoir "Leading Lady: A Memoir of a Most Unusual Boy"?

Charles Busch: I could say that now that I'm in my late sixties I'm finally in a place of wise self-reflection. However, I began this book when I was in my early fifties [laughs]! It's taken me all this time to figure out the structure and to get it all down and then to edit it to a reasonable length. At one point, the manuscript was over 450 pages, and I hadn't yet reached the age of fourteen [laughs]. In every way, I'm a storyteller. I transform my experiences into narrative while I'm living them. It was inevitable that I share these memories in book form.

GS: Were you a journal keeper or did you rely on your good memory for the details?

CB: So many of these stories I've told and retold many times in interviews, in daily conversation and even reduced to cabaret banter. The challenge was to force myself to recall my emotional states and go beyond glib repartee. After the final proofed draft was sent off to the printer, I was cleaning out a forbidden file cabinet drawer and discovered eight diaries covering the years 1975-78; a key period in my development as a writer/actor. I had no recollection of writing them. I chose not to open these diaries and put them right back in the drawer. It would only frustrate me. Anyway, my twenty-ish self wasn't that full of insight. I was too busy pushing and

scheming and plotting how I was going to invade the world of the theater while trying to earn a buck. I suspect (and I hope) these diaries were more like datebooks.

GS: Portions of the book are told in a non-chronological fashion. Why did you decide to take that approach in telling your story?

CB: I made an attempt at writing it in a strictly linear form. "Chapter One. I am born." But I get antsy reading show biz autobiographies where it takes many chapters detailing their grandparents and parents' lives and then the author's childhood and adolescence before it gets to the glamorous part. Therefore, I chose to begin with a scene from my adulthood then flashback cinematically. When I write about a



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childhood incident, I'll be reminded of a later experience as an adult and go off on that tangent. I'm continually amazed that I've been able to meet and even become friends with the stars of stage and screen that I worshipped when I was a stagestruck child.

GS: I'm so glad you said that because, throughout the book, you generously share space with other high-profile folks, including Kim Novak, Patrick Swayze, Liza Minnelli, Zoe Caldwell, Joan Rivers, and Claudette Colbert, writing respectfully about your interactions with them.

CB: I've had such a unique career.



As a male actress who evokes stars of the golden age, it's wild that at times I've been accepted as one of those actresses and have even shared dressing rooms with these legendary ladies. With Joan Rivers, the relationship was a profound one where she became something of a mother figure for me.

GS: "Leading Lady" is being published 18 years after John Catania and Charles Ignacio's documentary "The Lady in Question is Charles Busch" was released. Do you consider the two to be connected?

CB: I'll always be grateful to John and Charles for making that documentary. It was something of a three-year ordeal to get through, but they gave me a beautiful gift with this tribute. However, being a film, they couldn't delve into the psychology of many of my life choices with the

thoroughness that one can in a memoir. That said, the narrative is the same and it might be fun for the reader of this new book to watch the movie and see many of the people and clips from the theatrical productions I've written about.

GS: 2023 also marks the 30th anniversary of the publication of your debut novel "Whores of Lost Atlantis." Now that you've written your memoir, do you think you might have another novel in you?

CB: I'd like to write another novel. It's a dream of mine to write a taut and complex murder mystery whodunnit. I think my late Aunt Lil who raised me would make an excellent fictional amateur sleuth. I can envision a series of comic murder mysteries set in the Manhattan of the sixties, investigated by a keenly intelligent Park Avenue widow and her gay teenage nephew.

GS: I'd read that book! In the "Camp Summer Camp" chapter you write about your experiences at summer camp, which made me wonder if you'd seen the new movie "Theater Camp," starring Ben Platt.

CB: I haven't seen the movie yet, but I certainly plan to. Theater camps are fascinating in many ways. For one thing, they can be viewed as a



CHARLES BUSCH IN PSYCHO BEACH PARTY



GS: Beginning with the chapter, “The Bad Old Good Days or The Good Old Bad Days,” and continuing in the chapters that follow, you write about the impact of the AIDS epidemic. Did you find it difficult to write about that subject?

CB: When you push yourself to remember, you get into a kind of hypnotic zone where all sorts of forgotten details float to the surface. A number of times I found myself sobbing in front of my desktop computer. I think so much about my friends who died young. I wonder what would have become of them had they lived. I love them and miss them and am haunted by how they suffered. It was a time of villains and great bravery.

GS: You also wrote about your movies “Psycho Beach Party,” “Die, Mommie, Die!,” and “The Sixth Reel.” Is there any chance that we’ll ever see a movie version of “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife?”

CB: “The Allergist’s Wife” movie has been in the works for nearly 20 years. Sometimes it’s on and then it fades away and comes back. Right now, it’s suddenly very alive with three wonderful stars attached. Who knows where it will be in six months? I can be maddeningly blasé and detached about the project. It can be borderline obnoxious, but I think it’s a good healthy attitude.

GS: Do you have a book tour in the works, and if so, what can your fans expect from such an event?

CB: I wouldn’t say there will be a tour. That doesn’t seem to happen much these days. But don’t be surprised if I turn up in a couple of select cities with a stack of books to be signed, a grateful smile, and plenty of outrageous stories to share.

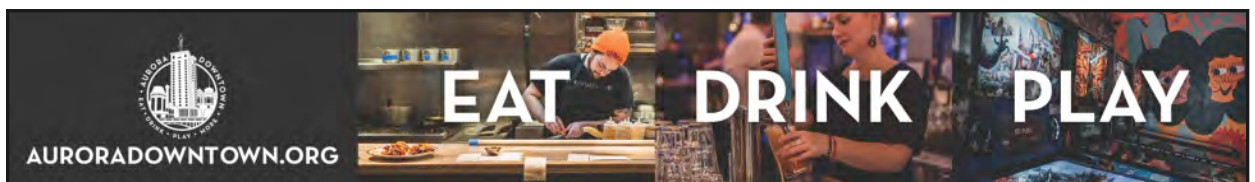
microcosm of show business, full of dreams and cut-throat ambition. Within a world of teenagers, you’ll find stars, has-beens, wannabees, hangers-on, and bitter feuds. It’s great fodder for dramatization.

GS: One of the longer chapters in the book, the Chicago-set “The Shopworn Angel,” reveals your experience with David’s Models Agency. What was it like to revisit that chapter of your life?

CB: During my youthful struggles, I viewed my life as an ongoing sitcom with me as the wacky star. I threw myself into the life of a rentboy with enthusiasm and a determination to see how my very individual personality would affect these sexual situations. I have no regrets about my year as a sex worker because I came away with insight and sympathy for men entrenched in the closet and the need for lonely people to have someone listen to their stories.

GS: Speaking of Chicago, the first Charles Busch play that I ever saw was “Vampire Lesbians of Sodom” at the Royal George Theater, which starred Jackie Hoffman and Alexandra Billings, among others. Did you have an opportunity to see that production?

CB: I heard it was a wonderful production. It ought to have been with that level of talent on stage. Alas, I never saw it. In fact, after the production was licensed, I never heard from the producer again. Several years later, I discovered that the show was still running! The producer never paid me one penny in royalties and then when I made a fuss, he quickly closed the show and disappeared. At the risk of coming off like an Actor’s Equity card carrying St. Francis of Assisi, I suppose the confidence and experience it gave those gifted young performers and the fun and joy for all those audiences were ultimately the most important.





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MONDAY

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TUESDAY

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. **Charlie's:** 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. **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:** \$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 Sofa Tap:** \$5 Amsterdam Cocktails, \$5 Tallboys Everyday Specials, \$5Jager, \$5 Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm - 4am.Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi. 8/1 Hardcore Full Moon Party.

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. **Charlie's:** 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 Sofa 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:**Open 5pm - 4am.Jockstrap Night. Free Clothing Check. 8/30 JOCKSTRAPFull Moon Party.

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:** \$1 off All Call Liquor Mixed Drinks. **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 Sofa 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:** Open 5pm - 4am.Throwback Thursdays70's & 80's Music & Porn by BijouVideo.

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 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. **The Sofa 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 Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm-4am.

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 Sofa 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:** Open 2pm-5am.

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 Stoli Vodka (and Stoli flavors) and Stoli Bloody Mary's. **SideTrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **The Sofa 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:** Open 2pm-4am. Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, #2 Sodas, Clubroom Opens 6pm, Movie Night 7pm.

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	Artist	Title
1	Kastra & Sarah De Warren	Landslide
2	CLMD	Bounce
3	Kshmr	Heartbeat (Radio Edit)
4	Telykast	You Got Me (With Georgia Ku)
5	Lucas & Steve	Careful What You Wish For ft. Alida
6	Oliver Heldens x Kylie Minogue	10 Out Of 10
7	The Blessed Madonna & Gabriels	Mercy Ft. Jacob Lusk
8	Nathan Dawe x Joel Corry x Ella Henderson	0800 Heaven
9	Meduza	Phone Ft. Sam Tompkins X Em Beihold
10	M22	The One (Radio Edit)
11	Luke Alexander	Rather Stay Ft. Ferris
12	J. Worra	Fade
13	Loud Luxury & Dvbbs	Next To You Ft. Kane Brown (Adventure Club Remix)
14	Matt Fax & Ladina Viva	Fire (Original Mix)
15	ARTY x Jonathan Mendelson	Lightning Strikes
16	Alex Kirsch & Molly Rainford	My Heart's A Broken Record (Vip Edit)
17	Rod Carrillo & David Sosa	Just A Little While
18	Marf	Monday Ft. Philip Strand
19	Oliver Heldens & Djs From Mars	Blue Monday ft. Jd Davis
20	3LAU	Too Late For Love
21	Eren Ab & Lena Leon	Fyi
22	Jain	Makeba
23	Kylie Minogue	Padam Padam
24	Andrew Rayel X Jes	From This Day On (Ben Gold Remix)
25	Pls&ty	Upside Ft. Ben Samama (Radio Edit)
26	Lizot X Hours X Gigo'n'migo	Better As Friends (Open Beatz Anthem 2023)
27	Bonnie X Clyde X Sum Sun	Memory (Radio)
28	Joel Corry X Icona Pop X Rain Radio	Desire
29	Bshp	Sweet
30	Dastic & Aeden	Loved By You Ft. Jai Ryu

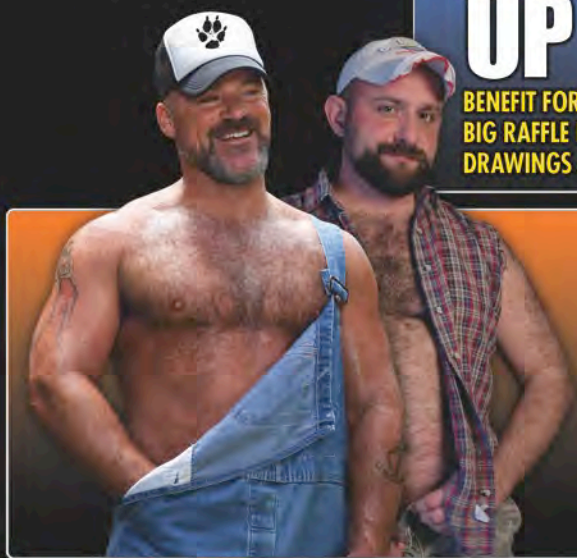
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LABOR DAY WEEKEND

GRAB HOLLY

Whose Magic Was It?

By Holly Maholm

Blair was in crisis. Both Xandra and I could see she was near a breakdown. We had shared with her our best advice on the challenges she was facing, but our advice was but a small fraction of the help she needed. I asked myself, "If I were facing just such a painful, uncertain decision, to whom would I turn for loving, sympathetic support?" It hit me like thunder. I would turn to Dot, who had faced just this sort of challenge before. She would know what to do.

I called Dot and described briefly the crisis Blair was facing. Dot instantly instructed me to drive Blair out to the Horse Rescue. This I did, first suggesting to Blair that she needed some quiet time for introspection, and that she could find that temporary refuge with Dot out at the farm. After we arrived, Blair went off to rest in the spare bedroom, and I filled Dot in on Blair's history and current despair. I then returned to the stable, leaving Blair and Dot to work things out.

I had asked Dot to let me know when Blair was ready to return to town, but I didn't hear from her for several weeks. Until... one morning when I walked into Donut Time and was flabbergasted to find Blair back at work! I was stunned! At first, I couldn't be sure it was really her, she was so changed.

All the pink and green had been washed out of her hair, which was pulled back in a ponytail secured with a braiding-band (something we use to braid the horses' manes). She was wearing a Western-style blouse, a long denim skirt (perfect for square-dancing), and a silver and turquoise belt. I could see the pointy toes of cowboy boots peeking out from beneath her skirt.

But what was most changed was her voice and manner. She cheerfully greeted each customer as they came in, offering coffee and their favorite donuts. She laughed and joked, sparkling with energy, humor and fun. This was not the angry, morose, gender-aggressive person I remembered. As I sat mesmerized at the sight, she reached out and hugged several of her long-time customers, telling each of them, "I missed you so much!" I got a hug from Blair, then turned and headed for the Horse Rescue, anxious to learn what magic Dot had worked on our young friend.

When I got to the farm, I found Dot sitting out on the porch of the old farmhouse, sipping iced tea. I got a cold glass for myself and sat with her. She began. "Holly, what a delightful young woman she is. Blair is a treasure! Anyway... when she got here she was a mess, but I've seen that sort of 'mess' before. So many people

have been filling her head with nonsense – what in the old days they would tell a girl like her how she had to have a boyfriend, and would be some man's wife someday. But now, of course, they don't use the usual slurs against lesbians... they tell those girls they're 'non-binary' or some other made-up foolishness about 'gender,' when the truth is, she's just attracted to women!

"Except now, if she insists she's attracted to women, they tell her she has to secretly be a man! Cause none of her friends in 'Gender Fantasy Land' are willing to entertain the possibility that a woman could love another woman." She went on.

"Anyway, Blair was suffering so much self-hatred that I had to use magic to get through to her. What I did was... I got bridles on Blossom and Biscuit, and then Blair and



I walked them out to the far western pasture, where all the rescue horses – and Feather – who passed away are buried. When we got there, I laid the horses down flat on their sides, and then Blair and I laid down in the long grass, using the horses' necks as our pillows. We just rested there for the longest time, listening to the horses breathe, and then I told her stories of some of the horses buried there, and about Feather, and how he loved the vagabond veterans who lived with him in the wilderness.

"Anyway, that experience opened her heart. It freed up all the love and generosity she had been wanting so badly to share, but had forgotten how. She did a lot of crying out there with her head on Blossom's shoulder, but when we got up, she was a new woman."

"That's amazing!" I exclaimed. "So, tell me, which unicorn was disguised as Blossom? Who used their 'unicorn magic' to heal Blair's wounded heart?" Dot replied. "Weren't a unicorn at all. It was all Blossom's everyday horse-magic. Sometimes a horse is all the magic you need to touch a young girl's soul."

(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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GRAB AN INDUCTEE

The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame

The only city-sanctioned LGBT Hall of Fame in the world, has announced its slate of 2023 inductees: 10 LGBT-identified individuals, one LGBT-identified organization, and one “Friend of the Community” (ally). The inductees were announced at a press conference on July 31 at Sidetrack The Video Bar.



Linda Bubon



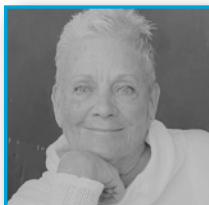
Linda Bubon is a Chicago icon who, along with colleague Ann Christophersen, founded Women & Children First Bookstore.

Andrew Davis



Andrew Davis has been a key journalist and editor covering Chicago’s LGBTQ+ community for nearly 30 years. He spent almost two decades full-time at Windy City Times, including most recently as editor-in-chief.

Jan Dee



Jan Dee (Jan Dee Jewelry) is known for her high-end jewelry designs and opened her first store in Chicago in the 1960s. During the 40+ years that she operated her store, she always donated merchandise to LGBT and AIDS organizations.

Anna DeShawn



Anna DeShawn was inspired to create E3 Radio, the only radio station in the country dedicated to playing queer music and reporting on queer news 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Her annual “Purple Tie Affair: Concert & Silent Auction” has donated over \$10,000 to various organizations in the Chicagoland area.

Margaret Hillis



Margaret Hillis, inducted posthumously, was an internationally renowned figure in classical music. She founded the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus and led it for 37 years. In addition to her work as a conductor and chorus director, she was an airplane pilot, veteran, educator, activist, mentor, and advocate who broke barriers.

Joseph Loundy



Joseph Loundy was the first mental health professional to be involved with Gay Horizons, around 1974. He eventually became executive director and led the agency from operating out of a single basement room to growing into one of the largest LGBT social service agencies in the country, which eventually became the Center on Halsted.

Robert Neubert



Robert Neubert has planned some of Chicago’s most notable philanthropic, corporate and civic events helping raise hundreds of millions of dollars in support of LGBT organizations such as Equality Illinois, AIDS Foundation Chicago, Howard Brown Health, PFLAG, the Center on Halsted, Chicago House, the Human Rights Campaign, and the 2006 Gay Games.

Col. Jennifer Pritzker



Col. Jennifer Pritzker is an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ causes. As a veteran she was featured in a 2019 Vanity Fair article, speaking out against the transgender military ban and other anti-LGBTQ+ policies. She has written multiple op-eds and, as a reserve officer, has spoken to the press about the dangers of LGBT discrimination. Her TAWANI Foundation supports universities and organizations dedicated to LGBTQ research and advocacy.

Terence Alan Smith



Terence Alan Smith, aka Joan Jett Blakk, was one of the first drag queens to step off the stage and enter the world of politics and one of the founders of the Chicago chapter of Queer Nation. In 1990 she challenged Richard M. Daley for Mayor of Chicago. She also ran for President, with the campaign slogan, “LICK BUSH in ’92,” gaining national attention.

Avery R. Young



Avery R Young is the first ever Chicago Poet Laureate. avery is an award-winning teaching artist who is an Arts and Public Life Artist-In-Residence at the University of Chicago. He has been instrumental in Chicago’s poetry scene, and a teaching artist for Young Chicago Authors and various not-for-profits.

Friend of the Community:



Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago Gender Development Program, the first and largest multidisciplinary program in the Midwest providing a full range of medical, behavioral health, and social support services to gender-diverse children, transgender adolescents, and other patient-families navigating issues related to gender and gender development.

Organization:



Black Alphabet, now in its 10th year, is the world's oldest and largest Black LGBTQ+ focused arts organization. What began as a conversation about the lack of exposure of films that explore the Black LGBTQ experience birthed the Black Alphabet Film Festival, Chicago's first Black LGBTQ film festival, and has expanded to Black Alphabet's new mission: to promote social equity awareness and education in all aspects of life for the Black LGBTQ+ community using media and the creative arts to promote healthy and whole lifestyles within the Black LGBTQ+ community. Her TAWANI Foundation supports universities and organizations dedicated to LGBTQ research and advocacy.

This year's Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 3, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St. ,at 6 p.m. It is open to the public. The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, the only city-sanctioned LGBT Hall of Fame in the world, was founded in 1991 to honor Chicago's people and entities, nominated by the community, who have made significant contributions to the quality of life or well-being of the LGBT community and the city of Chicago. The first Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame ceremony took place during Pride Week 1991 and was held at Chicago City Hall. Then-mayor Richard M. Daley hosted the ceremony and afterward, photos of the inductees were displayed in City Hall. The Hall of Fame has no physical facility but maintains a website, which allows anyone to visit the Hall of Fame at any time at <https://chicagolgpthalloffame.org>. Traditionally, the City of Chicago has displayed the Hall of Fame materials during induction periods, Pride, and in October for Gay & Lesbian History Month. This year's Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 3, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St. ,at 6 p.m. It is open to the public. For more information Visit <http://>

www.chicagolgpthalloffame.org



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**REELING: THE CHICAGO
LGBTQ+ INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
OPENING NIGHT
PRESENTATION; RUNS SEPT.
21 - OCT. 8, 2023**



Reeling: The Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival today announced the dates and opening night presentation for its 41st edition, running September 21 - October 8, 2023. This year, the second-longest running LGBTQ+ film festival in the world celebrates opening night with the Chicago Premiere of THE MATTACHINE FAMILY, to be held Thursday September 21 at the Music Box Theatre (3733 N. Southport Ave.) with a reception with special guest writer and director **Andy Vallentine** in attendance. The festival unspools more than 40 feature films and 12 short film programs over the following 10 days at Landmark's Century Centre Cinema (2828 N. Clark St.) and at Chicago Filmmakers (1326 W. Hollywood Ave.), with virtual streaming continuing until October 8.

Written by **Andy Vallentine** and **Danny Vallentine**, and executive produced by the award-winning actor and director, **Zach Braff**, THE MATTACHINE FAMILY, directed by Andy Vallentine in his directorial debut, tells the story of loving gay couple Thomas (**Nico Tortorella**) and Oscar (**Juan Pablo Di Pace**) who find that they have different ideas about what making a family actually means after their first foster child returns to his birth mother.

Reeling: The Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival runs September 21 - October 8, 2023. The full program for the 41st edition of the festival will be announced in mid-August, with tickets (\$12-\$40) going on sale at that time. Presenting Sponsors for the festival include AARP and Chicago Filmmakers.

For more information visit <http://www.reelingfilmfest.org/>

**World Premiere!
MURDER, REWROTE
AUGUST 1- SEPTEMBER
16, 2023 AT THE DEN
THEATRE**



Hell in a Handbag Productions is pleased to conclude its 21st season with the world premiere musical parody *Murder, ReWrote*, playing August 10 – September 16, 2023 at The Den Theatre (Upstairs Mainstage) 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

In the grand Handbag style, this affectionate musical parody of a certain well-known syndicated TV show follows Bessica Feltcher (**Britain Gebhardt**), a widowed Maine writer of mystery novels who becomes embroiled in murder and mayhem when she, and her nephew Grady (**Grant Drager**) visit a faded movie star's mansion. When the star's extremely annoying daughter, Christina (Tyler Anthony Smith*) is murdered, her "Mommie Dearest," June Crayfish (**David Cerda**), is the prime suspect. It's up to Bessica to find the murderer with the help of the audience, and some modern technology! *Murder, ReWrote* is stuffed with humor for both the casual *Murder, She Wrote* viewer and the deep-cut Fletcher fanatic.

For Tickets or additional information, visit <http://www.handbagproductions.org>.

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18, 2023 IN STEPPEWOLF'S
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THEATER IN HONOR OF
HELEN ZELL**



Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the nation's premier ensemble theater company, is pleased open its 48th season with the Chicago premiere of *Sanctuary City*, Pulitzer Prize winner **Martyna Majok's** (*Cost of Living*, *Ironbound*) harrowing and hopeful tale of immigration and young love, directed by **Steph Paul**, playing September 14 – November 18, 2023 in Steppenwolf's stunning in-the-round Ensemble Theater in Honor of Helen Zell, 1646 N. Halsted St. in Chicago.

Newark, NJ. Post-9/11. Two teenagers, brought to America as children, now face an unlikely foe: unexpected, unreciprocated love. Their friendship is no longer enough (for one of them) and their adopted country doesn't love them back. Pulitzer Prize winner Martyna Majok brings light to the sacrifices made by DREAMers, lovers and life-long friends in the heartbreaking and hopeful *Sanctuary City* – a story that fractures and transcends – crossing boundaries, borders and genre in search of a place to call home.

For Tickets or more information visit <http://www.steppenwolf.org>

Hell in a Handbag Productions presents the World Premiere of **MURDER, REWROTE**

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Photos By Anthony Meade



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SHAKERS ON CLARK HAPPY 9TH ANNIVERSARY SHAKERS ON CLARK

Photos By Anthony Meade



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14	2 Bears Tavern Uptown 773-672-4900 • 1140 W. Wilson Ave
16	@MOSPHERE • 773-784-1100 5355 N. Clark
5	2ND STORY BAR • 312-923-9536 157 E. Ohio
6	BATON SHOW LOUNGE 312-644-5269 • 4713 N. Broadway
26	BERLIN • 773-348-4975 954 W. Belmont
15	BIG CHICKS • 773-728-5511 5024 N. Sheridan
24	BOBBY LOVES • 773-525-1200 3729 N. Halsted
20	CELL BLOCK • 773-665-8064 3702 N. Halsted
27	CHARLIES • 773-871-8887 3726 N. Broadway
49	CLOSET • 773-477-8533 3325 N. Broadway
67	ELIXIR ANDERSONVILLE 773-975-9244 1509 W. Balmoral
51	ELIXIR LOUNGE 773-975-9244 3452 N. Halsted
3	FANTASY NIGHTCLUB 773-325-2233 • 3641 N. Halsted
10	GRANVILLE ANVIL 773-973-0006 • 1137 W. Granville
31	HYDRATE • 773-975-9244 3458 N. Halsted
8	JACKHAMMER • 773-743-5772 6406 N. Clark
68	JEFFERY PUB • 773-363-8555 7041 S. Jeffery Blvd
71	LIPS • 312-815-2662 2229 S. Michigan Ave
44	LUCKY HORSESHOE 773-404-3169 • 3169 N. Halsted
48	MARTYS MARTINI BAR • 773-561-6425 • 1511 W Balmoral
70	MEETING HOUSE TAVERN • 773-696-4211 • 5025 N. Clark
72	Nobody's Darling • 1744 W Balmoral
63	PROGRESS • 773-697-9268 • 3359 N Halsted
1	RAVENSWOOD TAP • 773-528-3253 • 1829 W. Montrose)
67	REPLAY • 773-654-1369 3358 N. Clark (Andersonville)
35	REPLAY • 773-975-9244 3439 N. Halsted (Lakeview)

	ROGERS PARK SOCIAL 6920 N. Glenwood
34	ROSCOES • 773-281-3355 3356 N. Halsted
45	SHAKERS ON CLARK • 773-327-5969 3162 N. Clark
39	SIDETRACK • 773-477-9189 3349 N. Halsted
69	SPLASH • 773-904-7338 3339 N. Halsted
23	THE NORTH END • 773-477-7999 • 3733 N. Halsted
52	The SOFO Tap • 773-784-7636 4923 N. Clark
7	TOUCHE • 773-465-7400 6412 N. Clark
71	WHISKEY GIRL TAVERN • 773-654-1766 • 6318 N. Clark

53	BANANA VIDEO 773-561-8322 4923 N. Clark
40	STEAMWORKS BATHHOUSE 773-929-6080 • 3246 N. Halsted

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67	REPLAY ANDERSONVILLE 773-654-1369 • 5358 N. Clark
43	WOOD • 773-935-9663 3335 N. Halsted

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25	CENTER ON HALSTED 3656 N Halsted • 773-472-6469
11	GERBER/HART LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES • 6500 N. Clark 773-381-8030
9	LEATHER ARCHIVES & MUSEUM • 6418 N. Greenview 773-761-9200



58
Devon

71

Hollywood Beach

Foster

Lawrence

Wilson

Montrose

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Belmont Harbor

Ashland Ave.

Fullerton Ave.

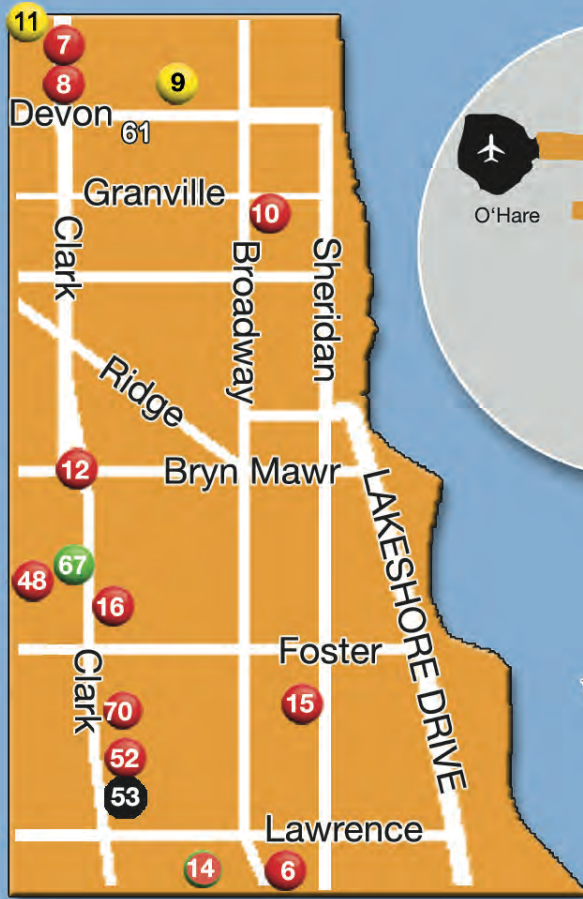
North Ave.

Chicago Ave.

Grand Ave.

S Jeffrey Blvd

E 71st St.



GRAB MAGAZINE MAPS

- GRAB a Bite
- GRAB a Drink
- GRAB Some Sleep
- GRAB Some Culture
- GRAB a Towel

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