

FEBRUARY 15, 2022 • VOL XII • ISSUE #2

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GRAB MAGAZINE
CHICAGO'S BIWEEKLY LGBTQ PUBLICATION

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GRAB JONATHAN

The ‘Queer Eye’ grooming expert’s new Netflix show explores everything from bugs to being nonbinary

By ChrisAzzopardi



Photo Courtesy of Netflix

Before I talk to Jonathan Van Ness about their new Netflix show, “Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness,” they take me on a little on-camera adventure that involves them “needing cuter light.”

They do a 180 with the computer. They swivel in their chair. “I need more natural light in my life, I’m sorry,” they say, still shifting and “getting comfortable.”

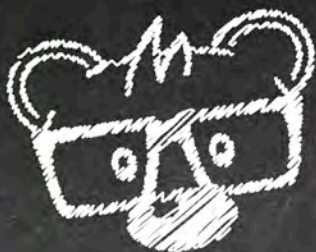
And then once they find that magical spot where the light hits their face in just the right place, the 34-year-old “Queer Eye” grooming expert grooms their computer, gently wiping the lens with a tissue. If you’re going to wear what they’re wearing — it appears to be a chiffon kaftan — you don’t want a dusty ol’ lens muddying its bright pink radiance, honey.

“I did an outfit change for you,” they say, having slipped into their new, flowier ensemble just before our interview.

Van Ness, who is also a children’s book author and one of just a few openly nonbinary public figures, rocks an entire closet of gender-nonconforming fashion on Season 6 of “Queer Eye,” which hit Netflix on New Year’s Eve 2021. On their new six-episode series, a TV adaptation of their podcast “Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness,” the multi-hyphenate even has an entire episode devoted to gender identity.

Featured in the episode, titled “Can We Say Bye-Bye to the Binary?,” are gender nonconforming activist Alok Vaid-Menon and Geo Neptune, the first two-spirit elected official in the state of

Maine. With Van Ness, who says they hadn’t even heard the term nonbinary until the age of 30, Vaid-Menon and Neptune explore what their identity means to them and the history of our rigid gender binary. The show also intends to open up minds on other topics as well, such as why bugs aren’t so bad, figure skating’s minority barriers and, naturally, an entire episode on the history of coifs called “Why Is Hair So Major?” All aglow through a freshly cleaned computer camera, Van Ness spoke to me about the “sense of ease” they feel now, a dream “Getting Curious” guest star they’re not sure they could form words around, and their very personal reason for being completely themselves around young queer people.



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Photo Courtesy of Netflix

CA: I watched a lot of “*Getting Curious*” yesterday and wanted to thank you for modeling curiosity, first of all. I think as adults we tend to lose our imagination and we just accept some things for the way that they are. Is that what you felt going into the show?

JonathanVanNess: Well, I started “*Getting Curious*,” the podcast, in 2015. I’ve always been someone who loves to learn, and I’m just a very curious person. And I clearly love talking. So the idea — wanting to understand the world around me better — has been something that’s existed within me for as long as I can remember. So that was definitely something that I wanted the opportunity to break down on the Netflix stage ‘cause it’s a very big stage.

And I wanted to bring a more visual, multi-medium, multifaceted world in which the podcast — but as a TV show — could live. So I’m just really excited that we got the opportunity and that Netflix believed in me enough and that we can go explore the world together. So I’m just really excited that I

have the opportunity and I hope everyone loves it.

CA: You mention Netflix being a big stage, which it is. Is that why you were like, “You know what? We are gonna do an entire episode devoted to nonbinary and gender nonconforming people”?

JVN: Yeah. Being someone who is nonbinary is something that I think I’ve been my entire life. I only had language for it in these last few years. But the amount of trans misogyny that I’ve had to endure and live through in my own life pales in comparison to some of the trans misogyny that other people have had to go through within our community and within our trans community, specifically.

However, I wanted to humanize us. And it’s not only my job to do this, obviously. But I wanted to have a time where we could talk and be together and learn together and just have that humanity, ‘cause I think so often we are portrayed in this way that it’s just not human. It’s only around, like, violence or this feeling of, trans people are coming for our way of life. Or trans people are coming for tradition. Or trans

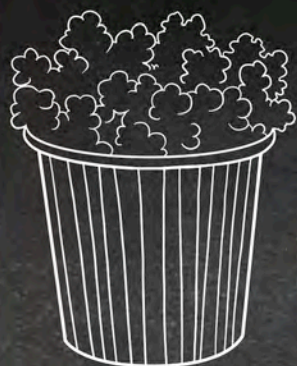
people are coming for sports. Or trans people are coming for public safety, or whatever it is.

And I wanted to show people that we are human and we are all sorts of different things that are not threatening, and actually very beautiful and amazing and are just as natural as the grass or rain. You know, we’ve been here forever. And I was really excited to get an opportunity to share that information.

CA: There aren’t a lot of nonbinary public figures in the world, and you seem to be aware of that as you’ve been using your platform to really educate people.

JVN: Absolutely. I think that for me, being someone who was very mercilessly bullied all throughout my childhood and formative educational years, I’ve always been very moved by this thought of, “If I could make it easier for other people like me or put a little bit of an end to other people’s suffering, it would make my suffering more worth it.” And so I’ve always liked the idea of using what I’ve learned to help make other people’s lives easier.

CA: I love that you said that because

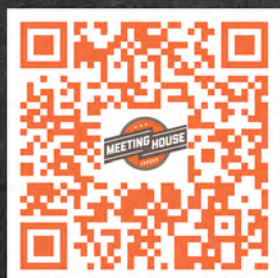


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my colleague, whose queer son loves you, wanted to know how you feel when it's a kid who looks to you as a huge inspiration as they're navigating their own gender and identity.

JVN: That's a really good question. I think sometimes when I see much younger children, like in my standup comedy show, I just feel immediately guilty. I'm like, "Oh my god. I hope I don't traumatize them, honey, 'cause we are going there tonight." So in that sense, it can be a little bit harder, but so often I think about Margaret Cho when I think about how I want to live my life as a public figure. I was introduced to her work at a very young age. I was maybe 10 or 11 when I first saw one of her specials on Comedy Central. And she did not hold back. She was herself. She is herself. She's a full-bodied version of herself. And look at how I turned out. I'm fine.

So I just feel like I wanna be myself. I don't wanna totally limit my art or my creativity thinking about, like, "Oh my gosh, is this gonna be too much for

someone?" I feel honored that people of any age would look to me and find more self-love, more self-acceptance, more comedy, more joy. More curiosity. So I think I wanna think about that because if I think about, like, "Oh my gosh, I'm a role model for a lot of young people," and even just success in general, if I thought about it too much, I would become really full of anxiety and unsure of what to do. And so I think in order for me to stay connected to myself and my own vision, I have to not think too much about the way that it's gonna be received.

CA: Do you have moments in your mind where you're like, "What would this have meant to little Jonathan growing up in Quincy, Illinois?"

JVN: Very much. And sometimes that's actually another one of those feelings where sometimes I think if I felt that feeling all the way, I know I'd just be in a corner crying because I can't believe that I've been able to do this with my life. But I do hope that other young people seeing me achieve what I've been able to achieve in my career

won't find it so shocking when they achieve their dreams. Because for me growing up, I felt like it was unheard of. I didn't think that I was ever gonna see someone like me be so successful and beloved and accepted and able to create their own projects. It really is such an honor. And I want other people, especially young people, to look at me and think that they can do it too.

CA: Is this your first season on "Queer Eye" identifying openly as nonbinary?

I came out about being nonbinary in 2019, before we filmed Season 5, but I don't know if me talking about it in that season made it to air.

CA: I wondered because you are fully yourself this season in a way that I hadn't really seen before. You're really embodying your whole self, even down to the fashion. Did you feel differently this season?

JVN: Yeah. I think it's just been such a fast four years, you know? From shooting Season 1 and 2 in Atlanta in 2017, which is when we actually shot that, and then Season 3 and 4, which



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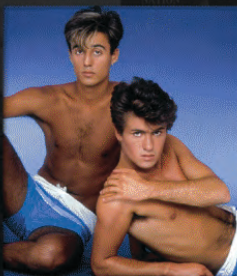
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we shot in 2018, really soon after the show had come out. Season 1 and 2 we shot together. Season 3 and 4, together. And then 5 was its own thing. And then 6 was its own thing. And so each one of those chunks I feel like I was in just a wholly different life situation every single time. Just neck-spraining differences in life situations. So I do think that the season between being married and ... definitely this was the first season where I was public about my HIV status. Just very public in all of the things. And so I think that that maybe did lead to just a more overall sense of ease.

CA: In “Getting Curious,” you’ve got some great guest stars, including Rachel Dratch, Lea DeLaria and Michelle Kwan. Who is on your dream guest star list for potential future episodes of the show?

JVN: I mean, once you do have

Michelle Kwan, I don't know where else you're gonna go from there. I kind of started with the most major one ever! But I mean, I feel like... is Adele ever available? Beyoncé? Michelle Obama, honey? Like, I'm shooting for the stars, but I don't know. Who knows?

CA: Oprah?

JVN Oh my god, Oprah. Aaah! I don't know if I could even have Oprah 'cause I think I would literally do that for the whole 22 minutes. Aah! Aaah!

CA: I'd watch it. I would.

JVN The title of that episode: “Can Jonathan Form Words Around Oprah?”

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and

Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.



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GRAB A BOOK

Unapologetic: An interview with gay writer Keith Butler

By Gregg Shapiro

Memoirs by LGBTQ+ authors continued to be more popular than ever with books by Mary Gauthier, Leslie Cohen, Lauren Hough, Michael Sayman, John Paul Brammer, and Precious Brady-Davis published in 2021, and memoirs by Harvey Fierstein, Alexandra Billings, David Pevsner, and Henry Hoke due out in 2022. *Little Black Gay Boy: An Unapologetic Memoir of Surviving, Coming Out, and Recovering* (Acta, 2021), by Keith Butler is another addition to the genre. Butler, who grew up in Virginia before relocating to Chicago where he currently resides, has written a no-holds-barred book about his personal struggles and his path to recovery. He was kind enough to answer a few questions about the book in late 2021.

Gregg Shapiro: Keith, why was now the time to write your memoir *Little Black Gay Boy*?

Keith Butler: I have been wanting to do this for so long but never thought I had a story to tell or that anyone would really care to hear it. Over the last five years, I have really done some intense work on myself and realized that my story could help others and it was time to get it out.

GS: You write with brutal honesty about your journey, ranging from childhood sexual abuse to coming out, to meth addiction, to recovery. Was there ever a point in the process of writing the book that you considered writing it as a novel instead of a memoir?

KB: No. I wanted people to know the truth about my life and by writing it as memoir they would hear my story in a compelling way because it really did

happen this way. As a novel, people that I speak of, my family, could deny the things that I talk about but as a memoir, it's my voice telling the truth about my

experiences, and no one can deny or downplay my experiences

GS: In the book, you do write about the abuse you suffered at the hands of some of your relatives, which made me wonder if you were aware of whether any of them have read the book, and, if so, what they think of it?

KB: There are a couple of relatives that will read the book and I am sure they will not be happy to hear me tell the truth of the abuse I suffered because of their actions. I am really not concerned or care what they think after they read it because it's the truth and maybe it's time they look at the part they played in my upbringing.

GS: Each chapter of the book concludes with a "For Little Black Boys Who Want to..." mantra

followed by advice that you offer the reader. Would it be fair to say that *Little Black Gay Boy* is as much a memoir as it is a self-help/advice book?

KB: My publisher wanted that piece added at the end of each chapter because even though the story, in some cases, could be universal, he wanted me to have a moment that I speak directly to "Little Black Gay Boys." So, I guess you could say that. I feel it's a brief conversation I get to have with them directly and a self-help book would have some numbered questions to reflect or write on that would be about them taking action to look at their lives.

GS: Who do you consider to





KB: E. Lynn Harris, Essex Hemphill, Anne Rice, and Armistead Maupin.

GS: Also included in your personal journey is your role in the 2001 movie *Kevin's Room*. With that in mind, if there was a movie version of *Little Black Gay Boy*, who would you like to see portray you?

KB: [Laughs] that question was also asked at my book launch. I am not sure who I would want to play me. I mean, we would have to look at (my life) both as a child and as an adult. No matter how far this book goes I have said to my Higher Power I just want to be part of the process. But since that night I have given it some thought and I would love to see Miles Brown from *Black-ish* to play me as a child and Wayne Brady as me as an adult because we are almost the exact age just off by a month and a few days. I have also been mistaken for him a few times in airports. But I don't see it [laughs].

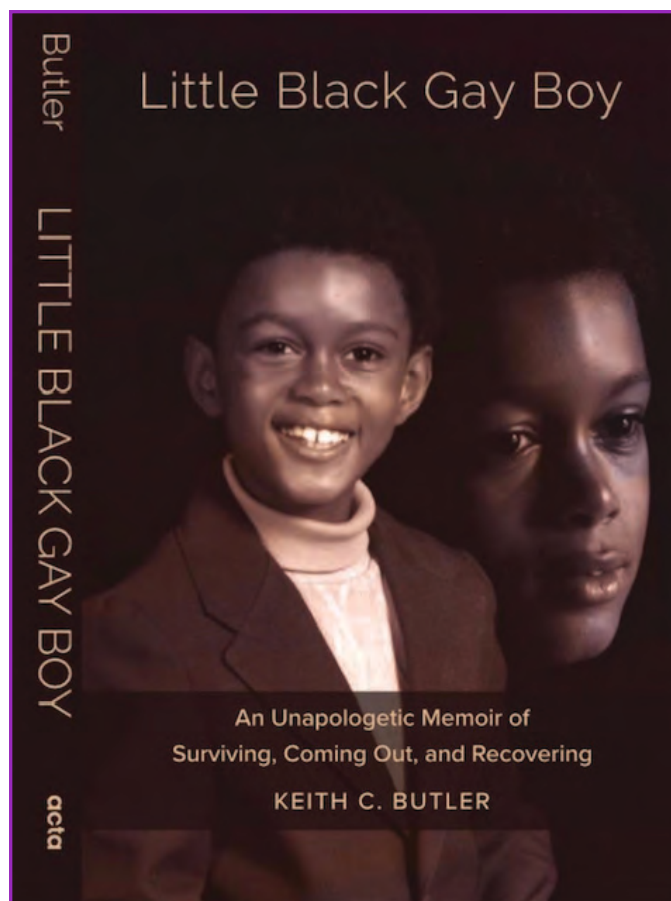
GS: Beginning with the chapter "Chicago, My Kind of Town" you write about your relationship with your adopted hometown, where, in 2017, you were inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame. What does such a distinction mean to you?

KB: When I was told I was being inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame I broke down crying because I was being recognized and put in a category with some amazing people that had done so much for our community. To be told, "We see the work you have done to elevate our community," meant my life and work really has meant something in the lives of others. I am so grateful that this is part of my legacy and it motivates me to keep doing the work.

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

KB: Yes. My next book will

actually be a self-help book with the target audience being people in recovery or figuring out how to recover from drug addiction. In sharing my stories of recovery, I only touched on a little in this book. I feel again I can help those struggling with addiction to know they are not alone and they don't have to go the journey alone.



GRAB JOSIE



Josie Totah Leads the Trans Charge on TV

The former Disney star talks LGBTQ+ relatability on ‘Saved by the Bell’ and what’s next for trans representation

By Chris Azzopardi

If you were expecting more of the same from “Saved by the Bell” when Peacock revived the series in 2020, you wouldn’t just be mistaken — you’d be pleasantly surprised.

A staple of TV for a generation of teens, the show, which originally ran from 1989 to 1993, has undergone a woke update that, this season, includes a powerful trans storyline.

Yep, in 2021, Bayside High now naturally reflects the world as we know it. And so there’s Lexi, the popular girl who just happens to be transgender. No big deal. At least that’s how the show treats it, and how former Disney star Josie Totah, the 20-year-old trans actor known for roles on “Glee,” the NBC comedy “Champions” and the Disney Channel series “Jessie,” prefers it.

Recently, Totah spoke about the

important message for trans allies in the show’s latest season of “Saved by the Bell” and how she thinks trans representation on TV has finally started to depict transgender people in a relatable and authentic way.

Chris Azzopardi: This is not the “Saved by the Bell” I grew up with when it comes to LGBTQ+ representation. What does it mean to you to be a major part of that kind of representation on this more evolved and more queer-inclusive revival that’s far less hetero-centric than the original?

Josie Totah: It’s awesome. Our show is so funny, and we get to tell so many cool stories that [weren’t] told in the original that are [relevant] to conversations that we’re having today, that represent people who’ve been

around since the inception of time. And it’s awesome. It’s such a privilege.

CA: Have you gone back and watched any original episodes of “Saved by the Bell”? I just wonder how you interpret the conversations that were being had then versus the conversations that are a part of this reimagining.

JT: Yeah, we went back and watched it as a cast. I mean, I had seen the show before just in its rerun phase in the early 2000s. I feel like that was a very big thing. I really based my character on the classic “Mean Girls” trope that we all know and love, and [I] flipped it on its head and gave her some surgery to make her very interesting and cool. Less stereotypically basic.

CA: Being a part of this show was so

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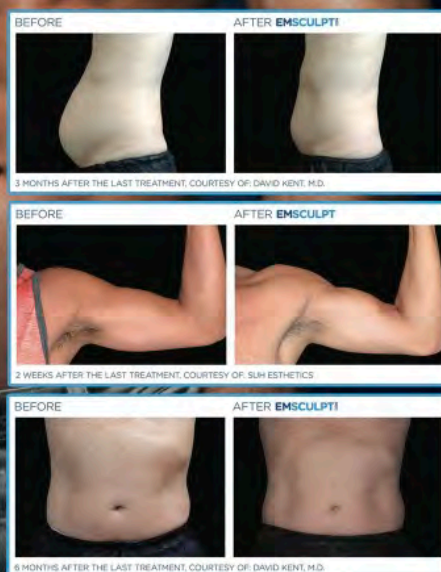
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important to you that you put school off to be a part of it. Can you explain why?

JT: Well, I put school off, and then school put me off because the pandemic happened. So I was ahead of the curve, but I'm still in college.

Somehow, I'm still graduating in May.

[Showrunner Tracey Wigfield] told me that she had an idea of a character that she wrote for me, and I fell in love. We met up at a coffee shop in downtown L.A., and she's just so cool. I love that woman so, so much, and that's sort of how it happened. It's one of the best opportunities I ever said yes to.

CA: As a producer, can you talk about what kind of input you're giving when it comes to LGBTQ+ representation on the show, specifically as it pertains to Lexi?

JT: I got to sit in the writers' room this season, which was so fun. I joined once or twice a week and sat in and had a great time. Just to get to be in the room with so many fantastic writers from so many different walks of life and getting to bring my own authentic journey and story to the show was awesome. And I think it [made] the story truer to real life and more entertaining because it was more unique, and there's relatability. So getting to that was awesome, but also getting to be a part of the other stories that we get to tell, like Aisha [played by Alycia Pascual-Peña]; her journey through her life, particularly in episode seven, was super fun. I remember being in the writers' room that week and getting to delve into that.

CA: Episode five blew my mind, especially as a fan of the original series. If I would've seen episode five when I was a kid, it would've changed my life. How did the idea to explore Lexi dealing with a really serious incident of transphobia



evolve?

JT: Tracey has been very cool from the beginning and she's just like, "We can talk about however much you wanna talk about when it comes to Lexi's gender identity." It was clear to us that we wanted to tell a story that sort of delved into her identity in a way that was more nuanced, that we hadn't been able to come to last season, and that also sort of progressed her arc as a character outside of her gender identity. I just had my second COVID vaccine at the time in March when we were pitching different things of how we would tell this story, and someone came up with an idea for Lexi to write a play that would solve transphobia, which I think is literally the funniest thing in the entire world. It just is a ridiculously beautiful episode in that way, and it's so funny.

CA: It deals with a really important societal issue — who carries the burden of having to make change for the trans community when transphobia happens? How did that resonate with you on a personal level?

JT: That's just a very real thing when it comes to the burdening of trauma, and it's crazy how people put the oppressed in charge of educating and solving things that everyone really should be working on. It was sick to get to tell it; it was very cool. And I'm glad that we show people probably how *not* to be an asshole when it comes to

things like that, and also how to be a better ally.

CA: By the end of the episode, Lexi realizes that she's got real support in her peers. But you also have Slater, played by Mario Lopez, on your side. You've got Jessie on your side. The original cast is advocating for you; they're allies of the community, clearly. What kind of conversations did you have with the original cast concerning that episode when it came to any kind of LGBTQ+ issues and transphobia?

JT: None of the original cast, but Belmont [Cameli, as Jamie Spano], Dexter [Darden as Devante Young] and Alycia are some of my best friends in the entire world, and I'm so honored, particularly with Bel and Dex and Mitch Hoog [as Mac Morris], just to have three guys who are straight and cis and really understand me and see me for my full self and not just one part of me. But also recognizing that life is different for me. It's so beautiful, and particularly with Bel and Dex just because they were in that episode the most. They're just the most supportive guys ever. And I felt so loved and so privileged. It brought me to tears. We shared a lot of love, and I really felt like they were carrying me on their shoulders that week.

CA: It's important for straight men to see that it's cool when you stand up for people in the queer community.





JT: Yeah, it's hot.

CA: What was your high school experience like?

JT: I mean, I went to a Catholic high school where I would call teachers by their first names and they'd be like, "Shut the hell up, sit down. My name is Sister Rebecca." And I'd be like, "Becca." I thought that I was really cool, but I wasn't. [I was] kind of just this kid who people knew from the Disney Channel and they're like, "That's that weirdo."

Yeah, I was crazy, but I met two of my best friends there, and we're still best friends to this day, and we survived. I think if you can survive Catholic high school with people, you're with them forever. But also it was an awesome Catholic high school, I will say. Very supportive of gender diversity and sexual orientation, and they were very cool. I was very, very privileged to not have a toxic experience.

CA: I grew up Catholic too, and you don't hear that very often about the Catholic experience.

JT: You really don't, but they always told me, "Boo boo, like, you might be weird, but God created you. So we blame him and not you. And you're meant to be who you're meant to be."

CA: There's obviously been so much talk over the years concerning trans

representation. How can we improve the representation of trans characters in TV and film? And how do you think Lexi advances trans representation in a positive way?

JT: First and foremost, it's played by me, an actual trans person, which obviously is unfortunately revolutionary since so many of our stories have been appropriated and have been told by people who have no idea what the trans experience is like and have surrounded it with [the] negativity of violence. Also, I'm a producer, which is sick. Like, that's amazing because I think it speaks to the authenticity in front of and behind the camera, which is very, very important. I'm not just being tokenized; I'm being listened to and I'm being valued, and it does change the show. It makes it better in my opinion, at least I'd hope, because it makes it more authentic. And I think that's sort of the goal, right? Not just placing people in these positions to sort of fill a diversity hire, but valuing their experience and capitalizing on their experience and their willingness to share for the benefit of the story, which is awesome. It makes our show so good.

CA: Like you mentioned, so many trans narratives are told through the lens of trans struggle.

JT: That's important, but it's also important to tell other stories too, because we're fully encompassing

human beings.

CA: Do you see a change in how Hollywood is representing trans people that isn't focused on trans struggle?

JT: I think we're turning a corner, but I wanna see a trans rom-com of a girl starring in her own movie and living her best life. I wanna see an undercover spy movie where a trans girl has to travel to Bulgaria and take down a drug heist. There are so many different realms that I wanna see and I'm going to do. And I'm so excited that I get to be young and able and afforded that opportunity to throw my hat in the ring.

I'm grateful that I'm living in this time, and I'm also excited to hopefully be able to tell other trans stories and other stories of people of color and people from different marginalized communities too, and highlighting their own journeys as well, which I think is very important.

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.



Photos By Anthony Meade

February 15, 2022

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GRAB A FILM



Photo Courtesy Netflix

‘The Power of the Dog’ Doesn’t Idealize Queerness and Is Better for It

The new Benedict Cumberbatch film is no ‘Brokeback Mountain’ repeat

By George Elkind

Growing acceptance has created a new suite of possibilities for queer storytelling in mainstream films. The sly, charged and freely oppositional work of the New Queer Cinema that dominated Hollywood in the late '80s and early '90s (itself influenced by gay creators like the multi-disciplinary David Wojnarowicz and Bavarian auteur Rainer Werner Fassbender) can often feel distant today.

Reflecting a conservative shift in Hollywood, works about queer people — and particularly cisgender gay males — have trended lately towards uplift. There's a desire, even a longing, for the gauzy, romantic, and most positive forms of depiction, and it's not so hard

to imagine why. These versions of queer life were long thought unimaginable. But that doesn't make them particularly real, either.

Forget queer identity posing any enduring problems or even concerns for movies' characters; regardless, often, of questions of genre, period or milieu, such matters have become politically and socially incidental. Whether through the long summer vacation in "Call Me By Your Name," ferris wheel kisses in "Love, Simon," or the picket-fenced form of gay family life presented in "Eternals," these stories serve as a for-some-welcome escape hatch from everyday life. Portraying queer folk as role models (or literal

superheroes) by celebrating monogamous, nurturing relationships with appeal across a range of audiences and tastes, these works suggest that actualizing acceptance should be easy — and why not? The queer people in them are so like everyone else that they might as well be straight.

But what about when everyone else isn't happy, and the world isn't so kind? This true-to-life, less utopic version of existence should sound more familiar. In writer-director Jane Campion's new adaptation of Thomas Savage's 1967 novel "The Power of the Dog," fantasy becomes reality for no one and honeymoons exist as brief stops at

scenic overlooks, or within the space of idling memories and daydreams.

The film follows a whole cast of characters, headlined by two unlike brothers, the Montana ranchers Phil and George Burbank (played by Benedict Cumberbatch and Jesse Plemons, respectively) who are unable to live in a state of ease. After George, the gentler of them, quietly marries Rose, a local innkeeper (sweetly played by Plemons' real-life wife Kirsten Dunst), he tries to integrate her with her gangly, effete and quite enigmatic son Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee) into their shared home. After marrying into the family, Rose — and later Peter, who's off to study medicine for much of the year — move out to the Burbanks' ranch, where they attempt to make a life together along with Phil and George.

Cumberbatch's Phil isn't the one married to Rose, but the two make a bitter match. Spitting vitriol at her and Peter, who he teases over his delicate craft projects, he labors to project a macho demeanor at every moment he can. Wearing spurs indoors, spurning baths and torching stacks of perfectly usable — and salable — cowhides, Phil's a man whose every breath taken in must be followed by an exhalation of spite.

But as the 1925-set film makes quite plain, there's an urgency — arguably a necessity — to at least a portion of Phil's viciously gendered performance. When Peter, as much a driving mystery as a viewer surrogate in the movie, finds some clues to Phil's secret queer identity, the pair form an improbable bond.

But "Brokeback Mountain" this is not. More a frontier psychodrama than



Photo Courtesy Netflix

an action-driven western with the kinds of shootouts or even fisticuffs one might expect, "Power of the Dog" makes its rugged environs an extension of the domestic, rendering it a story less about people adventuring out than working to live with themselves and each other at home. This struggle's not exclusive to its queer characters — everyone in it is connected by interlinked burdens. Refusing a fantasy space or the kind of martyr-victim roles that might prove gratifying — and familiar — to viewers from works like "Brokeback," Campion's visions of conflict here don't require or even allow for the sanctification of anyone.

At the same time, "Power" treats queer identity and desire as an identity and set of impulses that are irrepressible, offering a vision and sense of self that doesn't always sit

easily with one's immediate company or society at large. While "Brokeback Mountain" treated queer life as a kind of personal and social problem for those who lived it in its particular time and place, it also used "cowboy" as an identitarian counterweight, a way of assuring viewers that its men were "still men," presenting them as traditionally masculine so as to dramatize the absurdity of the world around them refusing to accept them.

Campion calls this sort of bluff, however; no matter what way Phil performs or strives, he's still caught in some way at the margins — if not by others than by a deep knowledge he holds about himself. Campion's idea of existential discomfort — or simply knowledge — of who you are isn't something to just honeymoon or fishing-trip away from (even when it could be attempted as in "Brokeback"), but it's not some cross born nobly either. Phil and Peter occupy the vast Burbank estate and could go off to anywhere on the Burbank tract, but what would it really matter? Culture and its scripts are things we carry with us.

Campion's dramatization of culture, identity and desire proves complicated. In "Power," as in life, queer personhood, like gendered roles and performance, are wrapped up in complex matrices of denial, egotism and self-mythologizing. Separation from the mainstream isn't easy or clean here, nor is tidy assimilation possible in any honest sense. What Campion's made here is a deeply critical work that, by disallowing saints and martyrs, manages to treat these conflicts — and identities — as messy in the ways they still so often are.



Photo Courtesy Netflix



Photos by Anthony Meade





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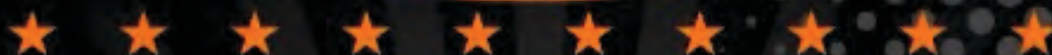
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VS



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DRAG RACE
SEASON 14
VIEWING PARTY



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7:30PM



VS



FRI 2/25
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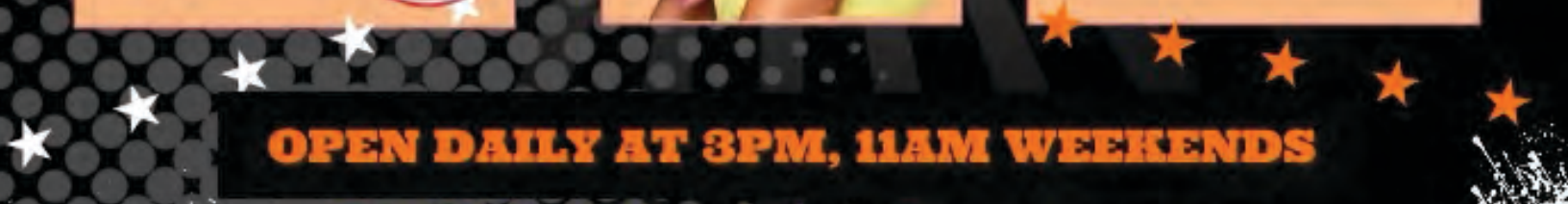


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Tuesday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$2 Tacos, ½ Off Bottles of Wine, \$5 Red or White Sangria, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: 8/10 TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$3 House Shots, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. 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). Touche: Hardcore Cruisin' Sponsor Leather 64Ten. No cell phones/Wifi.</p>
Wednesday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$4 Appetizers, \$7 Burgers, \$3 Domestic Drafts, \$5 Premium Drafts, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 Miller Lite Drafts, \$4 Stolis (All Flavors), \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am \$5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Taylor & Ariana 4th Wed of month – all 9pm-2am. Steamworks: Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. Touche: Jockstrap Night Sponsored by Full Kit Gear, Free Clothing check.2/16 FullMoon Party & Jockstrap night</p>
Thursday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. Houndstooth: \$2.50 Minis • \$3 College Beer, \$6 40'S, \$5 Absolut Bombs, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: RuPaul's Drag Race Season All Stars Viewing Party Doors Open 6:30pm, Bubble POP Hosted by Khloe Coulee 9pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 6 viewing party & Bogo Pizza 7pm, Buy One Pizza, Get One Pizza Half Off (Dine in Only), Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 You Call It's, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Chicago's RuPaul's Drag Race Viewing Party 7pm, Drag & Games Dance Party 9pm-2am Steamworks: Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. Touche: 11/25 Thanksgiving Open 8pm. Throwback Thursdays 70's-80's Music & Porn by Bijou Video.</p>

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Daily
Specials

Friday

@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. **Houndstooth:** \$6 Pulled Pork or Pulled Chicken Sandwich, \$6 Absolut Mules, \$12 Domestic Pitchers, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** 8/6 Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 6pm. \$5 drink specials.. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Tito's, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Shakers:** \$4 Domestic Bottles \$5 Well Mixed Drinks, \$10 Giant 23oz Long Islands in 22 flavors. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, T.G.I.F. Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. **CNYX Club Night.** 2/18 COWBOYROUNDUP&MR UNION SUIT CONTEST2/25 onyx ClubNight NIGHT

Saturday

@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. **Houndstooth:** Brunch 11am-3pm \$15 Bottomless Mimosas, \$6 Michelada's, \$2 Breakfast Sliders, \$5 Stadium Cups (ALL DAY), \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets.. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day Saturday 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **Touche:** 12/19 GEAR NIGHT EITH BLUF CHICAGO DRESS COODE IN CLUB ROOM BNC6PMCLUBROOM .BNC6PM. 2/26Mardi gras ripe party, dim lights hot go-go dudes

Sunday Funday

@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, Singsational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. **Houndstooth:** Brunch 11am-3pm \$15 Bottomless Mimosas, \$6 Michelada's, \$2 Breakfast Sliders, \$6 40'S (ALL DAY), \$12 Domestic Pitchers (ALL DAY), \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. **Hydrate:** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm \$8.95 Martinis . **Lark:** Free Flowing Brunch 11am-3pm. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$3 House Shots, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Frozens, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **Touche:** Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, Bears vs Ravens at Noon, Movie Night 7pm



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	Artist	Title
1	Love Harder x HUGEL x Tobtok	My Bed ft. RBVLN
2	Dyro & Conro	Memory Bank
3	Zack Martino ft. Tanya Lacey	Not Enough
4	Cheat Codes x Tinashe	Lean On Me (Michael Calfan Remix)
5	Dom Dolla	Pump The Brakes (Short Radio Edit)
6	MO	Live to Survive
7	Joel Corry x Raye x David Guetta	Bed
8	Shaun Frank & Takis ft. SHELLS	Don't Say I Love You
9	Joe Stone	Right Here
10	Allegra	Used To Miss You (R3HAB Remix)
11	Regard x Troye Sivan x Tate McRae	You (Radio Edit)
12	Sofia Carson	Fool's Gold (Tiesto 24 Karat Gold Edition)
13	Raye	Call On Me
14	Martin Garrix ft. Bono & The Edge	We Are The People
15	Sam Feldt & Sam Fischer	Pick Me Up
16	Rompasso & Leony	Love Me
17	Cuebrick	Love You (Original Mix)
18	Jes	Tight Wires
19	Disco Killerz & Holly T	Up to You
20	Eli & Fur X Disciples	The Pressure (Radio Mix)
21	Surf Mesa Featuring Bipolar Sunshine	Lose My Mind
22	ILLENIUM x Valerie Broussard & Nurko	Sideways (Quintino Remix)
23	Mike Williams & Felix Jaehn	Without You (Radio Mix)
24	Wrabel	Nothing But Love (GOLDHOUSE Remix)
25	Lost Frequencies	Rise
26	Matt Nash	Ready Or Not
27	Solomun	Tuk Tuk ft. ATNA
28	Zara Larsson	Right Here (ALOK Remix)
29	ARTY	One Night Away (JLV Radio Remix)
30	Bastiaa & DJ Shaan	A Little Too Much
31	Lucas Estrada x Matvey Emerson x James Carter	Never Leave You
32	Becky Hill & David Guetta	Remember
33	Henri PFR x CMC\$ ft. Laura White	Faith (Radio Edit)
34	DubVision x AMNL KNGDM	I Wanna Be There (Radio Edit)
35	Sigrid	Mirror (Paul Woolford Remix)
36	Anabel Englund x Yotto	Waiting For You
37	Danny Avila	Unlearn To Love Ft. Madugo
38	LODATO	Neon Lights
39	Becky Hill	Last Time
40	Galantis x David Guetta x Little Mix	Heartbreak Anthem



PhotosByAnthonyMeade



February 15, 2022

GRAB Magazine

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GRAB HOLLY

I Win the Nobel Prize

By Holly Maholm

It is the secret, unspoken dream of every author that he or she might win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Let me tell you how I won mine. Each year, the Nobel Prize Committee awards that prize to some deserving author, and they do not confine themselves to authors who write in English (or Norwegian, considering that the Committee is made up entirely of Norwegians). No. From year-to-year, they hopscotch around the globe, awarding the prize to authors who have written in languages which cannot be anything less than "Greek" to them. Recently, authors writing in Chinese, Japanese, Polish, Russian and Turkish have won the award. Thus we observe, the Committee has made an admirable (if disingenuous) effort to "shine a light" upon good writing - no matter what the language - and thereby give recognition to that nation's unique history, culture and traditions. But not if you're gay. There has never been an out, gay winner of this prize, despite the names that rush urgently to the tip of my tongue (thinking of you, Truman, and you, Willa). Which is odd, because even back when homosexuality was illegal, people

were well aware of gay authors of talent (smiling at you, Oscar). Nevertheless, the Committee has yet to recognize any publicly-acknowledged LGBT author with the award. Until today, that is. I walked in the door at Donut Time and saw Cindy sitting by herself in a booth. She was wearing elaborate, high-tech goggles, molded out of white plastic and secured with an elastic band around the back of her head. She was absorbed by what she was viewing and only reacted when I spoke. "Cindy, can I join you?" "Sure, grab a seat," she replied. She removed the goggles and smiled at me. "Wait till you see this fancy new gizmo I got!" she enthused. "You put it on, and there's a screen inside, where you can see - and play - a video game. There's a controller" (she held up a little gray game controller, attached to the goggles by a cord) "so I can play the game as if I were actually 'in the game,' not just watching it on a screen. "I bought a couple of the games they offer," she went on. "There's one where I'm a Navy Seal dropped behind enemy lines, and one where I'm a warrior with a sword, and have to fight my way through an army of orcs. There's plenty of games. "But you know me, Holly. I'm always thinking up new 'apps' where I can make

money. So, I'll tell you the big improvement I've made, but you have to keep quiet... until the IPO. "First," she began, "I realized I had to start with a background environment that could be easily modified. So nothing involving a battlefield or abandoned warehouse. Instead, I created a bare-bones framework onto which I can download a digital 'overlay' incorporating the location and characters I create." She took a sip of coffee, then went on. "Next, in order to provide that 'overlay,' I took a clip of one of my favorite movies - The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - and downloaded it to the game. I picked the final, climatic face-off. It's three minutes long and features Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach. And because it's a Virtual Reality game, I had to pick one of the

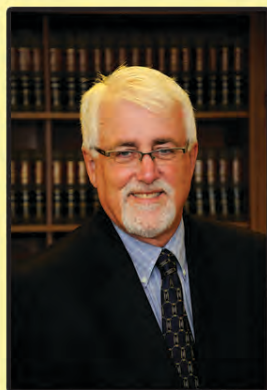


characters as my avatar. So, I picked Clint, 'cause he's the hero. "But that's not the best part!" she confided, excitedly. "I added one more feature: I hooked up the game to my iPhone, and I asked Siri to go to my Facebook page and download a bunch of photographs of my friends posted there. So check this out." Cindy helped me put on the goggles, and instantly I was there... at the climax of the movie. Looking at my two antagonists, I saw Siri had downloaded an image of Recon onto the character played by Lee Van Cleef, and (ironically) an image of Tuco (our friend, and Recon's fellow Outlaw) onto the character known as Tuco in the movie. I watched until the final gun battle - won by Cindy, of course! I was so excited by Cindy's newest VR 'app' that I promptly went on the internet and found video footage showing how previous Nobel Prize Winners have been honored by the Committee. Soon, I created a video - as seen in Cindy's app - of me winning the Nobel Prize! It starts with a late-night phone call notifying me of the award; then me flying to Stockholm where I attend the black-tie ball given for all the award-winners. It ends with the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony, where I give my acceptance speech to a crowd of my friends (downloaded from FB), I gratefully accepting the award on behalf of LGBT authors everywhere.

(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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Photos By Anthony Meade

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GRAB A GETAWAY



What's Old is New in Lulu: Your Guide to the Neighborhoods of Louisville, Kentucky

By Bill Malcolm

There are few places left in America that have a unique regional feel. Louisville, founded in 1778, is one of them. It is an amazing city of unique and independent neighborhoods.

There is so much to do: Walk through Old Louisville to enjoy the collection of old homes, shop in Lulu (the new urban hipster hood just east of downtown), enjoy the independent shops and restaurants (and new local hotel) in the Highlands along Bardstown Road, and experience 4th Street downtown.

The city is very gay-friendly and reportedly has not one but two Pride events each year.

Foodies will love the unique pan Southern cuisine – lots of fried chicken and bourbon to wash it down. Here is a run down of what to do in each of the many very unique (and tragically hip) neighborhoods:

The Highlands: Weird, Independent and Proud

This hip and swanky (and LGBTQ-friendly) neighborhood is full of unique local shops and restaurants. Bardstown Road is the main thoroughfare. To do:

Cherokee Park – This Olmstead designed park is a must with miles of hiking and scenery. Nearby is Taylor Park, another Olmstead treasure. Frederick Law Olmstead (of Central Park fame in New York) designed a system of parks and byways in Louisville.

Try the coffee at Heine Brothers, the local coffee chain.

The fabulous Carmichael's Books, one of the last great independent book stores left in the country is another Bardstown Road treasure.

New **Bellwether Hotel** in the Highlight and is located in a recycled police precinct headquarters and also telephone switching station. The is the first and only hotel in the Highlands. You can walk to three of the four LGBTQ bars and also enjoy the great

nearby restaurants. The Bellwether opened in September and is in two recycled old buildings: The local police station as well as the old telephone switching station. Enjoy free Netflix streaming in your room and complimentary Heine Brothers coffee. Book your stay at <http://www.thebellwetherhotel.com>. You won't need a car if you stay here since you can walk to all the neighborhood attractions.

Walk to the close together LGBTQ bars including Big Bar (1202 Bardstown Road) which features the best happy hour, Chill Bar (1117 Bardstown) which has karaoke and great music, and the Nowhere Bar (1133 Bardstown Road). They are all steps from each other on Bardstown Road.

Lulu

Unique shops in this new hipster hangout include include Blofish (gender neutral clothing) and Woman Owned Wallet as well as the Macaroon Bar for

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PARTY**

BEADS & BOOZE
DRAWING FOR TICKETS TO
TEATRO ZINZANNI



a cookie treat.

Enjoy an arepa (a Venezuelan pocket sandwich) at Senora Arepas. Next to it is LaBodeuita which features Cuban fare.

Angel's Envy Distillery is another must featuring artisan premium whiskey. They also give tours.

Butchertown

Shop at Butchertown Market which features local crafts, antiques, and home furnishings (\$1 mimosas).

Dance the night away at The Play Dance Bar is a Louisville staple and features three drag shows on Saturday nights plus a nightclub.

Tour or eat at Cooper and Kings, a brandy distillery. Yes, in addition to bourbon distilleries, they have a brandy distillery and rooftop bar and restaurant.

Old Louisville

A historic preservation district with a wide variety of building styles constructed between 1880 and 1905. One thousand four hundred old houses in 45 square blocks make it a treasure of American residential architecture. Book a tour at <http://www.louisvillehistorictours.com>

Logan Street Market is Louisville's public urban market and another hipster hangout full of unique shops.

Downtown

Enjoy a museum in a hotel at Museum 21c Hotel. Very LGBTQ friendly in this unique lodging experience. This arts oriented hotel is tops. (www.21CMuseumHotels.com)

I also stayed at the fabulous new Omni which has hints



of city history in this luxurious hotel.

Getting there

Just a five-hour drive from Chicago, I-65 is an option. You can also fly from Midway or O'Hare including on Southwest (Fares from \$59 one way).

Other tips

Lots of local fare including their own ginger ale, Ale8, which packs a punch and is a must. The Hot Brown sandwich (Mornay sauce over turkey on Texas Toast) is not for those on a diet. (Details and a recipe at <http://www.CulinaryLouisville.com>).

Did I mention the old fashioned and bourbon selections? I like Maker's Mark.

For more information

<http://www.GotoLouisville.com> has all you need to plan your trip. <http://www.LouisvillePride.com>

has the latest on the upcoming prides. LEO Weekly is the independent newspaper (leoweekly.com) with all the latest happenings. It stands for the Louisville Eccentric Observer.

You will be amazed at the local fare which makes a trip to Bourbon City a unique gay adventure.

Bill Malcolm is the nation's only LGBTQ+ syndicated value travel columnist. Residing in Indianapolis, he travels with a focus on the local and value orientation. Special thanks to GoToLouisville and the Bellwether Hotel for their hospitality and travel tips.





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MUSIC THEATER WORKS ANNOUNCES CAST FOR LA CAGE AUX FOLLES STARRING "RUPAUL DRAG RACE'S"

GINGER MINJ*, MARCH 10 - APRIL 3, 2022, AT THE NORTH SHORE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



Music Theater Works has announced the cast for its spring production of the Tony-Award winning *La Cage Aux Folles*, music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, book by Harvey Fierstein, directed by Producing Artistic Director Kyle Dougan and music directed by Kyra Leigh with choreography by Christopher Chase Carter+. *La Cage Aux Folles* performance schedule includes a preview performance Thursday, March 10 at 1 p.m.

The winner of six Tony Awards including Best Musical, Best Score, Best Book and Best Revival of a Musical, *La Cage Aux Folles* is a night full of belly-laughs. Based on the hit French farce that also inspired West End and international productions and Hollywood's "The Birdcage," this Broadway smash has a hilarious book by Harvey Fierstein (Torch Song Trilogy and Kinky Boots) and a score by the king of show tunes, Jerry Herman (Hello, Dolly! and Mame). With "RuPaul's Drag Race" headliner, Ginger Minj*, as "Albin" and costumes by "Project Runway" designer Justin LeBlanc+, The Music Theater Works rendition of this classic is guaranteed to be one of the most entertaining productions of the year. The theatre will be transformed into *La Cage's* elegant St. Tropez nightclub complete with an onstage bar and surprises at every turn. And when a non-traditional family's future in-laws come for a visit, *La Cage* shines the spotlight on family, love, commitment and drag as the truth comes out in the wildest of ways.

Tickets are currently available at [at MusicTheaterWorks.com](http://atMusicTheaterWorks.com).

**Hell in a Handbag Productions Presents
Hell in a Handbag Productions Presents
THE DRAG SEED**

By Artistic Director David Cerda Directed by Cheryl Snodgrass

February 24 – March 20, 2022



Hell in a Handbag Productions continues its 20th anniversary season with a revival of its popular comedy *The Drag Seed*, an unauthorized parody of the 1956 psychological horror-thriller film *The Bad Seed*. Written by Artistic Director David Cerda* and directed by Cheryl Snodgrass, *The Drag Seed* will play February 24 – March 20, 2022 at The Chopin Downstairs Theatre, 1543 W. Division St. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

Carson (**Patrick O'Keefe**) is a perfect little boy who likes to dress like the perfect little girl and they're deadly serious about crowns and pronouns. Carson's mother, Connie (Ed Jones), loves and accepts Carson but wishes Carson wasn't so competitive. Carson always gets what they want, and they really want to win the drag pageant at their very progressive school – The Josephine Baker Rainbow Academy for Gifted Students. When Carson loses to Summer Breeze, they vow to get that crown – one way or another... For tickets or additional information, visit handbagproductions.org.

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Proof of vaccination and masking required to attend

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www.handbagproductions.org

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GRAB A FILM

By Delven Shaw

Yeh Ballet is uplifting in many ways.



Based on the true story of a bedraggled dance teacher who spots extraordinary talent in two impoverished boys in a dance class in India. A short documentary in 2017 brought this story into focus, and the feature-length story is beautiful, informative, and [powerful].

Manish Chauhan (playing a character based on his life, here named Nishu) and **Amiruddin Shah** (here played by **Achintya Bose**, and called Asif) are the men who inspired the film, and they both continue to dance professionally.

Yehuda Maor, the dance teacher, is played by Julian Sands as an angry, broken-hearted artist. You may have seen this character before, but Sands makes it terrifying and heartbreaking.

We meet Nishu when he gains notoriety for his raw acrobatic dance on a television show, but his overbearing father does not support his dancing. Asif's brother drags him to dance class to head off his career as a petty criminal.

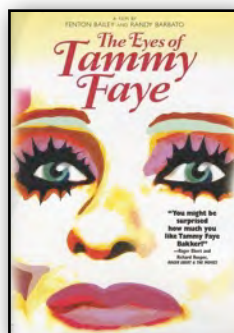
Both families and their friends' journey in supporting these artists is very gratifying. The fantastic scene in which Nishu dances for sick patients is devastating.

What separates **YEH BALLET** from other dance films like **NAVILLERA** (which I loved) and **TINY PRETTY THINGS** (which I did not love) is that the stars, when given a chance to show off, fly. The edits do not make them look like dancers. They are the real deal.

The cinematography is excellent, capturing the harsh separation of the poor neighborhoods from the high-rise culture surrounding them. Even the beautiful bridge in the opening sequence seems to go out of its way to avoid the poor district. But that is where the youth and spirit of the city explode.

Writer/director **Sooni Taraporevala** has done an excellent job of capturing the beauty of this poor neighborhood, the hardworking students in the school, and the allure of riches that beckons them to move away. Her excellent creative team delivers a powerful product that is full of joy.

THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE sparkle



Jessica Chastain delivers a marvelous performance in **THE EYES OF TAMMY FAYE**. She sounds terrific, looks good, and pulls all the right levers, from flirty to bright to over the top and vulnerable. The clever screenplay by **Abe Sylvia**, based on the documentary by **Fenton Bailey** and **Randy Barbato**, is directed with style and confidence by **Michael Showalter**. The film looks period-perfect and moves briskly from Tammy Faye's country upbringing to the horrors brought about by the marriage of television and evangelism.

But it is **Cherry Jones** whose powerful performance as Tammy's mother, Rachel, can not quite comprehend how the heights her daughter reaches are legal or moral. With echoes of **Mama Rose** and **Gypsy Rose Lee**, Jones's character is not afraid to question who is funding the over-the-top houses, pools, and clothing into which her daughter. The scene where Rachel is gifted a full-length coat should be studied in masterclasses for the specificity and contradictory emotions captured by Jones.

The admirable **Andrew Garfield** immerses himself in the complex role of Tammy's husband, Jim Bakker. But this is not his movie, and his big scenes seem stagey, and his transformation over the decades is not as startling as Chastain's. I was disheartened to learn that Jim Bakker is free from prison and back in the TV ministry.

When Tammy Faye returns to the stage, Showalter's brilliant mix of reality and fantasy come barreling home. I was horrified and crying at the same time.

Tammy Faye took many opportunities to bring LGBTQ people into her television ministry, and this film is wise to include those. Her addiction, make-up, and life that was full of impossible contradictions, of course, made her the blunt of SNL, drag performances, and other cruelties. But in Chastain's remarkable work, like Renée Zellweger's work in the great **JUDY** 2019, we see her heart and share her soul.

WEST SIDE STORY is a masterly reinvention of a masterpiece.



From the first notes of the overture, until the final frame of the credits, **Steven Spielberg**'s remake of the classic **WEST SIDE STORY** is an amazing achievement.

Screenwriter **Tony Kushner** elevates the classic source material of the Broadway version by giving greater depths to characters, inciting their passions to even greater heights. Critics may discuss some changes for years - making Anybodys a trans character instead of a tomboy and changing the male character of Doc to his widow played by **Rita Moreno** - probably the most notable examples. But don't any negatives keep you away. The film looks spectacular, and the powerhouse cast delivers the great score with fever and panache.

If you are new to **West Side Story**, suffice it to say that theater legends **Leonard Bernstein** (music), **Stephen Sondheim** (lyrics), **Arthur Laurents** (book) and **Jerome Robbins** (original direction and choreography) created a thrilling new version of **Romeo and Juliet** with feuding gangs replacing the Capulets and Montagues of Shakespeare's original. It is biting, romantic, and bitter but much loved for its spectacular score and Robbins' brilliant movement.

But in Spielberg's hands, it is fresh, funny, and given greater historical context. It will rank as one of his finest achievements. Rachel Zegler makes an award-winning caliber film debut as Maria. She is honest, sings beautifully, and glows with emotion. Ansel Elgort makes a fine Tony, and he sings, dances, and fights with conviction. **Ariana DeBose** plays Anita, the role originally created by **Moreno** in the original version, and she puts her powerful stamp all over it. **David Alveraz** is outstanding as Bernardo, who is now a professional boxer in Kushner's screenplay. Standouts in the large gangs are **Mike Faist** as Riff, **Josh Andrés Rivera** as Chino, and **Iris Menas** as Anybodys. The much-loved **Mareno** is perfectly pitched as the sorrowful survivor who has watched kids become tyrants.

The credits reveal that 15,000 people worked on the film, and the work of everyone of them should be applauded. Each frame has a zillion small details that fascinate.

The achievements I most appreciated were **Justin Peck**'s choreography, which honors the original material while giving it a daring contemporary feel. Director of photography **Janusz Kaminski** does magnificent work, without employing any obvious tricks. Production designers **Adam Stockhausen** and the five art directors make

There are a lot of Queer Culture Available Screening right now. Check out the 2 minute reviews at Delvanshaw.com for more!



SIDETRACK®

Photos By Anthony Meade



HUD AWARDS \$41 MILLION IN HOPWA GRANTS TO PROVIDE HOUSING TO LOW-INCOME PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV AND THEIR FAMILIES



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of HIV/AIDS Housing today announced it will award \$41 million in Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) competitive grants to 20 local governments and non-profit organizations through the HOPWA: Housing as an Intervention to Fight AIDS funding opportunity.

"The importance of affordable housing and access to inclusive, non-discriminatory supportive services for low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS cannot be understated," said Secretary **Marcia L. Fudge**. "Housing is a powerful structural intervention in ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic and this funding will provide grantees and their partners the opportunity to make a real impact in their communities."

In April, HUD announced the HOPWA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which allowed applicants to submit proposals aimed at creating and implementing new projects that align with initiatives to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to elevate housing as an effective structural intervention in ending the epidemic.

The HOPWA grants are a part of HUD's mission to providing access to high-quality and culturally competent services, including housing and supportive services that are non-stigmatizing, non-discriminatory, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Housing instability has been a major issue facing many persons living with HIV since the beginning of the epidemic.

Approximately half of all persons living with HIV in the U.S. will experience homelessness or housing instability at some point following their diagnosis. Economic disadvantages, episodes of poor health, and co-occurring health diagnoses make it difficult for many persons living with HIV to secure or maintain housing. Additionally, HIV/AIDS-related stigma, discrimination and systemic racism contribute to differences in access to housing and lead to ongoing disparities among racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+ communities.

The projects awarded today show exemplary and innovative qualities, including community-level coordination, data collection with emphasis on stable housing and positive health outcomes, culturally competent approaches to providing housing and services, and a systemic approach to advance equity in underserved communities that can serve as a national place-based model.

The awardees of the HOPWA grants will receive a one-time, non-renewable grant to fund housing assistance and supportive services for eligible beneficiaries, coordination and planning activities, and grants management and administration.

AFC (AIDS Foundation of Chicago) will receive \$2,250,000 to build upon its success of providing housing as healthcare especially through the Center for Housing and Health (CHH)—a supporting organization of AFC. To-date: CHH and AFC have housed 285 households in 2021 (for comparison, the organizations housed 133 households combined in 2019-2020) through its Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) program which aims to break the cycle of chronic homelessness and crises among the city's most vulnerable residents.

- In total, 395 households are currently housed. CHH and AFC anticipate having at least 425 housed by December 31.
- In addition to the 395 housed, there are an additional 140 household members (mostly minors under 18).
- Flexible Housing Pool's retention rates: 99.5% of households remain in housing at the 6-month point, 96.6% of households remain in housing at the 12-month point

For more information on AFC visit <https://www.aidschicago.org/>

LEADING GAY PORN AWARDS HEAD TO SPAIN IN 2022



Europe's leading gay porn awards are heading for Spain in 2022. Torremolinos will be welcoming the gay community from across Europe to the Hotel Ritual in April for a three-day celebration of the best of the gay porn world has to offer.

The 2022 European Grabby Awards kick-off on the 22nd April for 72 hours of celebration among the leading lights of the gay porn world, including some of the industry's most recognised and admired faces. A host of Pornstars, Directors, Fan Site Performers and Industry Professionals will be mixing with gay porn fans during the awards which are sponsored in 2022 by one of the porn world's premier websites: Just for Fans.

"We are excited to carry on our long-standing support of the Grabby Awards, both in the US and in Europe. Giving back to our community is a high priority at JFF, and our Presenting Sponsorships of both shows are just another way we support the LGBT community. We are gay-owned and operated, and do our best to provide a safe space for our LGBT performers of all types and fetishes." - **Dominic Ford** CEO - Just For Fans

The GRABBY Europe is the place to be seen for those in the Gay Adult

Industry, with a gala dinner, pool party, awards evening and nightclub after party. As 2021 comes to an end more than 50% of the rooms are already booked for the event and demand is bound to be even greater in the new year.

The 2022 Grabby Awards has always been different and by making it a three-day event in a sun-soaked Spanish resort, this is the most sought after ticket in Europe for fans of gay porn. Demand for tickets is heating up and already a host of leading gay porn studios - Kristen Bjorn, Bravo Fucker, BoyNapped, Lust For Boys, Lucas Entertainment, Macho Factory and Blake Mason - have booked their places for the event.

The official lube sponsor for the event is Swiss Navy, who will be making everything run smoothly, and they are joined as sponsors by global recruitment agency Apply To Model, world-renowned toy manufacturer Mr Hankey's Toys, Fetish focused dating platform Altside App, International Affiliate Managers Stunner Media, French-based porn site Wrestlingmale, European Twink porn site Lust for Boys, online DVD retailer Twink Cinema and one of Europe's oldest porn Twink porn brands Euro Boy XXX.

One of the most important elements of the Grabby Awards both in Europe and the USA has been the special hosts for the evening. The 2022 hosts are currently being lined up and they will be announced in January along with regular updates about our favourite other Pornstars being added to the guest list.

The organisers are incredibly pleased to announce that many of the 2021 winners have confirmed their attendance, including Allen King, Marc McAulay, Jafar, Viktor Rom, Pablo y Sebas, the gang from British porn studio Hung Young Brit, Just For Fans CEO Dominic Ford, Drew Dixon, Callum & Cole and Paul Stag.

Benjamin Willis, show-runner for GRABBY Europe believes the 2022 Grabby Awards will set new standards for gay porn awards.

"The world has changed in the past two years and we took the decision to splash out on a three-day extravaganza in 2022 to include not only the leading players in the gay porn world but also the fans who will have the opportunity to meet and mingle with their favourite Pornstars. It will be much more than just an amazing awards ceremony, it will be a non-stop 72-hour gay porn celebration and a lot more besides!" - Benjamin Willis

The nominations for the European Grabby Awards will begin on January 7th with the US award nominations coming a month later. The American Grabbys will be held Saturday May 29th in Chicago.

Full details of the event and more information can be found at <http://www.GrabbyAwards.com>

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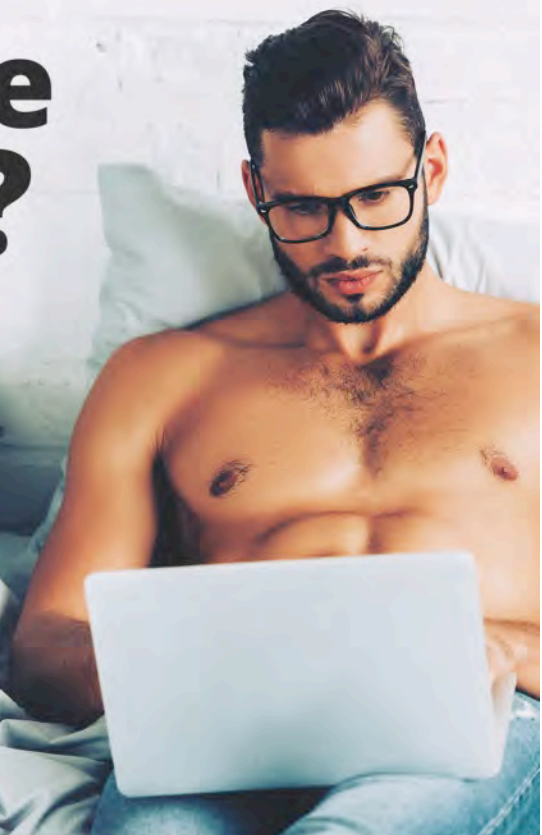
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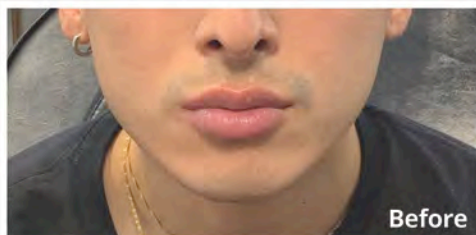
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Dr. Jessie Cheung is a board-certified, fellowship trained dermatologist with practices in Chicago, Illinois, and New York City. Her focus is on cosmetics, anti-aging and regenerative medicine, hormone replacement therapy, and sexual health. Nurse JuanCarlos sees clients at the Chicago location.

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