

MARCH 29, 2022 • VOL. XIII • ISSUE #5

# GRAB MAGAZINE

CHICAGO'S BIWEEKLY LGBTQ PUBLICATION

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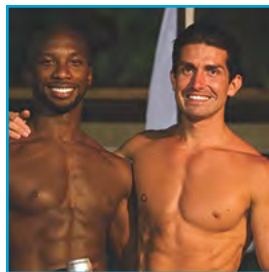
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**GRAB MAGAZINE**  
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**GRAB** MAGAZINE  
CHICAGO'S BIWEEKLY LGBTQ PUBLICATION

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908-232-2021

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1961 - 2019

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# GRAB A TICKET



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The main dance floor will feature International DJ brothers, Oscar and Edgar Velazquez from Mexico. They have been a fan favorite and were last seen at OMW's 2019 main pool party.

Not to be outdone, Barry Huffine will command the dance area at Bear Lagoon.

Whatever beats you are looking for, you can find them at Riptide.

Also returning to Riptide this year will be TRANS Beach. Bliss Health sponsors the only area of its type at a main event where the trans community can gather and hangout or use it as their home base for the night. Saturday night's Main Event continues with the Pride Cup inspired sports theme with RED Vol. V: Varsity at Disney Spring's House of Blues. Get on your favorite RED sports gear and join International DJ/Producer **Paulo** as we dance the night away. RED always features our pop-up professional dance numbers headlined by RuPaul's own **Bosco**. You DO NOT want to miss this one! BACK by popular demand, Sunday's close out Main Event will inspire your creativity with WIG featuring International DJ/Producer Twisted Dee. Be prepared to get your best WIG-ON and enjoy a night of performances by RuPaul's best; **Angeria Paris Van Michaels**, **Phoenix**, and RuPaul's Drag Race All stars winner of the fourth season, **Trinity "The Tuck" Taylor**. You

will be blown away by the fun-filled music and performances at WIG.

The weekend is filled with unbelievable sights and sounds. The SOLD OUT Sheraton Lake Buena Vista is home to the weekend Therapy Pool Parties and the Cadabra Afterhours. You can book rooms now at the Fairfield Marriott which is located just 25 steps from the Sheraton. All rooms include two weekend pool party passes— a value of \$210.

The weekend kicks off with Friday's opening Therapy Pool Party anchored by DJ's Joe Ross and **Edil Hernandez**. The Gay Biz Expo opens on Friday, too, and you can find great swimwear for the weekend at Mojo Manor after hours wear at TropiXX. Saturday's Therapy Pool Party features DJ **Cindel** and DJ **Sinna-G**.

The theme Saturday is Pep Rally celebrating the launch of The Pride Cup sporting tournament during Red Shirt Pride Days Weekend. Be prepared for



some special surprises.

Sunday's final Therapy Pool Party kick off with DJ **Scott Robert** followed by headliner DJ **Deanne**.

Friday's Cadabra is FANTASY where DJ **Nina Flowers** will take you on a magical journey with deep, sexy beats. Opening set by DJ **Obra Primitiva**.

Cadabra's Saturday night follows the sports theme where DJ/ Producer

Abel will welcome you to *LOCKER ROOM*. Get your nighttime gear ready for the locker room, where it will be down and dirty.

The final Cadabra Afterhours will bring out the DADDY in you when DJ **Alex Ramos** will drive home his sexy vibes and close out the weekend.

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**March 29, 2022**

**GRAB Magazine 7**



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# GRAB JOHN



Photo Courtesy Peacock

## Power, Putin and, Yes, the Tiger King John Cameron Mitchell on what we can learn about abusing authority from Joe Exotic

By Chris Azzopardi

What could Joe “Tiger King” Exotic and fictional genderqueer arthouse punk-rocker Hedwig Robinson possibly have in common? John Cameron Mitchell.

And so, the Farrah Fawcett wig comes off the 58-year-old actor who created Hedwig and brought her Off-Broadway in 1998, before “Hedwig and the Angry Inch” became a cult indie film three years later, in 2001. Instead, to portray the wildly controversial and buzzy gay subject of the Netflix docuseries “Tiger King” for the new Peacock series “Joe vs. Carole,” Mitchell’s rocking a “Bring Me Some Water”-era Melissa Etheridge mullet.

In this eight-episode dramatization of Exotic’s ludicrous run as the Oklahoma zookeeper infamous for his cruel treatment of animals and his plot to kill animal rights activist Carole Baskin (played here by Kate McKinnon), Mitchell slips out of Hedwig’s heels and into Joe’s cowboy

boots. (Exotic is currently serving a 21-year prison sentencing for hiring two men to kill Baskin.) The purely scandalous story told in the Netflix series is still scandalous — how could it not be? — but with a humanizing bent to it. You might even find yourself liking the guy. Which, as we’ve seen with the Trumps and Putins of the world, is a slippery and dangerous slope.

From his apartment in New York, Mitchell, who recently came out as non-binary, spoke about why Joe Exotic is “the real Trump,” a podcast he’s working on that takes on cancel culture, and how this generation’s wokeisms are inadvertently working against the very allies they seek.

**CA:I've followed your career for a long time, and being this indie art guy, a lead role in a Peacock series must feel like a big moment.**

**John Cameron Mitchell:** I’m old enough to know that it comes and goes. I was able to buy a house for the first time. I’ve always kept my overhead low. And I was like, well, I’m getting older. And so this came along and it was a dream job. I loved everybody. I had a great time. They took my input. Kate’s amazing. Etan [Frankel], the showrunner, is amazing. And we shot in Australia, which was very fun and comfortable at the time. I had more fun acting in this on screen than in Hedwig because I had too much responsibility in Hedwig.

**CA:Wait, so “Joe vs. Carole” allowed you to buy the house?**

**JCM:**Yes. It’s called money, baby. It’s a mainstream thing. I’m considering another job right now, whether I want to commit to a multiyear thing, but we’ll see. Nice to have options. I’m working on another fictional podcast, which is



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very fun. This one's more zany and of-the-moment. Kind of on the subject of cancellation. It's time to bring our wisdom and humor to bear on a somewhat humorless subject. And I'm also working on a TV series. Pitching a musical TV series. And continuing touring here and there with my concerts.

**CA:**With "Joe vs. Carole," I think it's important to acknowledge that you and Kate, two queer icons, are at the center of this story. There's something very special about that for me.

**JCNM:**I wish we had more to do because we really hit it off and I'm writing her something now I hope she'll do. Kate and I both obviously have strong opinions about our characters and about humor and about how the characters should be played. Because we're not really doing the real people; we're doing an interpretation of them. She's much funnier than the real Carole. I'm adding my own things to it. It's maybe 50 percent the real people and 50 percent what we're bringing to it. Because we're not doing a "Saturday Night Live" sketch. We're not doing a karaoke version. We're wanting to have a full emotional experience. And we're guessing, also, what these characters might be like when they're not on camera. And that's a wonderful thing. We had enough freedom and Etan, the showrunner, was open to that. He cast two queer people in a kind of queer story. And when you see it, it actually feels very queer. The way it's shot, even. It's very artificial with hopefully an emotional center. It feels like it's, perhaps, in that Hedwig model, where you're not stinting on the humor and the camp, but we're also honoring the people as real people who've been through shit.

**CA:**Did you recognize that the series'

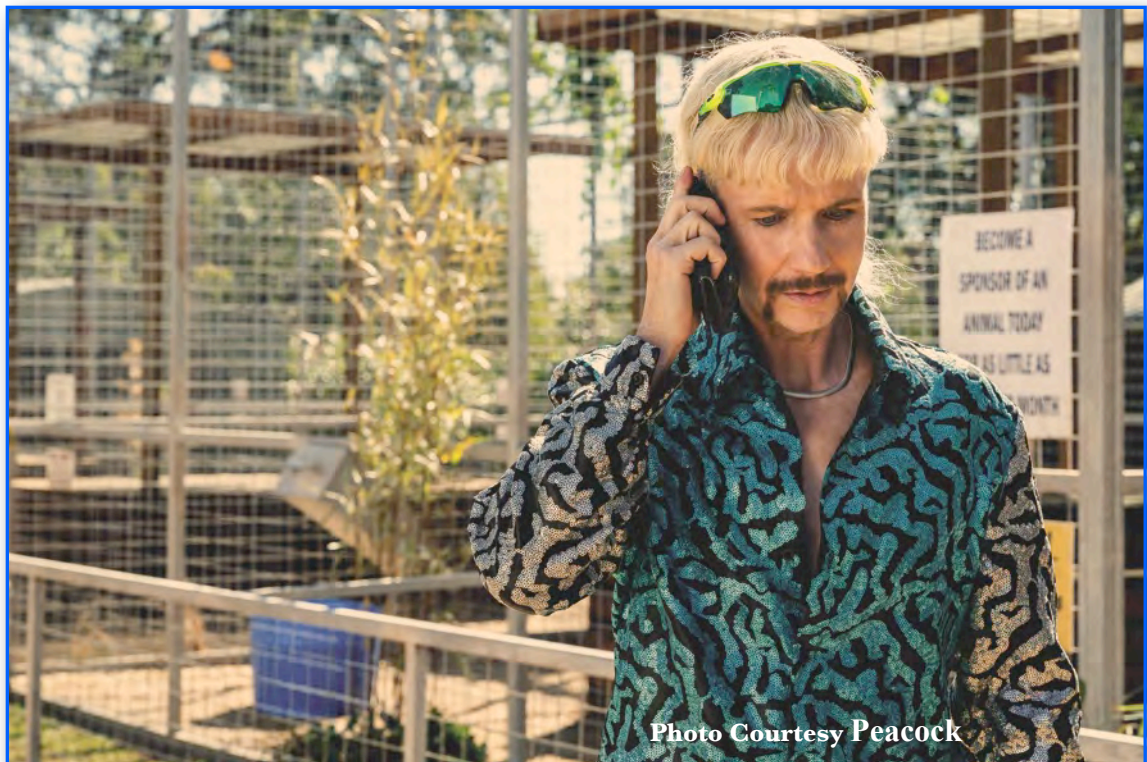


Photo Courtesy Peacock

queerness would extend to its direction, as well, before you signed on?

**JCM:**

I didn't really know about the way it was shooting. Justin Tipping, one of the directors, came up with the way it's shot. It has certain homages to the Coen brothers, to Danny Boyle, to Hedwig even. It's highly artificial until it gets real. And that's how their lives seem. They're sui generis people. They came from trauma, but they triumphed and created their own kingdoms. But then got corrupted by that power, I think. Joe and Carole could have been buddies. Kate and I even had an improv where we just started making out in a dream sequence. It was improvised. They didn't keep it in and they won't let me put it on my Instagram because a lesbian's kissing a gay man and that's wrong. Seems right to me.

**CA:**Seems very right to me.

**JCM:**Yes. Well, I'll just have to make it happen in another project.

**CA:**The one that you're writing for Kate?

**JCM:**That's for a podcast. We'll still kiss on the podcast.

**CA:**I didn't realize that "Joe vs. Carole" was going to humanize these characters in the way that it has. And there's so much about Joe

that we learned from the series that I didn't from the docuseries

**JCM:**Because you know, he's larger than life and, to America, he's a kind of "Duck Dynasty"-meets-"Real Housewives" [personality]. He's not a real person. He's a paper tiger that's entertaining and maybe not necessarily empathetic. I actually think when you watch him, he's so eager to please that you want to hug him and take the gun out of his holster and throw it in the river. And Carole presented a more controlled facade, in a kind of Hillary Clinton way. Which turned people against her, partly because of misogyny. But that's her defense. And that was Hillary's defense — to hold it together.

Joe screams about being tough, but you can tell [he] isn't. He's a megalomaniac, but he's not exactly tough. It's like Trump. If you keep saying you're the best, you know there's a hole in your soul if you have to keep reminding yourself. We all know the people who don't mention it are the strong ones.

**CA:**So then what do these people do? They exert their power, they become bullies.

**JCM:**They still do. And they can abuse it. Because they have to prop themselves up. That's what Putin is in a more calculated way. Trump is too inept to be a Putin. But he still engenders

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popularity amongst people who love a dictator, who want a daddy, and they're willing to ignore the facts because they think he's authentic. I don't know how someone who's a Thanksgiving Day balloon can appear authentic. And a man of the people when he was born with a silver spoon up his ass. And Joe is the real Trump. He's from the dirt. He made himself. Nobody handed him millions.

Though, he did build the zoo with his brother's insurance. And he became a very abusive person, but he's also a human being.

**CAIt dawned on me while watching this that you were born in Texas and raised in Kansas. How did your own origin story help you understand Joe when it came to an understanding of being gay in the South?**

**JCM:**It was not exactly the South. I would call it more rural America. Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas are kind of this lower Midwest thing that's different from the South. East Texas is more Southern. I'm from west Texas, which is more cowboy than Southern gentility. But we did live an hour from where his zoo was before the zoo in Fort Sill. And Saff [Saffery], the trans man whose arm is eaten off [by a tiger], is stationed there, actually.

So I'm conversing with my old friends from Kansas, high school friends, and they're all like, "Johnny, you got it, you got the accent," and I'm like, "I know; I grew up with all you all." And so that makes me feel good that they bought it. Because I hadn't been there in a while. But when I go back I feel that it's in my bones the way I do when I'm in Scotland too. My mother's Scottish, my dad's American. And I've moved around a lot, and I had to feel comfortable in different places. Changed my accent. That's why I became an actor. But I like the "say a few things in a minimal way, kind of Midwestern" thing. Texan is more loquacious. But Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri — that's all like, just say what you mean, try to mean it, say it in a few words. So there's a warmth and not getting carried away with things. Which I love about it.

And I think that's probably why Joe didn't move. Another queer person would go to the big city. I mean, he went to Dallas for a bit, but it [wasn't] exactly the same as New York or California at that time. So queer people at that time had three options. You either keep your head down and stay in



Photo Courtesy Peacock

your small community and become the hairdresser or the lesbian gym coach and just keep it quiet and have your wife or husband and maybe just shut up and help people out. That's a valid way of living. Or you leave and go to the big city and find your queer community. Or you do what Joe did, which was make a community. Build a fortress in the rural area called a zoo or a pet shop or a drag parlor. And I identify with that because, though I did leave, I create my communities. My temporary creative communities with

movies and shows and podcasts and the unwanted animals, the misfits with skills, come there and have a good time. But I know that it will end at some point before the infighting can begin, unlike the zoo. So I love a temporary community.

**CA:And he just dragged that on for too long.**

**JCM:**And when you have ex-cons and rehab folks and you're not paying them well, it's going to end in tears. If you seek out lovers who are lost



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themselves, and there's drugs involved, you know there's going to be trouble. I feel like his first relationship was the most stable. Even though I think his husband had a drug problem and died of AIDS, that was [his] most healthy relationship. He was grounding for Joe and he had as much power as Joe. Later, he sought out people that he could Lord over, but save as well. There's a thin line between savior and cult leader.

**CA:** I was thinking about the physicality of Joe, because there's a lot going on here. And none of it is really you. And that includes the wig, the facial hair, of which you have none, the jewelry, the tats and the shiny tiger print shirts. What piece really helped you transform into Joe?

**JCM:** A cowboy boot with a heel gives you something, a way of walking. All of it together felt like drag, felt like armor. So when I get into the wig and the makeup and the costumes, it's the same as Hedwig. And in fact, the characters have a lot in common. They're both misfits who create their own world to survive it and lash out at people because of their early trauma. Lord over people. Hedwig breaks that cycle. Joe doesn't.

**CA:** watching you I was like, "Oh yeah, this is like dressing up as Hedwig."

**JCM:** I felt like a drag king. I felt like a lesbian identified gay man. The Melissa Etheridge mullet and all.

**SCA:** Switching gears, let's talk about "Shortbus," your 2006 film that has been remastered in 4K and is currently screening across the U.S. before its Blu-ray and streaming release later this year. How do you think "Shortbus" plays to younger



Photo Courtesy Peacock

generations who are seeing it for the first time?

**JCM:** The screenings I've been to with people who remember it and people who it's new to — young people — is interesting. The older people who saw it in their 20s and 30s were like, "Gosh, that sex is like whatever now, but it's the deeper stuff that really gets me now." And the young people are like, "People have sex like that?" They're all like, "Is there a consent issue?" They're looking for something un-PC about it and they can't quite figure out what it is.

They love it. But they're being taught lately they have to find trouble with most things. One of them who loved the film said, "What would you say if someone" — a very journalist way of saying what they're thinking, "said, 'Is it your right to tell the story of an Asian woman who can't have an orgasm?'" And I said, "Well, to that person, whoever said that, which is not you, I would say, it is my story. We developed this together." There's elements of me, and I'm a Toni Morrison fan. When Toni's students were like, "I'm going to write about my going to Europe," she was like, "You will not. You will write about something you don't know anything about. You, little Black girl, are going to write about that white frat boy in Houston. And you're going to find out what that world is and you're going to enter it." And

that is the beginning of empathy. There's no other purpose for fiction.

If you keep splitting those hairs looking for trouble, you stop the organ called empathy. You clog it with unnecessary wokeisms that have good intentions. They cloud the mind, and they stop you from feeling. And they do Trump's work, and you start lashing out at your natural friends and allies. That's what he wants us to do, kill each other so he can take over.

**CA:** That seems like your jumping off point for the podcast you're working on.

**JCM:** Exactly. So when someone said that, "Have you considered remaking 'Shortbus' with a more diverse cast?" I'm like, "Why not talk to that other woman who said it's not my story to tell?" We made this film with the very few handful of people who were willing to go into that sexual realm. And I wanted it to be as diverse as possible. But I also got who I got and I was very happy with them. I couldn't find a lesbian couple, for example, who wanted to do it. So I recreated it. And I work with people who are in effect playing versions of themselves. "Shortbus" is as authentic as anything I've ever made in terms of the reality of these characters, the reality of the setting, the reality of the extras. No one had a problem on that film. Whereas today I don't think it could be made because of the panic

about sex and representation and everything else.

**CA:** I wondered about the sex in particular, because I know it's not simulated, but we have shows like "Euphoria" where we're seeing a lot more frank sex in content.

**JCM:** It's still grim, though. God. It's still depressing sex. Depression porn.

**CA:** "Shortbus" was not depressing sex. I remember feeling sexually empowered by watching it.

**JCM:** Good. God knows there are very creative people in the world. I think they're being clogged. A lot of people turn to me, my young friends, and say, "How do I get rid of that feeling?" Because they know that my work embodies following your impulses in a disciplined way and not being afraid of not fitting in, or being famous, or being rich. There was something called art for art's sake. That would be my drag king name — Art for Art's Sake. May be even better than Hell of a Bottom Carter.

You have to play. This is your time to play. Now that COVID is over, it's your time to travel to get out of this hamster wheel of American social media. Go to Latin America, go

somewhere you've never been and find out that other people are living in different ways. We're shocked by what's happening in Ukraine. I think what's happening there is a fucking a tragedy and a crime. But at least it's reminding people that we're human.

*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 LAUREN

## House of love: An interview with lesbian author Lauren McBrayer

By GreggShapiro

We're only a few months into the year and 2022 is already proving to be one of the queerest ever in terms of literature, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry titles. If it's not already on your reading list, by all means, add lesbian writer Lauren McBrayer's debut novel *Like a House on Fire* (Putnam, 2022). Set in the gay mecca of San Francisco, *Like a House on Fire* seemingly begins as straight as can be. Merit and her husband Cory are the parents of two young sons. Itching to get back to the working world, painter-turned-architect Merit takes a job at a respected firm run by exotic Dane Jane. They hit it off instantly and before you know it, Merit and Jane's working relationship becomes a friendship, and then something much more. McBrayer deftly handles the subject matter and readers are sure to find themselves rooting for the main characters as they embark on their potentially treacherous journey. McBrayer was generous enough to answer a few questions in advance of the publication of the novel.

**GreggShapiro:** Lauren, I'd like to begin by thanking you for opening your debut novel *Like a House on Fire* with an epigraph by lesbian poet Mary Oliver. Please say something about what Oliver means to you.

**Lauren McBrayer:** Oliver means everything to me. Her poetry alone has been such an influence in my life in the way it so beautifully integrates the sacred and the ordinary. With precision, curiosity, and humility, Oliver captures the singular experience of being both a body and a soul moving through time and space. And then there's her personal life. Oliver's forty-year relationship with Molly Malone Cook, which, by Oliver's account, started with a love-at-first-sight moment and grew into something strong and true and utterly unshakable, resonates so deeply with me. Merit and Jane's relationship, as readers will see, starts with a similar

electric shock of chemistry and builds into a deeply intimate partnership that takes them both by surprise. The poem "I Did Think, Let's Go About This Slowly" captures their relationship perfectly and it delights me every time I see it on the opening page.

**GS:** *Like a House on Fire* burns, if you will, with a multitude of emotions, including humor. How important was it for you to include that energy in the book?

**LM:** I knew instinctively that this story would live and die on its tone. It couldn't be clinical and cerebral, but it also couldn't be melodramatic. What Merit and Jane experience together is both transcendent, and also quite ordinary – that's the remarkable thing about love. It contains within it so many other emotions. Excitement. Desire. Pain. Fear. Hope. Anger. Disappointment. Joy. My task, then, was to try to capture a tone that was both serious and playful, and the humor was essential to this balance. I also wanted to include an element of absurdity, particularly when it came to capturing Merit's experience of modern marriage and the intense emotional load she carries as a wife and mother. There's a quote from Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls that I thought of often as I was writing this book: "you have to laugh at yourself because you'd cry your eyes out if you didn't."

**GS:** Early in the book, there are hints of queerness: the San Francisco setting, Jane's line "The only people who understand us are gay men" in chapter three, Jane's dead gay brother Frederik in chapter

four, and lesbian couple Regina and Allie, and Merit's childless lesbian college friends all in chapter five. Was this a way to set the stage for what was to follow?

**LM:** I didn't think of it as foreshadowing necessarily, but more of a way to normalize queerness. While *Like a House on Fire* is surely a coming-of-age story for Merit (albeit in mid-life!), I didn't want it to be a fish-out-of-water tale. So, I made the choice to give my characters a slew of privileges most gay women don't have – including this backdrop of queerness that makes it "no big deal" for them to find themselves in a lesbian relationship in this particular time and place. While this isn't the lived experience of many LGBTQ+ people, it was my own experience, and I wanted to give voice to it here.

**GS:** Please tell the readers something about the inspiration for the story of Merit and Jane.

**LM:** At the beginning of the writing process, I would've answered this question very differently than I would answer it now. Back then, I would've said that one afternoon, while I was on a beach weekend with a group of



Photo by Marc Cartwright



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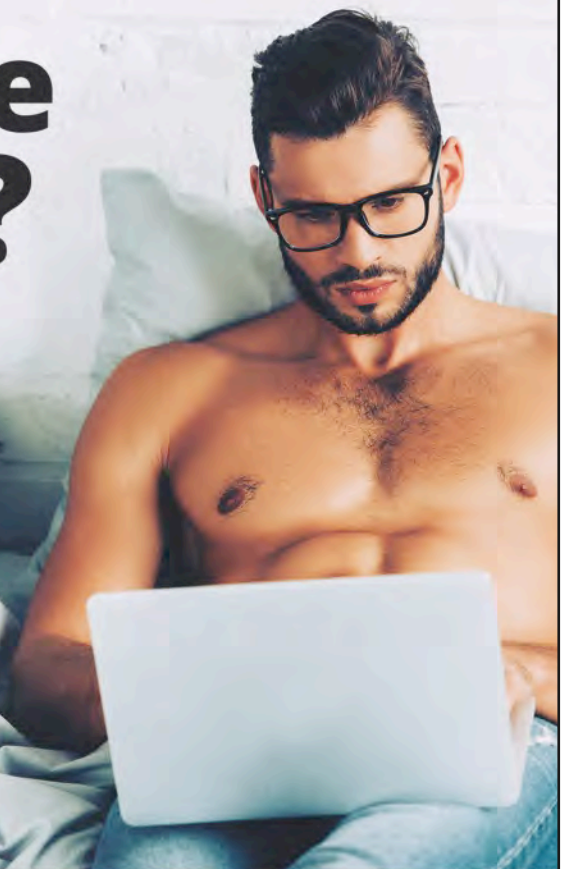
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women I didn't know very well, Merit and Jane announced themselves in my brain and demanded that I pay attention to them. At the time, I didn't see myself in Merit at all. I couldn't have fathomed that her struggles were in fact my own, which I'm grateful for, because it gave me the unfettered freedom to take her wherever she needed to go. Now, on the other side of the writing process, I understand that Merit and Jane showed up in my mind exactly when I needed them to answer questions I didn't yet know I needed to ask and that their arrival was a perfectly-timed gift. Not only did this novel light me up creatively, it also gave me the space and the permission to explore my own fears, disappointments, and desires, sparking my own journey toward self-discovery and truth.

**GS: Jane is Danish. What is the significance of Jane being from Denmark?**

**LM:** I knew Jane wasn't American from the moment she showed up in my mind. I chose Copenhagen as her home because it felt like the opposite of Merit's own upbringing in the Florida panhandle.

**GS: I'm glad you mentioned Merit's panhandle roots. She had a religious upbringing, and her parents are still devout. Merit also makes an effort to include prayer and church in her life. Please say a few words about why it was important to include that as part of Merit's identity.**

**LM:** The simplest answer here is that I am a person of tremendous faith and it felt natural for me to give Merit a connection to the Divine. On some level, I was trying to do the same thing with faith that I was attempting to do with queerness: that is, to sort of de-sensationalize it. We tend to be black and white with our thinking; a person is either religious or not, gay or not, when most of us are somewhere on the spectrum. I suppose I was trying to put a lot of grey into this novel and avoid the absolutes.

**GS: What can you tell the readers about your approach to writing sex scenes?**

**LM:** Wish fulfillment can be a great driver of story [laughs]! Their sex scenes were definitely an outlet for me, particularly since I was writing them in the heart of quarantine in 2020, when I was coming to terms with the state of my own marriage and asking questions about my own sexuality during a completely isolating global pandemic. At the same time, for these very particular characters, the seeds of their sexual connection were present at their

very first meeting, so by the time I got to the moment in the novel when they cross the line into physical intimacy, it felt natural and organic for me to take them there.

**GS: Without giving away too much, the surprise ending is handled with grace and strength. Did you know from the beginning that this was how the book would end?**

**LM:** Not by a long shot. My initial thought was that Merit and Jane would have one hot night together and then realize that sex ruins friendship and "de-transition" back to being just pals. The story obviously did not ultimately unfold that way! As for the ending, the last five pages of the book – the surprise ending you're referring to – didn't exist until the weekend before my agent took the book out on submission. I'd completed the manuscript without an epilogue, which would have been a very different resolution. And then that weekend before we went out with it, I felt this little nagging voice inside me telling me "it doesn't end that way." So, I gave myself permission to write a different conclusion to the story, just for me. I wrote it in one sitting, with very little pausing or editing, and when I finished it, I knew I had to include it. There have been several edits of the manuscript since then, but I don't think a single word of the epilogue has changed.



**GS: Like a House on Fire is very cinematic. If there was a movie version of your novel, who would you want to play Merit, Jane, and Merit's husband Cory?**

**LM:** Such a fun question! Robin Wright is unequivocally Jane in my mind. I also love the idea of Kristen Bell and Dax Sheppard as Merit and Cory. Who wouldn't want to watch that incredible trio [laughs]?

**GS: Do you have another book project in the works?**

**LM:** I do! I'm working on a novel, loosely structured around the key moments of Maureen Murdock's *The Heroine's Journey*, about a woman who dismantles every aspect of her identity in order to reclaim the truest aspects of herself. It's a more philosophical story than *Like a House on Fire* and incorporates aspects of Greek mythology and Jungian psychology and indigenous spirituality, which is challenging and so much fun.

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# GRAB HENRY

## Sticking with it: An interview with *Sticker* author Henry Hoke

By by Gregg Shapiro

With his breathtaking memoir *Sticker* (Bloomsbury, 2022), queer writer Henry Hoke challenges our notions and expectations of the genre and does it all in under 125 pages. Part of Bloomsbury's Object Lessons series, for which he chose stickers, Hoke evokes our senses, emotions, memories, fears, and history, expressed in contemporary and urgent language that never fails to captivate. A necessary and important read for all. Henry was generous enough to answer a few questions before the publication of *Sticker*.

**Gregg Shapiro: As a memoir theme, how did you arrive at the one for *Sticker*?**

**Henry Hoke:** After finishing my first novel, *The Groundhog Forever*, in 2019, I was seeking a container for a variety of short memoir pieces that had been bouncing around in my head, so when I saw Bloomsbury's open call for Object Lessons proposals I decided on a unifying object and pitched. That first object (disk) was spoken for already, but I got some encouraging words from Chris Schaberg (one of Object Lesson's editors), so I went back to the drawing board and chose sticker – an even more varied, nostalgic way in – and that one stuck.

**Gregg Shapiro: Were the essays/chapters written in the order in which they appear in the book?**

**HH:** Weirdly, yes, for something so fragmented. I decided on the 20 stickers and outlined their chapters, arranged them like a mixtape, and wrote the book in sequence. It helped to generally follow a bildungsroman format, as the pieces progress in rough chronological order, the stories growing alongside me.

**GS:** Almost every essay in *Sticker* contains a kind of “scratch-and-sniff” refrain or mantra.

**HH:** This was my favorite part about writing the book, threading the recurring line “if [whichever sticker] was a scratch-and-sniff it'd smell like \_\_\_\_\_” into almost every essay to create a

unity. As I detail in the “Blueberry” chapter – which is scratch-and-sniff specific – those smells are so deeply linked to memory that it helped me to imagine (and illuminate for the reader) what abstract or literal sensorial quality each sticker might have.

**GS: The book opens with the essay “Mr. Yuk,” about the poison warning sticker, and Mr. Yuk makes a return appearance in the “Constellation” and “Death to the Pixies” essays. Would it be fair to say that like every “first crush,” Mr. Yuk made an indelible impact on you?**

**HH:** Yes, his image is seared into my memories. Our first encounter with iconography, especially one tied directly to danger, is hard to shake. That was his brand and his lasting effect for little me.

**GS: Was it always your intention that the third essay “Wahooa,” and “HH,” the final essay, would serve as kind of Charlottesville brackets for the book?**

**HH:** This was another musical impulse, like bookending tracks on an album, with “Wahooa” and its litany of outside perceptions on the town, rendered in only direct quotations – kicking things off, and then “HH” – and its exploration of how the town's name was transmuted into a woeful signifier – functioning as a closer.

**GS: Did you know when you started writing the memoir that Charlottesville itself would become a character in the book?**

**HH:** Definitely. By default, whenever I'd write anything about my youth (especially *The Book of Endless Sleepovers*) I was low-key writing about



photo by Myles+Pettengil

Charlottesville, just as all memoir consciously or unconsciously reflects the place(s) where the writer was raised. The deeper purpose of this book was to engage with my hometown explicitly, my complex relationship to it, and how that shifted once C'ville entered the international spotlight in the wake of white supremacist terror and the murder of Heather Heyer. The city's conflicts – centuries in the making – run parallel to those of America at large in this moment and many previous eras.

**GS: Throughout the book, you alternate between naming names of people, Lisa Frank for example, and making casual references to them, such as Dave (Matthews) and Paul (Nelson). Can you please say something about how you decided who would be identified and who wouldn't be?**

**HH:** This was never something I created a strict system for, instead following more poetic impulses essay-by-essay, so shoutout to my copyeditor Dhanuja Ravi, for tolerating the freewheeling approach. Dave and Paul were how they were always known to me, like in the context everyone knew who you were talking about, so I kept them last-nameless. Almost all non-celebrities and childhood friends have stand-in nicknames (Ponytail, Sled, The Vampire) for anonymity, and I purposefully chose not to use the

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**GS: Do you know if Lisa Frank is aware of her inspiration and that she's mentioned in the book?**

**HH:** Nah, but I'd absolutely die [laughs]. Hi Lisa! When you read this, email me [laughs].

**GS: Does Dave Matthews know he's in your book?**

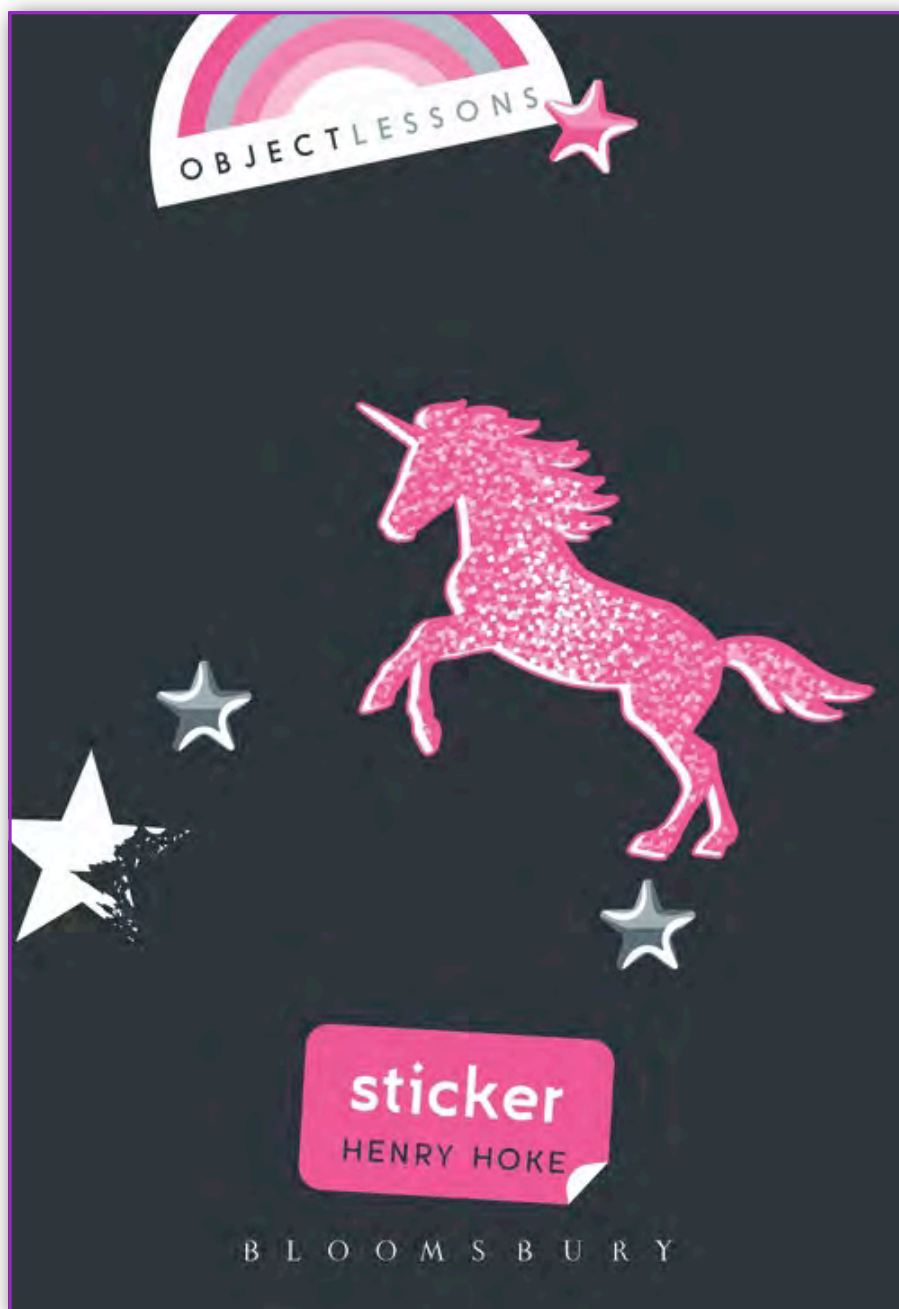
**HH:** God, I hope not [laughs]. Don't tell him.

**GS:** Your queer sexuality, in the essays "*Unicorn*," "*Chiquita*," and "*Death to the Pixies*," for example, is an essential component to the memoir.

**HH:** Just as C'ville is inextricable from my upbringing, so is a struggle with gender and sexuality. Being bisexual and genderfluid means my identity is ongoing. I've spent my life mostly performing this journey of questioning through my writing, since the very beginning. My books have always expressed queerness via uncertainty and contradiction, and that's because those modes are so tied to my sense of self. It's taken a long time for me to be okay with flux, to hold definitions at arm's length, and use those arms to embrace wherever I'm at.

**GS: In the "Are You Triggered" essay, you write "Things have changed in Charlottesville, I hear, have been changing everywhere, have never changed." It's a statement that's truer than ever because even though Biden was elected as POTUS, the 45th president's influence is almost unabated, with the recent election of conservative Republican Glenn Youngkin as Virginia governor. Do you think it's possible for real change to ever take place?**

**HH:** Sections of *Sticker* intersect with Critical Race Theory, and forebears in this crucial field of study deserve so much more than to have their labor tossed around like a political football. To be honest, I'm grieving for Virginia on many fronts, and sick of giving any attention or platform to these craven right-wing grifters and fascists and letting them drive the conversation or appropriate leftist terms for mockery. It's never been amusing, and it only aids in their reach. Neoliberals cannot stop going on the defensive, and that was glaring in the recent gubernatorial election. It feels like avoidance, resistance to real action. "Change" has



to come in the form of material benefits – reparations, prison/police abolition, and a baseline of care (living wages, paid family leave, M4A, debt jubilee). I'm grateful to people fighting for these things – locally in their communities, and on a national scale – against an overwhelming tide, and I strive to fund, show out, and support them in whatever ways I can.

**GS: What do you think your cousin Tallulah Bankhead would think of *Sticker*?**

**HH:** Having read her (underrated) autobiography, I like to imagine I channeled a degree of her sardonic perspective and wit. I tweet in her voice

@therealtallulah and I'd be more worried what she thinks of that [laughs].

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

**HH:** I'm done with long-form nonfiction, probably forever. *Sticker* truly sapped that impulse. So, next up is a novel about Los Angeles, narrated by a mountain lion who's as traumatized and in need of therapy as everyone else in our careening hellworld.

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<b>Tuesday</b>	<p><b>@mosphere:</b> \$5 Well Cocktails &amp; Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. <b>Cell Block:</b> Open 4pm-2am. <b>Charlie's:</b> TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. <b>Houndstooth:</b> \$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. <b>Hydrate:</b> 8/10 Tat Tuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. <b>Kit Kat Lounge:</b> Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis <b>Lark:</b> 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm 50% off Bottles of Wine with purchase of an Entree. <b>Lucky Horseshoe:</b> Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. <b>Meeting House Tavern:</b> \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$3 House Shots, \$5 Jäger, Fireball &amp; Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. <b>North End:</b> Open at 11am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers &amp; Ciders. <b>Replay Beer &amp; Bourbon Lakeview:</b> Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts &amp; Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. <b>Sidetrack:</b> 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. <b>Steamworks:</b> Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). <b>Touche:</b> Hardcore Cruisin' Sponsor Leather 64Ten. No cell phones/Wifi.</p>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<p><b>@mosphere:</b> \$5 Well Cocktails &amp; Draft Beer 6-8pm. <b>Cell Block:</b> Open 4pm-2am. <b>Charlie's:</b> Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. <b>Kit Kat Lounge:</b> Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis <b>Lark:</b> Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos &amp; Totchos, \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. <b>Lark:</b> Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails. Buy One Pizza Get one half off Die In Only <b>Lucky Horseshoe:</b> Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. <b>Meeting House Tavern:</b> \$3 Miller Lite Drafts, \$4 Stolis (All Flavors), \$5 Jäger, Fireball &amp; Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. <b>North End:</b> Open at 11am \$5 Lagunitas Draft &amp; Cans. <b>Replay Beer &amp; Bourbon Lakeview:</b> Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts &amp; Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm <b>Sidetrack:</b> Open at 3pm, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Taylor &amp; Ariana 4th Wed of month – all 9pm-2am. <b>Steamworks:</b> Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. <b>Touche:</b> Jockstrap Night Sponsored by Full Kit Gear, Free Clothing check.</p>
<b>Thursday</b>	<p><b>@mosphere:</b> \$5 Well Cocktails &amp; Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. <b>Baton Show Lounge:</b> Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm &amp; 11:30pm. <b>Cell Block:</b> Open 4pm-2am. <b>Charlie's:</b> Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. <b>Hydrate:</b> RuPaul's Drag Race Season All Stars Viewing Party Doors Open 6:30pm, Bubble POP Hosted by Khloe Coulee 9pm. <b>Kit Kat Lounge:</b> Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. <b>Lark:</b> Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails. 7pm Extreme Bingwith Vian Dejour. 50% off Nachos or Totchos \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks Traditional Flavor Only. <b>Lucky Horseshoe:</b> Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. <b>Meeting House Tavern:</b> \$5 You Call It's, \$5 Jäger, Fireball &amp; Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. <b>North End:</b> Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails <b>Replay Beer &amp; Bourbon Lakeview:</b> Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts &amp; Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm <b>Sidetrack:</b> Open at 3pm, Chicago's RuPaul's Drag Race Viewing Party 7pm, Drag &amp; Games Dance Party 9pm-2am <b>Steamworks:</b> Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. <b>Touche:</b> 4/7 &amp; 4/14 Throwback Thursdays 70's &amp; 80's Music &amp; Porn by Bijou Video.</p>

# GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

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:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails. Every Friday from March 4th thru April 8th \$16.95 All-You-Can Eat Beer Battered Fish, Crispy Fries and Cole Slaw. **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. **Touche:** 4/1CD4 Social 8pm, M.A.F.I.A. Club Night 10pm. 4/8WTNB SOCIAL 8PM MCL 2022 Welcome Party 9pm

## 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. **Lark:** Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch 11am-3pm **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:** 4/2 BEARNIGHT BEARS, CUBS, OTTERS & MORE!, 4/9 MCL 2022 gear Swap noon KINK U 1-4pm MCL CONTEST VIEWING PARTY 107PM, VICTORY PARTY 10PM 4/16 GER Night & Full Moon Party with BLUF/ Chicagobarber & bootblack BNC 6pm

## 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, Singasational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. **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:** Lakeviews #1 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 Frozen's, \$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. 4/10 MCL 2022 MCL 2022 BRUNCH 11AM BEER BUST 2PM-4SM \$2 Budlight drafts- Sodas Clubroom. Open 6pm Movie night 7pm 4/17 Easter Beer Bust \$2 Bud & Budlight drafts -Sodas. Movie Night 7pm.

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## GRAB A HIT

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	Artist	Title
1	Joel Corry x Mabel	I Wish
2	NEIKED x Mae Muller x Polo G	Better Days (Regard Remix)
3	Diplo & Miguel	Don't Forget My Love
4	tyDi x Electric Polar Bears	You Never Know ft. Neverwaves
5	Tujamo	Down
6	Cosmic Gate & Olivia Sebastianelli	We Got The Fire
7	Regard x Years & Years	Hallucination (Clean Edit)
8	Poo Bear	Distant Shore (Joel Corry Remix)
9	Rozell & Sebastian Perez	No One Knows My Face (Radio Edit)
10	Zookeeper & Jen	Taking Over Me
11	David Guetta	Family ft. Bebe Rexha x Ty Dolla \$ign & A Boog
12	The Chainsmokers	High (Radio Edit)
13	Dom Dolla	Strangers ft. Mansionair (Radio Edit)
14	Allegra	If You Wanna Love Me (Majestic Remix)
15	Armin van Buuren & Sam Gray	Human Touch
16	SLVR & offrami	Do Anything ft. LOUIS III
17	Martin Garrix x Matisse & Sadko x John Martin	Won't Let You Go
18	VASSY x GTOOffice	Tuff
19	The Chainsmokers	I Can't Make You Love Me (Remix)
20	Alesso x Katy Perry	When I'm Gone
21	Sam Feldt x Rita Ora	Follow Me (Radio Edit)
22	Farius	A Big Life (Radio Mix)
23	Jonas Blue & Why Don't We	Don't Wake Me Up
24	MelyJones & Charles B	Do You Remember (Coopex Edit)
25	Charli XCX	Good Ones (Joel Corry Remix)
26	tyDi & Jes	Just Believe
27	Warren	Before You ft. LEXI
28	Majestic	Tricky ft. Autumn Rowe
29	MEDUZA	Tell It To My Heart ft. Hozier (Radio Edit)
30	MO	New Moon
31	Keanu Silva x Toby Romeo x SACHA	Hopeless Heart (Radio Edit)
32	Just Kiddin	Change My Mind
33	Jax Jones	Where Did You Go ft. MNEK
34	Michael Calfan & Nadia Ali	3 2 1 (Radio Edit)
35	John Newman	Waiting For A Lifetime
36	The Knocks	River ft. Parson James
37	Tritonal & Codeko	Superhuman (Ferry Corsten)
38	Jetta	Honey (Jonasu & RUDY Remix)
39	John Summit	Human ft. Echoes
40	Purple Disco Machine	Dopamine ft. Eyelar



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## THURSDAY 4.7

**MCL2022 REGISTRATION** 7-10pm  
Pick up packages & purchase tickets

## FRIDAY 4.8

**MCL2022 REGISTRATION** 5-10pm  
Pick up packages & purchase tickets

**WELCOME COCKTAIL PARTY** 9pm 

## SATURDAY 4.9

**LEATHER EYE-OPENERS** 11am-2pm  
Complimentary coffee & continental breakfast

**MCL2022 REGISTRATION** 11am-4pm  
Weekend package pickup for late comers

**FETISH FLEA MARKET** noon-4pm  
Buy-sell-trade leather-rubber-uniforms

**KINK U** 1-4pm  
Presented by Titans of the Midwest

**PRE-CONTEST COCKTAILS** 6pm

**MR. CHICAGO LEATHER 2022 CONTEST** 8pm   
At the Leather Archives & Museum  
Hosted by John Pandal IML2003 / doors open 7pm

**MR. CHICAGO LEATHER 2022 CONTEST  
VIEWING PARTY** 8pm  
Watch the contest live here on the screens at Touché

**PURE VICTORY PARTY** 10pm-5am  
Strict dress code in club room / DJ Harry T

## SUNDAY 4.10

**MCL 2022 BRUNCH** 11am-2pm

**BEER BUST** noon-4am  
\$1 Drafts & Sodas all day at Touché

**LA&M BENEFIT PARTY** 2-5pm  
at Marty's Martini Bar

**LEATHER SHOW TUNES** 4-8pm  
at the Call Bar



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# GRAB HOLLY

## Adam and Eve and Steve

By Holly Maholm

I woke up early, instantly alive to the impending drama which had troubled me so much the night before.

Yesterday, Phyllis and Dave had come to me for legal advice. There was a student at the high school – Lauren – who was pregnant. Phyllis was willing to help her get an abortion, if that's what she wanted. Dave, however, desperately wanted to adopt the baby – assuming Mike shared his desire to adopt, and assuming Lauren could be convinced to give up her baby for adoption. Time was of the essence. Unless Dave could get all parties to agree, this under-age mother would get an abortion.

I heard Mike's voice coming to me from the foyer of the stable. "Holly, you home?" "I'm here," I called out in reply. "Come on in." Mike joined me at my kitchen table. "You can guess why I'm here," he began. "Dave and I were up all night discussing what he told you about – the idea of us adopting Lauren's baby. And since we need your help, I want to tell you the result.

"We decided we want to adopt," he declared. "The possibility of Dave and me adopting was something I had never considered, but after we talked about it

for hours last night, the two of us decided we want to give this baby a happy home and loving parents – if the mother will let us, that is."

Seeing the innocent and hopeful expression on Mike's face, it was difficult for me to say what I said next. "Look, Mike, there are a couple of issues you and Dave need to be aware of, if you go down this road. But first, there's one big issue you will have to face.

"You will be asking a hetro-woman to agree to give up her child to be raised by a gay couple. I don't need to remind you what prejudice exists in this world against same-sex couples, and even if this mother – who is only 16, after all – has not yet lived long enough to develop any bias against you and Dave, you can be sure others will be sure to 'educate' her on all the false and homophobic 'wisdom' – gossip, really – that straight people share among themselves."

Dave responded. "I know. As the pastor of our little LGBT congregation, I've had dozens of straight folks lecture me that the Bible refers to 'Adam and Eve' not 'Adam and Steve.' They think they are being clever when they say this; as if this phrase represents the final, authoritative 'Biblical teaching' on the subject of both gay marriage and gay adoption. It's painful to hear

someone – often someone I thought was a friend – use that phrase, not seeming to care how much it hurts me. And when I hear that phrase, honestly, I try to 'turn the other cheek,' and not make it the occasion for a confrontation.

"Because, trying to be fair to them – even if they have not been kind to me – there is an underlying kernel of truth in that hurtful phrase: That straight couples bear the entire burden of populating – and repopulating – our world. Only a straight couple can conceive and bear children. So why should we be surprised if straight folks – even people who never had children, or wanted children (even when they had the chance) – take this opportunity to mock and belittle gay couples who are willing to take on the difficult, burdensome task of raising and supporting a family.



"Holly, when I hear straight people make that smug, condescending comment about 'Adam and Steve,' I am tempted to remind them how rare actual 'Adam and Eve' families are in our modern world. Why, nearly 50 percent of marriages today end in divorce!

"And look how many single women there are who never get married, but just go on year-after-year using birth control to avoid pregnancy, and if they do get pregnant, they just casually get an abortion. Or if some of them do decide to keep the baby and become a single parent, it's a case of 'Eve' deciding she doesn't need an 'Adam' or a 'Steve.' She just goes on welfare and lets Uncle Sam be the 'Dad.'

"In my Sunday school classes, and in Dave's classes at the high school, we see a never-ending procession of kids who never had a father – just one 'baby-daddy' plus a succession of temporary boyfriends who show up briefly in their mother's life, then fade away, replaced by yet another man who's name they decide they don't need to learn.

"No," Mike summed up. "If people only knew how rare that 'Adam and Eve' family has become, they'd learn a little humility and agree that for a child who needs and deserves two loving parents, 'Adam and Steve' will do just fine.

*(To be continued)*

*Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly's new 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*

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# POSITIVE THOUGHTS

## Positive Thoughts: As a Woman

HIV

As a woman, I know what it feels like to be invisible. As a Black woman that feeling is sometimes intensified. It gets juxtaposed with occasionally being the person everyone is looking at, but not really seeing. In a time of “racial reckoning” such as what’s currently going on in the world right now, the need to be seen, and heard, is more important than ever if we expect to elicit change.

Being a minority woman living with HIV comes with a bit of invisibility. Forgive my bluntness, but I imagine being anything other than a gay man living with HIV is a little like that. I’m trying not to be offensive — only to live my truth by saying that. But the truth always seems to offend someone these days.

My truth is that I am a Black woman living with HIV, and sometimes I struggle to be both seen and heard. I struggled at the beginning of my diagnosis to find faces that looked like mine. Voices that sounded like mine. Struggled to find services that considered my femininity and the unique experience of being a woman, let alone a Black woman. I struggle now to see regular representation in literature, research and media of our presence and place in the big picture.

According to UNAIDS, in 2020, 53 percent of people living with HIV were women and girls. Black folks, both male and female, are disproportionately affected by HIV. Yet, Black men, Black women, and really, women of any race, have never been seen as a face of what HIV could look like. Through no fault of their own, white gay men became “the face” of HIV/AIDS in the beginning of the epidemic. There are a lot of women’s organizations focusing on women and fighting for a seat at the table, but it shouldn’t be a fight. Women have always contributed to caring for those living and dying with HIV. At the same time, they have often been left out of study trials. Even though strides and advancements have been made in treatments, life expectancy and quality of life, too many old stigmas and old prejudices persist. With statistics like the ones above, women need to be seen.

No matter who you are, in a crisis, identifying with others like you gives

you the starting point for goals and boundaries and your journey to overcoming. Being seen and heard in this space can be complicated. It’s a double-edged sword of wanting someone to understand and comfort your insecurities, but at the same time not wanting to open yourself up to hurt. You want to be seen but not stigmatized. You want to be heard, but you don’t want someone else to tell your story or your truth in a way that doesn’t honor you. When you’re living with HIV there are levels of acceptance and peace. I think that for me the most important thing is that people with HIV learn to see themselves as they want to be first so that whether or not someone else sees you in a positive light (pun intended), it won’t matter because you see yourself as who you are and it’s enough for you. There is power in just being enough until you get to abundance. I will forever believe that stigma will persist and, therefore, so will new infections, until we normalize what people consider abnormal. That means everyone needs to be seen and heard, so people can see themselves, and let go of shame and fear and get real about risk and testing.

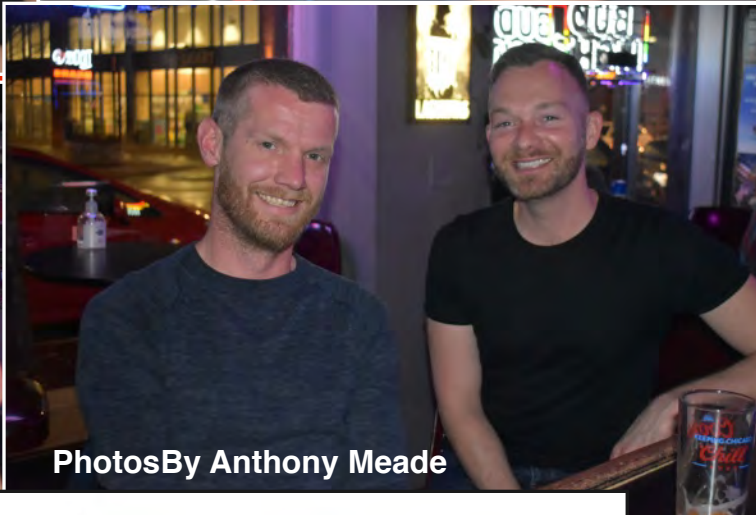
Be well. You matter.

*Bridgette Picou is a licensed vocational nurse in Palm Springs, California, and writer for Positively Aware. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ+ wire service. Visit their websites – <http://thebody.com>, <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com> and <http://poz.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.*



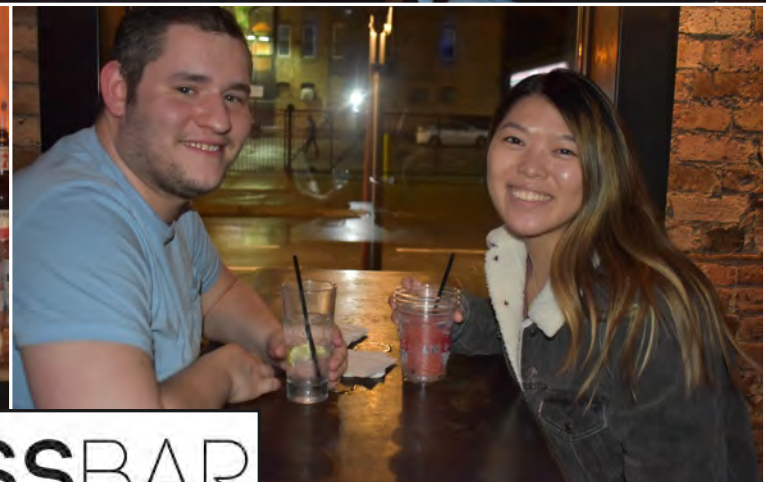
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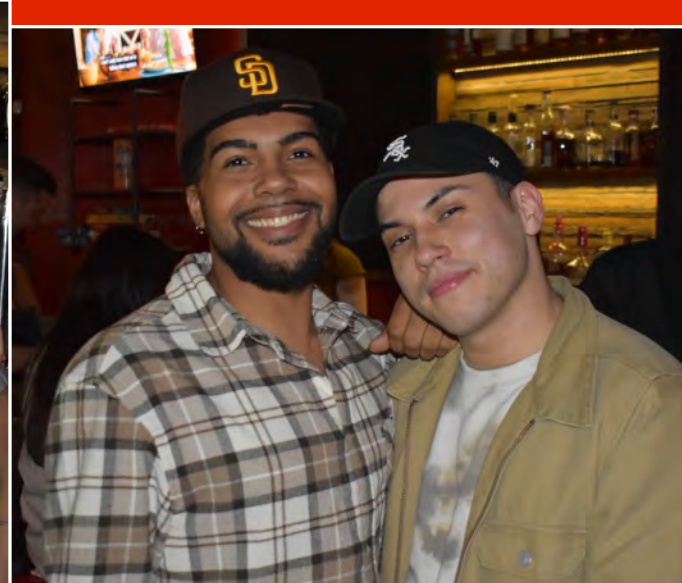
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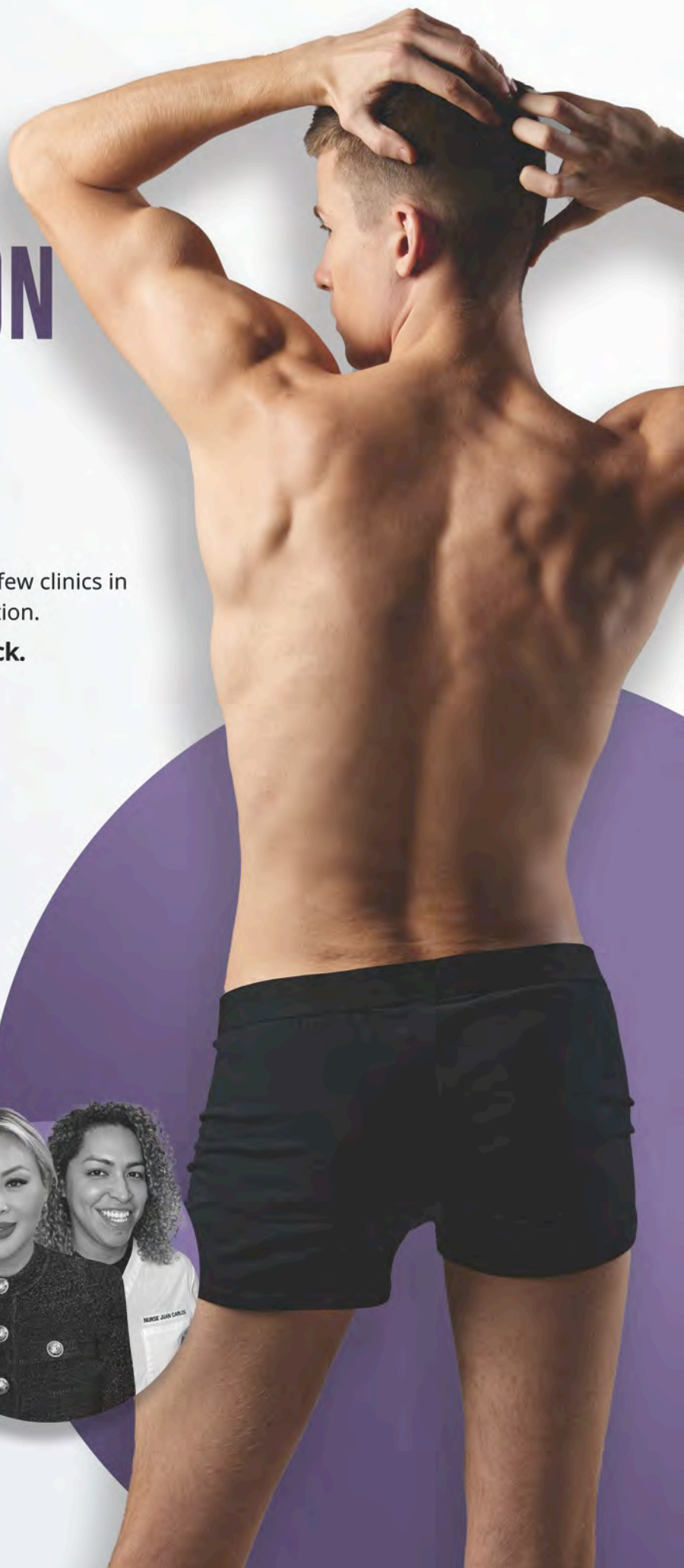
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**Trident International Windy City Cupcake Wars on Sunday, April 3rd at Touché 6412 North Clark Street**



Trident International Windy City proudly announces the return of their annual Cupcake Wars on Sunday, April 3rd which will be held at Touché 6412 North Clark Street in Chicago. The public (sorry you must be 21 or over) is invited to sample the best cupcakes by bakers representing the Chicago leather & fetish community with proceeds to benefit the Broadway Youth Center.

This tasty event kicks off at 5pm when our competing bakers present their savory or sweet cupcakes for sampling. A \$5 donation to the BYC garners guests a tasting card that permits them to sample each cupcake offering and then vote for their favorite cupcake.

There will also be an auction for one perfect cupcake from each baker, allowing guests to take home one or more treats. A judging panel will also weigh in on their favorite cupcake and will award their choice baker the 2022 Master Baker Trophy.

The Broadway Youth Center works to improve the quality of life experienced by youth (12-24) who are LGBTQ +, underserved, and/or experiencing homelessness through the provision of youth-centered integrated healthcare and social services. BYC serves anyone, regardless of ability to pay. BYC provides basic needs assistance, resource advocacy, mental wellness supports, and education/vocational services. To reach BYC, please call 773.388.1600

In previous years, Trident International Windy city has hosted 2 annual "tasty" fundraisers for BYC, their Chili Cook Off in the Fall and Cupcake Wars each Spring. These events have solicited huge support for BYC, usually raising sufficient funds that help cover their service expenses for a month. After a hiatus due to Covid, it is hoped that this first year back will be even more successful to make up for the break in Trident's fundraising efforts. Those unable to attend are encouraged to donate directly to BYC.

Trident International Windy City is the oldest pansexual Leather/Levi Club in Chicagoland. Founded in 1993, they meet monthly at Touché.

**Dining Out For Life, Benefitting TPAN: Thursday, August 11, 2022**



Dining Out for Life is an international fundraising event in more than 60 cities across the U.S. and Canada that raises millions of dollars for HIV-focused charities each year. Here in Chicago, this event is produced by TPAN and engages dozens of the city's best eateries, along with thousands of dining patrons, to raise awareness and important funds for fellow Chicagoans affected by HIV/AIDS. All funds raised in Chicago stay in Chicago.

For more information visit [www.TPAN.com](http://www.TPAN.com)

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### **MORE THAN JUST A PLACE TO DRINK**

## Center on Halsted Returns to In-Person Event for May 6 Human First Gala



In its 15th anniversary year, Center on Halsted Human First Gala brings together the community and allies in an evening of celebration to recognize the contributions that individuals, businesses, and other organizations have made to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community in Chicago.

The formal event is May 6 at the Old Post Office, 433 W. Van Buren Street, with 5:30 pm cocktails and 7 p.m. dinner.

Human First raises vital funds to support the Center's mission through our comprehensive offering of programs and services. The evening encourages the opportunity to reflect upon past accomplishments, while we look forward to the work ahead as we continue to build a world where we are today, where we were in 2007, and where we plan to be in the future.

"We are especially thrilled this year to return to an in-person event after a two-year absence," said Center on Halsted CEO Modesto "**Tico**" **Valle**. "This promises to be a major night of celebration for the entire community and our supporters as we also mark the 15th anniversary of the Center."

The Community Spirit Award for corporate commitment to the LGBTQ community is being presented to **William Blair**. The company's leaders and notably its *Pride Alliance Business Resource Group* has been a valued partner for the work of Center through philanthropy, volunteerism, and advocacy.

Also, award-winning dance music icon **Crystal Waters** returns to Chicago for the Gala as the headline performer.

The Gala commemorates outstanding civic leaders with the Human First Award and Community Spirit Award for contributions to the advancement of Chicago's LGBTQ movement. Honorees for Human First Awards are long-standing Center supporters: community organizer **Julio Rodriguez**, cofounder and board president of one of the oldest LGBTQ non-profits in Chicago, **ALMA**; veteran activist and advocate **Mary Morten**, president of the Morten Group; and longtime volunteers and leaders of the Center's "green team" **Bob** and **Susan Sullivan**.

Table sponsorships, individual tickets and corporate sponsorship opportunities are available through the Center's website: <https://www.centeronhalsted.org/hf/>

## Legendary Pop Sensation Paula Abdul Announced As Headliner For White Party Palm Springs' Sunday T-Dance 'Carnival' Themed Event



PALM SPRINGS, CA | March 22, 2022 – Today, White Party Global (WPG) announced that 2x Platinum-selling, American singer, dancer, choreographer and television personality, **Paula Abdul** will headline the White Party Palm Springs' World-Famous T-Dance 'Carnival' theme event, taking place on Sunday, May 1 outdoors across from the Palm Springs Convention Center. White Party Palm Spring runs April 29 to May 1. "I'm beyond thrilled to be playing for all my fans at the legendary White Party Palm Springs 2022 Sunday T-Dance," said Abdul. "I am putting together an energetic show for you and can't wait to join everyone in the desert for this celebration – see you all soon!"

With a catalog of #1 hit singles including '*Forever Your Girl*,' '*Cold Hearted*,' '*Rush Rush*,' '*Opposites Attract*,' and '*Straight Up*,' the GRAMMY Award winner will belt out her biggest hits and deliver a high-impact dance performance sure to keep the party revelers energized as they dance the night away under the beautiful desert sky.

"White Party Palm Springs has seen iconic performances from some of the biggest names in the music industry, including *Lady Gaga*, *J-LO*, *Deborah Cox* and *LeAnn Rimes*" says White Party Global Executive Producer Chris Diamond. "Paula Abdul is legendary, making her the perfect choice for this already legendary party. I'm excited to see what Paula will bring to this year's Big Top Circus T-Dance."

Starting in the afternoon, the "Big Top Circus" T-Dance will feature state-of-the-art sound, lighting, and video all under the beautiful desert sky. The night culminates with a climactic, custom, musically inspired fireworks and video tribute to White Party Palm Spring's gay party impresario **Jeffrey Sanker**.

Weekend passes are still available, but are selling out fast. Individual day passes are now available for purchase. Information on passes, the host hotel, and additional event details can be found at [www.whitepartyglobal.com](http://www.whitepartyglobal.com). (All tickets purchased pre-pandemic will be honored for Palm Springs White Party 2022 and 2023).



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**Irish Theatre of Chicago Presents**  
**MOLLY SWEENEY**  
 By Brian Friel  
 Directed by Ensemble Member  
 Siiri Scott  
 March 31 – May 8, 2022



Irish Theatre of Chicago is pleased to return to the Chicago stage with Brian Friel's moving play Molly Sweeney, directed by Ensemble Member Siiri Scott, playing March 31 – May 8, 2022 at The Chopin Studio Theatre, 1543 W. Division Street in Chicago.

Blind since birth, Molly knows the world through touch, sound, taste and smell. When her hopeful husband and ambitious doctor propose restoring her sight, everyone begins to understand things may not be as they appear. Brian Friel, Ireland's master storyteller, brings us a riveting contemporary drama about the unexpected consequences of a medical miracle. Tickets go on sale soon at [www.irishtheatre.org](http://www.irishtheatre.org).

**The Den Theatre Presents**  
 Comedian  
**JAMIE LEE** April 22 – 23, 2022  
 on The Heath Mainstage



The Den Theatre is presents comedian, actress (Crashing), author and Emmy Award-winning producer (Ted Lasso) **Jamie Lee** for four stand-up performances April 22 – 23, 2022 on The Heath Mainstage, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Tickets are currently available at [thedentheatre.com](http://thedentheatre.com) or by calling 773 697-3830.

**The Den Theatre Announces**  
 Comedian  
**HANNAH EINBINDER**  
 Friday, June 17, 2022 on The  
 Heath Mainstage  
 Co-Star of the Hit HBO Max  
 Series 'Hacks'



Comedian and actress **Hannah Einbinder**, who stars opposite Jean Smart in the hit HBO Max comedy series Hacks, brings her stand-up tour to The Den Theatre for two performances only on Friday, June 17, 2022 at 7 pm & 9:30 pm on The Heath Mainstage, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Tickets are currently available at [thedentheatre.com](http://thedentheatre.com) or by calling 773 697-3830.

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