

JANUARY 16, 2024 • VOL XV • ISSUE#1

GRAB MAGAZINE

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GRAB SOME GEAR

Happy New Gear Fit to Perfection in ESCollectionUSA

By Skip Sheffield

As men embark on a new year of wellness and self-improvement in 2024, it's important to remember the old mantra of "Look good, feel good, perform better."

The new year presents the perfect opportunity for men to upgrade their fitness wardrobe. Whether planning to engage in cardiovascular activities, strength training, or yoga, having the appropriate attire ensures comfort, flexibility, and optimal functionality. Advancements in fabric technology include moisture-wicking materials that keep sweat at bay and help to prevent chafing; and compression gear, designed to support muscles and improve blood circulation, allows men to push their limits and achieve better results. This season, ESCollectionUSA offers their sexiest sweat shorts and joggers ever, in crisp, modern fashion-forward cuts and colors.

Photo By Tarek Del Moreno



Photo By Tarek Del Moreno

The **First Class Athletic Hoodie** in gray is a classic athletic hoodie featuring bee nest fabric contrasting on the sides, an invisible zip on the front, and two pockets. \$117 at ESCollectionUSA. It coordinates perfectly with the First Class Athletic Pants. \$107 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com).

First Class Athletic Hoodie and shorts. The First Class Athletic Hoodie is also available in black. \$117 at ESCollectionUSA. Matching black shorts are \$71 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com).



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ESCollectionUSA's Plumeti T-shirt is made of the finest plumeti fabric. It is \$41 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com). The other model wears **ESCollectionUSA's Rib Brief** in black, \$41 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com).



Photo By Tarek Del Moreno

The **First Class Athletic short** is available in gray. \$71 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com).

ESCollectionUSA's High End Spike Pants and jacket. Sports pants feature black tape with a clip on the waistband and rustic spike fabric all over. Two pockets on the sides with a metallic hook on the rear. \$97 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com). The coordinating jacket with rustic spike fabric contrasting on the sleeves and a vertical black tape with a clip on the left side is \$112 at [ESCollectionUSA.com](https://www.ESCollectionUSA.com).



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GRAB MAURICE



Photo By Lito Howse

“So Glad”: An interview with Maurice Vellekoop

By Gregg Shapiro

LGBTQ graphic (as in illustrated) memoirs are nothing new. But it took Alison Bechdel’s award-winning 2006 book “Fun Home,” to bring the genre to mainstream audiences, thereby generating mass public appeal and appreciation. Since then, books such as Maia Kobabe’s “Gender Queer” and Alice Oseman’s graphic novel “Heartstopper” have brought increased attention to both non-fiction and fiction LGBTQ works. **Maurice Vellekoop’s** marvelous graphic memoir “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together” (Pantheon, 2024), out in February, is a perfect addition to the genre. A powerfully rendered personal story of growing up in a religiously conservative home in Canada, being the artistic one in a straitlaced family, finding necessary creative outlets for expression and, eventually, self-acceptance. Maurice was generous enough to make time for an interview in advance of the publication of his book.

Gregg Shapiro: Maurice, I first became aware of your work with your fabulous 1997 homoerotic primer, “Maurice Vellekoop’s ABC Book,” which you wrote about in the “Deep Magic” chapter of your new graphic memoir “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together.” Please say a few words about the “ABC Book” for the readers.

MV: The “ABC Book” pictures a series of homoerotic encounters between various gay stereotypes, arranged alphabetically with very simple rhyming text. For example, “E is for Executives reaching their goals, F is for Firemen sliding down poles.” It’s a naughty riff on Little Golden Books but for an adult audience. It was inspired by the subversive work of both Edward Gorey and the great homoerotic artist Tom of Finland, who is such an inspiration. Tom’s world, much as I love it, is relentlessly macho. I wanted my playful vision of gay sex to be more inclusive, so, in addition to all the bikers and cops, I drew

some hairdressers and interior decorators having hot sex too!

GS: In the memoir, you also wrote about the early influence of Charles Schulz and Walt Disney on your imagination and your work. Were there graphic novelists, such as Alison Bechdel or Marjane Satrapi, who also influenced you and how you approached “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together”?

MV: In my career as a magazine illustrator, I’ve drawn inspiration from a wide variety of sources. One artist I love is Arthur Getz, who did “New Yorker” covers from the 1940s to the 1970s. His sense of light and mood is something I’m always striving to emulate. In the world of comics, yes, definitely Bechdel; less so Satrapi, much as I revere her. Legendary Canadian comics artist Seth is a big influence. I love his book, “It’s a Good Life if You Don’t Weaken.” I borrowed the page design and layout of “I’m So Glad

We Had This Time Together” from it.

GS: In the “Bewitched” chapter you wrote about wanting a Barbie doll when you were a boy. You also wrote in the book about your love of movies. Have you seen the Greta Gerwig “Barbie” movie, and if so, what did you think of it?

MV: I enjoyed “Barbie” very much! Sorry, I can’t really add much further to the discourse.

GS: TV also played a role in your formative years. Do you know if Carol Burnett is aware of your drawings of her and that she’s in your book?

MV: Good question! I’ll have to get the publisher to send her a copy. I met her very briefly in New York in the 1990s. Bob Mackie, who famously designed every single costume for her weekly variety show, was having a retrospective at FIT, so I knew Carol would be there for the opening night. At the entrance I spotted her, and, blushing like a 12-year-old, handed her a copy of my book “Vellevison,” pointing out there was a drawing of her on the cover. She flashed that dazzling smile, said thanks, handed the book to her assistant, and went in.

GS: You had a conservative religious upbringing, which of course has an impact when you realize that you are gay. While writing the book, were you consciously writing to a reader who also had a similar experience, and if so, what do you hope they will get out of reading your book?

MV: I was not necessarily writing for that specific audience, though I certainly thought about it. When I read, it’s to discover stories that don’t necessarily reflect my own experience. I grew up in an unusual, hermetic world of devout Protestant Dutch immigrants and I thought my book could, in part, be a glimpse into that world. Having said all that, if my book can offer solace or help someone struggling through a similar circumstance, that would be amazing!

GS: In the “Thistletown” chapter, you wrote about how you and your sister Ingrid came out to each other. When you think about



that experience today, having a queer sibling with whom to share the coming out experience, how does it make you feel?

MV: It meant the world to me to have an ally I could confide in safely at fourteen. Ingrid and I were very tight in my teens and 20s, and her artistic talent was a constant inspiration. I feel very blessed to have her in my life. And that passage is one of my favorites in the book, especially when the waitress says, “What can I get you girls?”

GS: Like a lot of gay teens, you found a safe haven in your high school’s theater department. Are

you still in touch with any friends from that time, and did any others also come out?

MV: No, I’m not in touch with friends from high school. But I recently reconnected with an art school buddy who I always wondered about. He recently came out – in his late 50s – and is happily partnered. It’s never too late!

GS: In the “Vissi D’Arte” chapter, there is a drawing of you reading “A Boy’s Own Story.” Does Ed White know he’s in your book?

MV: [Laughs] I will have to send him a copy too! I am a big fan of Edmund White, but at the period referred to in the book, the late

eighties, he seemed to represent a trend toward a very heavy, bleak, and cerebral gay literature that was not exactly fun to read.

GS: What do you think your parents, who are both deceased, would think of “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together”?

MV: What my dad would have thought is anyone’s guess. He was such an unusual, unpredictable creature. I’m sure he would have been proud of the accomplishment, whatever his feelings about his own portrayal. My mother was really dreading the book. She was a very private person, and the book represents a huge invasion of that privacy. Also, though she was quite literary, all the books she loved were written long ago, and she just would not understand the level of candor that modern readers expect from a memoir. Despite her dread, she was unflinching supportive of the project, always ready to answer my questions, even when what I was asking was quite intimate.

GS: You wrote openly about your struggle with depression, often depicting two imaginary beings representing a kind of good and evil duo. You were fortunate to find Maggie, the right therapist for you. Regarding the book’s title, would it be fair to say that some of the most productive “time together” was actually what you spent with therapist Maggie?

MV: The title can be read a number of ways, some of them ironic, so that’s an interesting take. I never thought about it in quite that way, but now that you raise it, yes, absolutely. I was so fortunate to have found someone so wise, funny, pragmatic, and kind. Nowadays, therapy is so much more accepted than it was 25 years ago. But if there are readers who are curious but skeptical, I hope my book illustrates how therapy can work to produce profound change.

GS: One of the things that I loved about the book was the visual history of your hair throughout the book. In the “God’s Temples” chapter, you even mention that the hair on your head darkened when you turned 13. Please say something about the part, pardon the pun, your hair has played in

your life.

MV: I was lucky to have inherited my hair-dresser mother’s thick, luxuriant hair (in her case dark brown, in mine, white-blond in childhood, later a duller gold, now mostly silver). There was a long period in the 1990s when I had a sort of 1970s shag. I looked a bit like the

singer Beck, and I used to get a lot of puzzled stares from people wondering, “Is it him?”. However, cool as I thought I looked, this look did not go over well in the gay bars of Toronto, where a rigid conformity prevailed. Eventually, I cut it off and have had a kind of Tintin-esque coif ever since.

GS: Earlier I mentioned Bechdel and Satrapi, whose graphic memoirs were turned into a Broadway musical and a movie, respectively. What would it mean to you if “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together” was adapted for another medium?

MV: It would be amazing if somehow Disney decided it was time to do an animated film for adults, based on my memoir. Especially if they could recreate the loose, sketchy style of “101 Dalmatians” and “Jungle Book,” my



favorite period.

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

MV: Yes! My book agent and I are pitching a children’s book written and illustrated by me. I’m also working on some new erotic drawings, which may end up as a book. For lots of reasons, as a young man, I didn’t think I was attractive, and I spent many years in celibacy. Now, when I look at old pictures of myself, I see a pretty, rosy-cheeked, full-lipped twink. So, I’m drawing that character getting all the wild sex he so desperately wanted but couldn’t allow himself to have. I can’t decide whether the project is terribly sad or crazily empowering, maybe it’s a bit of both!

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GRAB APLANE



Winter Fun in Florida Sun: Your Ft.Lauderdale/ Wilton Manors Holiday

By Bill Malcolm

Consider a winter getaway to Fort Lauderdale and Wilton Manors (The Island City which is surrounded by Fort Lauderdale, Florida). The weather is usually perfect: highs in the low 80s and rain free. There is so much to do and if you stay right in Wilton Manors, you will not need a car.

WHAT TO DO

Besides hanging out at Sebastian Beach, there is lots of other stuff to do.

Hike the boardwalk and enjoy the red mangrove swamp in Colohatchee Park Wilton Manors. I took the electric shuttle there for just \$2 known as the Circuit Rideshare service. Download the app and book your ride. It's like a UBER but you share a ride using a cute multi-passenger vehicle. The drivers work for tips so be sure and give them one. Details at ridecircuit.com/fortlauderdale.

Join the Frontrunners for a walk or run. They meet Sundays at 5 p.m. at the Pride Center in Equality Park in Wilton Manors (and also Wednesdays in Holiday Park and Saturday mornings). Details at FRWFL.org.

Pick up some sexy underwear at

the Pride Factory clothing store (2282 Wilton Drive, Wilton Manors).

See the shark exhibit at the Frost Science Museum.

Walk along the Riverwalk in downtown Ft. Lauderdale.

The new Seminole Hardrock Hotel and Casino in nearby Hollywood features live sports betting and games such as craps and roulette. It features restaurants and a guitar shaped hotel.

The Wilton Manors Library has shared computers and is perfect for teleworkers working out of their Wilton Manors office.

Download the Seek App and get to know the flora and fauna. Green iguanas are a startling site as are the colorful ducks which walk around the neighborhoods. The various kinds of palms are interesting. With a subtropical climate, you will find flowers not seen elsewhere in the U.S.

Take the Brightline Train to Miami. The super-fast first gets you there in just 30 minutes. You can even buy a snack onboard. The train also goes north to Orlando Airport. There is nothing else like it in the U.S.

NIGHTLIFE

Most of the bars are close to each other on Wilton Drive in Wilton Manors. Hunters is my first stop. There is something going on every night. (Yes, the same owner as the one in Palm Springs.)

The LIT was just voted the best bar for lesbians. You will find them at 2440 Wilton Drive.

You will find the leather crowd at the Eagle in Wilton Manors.

Georgie's Alibi Monkey Bar (of P-town fame) at 2232 is a lot of fun.

Johnson's has dancers and a happy hour from 5 to 8 p.m.

The new NoManors Bar is a lot of fun.

There must be 15 bars within steps of each other on both sides of Wilton Manors Drive. Check them out while in town.

WHERE AND WHAT TO EAT

Enjoy a burger at Rosie's Bar and Grill (2449 Wilton Drive) on Wilton Drive. The popular hangout is necessary. Pub on the Drive also has great food and a brunch on Saturdays and Sundays. You will find them at 2271 Wilton Manor Drive.

Since I travel by myself, I prefer getting food to go at grocery stores.



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The Publix Market (Florida's iconic grocery store) can be found at 2633 N. Dixie Highway. Try the hot food bar which features southern classics. Pick up some Jaymar brand super sweet Florida strawberries for breakfast or a snack. Get cash at their Presto! ATM which features no surcharge for many users with accounts at a credit union.

The new Sprouts Market is another option. They too have made to order sandwiches and other items.

WHERE TO STAY

The new Wilton River Suites is right on the river and walkable to the bars in Wilton Manors. Check out a bike or kayak during your stay. You get your own apartment, some of which have two bathrooms. They also feature an onsite gym and pool. Book your room at wiltonsuites.com.

Men will like the even closer in Calypso Inn which features a small pool. The tropical outdoor gardens are impressive, and it is just two blocks to the bars in Wilton Manors. Tell the owner Wes, I sent you.

I have also stayed at the Home2Suites in the Flagler Arts Village District. The newer hotel is handy to the Riverwalk and downtown.

GETTING THERE

I took Southwest without incident to and from FLL. Then you

can UBER your way to the hotel or take the #1 Bus to the #50 Bus to

get to Wilton Manors. Details at Broward County Transit. The Tri Rail also runs from the airport to the city. Tri Rail also runs from Miami International as well. Skip the traffic and parking head-aches and UBER or take transit. And if you stay in Wilton Manors, you can walk everywhere.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

OUT SFL carries my column and is a newspaper and a magazine. Pick up a copy of either or find them at OUTSFL.com.

HOTSpots! Florida is another gay tabloid and also a reliable source of current goings on. You can read them on line at HOTSpotsMagazine.com.

The monthly *OutClique Magazine* also has lots of ideas of what to do while in town.

Special recognition to Richard Gray for his travel tips. Richard is the Senior Vice President of Inclusion and Accessibility for [Visit Lauderdale.com](http://VisitLauderdale.com) who single



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Bill Malcolm's syndicated LGBTQ travel country is carried by LGBTQ publications throughout North America.



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GRAB MUSIC

Six best LGBTQ+ albums 2023

By Gregg Shapiro

When it comes time to compile a “best of” list for the year, it’s a relatively simple process. I ask myself what albums I kept returning to time and time again. Beginning with Brandy Clark’s eponymous fourth album (which got the most spins of all) and concluding with Man On Man’s sensational second album “Provincetown,” it was a very queer year. While I did everything in my power to limit the list to five, I had to make an exception so you, dear reader, can learn about the great LGBTQ+ music put out in 2023.

Brandy Clark



It was only a matter of time before two of the biggest queer names in Americana/country crossover collaborated, but we’re glad that **Brandy Clark** and Brandi Carlile did. Clark’s eponymous Warner Records album was produced by Grammy-winner Carlile who plays on all but one of the 11 tracks. While Carlile’s presence is felt, the album is pure Clark. From her celebrated turn of phrase and distinctive sense of humor and perspective to her easily recognizable vocal style and delivery, the album is all hers. Unforgettable tunes include “Tell Her You Don’t Love Her” (on which she’s joined by Lucius), the gorgeous duet with Carlile on “Dear Insecurity,” “Best Ones,” “Ain’t Enough Rocks” (featuring Derek Trucks), “Northwest,” “Take Mine,” and “She Smoked in the House.”

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GRAB Magazine

Jake Shears



Jake Shears kept us waiting five years for “Last Man Dancing” (Mute), the follow-up to his 2018 solo debut. An entirely different animal from its predecessor, the music is joyful, youthful, exhilarating, and forward-thinking. And, yes, dancing is required. “Too Much Music” is both retro and of the moment, while “Do The Television,” co-written by Shears, and Scissor Sister bandmates Scott Hoffman (aka Babydaddy) and Ana Lynch (Ana Matronic) is mesmerizing. Kylie Minogue duets with Shears on the irresistible “Voices” and we get a good measure of Big Freedia on “Doses.” Shears makes use of the old-school continuous mix groove from “8 Ball” through “Devil Came Down The Dance Floor,” giving the listener the feeling of being at their own private dance party or club.

Sufjan Stevens



The signs were there all along when it comes to **Sufjan Stevens**’ official October 2023 coming out. What straight man could possibly write a

song about serial killer John Wayne Gacy and his victims, and make it as gorgeous and chill-inducing as “John Wayne Gacy, Jr.” (from 2005’s “Illinois”)? Would a straight man have been able to create a song as sensitive as “Mystery of Love,” Stevens’ Oscar-nominated tune from the gay film “Call Me By Your Name?” His 2023 masterwork “Javelin” (Asthmatic Kitty), featuring the dedication to his late partner Evans Richardson (who died in April), feels less like a surprise, and more like a confirmation. The music is everything we’ve come to expect from Stevens, and more. From the alternately exquisite and jarring opener “Goodbye Evergreen,” to the lush choral vocals on “A Running Start” and the potential hit single pop of “Will Anybody Ever Love Me?,” Stevens continues to merge queerness and faith.

Meshell Ndegeocello



If you’ve been listening to and following queer musician **Meshell Ndegeocello**’s compelling music career, from her early ‘90s hit single “If That’s Your Boyfriend (He Wasn’t Last Night),” the political statement of “Leviticus: Faggot,” and the breathtaking “Bitter” album, through her vast and varied 21st century sonic explorations, you know that her output is anything but predictable or dull. “The Omnichord Real Book” (Blue Note), Ndegeocello’s first album of all

January 16, 2024

original tunes since 2014's "Comet, Come To Me," continues her longstanding tradition of being musically daring. The roster of guest musicians, including Joan As Police Woman, Jason Moran, Jeff Parker, and Josh Johnson, is mind-blowing. The sound throughout is equal parts timeless and forward-thinking, soulful and soul-stirring.

Anohni and the Johnsons



Anohni has long been a transformational artist. From performing "Cripple and the Starfish" on 1996's various artists

compilation "God Shave The Queen" to leading Antony and the Johnsons in the early years of the 21st century to going solo on 2016's "Hopelessness," Anohni has always remained their distinctive creative vision. Now, coming full circle as **Anohni and the Johnsons**, this has proven true once again on the stunning "My Back Was A Bridge For You To Cross" (Secretly Canadian). Beginning with "It Must Change" (a song with an environmental message on par with Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On"), Anohni makes a statement to which we should listen. The R&B vibe on "Can't," "It's My Fault" (featuring the lines, "It's my fault/The way I broke the earth"), and "Why Am I Alive Now?," also make these among Anohni's most accessible songs. Even the jarring "Go Ahead," with its Yoko Ono-style arrangement and delivery, doesn't feel out of place here.

Man on Man



When queer musical duo **Man On Man** – Roddy Bottum and Joey Holman, whose partnership is both creative and romantic – released its eponymous debut album in 2021, it was as if someone opened a gallon drum of poppers, and we were all experiencing the same thrilling head rush. Man On Man effortlessly avoids the dreaded sophomore slump with the incredible "Provincetown" (Polyvinyl). Not shying away for a moment from its sexy subject matter, Man On Man is in peak condition on songs including "Take It From Me," "Gloryhole," "Piggy," "Showgirls," "I Feel Good," and "Kids."

Mia Francesca

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GRAB ROGER

Indigiqueer Artist Roger Kuhn Discovers His True Colors

By Larry Olsen

“I always knew I was different from the other kids my age,” says musician Roger Kuhn. In addition to standing out as bi-racial and bi-cultural - his father was of German and Russian descent and his mother is a tribal Poarch Creek woman - Roger says he never felt quite settled in his skin. “I didn’t feel like a boy, nor did I feel like a girl. I grew up loving He-Man, Thundercats, Barbie, and She-Ra. I used to pretend I was Madonna and David Bowie at the same time.”

It wasn’t until his mid-twenties when Roger discovered what it meant to be Two-Spirit. Coined by native tribal Dr. Myra Laramee in 1990, Two-Spirit is used to signify male, female, and intersexed individuals who combine activities of both gender traits. In most tribes, they are considered neither men nor women; they occupy a distinct, alternative gender status.

Roger describes his gender and sexuality as circular and not on a fixed binary. “It’s like peering through a kaleidoscope and seeing multiples shapes, colors, expressions, and beauty,” he explains. He sings about it in his new single, “Kaleidoscope,” a song rooted in classic house and progressive EDM that champions finding inner strength and celebrating liberation, and his new book, *Somacultural Liberation*, out this month. “For me, freedom is living my truth and pursuing my dreams,” he continues.

It is why, after working as a psychotherapist for the past decade, Roger Kuhn decided to take time away from his practice to prioritize



Photo By Bjorn Bolinder

his creative expression once again. He explains more from his home in Los Angeles.

Larry Olsen: Growing up in conservative North Dakota had to be difficult for you.

Roger Kuhn: If I wasn’t being picked on for being bi-racial, I was being made fun of for my perceived gender and sexual orientation variance. I was always a target, and it was sad because feeling included is so important. Being treated with equality and equity is vital to one’s wellbeing. One of the primary reasons I became a musician and author was to break free from the limitations that others placed on me my whole life. I discovered that through writing and song, I could share my truth.

L.O: What is your truth?

RK: That I am an Indigiqueer person. There are few examples of

Indigiqueer people in mainstream media. I’ve had to learn new ways to navigate systems that were put in place to silence and control Indigenous people.

L.O: Have you faced discrimination within the LGBTQ community?

RK: Countless times, both personally and collectively. Being Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ presents with unique complications. We face different issues and challenges that others in the community do not experience or understand. I have stood my ground with many Caucasian gay men who have tried to convince me they were as marginalized as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color LGBTQIA+ people are.

L.O: What exactly does it mean to be Two Spirit?

RK: Two-Spirit is a term used by Indigenous people who have gender



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and sexual orientation variance and a deep connection to their Native identity. I first learned the term in 2005 from another Two-Spirit person who upon meeting said to me, "oh you're like me, Two-Spirit". He then explained what it meant and I immediately resonated with the term. I identify more as Two-Spirit than I do as gay because being a Native American person is as important to me as my identity as a gay person. Two-Spirit allows me to not have to choose.

L.O: What pronouns do you prefer to use?

R.K: I use he/him pronouns though I am also comfortable with they/them. If we are homies, she works too.

L.O: I'm curious to know how you feel about Demi Lovato switching her pronouns from they/them back to she/her after she grew tired of having to explain her gender identity.

R.K: I believe it's important to recognize that some people come from a privileged place where they

don't have to explain themselves. For others, living in our truth requires work and a willingness to be witnessed in our vulnerability.

L.O: Is "Kaleidoscope" intended to be a Two-Spirit anthem?

R.K: It's an anthem for all of us really. Kaleidoscope is about trusting our vulnerability and pursuing our inner most truth. For me, part of that was to embrace my identity as a Poarch Creek Two-Spirit person and to advocate for other 2SLGBTQIA+ and all marginalized people.

L.O: In 2022, you were featured in the Levi's Pride campaign, promoting awareness and acceptance within the Two-Spirit community. How did that come about?

R.K: Six years ago, I made a sign that I carried with me in the San Francisco Pride Parade. It read: Decolonize Sexuality. It got a lot of attention and was featured in several media outlets. I carried the sign again in the next year's parade and it caught the attention of Levi's. They reached out and invited me to partake in a photoshoot that they ended up using in their Pride campaign. The campaign ran in Target and Macy's stores in the US and appeared internationally on Levi's social media.

L.O: Where are you in your quest to find



happiness and satisfaction in your life?

R.K: I am at a really great place in my life. I know that all the work I have done on myself over the years has paid off. I have a great connection with all of my family and friends and this year, I will celebrate my eighteenth anniversary with my husband, fifteen years married.

L.O: What advice would you have for someone still struggling to find their place and/or their people?

R.K: Don't put on facades. I am careful to always be open, honest, caring, and supportive. I don't give my time or talent to people who don't respect my boundaries and limitations. Ultimately, I love myself and know myself enough to recognize that I still have a lot to learn and unlearn. I welcome growth and change. I encourage others to do the same.

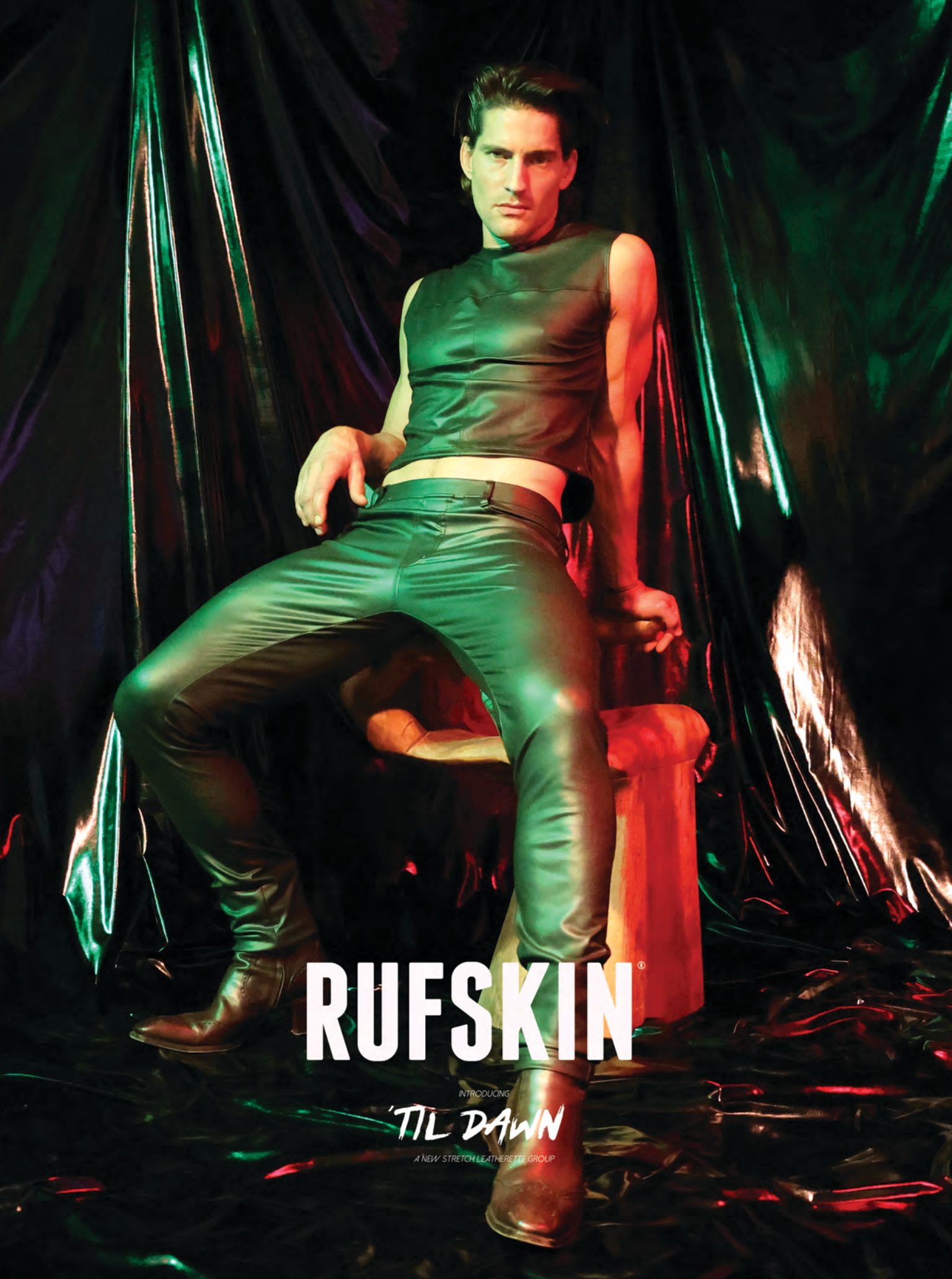
L.O: What do you hope fans take away from "Kaleidoscope"?

R.K: The power of vulnerability will lead you closer to your liberation. Trust that you have wings and you can soar.

Roger Kuhn's "Kaleidoscope" is being distributed by So Fierce Music/ The Orchard/Sony Music Entertainment and is available on all digital platforms.

For more Visit www.rogerkuhn.com





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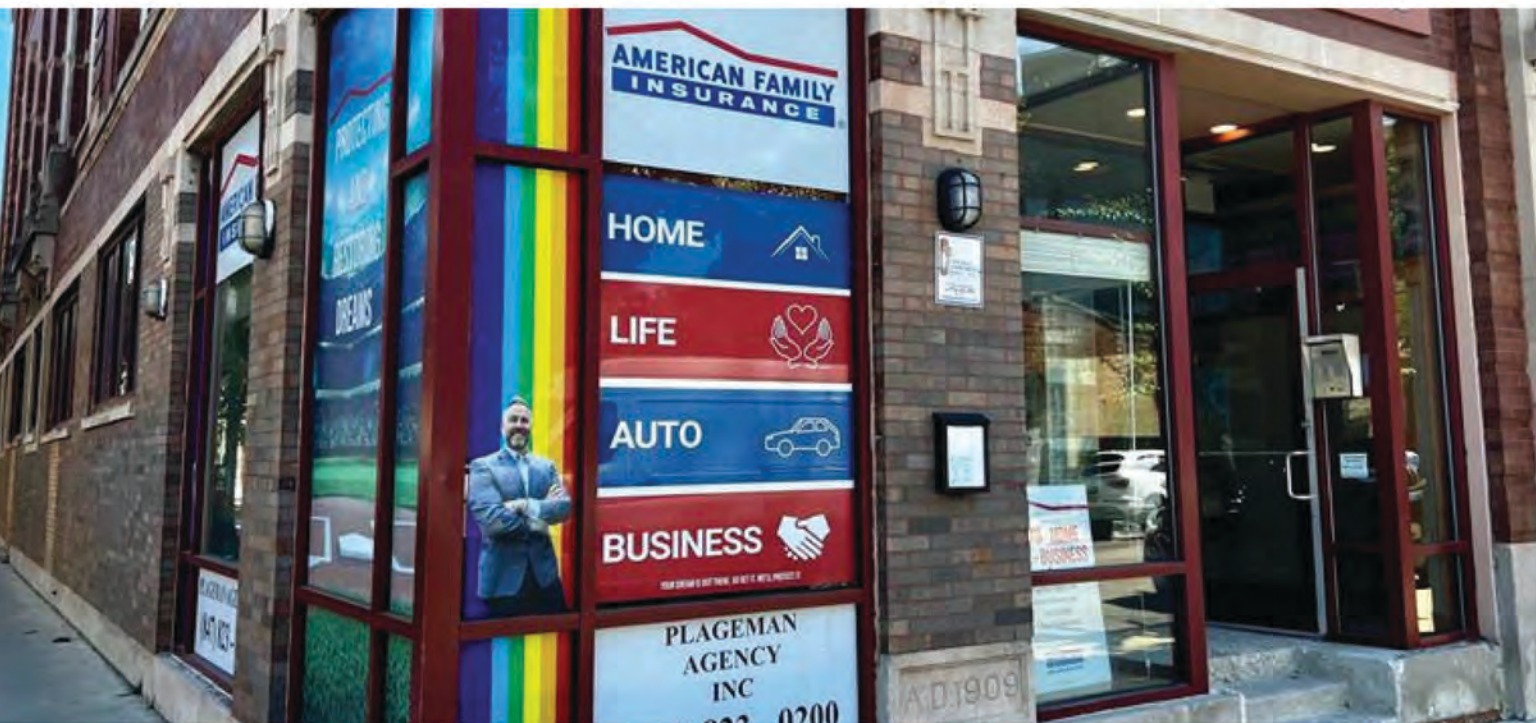
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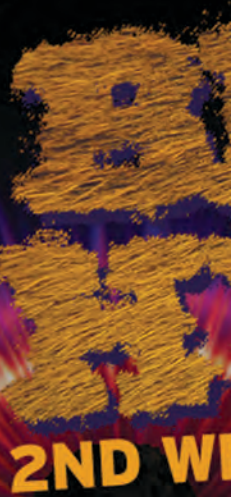
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MONDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Stoli Cocktails (Any Flavor), Everyday Specials: \$5Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlies:** Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** \$5 10oz Margaritas. **Hydrate:** Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm.. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$5 Well Drinks. **Shakers on Clark:** Comedy Night \$1 off Well Drinks and Well Shots. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. **The Sofa Tap:** \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm-4am. Horny Bastards A Night for those who just didn't get enough over the weekend.

TUESDAY

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

WEDNESDAY

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

THURSDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons . Everyday Specials:\$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. **Charlie's:** Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** Bottomless Tacos! \$23.95 5pm-10pm , Must purchase a beverage for special. Dine in Only. **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Miller Lit Tallboys Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$6 Tito Cocktails, Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails. **Shakers on Clark:** \$1 off All Call Liquor Mixed Drinks. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Let's Go Thursdays with Alex Kay & Friends 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. **The Sofa Tap:** \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails\$5 Tallboy Beers Everyday Specials: , \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm - 4am.Throwback Thursdays70's & 80's Music & Porn by BijouVideo. Thanksgiving Open 8pm 70's & 80's Music.

Daily Specials;

FRIDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. Happy Hour Specials: 3pm-6pm: \$4 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p-1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p-1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p-1am, 5th Fierce Fridays - Strut 10p-1am, Dancing until close. **D.S. Tequila Co:** TGIF Special \$5 Effen Cocktails and \$4 Hornitos Shots. Hydrate: Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Jackhammer:** \$5 Miller Lite Tallboys \$8 New Amsterdam & Redbull Happy Hour Specials 5-9pm: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons \$5 Chicago Handshake Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$6 Tito's Cocktails \$7.50 Big Miller Lites. Happy Hour Specials 5pm-8pm: \$5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. **The Sofu Tap:** \$3 House Shots, \$7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts Happy Hour Specials: 3pm-6pm: \$4 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tall Boys Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm-4am. 1/19 Cowboy RoundUp, 7/26 MCL 2024 Weekend Welcome Party

SATURDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$6 Lagunitas IPADrafts. Happy Hour Specials: 1/2 Off All Drafts \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-3am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7-10pm, The Main Event 10pm-1am Dancing until Close. **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$5 Miller Lite Tallboys Happy Hour Specials 5-9pm: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons \$5 Chicago Handshake Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Jackhammer:** \$3 House Shots \$5 Miller Lite TallBoys Happy Hour Specials: \$5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons. Everyday Specials: \$5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, \$4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** \$5 Signature Margaritas Happy Hour Specials 2pm-5pm: \$5 New Amsterdam Cocktails \$12 Mimosa Carafes, Everyday Specials \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. **North End:** Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games with Sasha & Zamora Love 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **The Sofu Tap:** \$5 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat, \$5 Signature Margaritas, Happy Hour Specials: 12pm-3pm: 1/2 Off All Drafts Everyday Specials: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR, Hamm's) Free Darts. **Touche:** Open 2pm-5am. 1/20 Gear Night with Bluf Chicago dress Code in Clubroom BNC 6pm., 1/27 MCL 2024 Gear Swap @noon MCL 2024 Contest @9pm Victory Party Follows.

SUNDAY

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



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Top 30 Dance Chart For the First week of January

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	Artist	Title
1	Icona Pop	Where Do We Go From Here
2	Tate McRae	Greedy (Alok Clean Radio Edit)
3	Ofice x Jayem	Can't Deny Ft. Alix Robson
4	Sophie And The Giants X Purple Disco Mach	Paradise
5	Armin Van Buuren	Lose This Feeling
6	Sonny Fodera & Paul Woolford & Ella Henderson	Like I Used To (Radio Edit)
7	Bingo Players X Stadiumx	Good Times Ft. Gemaine
8	Loud Luxury	Young & Foolish ft. charlieonnafriday
9	Disco Fries x Sarah de Warren	The Edge (Finky's Shorter Edit)
10	Eren Ab & Lena Leon	Fyi
11	Loud Luxury & Two Friends	If Only I Ft. Bebe Rexha
12	Bingo Players X Goshfather	Be Mine
13	Sesco	Feel Good
14	Manyfew	Love You (One More Chance)
15	Noizu	Vogue (Radio Edit)
16	Kastra & Alex Byrne	Denial
17	Zayn	Love Like This (Mura Masa Remix)
18	DJ Sammy	Have You Seen The Rain
19	Tungevaag X Steerner	Imma Love You
20	Electric Polar Bears	Where We Started
21	Brando	Too Close
22	PS1	Out For 1
23	Purple Disco Machine x Duke Dumont x Nothing E	Something On My Mind (Radio Edit)
24	Switch Disco	Vacancy
25	The Knocks & Sofi Tukker	One On One (Radio Edit)
26	Ferry Corsten	Stay Awake ft. Diandra Faye (US RADIO EDIT)
27	The Blessed Madonna & Gabriels	Mercy Ft. Jacob Lusk
28	Vassy	Krazy
29	Morgan Page X Farfetchd	Runaway Ft. The Dirty Rich
30	Nathan Dawe x Bebe Rexha	Heart Still Beating

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GRAB ROGER

Landlord's Obligation to Return Security Deposits

By Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq.

Q: I am planning to move out of my apartment during the spring. I expect to have a problem with my landlord in getting my security deposit refunded when I move. What is my landlord's responsibility under the law to return my security deposit? Can I use my security deposit as the last month's rent? Does my landlord have to pay me interest for the time he had my security deposit?

A: Chicago's "Residential Tenant and Landlord Ordinance" applies to all residential, rental real estate located within the City of Chicago. The law establishes responsibilities for landlords not only in leasing apartments but in handling their tenant's security deposits (the law does not apply, however, to owners of buildings of six units or less and owner occupied).

If you rented your apartment, renewed your lease or paid a security deposit for your apartment after January 1, 1987, and your

apartment is within the City of Chicago, then the ordinance governs your landlord's obligations to return your security deposit and renew your lease.

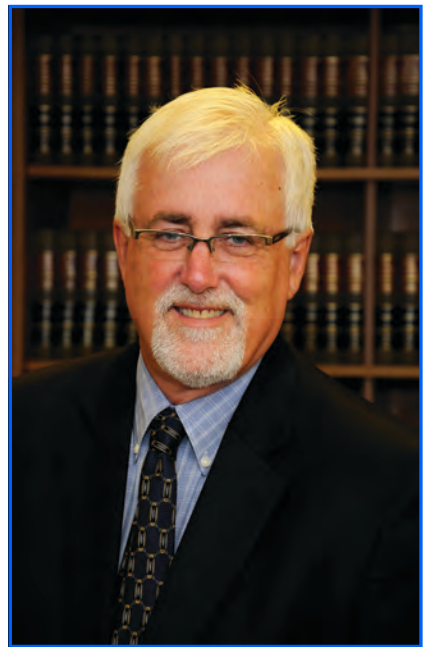
The ordinance requires landlords to hold all security deposits in a separate, interest bearing account in a federally insured bank or savings and loan located within the State of Illinois. The landlord must pay interest to his tenants. And the landlord is obligated, within 30 days of the end of each 12-month rental period, to pay any interest due to the tenant by cash or a credit against the rent.

When a landlord receives a security deposit from a new or existing tenant, he is obligated to give a receipt to the tenant showing the date received, the amount of the deposit and the name of the person receiving it. If the landlord fails to provide a receipt for the security deposit, the tenant has the right to make demand for the return of the security deposit and the landlord must return it.

The security deposit cannot be used for the last month's rent

although it is a very common practice. Under the law, the tenant must pay the last month's rent even though they plan to move at the end of the last month. When the apartment is vacated, the landlord has 45 days within which to return the security deposit to the tenant plus any interest.

Your landlord may deduct from the security deposit any unpaid rent and a reasonable amount necessary to repair any damage to the property. If the apartment is damaged and your landlord wants to deduct money from the security deposit to pay for the repairs, the landlord must, within 30 days after the tenant vacates the apartment, deliver or mail to the tenant an itemized statement of the damages



caused to the premises and the estimated or actual cost of repairing each item. If the items have been repaired, the landlord must attach copies of the paid receipts for the repairs or replacements. It's smart for all tenants to take photographs of their apartment showing that their apartment was left undamaged in case of a dispute.

If the landlord or the landlord's agent (management company) fails to comply with the city ordinance or refuses to return the security deposit, the tenant can take the landlord to court and recover an amount equal to two times the security deposit plus interest with court costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

Cook County residents can use Cook County's Pro Se Court to file lawsuits without having to hire an attorney. Filing a suit in Pro Se Court is relatively easy. The Pro Se Court's staff helps individuals who want to sue – they are called plaintiffs – to fill out the appropriate forms in Room 602 of the Richard J. Daley Center.

Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a graduate of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at RVMLawyer@aol.com. He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.

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The Fable of the Hunting Dog

By Holly Maholm

Dot and I were sitting with Queen Penelope and Sassy Pants in the orchard, where Dot and I had brought packed lunches. Both of us had included a brownie in our lunch, but when we commenced our meal, I saw Dot started with her brownie, instead of her sandwich. I commented, "So, Dot, I see you are one of those who start with 'dessert' rather than saving it to the end, like most people." Dot responded, "Yes, and there are many more like me; who have our reasons for defying the expectations of the majority. As the saying goes, 'There are two types of people in this world, those who divide the world up into two types, and those who do not.'" Sassy smiled, then chimed in.

"Actually, there is a fable we unicorns teach our youngsters that touches on that observation. Let me share it with you." She continued. "Once there was a unicorn – a queen, whom I will call Vera – who liked to take naps in a sheltered glade in the forest. One day, she was dozing there when a group of rabbits surrounded her and – using gentle nudges of their paws – woke her up. She looked surprised, and one rabbit stepped forward.

"Your majesty," he began, "we are in desperate need of your protection! Our lives are in danger, and only you can save us." Vera responded, "Oh, dear! Please tell me how I can help." The rabbit went on. "Not far from the fields and forest where we live, there is a house where a human and his family reside. And that human owns a dog, which he uses when he goes hunting. Now, when that human is not hunting, he keeps his dog chained up in his yard, but at night he lets his dog run free.

"That dog is large and swift and fierce; he quickly finds the scent of our species; and it never fails that he runs down and kills several of our number. But, he does not take the bodies of those rabbits back to his master, nor does he eat those bodies, himself. No. He only kills those rabbits for sport, as if he gets his entire reward in killing, but is never satisfied, no matter how many he kills.

"Vera pondered what to do, then gave the rabbits their instructions. The next night, when the dog caught the scent of rabbits and followed it, it brought him to that place in the forest where Queen Vera was waiting. When the dog saw the Queen, he stopped and stared in amazement. The Queen spoke, 'I believe you know who I am,

and what role I – and the Species Unicorn – play in that great Assemblage of Animals. It is our duty to do what we can to safeguard the many species of animals, and where necessary, to adjudicate conflicts that arise. The rabbits have brought to me just such a grievance they have with you, that you are killing members of their species wantonly and without just cause.'

"But while the Queen was speaking, the dog – instead of acknowledging the gravity of the situation – gave free rein to his pride, arrogance and conceit. He replied, 'I know who you are, and I've heard of your species and what role you pretend to play. You claim authority to decide disputes between various species of



animals, but you lack the power to enforce your judgments, and you ignore certain irrefutable facts which permit me to defy your authority.

'First, I am a predator, and you and the rabbits are – to me – no more than "prey." Yes, I kill the rabbits merely for sport, but we predators are deaf to your cries of pain. I have sharp teeth and powerful jaws, and those give me license to kill as I please. But more importantly, I am a domesticated animal, property of a human.

Accordingly, I am of a completely different type from you wild animals. I answer only to my master, not to you.' He turned and ran off.

Vera sat silently for some time, deciding what to do. At last, she gave the rabbits their assignment, and the next night the rabbits laid down a strong scent that led the dog back to Vera's resting place in the forest. The dog arrived there, breathing heavily and ready to do violence to any prey – rabbit or unicorn – he might encounter. However, though he found Vera resting where she was before, he also found that she had brought with her the She Wolf of the local pack, together with four additional adult wolves.

After the wolves finished killing the hunting dog, the She Wolf explained to Vera, 'Yes, he was a predator like us, but in this world, there are those who pity the weak and those who do not. We do.'

(To be continued)

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

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Photos By Anthony Meade



GRAB A MUSICAL

Screen Queen: Mean-spirited school spirit

By Gregg Shapiro

The trend of adapting films into stage musicals and then movie musicals has produced hits such as “Hairspray” and misses including “The Producers.” **“Mean Girls”** (Paramount), falls somewhere in between, although it leans closer to a miss.

Fans of the original 2004 “Mean Girls” movie, based on Rosalind Wiseman’s 2002 book “Queen Bees & Wannabes,” will be pleased to know that, for the most part, the musical remains true to its source. The ageless Tina Fey, who wrote the screenplays for both, returns as math teacher Ms. Norbury, as does Tim Meadows as Principal Duvall.

There are notable minor changes including making Ms. Heron (Jenna Fischer), the mother of lead character Cady (Angourie Rice), a single parent. The most significant changes include a considerable increase in BIPOC and LGBTQ+ characters, both major and minor, as well as the inescapable presence of social media and smartphones in the lives of high school students.

The bottom line is that

comparisons are inevitable, and Rice is no Lindsay Lohan, Christopher Briney is no Jonathan Bennett, and Busy Philipps is no Amy Poehler. However, René Rapp (who performed in the musical on Broadway) and Jaquel Spivey do succeed in taking complete ownership of their roles as queen bee Regina and sassy queen Damian, respectively. Bebe Wood as Gretchen and Auli’i Cravalho as Janis come close to making us forget the original performers (Lacey Chabert and Lizzy Caplan) but fall short.

Speaking of Lindsay Lohan, her appearance as the Mathletes challenge moderator is sure to elicit the same audience reaction as when Whoopi Goldberg appeared as the midwife in “The Color Purple” movie musical.

The following is a series of



questions (not to be confused with a pop quiz) that deserve to be answered.

Why are the songs, written by Nell Benjamin and Jeff Richmond (husband of Tina Fey), utterly forgettable? Seriously, see if you find yourself humming even one of them after the credits roll.

Why is the choreography so clunky, uninspired, and derivative (hello, “La La Land”)?

Why did it take two (!) directors – Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez, Jr. – to come up with this?

Why are the scenes with the most well-deserved laughs, all featuring Rapp, saved for the last 30 minutes of the movie?

The tradition of the movie musical isn’t exactly in jeopardy, but it doesn’t look promising. The biggest concern? That Benjamin and Richmond, who also co-wrote the stage musical version of “Legally Blonde,” are at work on a movie adaptation of that one.

Rating: C-





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GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"Blood Sisters" by Vanessa Lillie. 2023, Berkley \$27.00
384 pages



It's the truth. Scout's honor. Pinky swear. Spit on your palms or prick your fingers, and shake hands. As a child, you had many ways to show that you intended to keep a promise when you made it and your word was your bond, but you've grown up. Today, you cross your heart but, as in the new novel "Blood Sisters" by Vanessa Lillie, you hope no one has to die.

She wasn't looking for skeletal remains.

For Bureau of Indian Affairs archaeologist Syd Walker, such a find was very unusual but not unknown. Odd things happen during geological surveys on tribal lands everywhere. Still, the gruesome recovery in Rhode Island wasn't top on Syd's mind.

She'd gotten a call that her sister, Emma Lou, was missing in Oklahoma. Again.

Fifteen years before, as Syd, Emma Lou, and Luna, who they'd considered a sister, were chilling in Luna's family's trailer, a group of men broke in. Wearing masks, the "devils" killed Luna and her parents, and the small town of Picher, was never the same.

Neither were Emma Lou or Syd.

As a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Syd was well aware of the problems near her hometown, the issues Native Americans had there with the BIA, and her own ancestors' efforts to survive on land that was given and then snatched back. She also knew the fact that she had a wife at home in Rhode Island set her apart since she'd left. And drugs – too many people on tribal allotments were getting drugs too easily.

But someone wanted Syd to come home: a female skull was found in the crook of a tree with her old work badge in its mouth. Despite knowing that Syd had fled Oklahoma on purpose, her new boss at the BIA pulled strings to arrange the trip and assigned her the case.

Years ago, Syd had promised to

protect Luna and Emma Lou.

One of them was already dead. The other was missing.

Was the skull a threat – or a warning?

Here is the best advice you're going to get when you grab "Blood Sisters": pay close attention to the minutiae. Without being a spoiler, little things mean a lot.

Unless you watch carefully, you'll be cruising along at 200 miles an hour in a screaming run through pages and pages of barely-bearable excitement when suddenly, your brain will make that scratchy sound like a stopped record album. It's there where author Vanessa Lillie drops three tons of TNT, right towards the almost-end of her story and whoa, Nelly. If you're not paying attention, you may have to read the chapter multiple times to cut your "What the...?" down to a manageable level.

Yeah, this is that kind of book, the kind that's written with authenticity, an insider's feel, and heightened tension that'll keep you awake. The kind that you think you know how it'll end and you're wrong. For mystery lovers or thriller fans, "Blood Sisters" is the kind of book you should scout out.

"The Risk It Takes to Bloom: On Life and Liberation" by Raquel Willis c.2023, St. Martin's Press \$29.00
384 pages



The catalogs should start arriving soon.

If you're a gardener, that's a siren song for you. What will you put in your pots and plots this spring? What colors will you have, what crops will you harvest? It never gets old: put a seed no bigger than a breadcrumb into some dirt and it becomes dinner in just weeks. All it needs, as in the new memoir "The Risk It Takes to Bloom" by Raquel Willis, is a little time to grow.

The last time Raquel Willis remembers being completely safe and loved without strings attached was at age five, at a talent show. Shortly afterwards, some elders began telling

Willis to speak with "a particular brand of clear;" to move differently, to act differently. Willis was a Black boy then, and that was how her father worked against his son's "softness."

Willis didn't know the truth about herself then, but other boys did. So, eventually, did the girls, as a grade school Willis "gravitated... toward" them. Young Willis prayed for God to "just make me a girl" but the bullying that had already begun only got worse.

She changed schools and things were no better; meanwhile, her father tried "even harder" to correct who I was becoming." Friends and online friends were encouraging and supportive, offering her courage to come out to her mother, who thought it was "a phase." Her father was angry, then accepting. Other family members took Willis' news in stride.

It was going to be okay. More than okay, in fact, because Willis was introduced to drag, and she started to feel more comfortable in women's clothing than in men's attire. To Willis, the drag troupe had begun feeling like family. She settled into life as a gay drag performer, because that was the "language" she had.

And then one day, while talking on the phone with an on-again off-again boyfriend, something important hit Willis, hard.

"I think I'm a woman," she told him. "I'm a woman.... I am."

Sometimes, it takes awhile to understand the person you really are. Half a book, in this case, because "The Risk It Takes to Bloom" is quite wordy: author Raquel Willis tells her story in excruciating detail, and it can get rather long.

And yet, the length allows for clues that readers can follow, to truly see the woman, the activist and writer, who penned this book. But is that enough to attract readers? What sets this book apart from other, similar books by star-powered Black trans women?

The answer lies in the approachability of its author.

Willis tells her tale with a more anchoring feel, more down-to-earth, like she could have lived up the street from you or sat in the last row of your high school Algebra class. You could've known her. You could know someone like her. Or Willis could be you.

Indeed, this book might hold plainspoken inspiration for anyone who needs it. If that's you, get "The Risk It Takes to Bloom," find a chair, and plant yourself.



Photos By Anthony Meade

SPLASH CHICAGO



WILMOT MOUNTAIN TO HOST A GAY SKI DAY SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2024

Wilmot Mountain has announced the details of their first Gay Ski Day. Below is a list of family-friendly activities that are planned for the day are as follows Times and additional details can be found on the resort's website as they come to fruition.

- \$5 rentals after 3 pm
- Cookie Decorating Class
- Drink Specials
- Guests are invited to wear family-friendly pride outfits
- S'mores on the Patio
- Glow items, Pride Flags, & Party Favors being handed out
- Light Up Archway Photo Op (after dark)
- Kringle samplings on the plaza.

Details are still in the works, but planning for a Ski Pride Parade.

About Wilmot Mountain

Learn to ski like a future CEO – Close proximity to large metropolitan areas, affordability, and a smaller footprint to build

confidence quickly are all benefits new skiers reap when visiting smaller ski hills. Vail Resorts' own **Kirsten Lynch** (who took over the reins as CEO Nov. 1, 2021) learned to ski in the Matterhorn of the Midwest (aka Wilmot Mountain) during her childhood.

The resort's World Class Ski and Ride School caters to newbies. Embrace the winter season and book a group or private lesson; learn to ski yourself or give your kids a gift that will last a lifetime.

Bonus: Epic Pass holders received a 20% discount on group lessons. This is another reason to add this pastime to your winter bucket list.

Accessible, affordable, and fun, this big-time resort with a small-



town feel has converted thousands of first-timers into lifelong skiers and riders, and now, with the opportunity to take that passion to Vail Resorts' iconic western mountains, Wilmot Mountain is truly the place where Epic begins.

Follow Wilmot Mountain for updates and real-time information on Instagram: wilmotmtn and on Facebook: Wilmot Mountain. For more information about Wilmot Mountain, visit WilmotMountain.com.

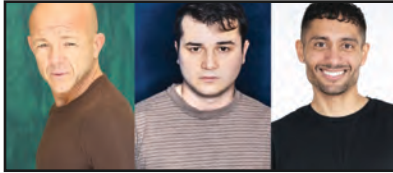
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**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR
OPEN SPACE ARTS
PRODUCTION OF THE
CLASSIC GAY PLAY
SUNSETS: TWO ACTS ON
A BEACH, OPENING
FEBRUARY 2**



Open Space Arts has announced its cast for *SUNSETS: TWO ACTS ON A BEACH* by **Cal Yeomans**, a long-lost drama by an early pioneer of gay theater. Kevin Wood will direct this evening of two one-act plays, which was last performed at the 1982 American Gay Arts Festival in Chicago and offers an intimate exploration of human sexuality and relationships from an era before AIDS era and before online hookups. Both plays are set next to a men's room on a Florida gulf coast beach – the sort of place where seaside frolics take a different turn when the sun goes down.

John Cardone will appear in Act One: "The Line Forms to the Rear," as Henry, a former drag performer who finds a new life purpose in a most unusual type of social service. This one-act play is a monologue that delves into the complexities of gay life with heavy yet authentic language. **Christopher Sylvie** and **Aaron Cappello** will perform in Act Two: "At the End of the Road," which explores the developing relationship – physical and emotional - between Dan (Cappello), a young, bi-curious, and married construction worker; and John (Sylvie), a forty-something realtor who is a regular visitor to this particular stretch of beach. Cardone also appear in Act Two as Henry's drag persona Henrietta. The production contains nudity. Opening night is Friday, February 2 at 7:30 pm and the play will run through Sunday, February 19, 2024. All performances will be in the intimate 20-seat theatre at Open Space Arts, 1411 W. Wilson Ave., Chicago.

For Tickets or more information
Visit www.openspacearts.com

**STEPPEWOLF THEATRE
COMPANY ANNOUNCES
LOOKOUT
SPRING 2024 SEASON**



LookOut, Steppenwolf Theatre's performance series that presents the work of artists and companies across genre and form, proudly announces its Spring 2024 season, showcasing the work of Chicago's vibrant community of dancers, choreographers and movement makers. Highlights from the lineup of seven unique engagements include Anjal Chande's solo work *The Next Cup of Tea* that is the culmination of seven years of development; Maggie Bridger's multi-media and universally accessible inquiry of pain and care; and a work exploring Black futures against the backdrop of empire from interdisciplinary artist Benji Hart.

Additionally, the LookOut Series is excited to announce the return of its curatorial residency program, offering an opportunity for a Chicago dance practitioner to curate a series of performances over a two-week span. Following the success of last season's series work around curated by Kara Brody and Amanda Maraist, this season Helen Lee curates a series entitled *MERGE*, colliding musicians and dancers in unexpected configurations.

LookOut Series Associate Producer Lauren Steinberg comments, "When we hosted work around last spring, we were struck by how many members of the local dance community showed up to support the series. Since then, it has become abundantly clear that Chicago practitioners need more resources and space to show their work. We're thrilled that Helen Lee will continue this mission with *MERGE*, which will feature more than a dozen artists."

All LookOut performances take place in Steppenwolf's 1700 Theater, the intimate venue nestled behind Front Bar, 1700 N. Halsted St.

Tickets now on sale at steppenwolf.org/lookout or by

calling the Box Office at (312) 335-1650.

**GROUND FLOOR THEATRE
ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR
WORLD PREMIERE OF
ALWAYS A BOY
FEBRUARY 15 – MARCH 2**



Ground Floor Theatre (GFT) announces casting for the world premiere of *Always A Boy* written by Jo Ivester and Jeremy Ivester and directed by Ground Floor Theatre Co-Artistic Director Lisa Scheps. *Always A Boy* plays February 15 – March 2, 2024 at Ground Floor Theatre.

Inspired by the bestselling 2020 memoir "Never a Girl, Always a Boy" by award-winning author Jo Ivester, this new work tells a family's journey and a coming-out story with humor and warmth. Honest and hard-hitting, *Always A Boy* shares the tough moments as well as the joyful ones with a story of acceptance in a family that always knew how to love, but needed to learn how to accept.

Before making its world premiere at Ground Floor Theatre, *Always a Boy* had a recent industry presentation on October 13, 2023 in New York City under the direction of Tony-Award winning producer JJ Maley (*A Strange Loop*), with dramaturg and creative consultant Mika Kauffman.

"Storytelling is a powerful way to combat prejudice. *About a Boy* is an adaptation of my story and transition," said playwright **Jeremy Ivester**. "It's easy to dehumanize and hate what you don't understand, and my hope is that the play shows just how human I am -- that we are just people and therefore deserving of love and respect and the ability to exist in this world."

Tickets on sale now at groundfloortheatre.org/boy.

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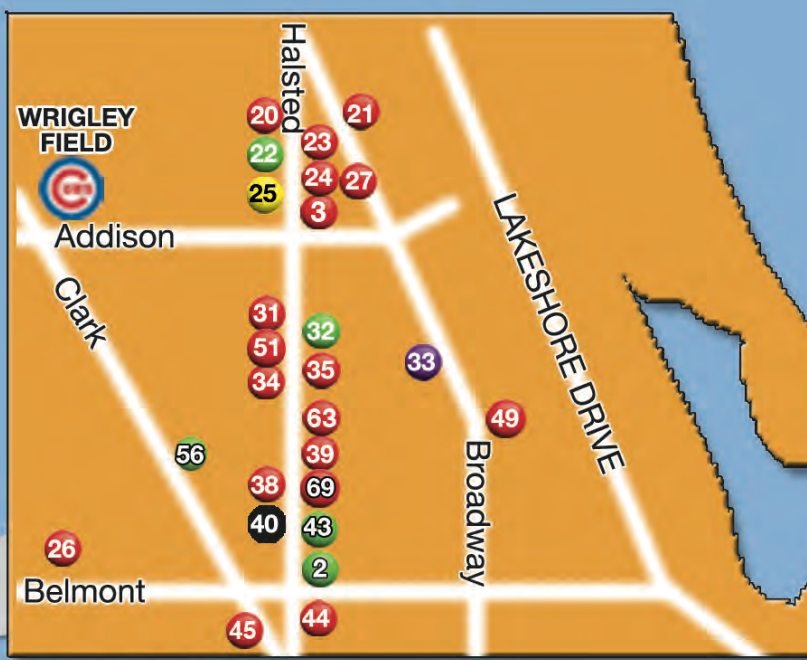
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