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GRAB TRACEY

FILM



Photo Courtesy of Quantrell D. Colbert / Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures

Why Tracey Scott Wilson Deserves Your Respect How the 'Respect' screenwriter's sexual identity influenced her telling of Aretha's story

By Chris Azzopardi

Aretha Franklin's journey to self-discovery is seen through the lens of openly lesbian screenwriter Tracey Scott Wilson in "Respect," the biopic starring Jennifer Hudson as Detroit's own Queen of Soul. In director Liesl Tommy's film, Wilson focuses on Franklin's tumultuous path to the top, one that involved many years of fighting for personal and professional agency.

During her formative years, Aretha was bound to the controlling men in her life, namely her first husband, Ted White, and father, C.L. Franklin. That is, until she realized she didn't have to be. The movie's message — find your own voice — is one Wilson is very familiar with. After all, she's lesbian. And, like Aretha, a preacher's daughter.

From Brooklyn, the screenwriter spoke about how being part of the LGBTQ+ community influenced her script, why Aretha isn't considered a

gay icon, and how she wants the Queen's song "Ain't No Way" to be reclaimed as the gay anthem she says it is.

Chris Azzopardi: There are so many ways to tell Aretha's story. How do you think your identity helped shape the narrative direction of the story as you chose to tell it?

Tracey Scott: That's such a great question and something that no one has ever asked me. I didn't know that Carolyn [Aretha's younger sister] was a lesbian and so, when I found that out, that was just huge. I was like, "Wow. I wonder what would've happened had I known that when I was a kid."

So, reading about Aretha's family and the uniqueness of circumstances. And, also, my father was a minister. Obviously not as big as C.L., but I was very sort of tuned into the preacher's

kid part of me because, whenever you're a preacher's kid, you have to find your own identity outside of your parents. It can be so overwhelming. So I was just thinking about Carolyn and being a preacher's kid, with a world-famous father at that. And then also, as a gay person, to decide you're going to live your truth is just remarkable. Aretha, you know, never questioned [it]. They completely accepted that.

CA: So was Carolyn your inroad to this story?

TS: I think that Aretha was still the inroad, but because of her and Erma [Aretha's elder sister], they were really important because I realized how much they influenced her, and vice versa. Their relationship was very formative to her. And whenever I was thinking about Aretha, I was thinking about where her sisters were at that moment.

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CA: Of course there's gay gospel musician and Aretha collaborator James Cleveland, played by Tituss Burgess in the movie. Do you think Aretha coming out of her shell and harnessing her inner power had anything to do with the LGBTQ+ people around her, like Carolyn and James?

TS: I actually do believe that. James Cleveland would have these parties and there were just gay people there, where it was sort of unspoken. Singers in the Black churches, ministers of music...

I think that her father, from all of my research, was just never sort of judgmental about that. I mean, I think it was different when it came to his own daughter. But I do think that seeing so many people — women, gay men — just live their truest under her father's roof really did help her later on, in terms of just declaring her own identity.

CA: Why do you think Aretha's contemporaries, like Diana Ross and Patti LaBelle, are considered gay icons but Aretha is rarely referred to as one?

TS: I think that the reason she hasn't traditionally fallen into that category is

because of her relationship with the church. For so many gay people, the church has been a source of pain. And for Aretha, it was a source of pain, but also her greatest source of inspiration. I think that's why she wasn't a gay icon. You know, "Amazing Grace" is her best-selling album [Note: It's also the best selling gospel album of all time, period]. Whereas Patti LaBelle grew up in the church as well, but musically she wasn't as connected to it. Same thing as Diana Ross. Diana Ross, growing up in the Motown scene, she didn't have anything to do with that. So, I think that's the unintended barrier, because she definitely had all of the other qualities these women had. The larger-than-life persona, the feminism...

CA: And the shade. The shade was just so good.

TS: The shade. Oh my god.

CA: To me, a lot of things that Aretha had done in her career fall into the gay icon category: the over-the-top exuberance, the voice, the sass, the shade.

TS: Carolyn, she wrote "Ain't No Way" to be... it's a gay anthem. When you

look at those lyrics, it was so clear. You know what she's talking about.

CA: Do you think Aretha knew?

TS: Oh, absolutely. I think the lyrics spoke to her as well, but her singing there was also an acknowledgement of her sister. [Aretha] was very private, so she didn't talk about her life and she certainly wasn't going to talk about her sister's private life. I think if it would have been known, she would've been right up there with Cher.

CA: I can't find a lot of examples of Aretha actually openly talking about her LGBTQ+ fanbase.

TS: I don't think that was because of any type of shame. I just think that she was so intensely private that any opening up of that conversation would've meant talking about Carolyn. It would've meant talking about James Cleveland. It would've meant talking about her childhood. And she just didn't want to.

CA: It sounds like Aretha's relationship with Carolyn gave you some insight into how Aretha felt about the community.

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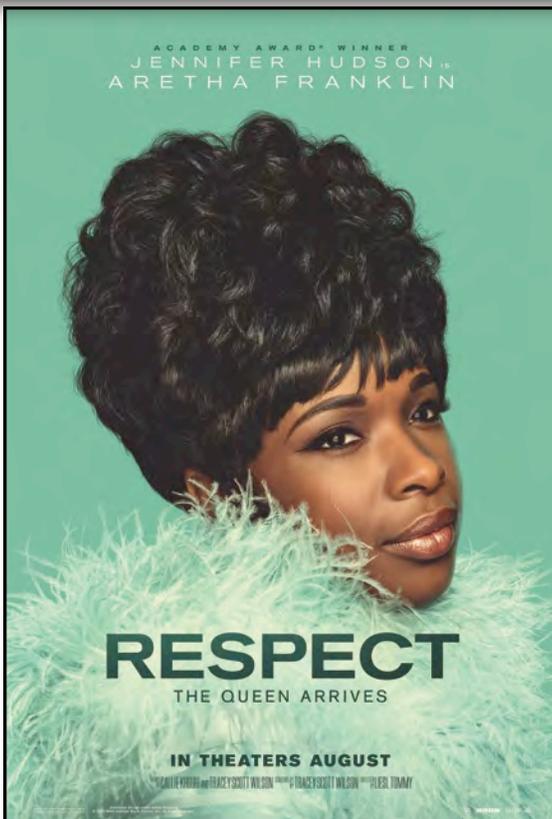
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TS: James Cleveland as well. You can see from “Amazing Grace” how close they were, growing up at the house with him. He was obviously very open about it.

CA: Because of the movie, now I hear “Ain't No Way” in a brand new queer light. It really does sound like a gay anthem.

TS: Yeah, it really is. I hope it gets reclaimed. Because of just time, I wasn't able to talk about Carolyn being a lesbian in the movie. There were a couple of scenes where I sort of laid it out. They had conversations, but it had to be cut. But I just hope it gets reclaimed for the anthem that it is.

CA: Can you talk about the scenes that didn't make the cut?

TS: There's a scene where Erma and Aretha were

talking with Carolyn, and Carolyn is feeling sorry about somebody she dated that was crazy [laughs]. It was a scene where Aretha and Erma were talking to Carolyn, and they were asking her about someone she had previously dated and Carolyn was basically saying, “Don't. Please. Don't ever mention that girl's name again.” And there was another scene where she started wrestling with who she was interested in.

CA: Maybe the follow-up you write is Carolyn's story.

TS: Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't it? Carolyn and James's story.

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 RICHARD

FILM



Photo Courtesy of Monarchy Enterprises

Richard E. Grant Puts His Best Heel Forward In ‘Everybody’s Talking About Jamie,’ the veteran actor plays a gay warrior queen who inspires a young drag artist

By Chris Azzopardi

On the heels of his Oscar-nominated role as Jack Hock in “Can You Ever Forgive Me?” alongside Melissa McCarthy, actor Richard E. Grant takes on another aging gay man who embodies AIDS-era homosexuality. This time, though, the British actor’s character, Hugo Battersby, is literally in heels.

In “Everybody’s Talking About Jamie,” adapted from the coming-of-age British stage musical, Grant’s Hugo moonlights as Loco Chanelle, one of the most popular drag queens on the scene during a major turning point in the gay liberation movement, when AIDS devastated the LGBTQ+ community and forever changed the men, like Hugo, who lived through it.

He wasn’t just a drag queen — he was a warrior queen. Just the kind of figure Jamie (Max Harwood), the film’s titular character, needs as he navigates his young queer life as an aspiring queen whose bullies and school administration stand in the way of him being his true self.

Grant, also known for his roles in “Bram Stoker’s Dracula,” “Spice World” and “Gosford Park,” spoke about the role days before the heartbreaking passing of his wife, veteran Hollywood voice and dialect coach Joan Washington. In our interview, Grant talked about the major differences between Jack and Hugo, how bingeing 11 seasons of “RuPaul’s Drag Race” was his crash course in drag, and the

unforeseen problem of being in costume and having to pee.

Chris Azzopardi: You look good in drag, Richard. It makes me think that, perhaps, you had a past in drag. Is that something that we should talk about?

Richard Grant: Chris, this is entirely due to the amazing artwork of Guy Common, the makeup designer and applier; Nadia Stacey for the statue-like wig; and Guy Speranza, for his amazing costume of the double-D bra. That’s all their work. I can take no credit for this, whatsoever. They provided the armor for this.

CA: Was it the double-D bra that

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really helped you get into character as Loco?

RG: And six inch heels, leopard-skin tights and being 6'8" and having to bend through doorways. That does something to your psyche. [Laughs.]

CA: Did playing Loco have you considering your own drag name if, say, you were to compete on "RuPaul's Drag Race"?

RG: I think it would have to be Regina D'Lumpious.

CA: I look forward to the national tour.

RG: Oh my god. I watched 11 series of "RuPaul's Drag Race" in three weeks. I've never seen drag before, so I thought this was the best way of trying to immerse myself into the vulnerability and sheer steely determination that you have to have to live that life.

CA: How did your crash course in drag prepare you to play Loco?

RG: The vulnerability, on the one hand, and the incredible nerve that it takes, and then throwing shade and sass, and that every single drag artist had some prejudice to overcome, either within their own family or in society. So I thought that the courage that they have is absolutely extraordinary. They may be

crying backstage or having a meltdown or some tragedy has happened, and yet, they go onstage in all this gear and just deliver. And I felt that was really key to Hugo/Loco. These two sides, it's so extreme.

CA: Hugo's story is one of resilience — he lived through the AIDS epidemic, lost a lot of friends to the virus, including his partner — and Jamie recognizes that.

RG: He's kind of an emotional anchor and [there's] the historical overview too, because Jamie is out happily at the age of 16. His real struggle is convincing the school to accept him in drag, which is a very different journey from what Hugo has gone through with Stonewall, the hedonism of the '70s and the legalization of homosexuality, certainly, in the UK in 1967, which is a historical blink away. Then followed by this scourge of AIDS in the '80s and '90s, where you know generations of people were wiped out. It's such a different struggle than what Jamie knows and is going through. And I thought that being done in a montage with a song called "This Was Me" was a very smart way of bringing that historical context into the movie.

CA: How do you know so much

LGBTQ+ history?

RG: Where I grew up in this tiny country in Southeast Africa, I don't recall ever meeting anybody that I knew was gay. But certainly, when I went to drama college and university and going into the theater, there are many gay people. So, I suppose by osmosis and accumulation of people that you are surrounded by. So many designers and makeup artists and costume designers in my career experience have been gay. I think that informs you. People who had the best parties or the best clothes or the best music choices, they were the people that, in my experience, were gay.

So it seemed like the chosen people compared to the rest of us, who were wearing slouchy clothes or not having good taste, which I know is playing to a complete cliché.

I was also friends with an actor called Ian Charleson, who played the lead in "Chariots of Fire" in the early '80s. He died of AIDS in 1990. I've worked with him a couple of times. So he was really the inspiration for how I approached playing Jack Hock in "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" Then I went to RuPaul's school on TV to try and learn how to play Hugo Battersby/Loco Chanelle. So I think that you can't work in show business and not be educated by gay people. You'd have to be in a

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universe of only doing action movies with hyper-machismo people to not be aware.

CA: A couple of years ago you said it was “unjustifiable” when straight actors play gay roles, which has obviously been an ongoing conversation in the business. But you're gay in this movie.

SG: It's the first thing I said to [director] Jonathan Butterell when he offered me this part. I said, “You should cast a drag artist or an openly gay actor to play this part because you and I are gonna get into trouble for doing this.” And he said, “The creative team are all gay, and we have decided you have sad eyes, and we think that you're right for this part.” So I said, “Well, you know, if it comes down on your head or mine that you should have cast a gay actor, be warned.” But he was very determined.

CA: Do you think Jack and Hugo would be friends if they met on the street?

SG: I think that Jack is such a gregarious huckster, and chances are that he never saw himself as a failure. Whereas, I think that Hugo knows that he's a failure. And he's lost his partner. Jack had lost his partner, as well, but there is something innately optimistic about him, about Jack Hock, that is what makes him ludicrous and funny and vulnerable. Whereas Hugo is until he meets Jamie, who really ignites his love of drag and gives him a kind of brief second act in his life.

I think that Jack Hock would probably think that Hugo was a sad, old



Photo Courtesy of Monarchy Enterprises

has-been [laughs] and not worth bothering with. And certainly, because he had no money. Jack was entirely obsessed with anybody who was gonna give him a drug deal or a free meal or a sofa. Hugo doesn't have anything to offer. He would just think he was a sad, old queen. (laughing) He would have no time for him, definitely.

CA: If there's another straight guy out there who wants to transform into drag, what tips can you offer?

SG: Go on a diet. [Laughs.] And when you're in drag and tucked, be warned in advance that you can't eat or drink anything other than tiny sips through a straw because the [work] that it takes to get out of all that gear to go and have a wee is so monumental that you have to

develop the thinking and the physicality of a camel's bladder.

CA: It doesn't sound like a very pleasant experience when you describe it like that.

SG: It's extremely uncomfortable.

CA: Is this the first time that you've walked in heels that high?

SG: Yeah, first time I've been in drag.

CA: Well, I mean, you can still walk in heels without being in drag, Richard.

SG: True. I'm a teenager of the '70s so I had platform heels, but not as high as these were.

CA: How tall were those?

SG: Oh, four inches.

CA: Did you manage to stay up on them? No accidents?

SG: Oh yeah, because the wedges of those ones, in the '70s, were like two inches square. These drag shoes were stiletto heels. Torture chambers. Have you been in drag?

CA: Not full-on drag.

SG: Well, there's always tonight.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity

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



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GRAB JOSIE

MUSIC

Much more than Johnny's girl: An interview with Josie Cotton

By Gregg Shapiro

In terms of music and movies, 1982 was an unexpectedly significant year in queer culture. The movies *Making Love*, *Personal Best*, and *Victor/Victoria* were released in theaters. The UK band *Culture Club*, led by the original gender-bender *Boy George*, burst onto the scene and topped the charts, even winning a Best New Artist Grammy Award in the process. That same year, a singer named Josie Cotton released her debut album *Convertible Music*, containing the campy new wave single "Johnny, Are You Queer?" (written by Bobby and Larson Paine). Depending on where you lived, it was either a hit or just bubbling under. One thing's for certain, it helped to put Cotton on the radar of a lot of LGBTQ+ folks, especially those with a good sense of humor. Of course, the fiber of Cotton's talent is greater than that. Over the course of her career, she released six more albums, had songs featured on movie soundtracks, and founded her own record label. As a record mogul, she's been able to reissue previous albums, including *Pussycat Babylon* on vinyl, as well as see to the long-awaited CD debut of *Convertible Music*. Cotton, who is embarking on an autumn 2021 concert tour was gracious enough to make time for an interview before hitting the road.

Gregg Shapiro: Josie, 2022 marks the 40th anniversary of the release of your debut album *Convertible Music*, which has been rereleased in an expanded edition on colored vinyl as well as on CD by Bomp! and your own Kitten Robot Records. Do you have anything special in the works to mark the occasion?

Josie Cotton: I didn't even realize that was the case. [Laughs] I didn't know there was an anniversary coming, so thank you! I don't have plans at this moment, but it sounds like I should start making them right now [laughs].

GS: Did you have gay friends at the

time that "Johnny, Are You Queer?," the hit single from *Convertible Music*, was released and, if so, were you concerned about how they would react to the song?

JC: I grew up with a whole gay parade of friends of my mom's. She was very progressive, at the time, in Dallas, Texas. She had gay weddings in her house. Her best friends were gay. I grew up in a ballet studio [laughs] with a lot of male dancers who swung that way. And my father turned out to be gay. I'm immersed in it.

GS: Do you recall the way your friends and family reacted to the song?

JC: My friends loved it. Everyone in California was pretty elated over the fact that they had a song that they thought of as their own, which was lovely. The only people who were confused and angry [laughs], as they usually are, was the religious right, who were protesting at KROQ where I think "Johnny..." was number two (in airplay popularity). They thought I was a gay man trying to convert people to homosexuality [laughs].

Because I have an odd sense of humor, I would watch some of these crazy shows. They were playing "Johnny, Are You Queer?" at half-speed. (Televangelists) Jan and Paul Crouch, who had a whole worldwide TV network,



said I wasn't real. I remember thinking, "God, I sound just like Brian Wilson," when they played it at half speed. (Sings "Johnny, are you queer, boy" very slowly.) [Laughs] they were crying and screaming on TV. I was thinking, "No, no, we didn't mean that! You're missing the whole idea of this." It was just strange. As you probably know, there was some reaction on the East Coast that was not as friendly as it was on the West Coast for some reason. It's always been kind of a mystery to me how I was banned in Amsterdam, which I thought was kind of a wonderful moment in my life [laughs]. That's something I can be proud of, I suppose, if I choose to be. A lot of younger friends didn't know there was an issue with that word. They took it in the spirit that it was written, which I think was very innocent. It was more like a phenomenon that was happening. In the androgynous new wave days, girls were falling for boys, and you didn't know quite what was going on. Also, I considered it an acting job on my part,



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because I always had great gaydar [laughs], out of the womb. The girl singing that song was dumb as a bag of rocks [laughs]. It's like, "What? You don't know what's happening?"

That was the funny part of it to me, because she was just so clueless. And it was done so innocently. That was the whole idea of it. I think on the East Coast it had an odd pairing in that, in scheme of things, it was when AIDS was coming to the East Coast. I didn't realize it until much later. I understand why there was a reaction to me, like who am I to come in and ask this question when all this tragedy was going on. I did appreciate that in time, that that was poor timing.

GS: But it was by no means intentional.

JC: No, it wasn't. Someone asked me, "What would it be like if that song was coming out now, and no one ever said that before, or used that word in a way that wasn't derogatory like that song does?" It has no demeaning intent at all. I really think that it couldn't come out today. It had to come out at that moment. It didn't have to be me. At that moment there was an innocence, and (the song provided) a dance-y way to defang a word in this way. (Now) I think people are so politically correct, I don't think that word would fly.

GS: The popularity of the song, and the neglect you received from the major label, ultimately resulted in your being labeled a "one-hit wonder." People tend to have strong feelings about that moniker; either they see it as a badge of honor or a source of shame. Where do you stand?

JC: This is funny to me, because it wasn't a hit. It was banned from the radio [laughs]. I never made money from it. I wonder what they mean by "hit" in "one-hit wonder" because I just took a bullet for that song, basically. I also had songs that charted much higher than that, so that's not even accurate.

Another part of it is that it was more like an atom bomb, that song. It actually caused seismic change in an invisible way. It seemed like a joke then. People also said that I sang "joke songs." It was



so much more than that. I just feel proud that I was a part of that because I think the right people own that word. I feel a sense of pride when I hear people so casually use the word. "I'm a queer artist. I'm a queer singer. I feel kind of good that that is in the world now and I had some small part in doing that. I've had so many gay men and boys come up to me and say that that was the song that gave them permission to be gay.

GS: We're speaking the day before

you are scheduled to perform as part of the Lost '80s Live all-star line-up. What does it mean to you to be part of such an event?

JC: I've done quite a few of these now, The Lost '80s. I avoided them like the plague up until a couple of years ago because I was doing so many different types and styles of music that I did not want to be associated with the '80s, honestly. I went my own way, and that freed me as an artist, so that was a good thing. A couple years ago, it came

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up again and I went, "OK, I'll do that." Then I kind of fell back in love with the '80s sound [laughs]. I remember it in a different way than now (when) I'm perceiving it as I'm singing it. It became fun again [laughs]. I was doing these shows and now I'm at the point where I'm like, "OK, I can't one more time." I think I'm almost at the end of my ability to go back in time [laughs] because...

GS: ... there's so much more to you.

JC: Right! There is so much more, yes. I feel like I'm better at what I do; songwriting, conceptual art. I think of myself as a concept artist, really. Every album has a completely different aesthetic. That's where I feel alive when I'm doing that. But when I play these shows, and the Greek Theater (in L.A.) is just a grander version of these shows, the people are so ecstatic. I describe it as performing for 10,000 puppies, and I love puppies! They're so happy and they're almost crying because you're connected with their lives. All their memories are connected with you. So, it's lovely. I'm so flattered and touched by all of that. But when I'm on stage, I don't feel like I'm fulfilled as an artist when I'm just doing '80s songs from so long ago. I don't think that's the whole of me is what I'm saying.

GS: Convertible Music was originally released on vinyl, and some of your more recent recordings, including 2007's Invasion of the B-Girls, 2010's Pussycat Babylon and 2019's Everything Is Oh Yeah have also been given the vinyl treatment. What do you think about the vinyl resurgence among music lovers?

JC: I think it's fantastic because the people who are into vinyl really are collectors. They're in love with the sound of vinyl and having the artwork; something that they can hold in their hand it's a kind of a very visceral experience when you can read all the lyrics. I think that's a whole part of the experience of music. Kids, especially, love the vinyl. I didn't realize that CDs are back, too! A lot of people couldn't get my material on Elektra because they never put it out on CD, for some reason. But I don't know quite where they're getting their CD players, because it's been eliminated from the earthly planet.

GS: The 2021 vinyl reissue of Pussycat Babylon comes at a time when electro-pop continues to be a popular musical genre. The club-oriented song "All I Can See Is the Face of Bruce Lee," in particular, sounds like the kind of track that would be a hit with the gay crowd at



Tea Dance.

JC: For the song "See the New Hong Kong," there were quite a few dance remixes of that in Europe. This album was a limited release (on CD) 10 years ago. That kind of did a number over in Europe. Then Tiësto did a remix of "If A Lie Was Love." It's fantastic! We're doing a 12-inch single with "Calling All Girls" and the B-side is "Stop Iggy Pop."

GS: Have you ever encountered a drag queen performing any of your songs in her act?

JC: Yes! "Hi I Like You" was a huge drag queen song in Los Angeles, I

discovered. I love that because there's a lot of references to trans and pink cotton candy and hookers. A crazy song about the dark side of love and liking people, but really being a multiple personality [laughs]. The end you don't want to come to in a relationship. They got the humor of it and I was so thrilled. I told my coproducer and he was so ecstatic to hear that because that means you've done something great at that point.

Josie Cotton performs on Oct. 10 at Liar's Club, 1665 W. Fullerton for more information call 773-665-1110.



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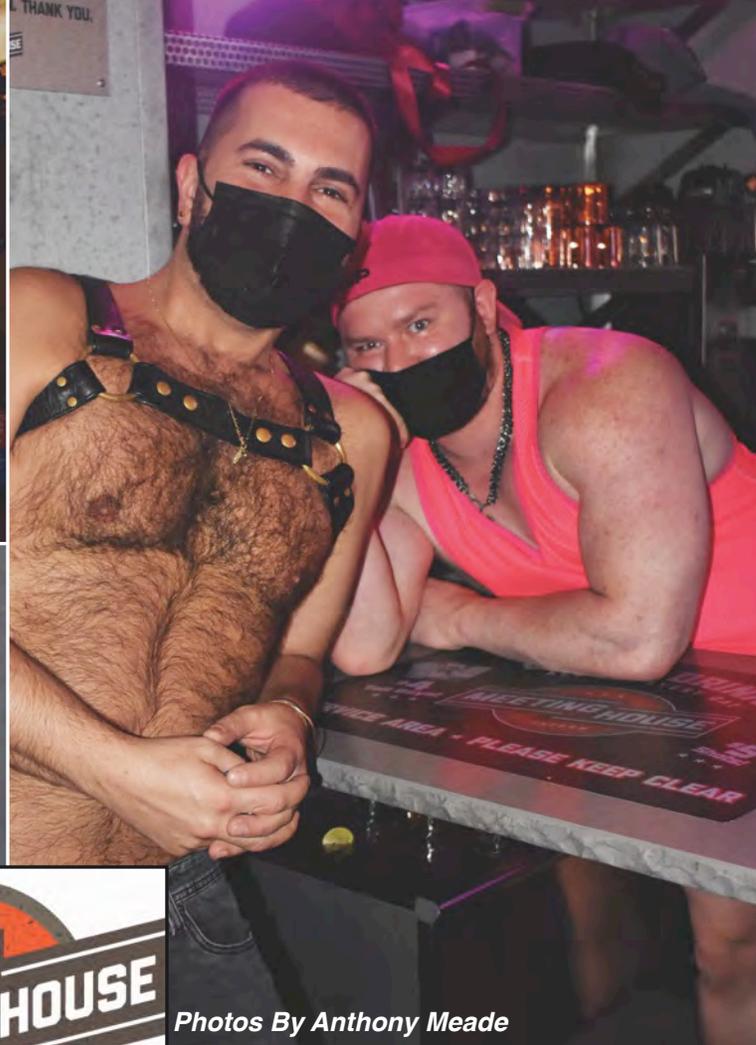
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	Tuesday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$2 Tacos, ½ Off Bottles of Wine, \$5 Red or White Sangria, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: 8/10 TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$3 House Shots, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. Steamworks: Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). Touche: Hardcore Cruisin' Sponsor Leather 64Ten. No cell phones/Wifi.</p>
	Wednesday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$4 Appetizers, \$7 Burgers, \$3 Domestic Drafts, \$5 Premium Drafts, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 Miller Lite Drafts, \$4 Stolis (All Flavors), \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am \$5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Men's Room Wednesday 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Taylor & Ariana 4th Wed of month – all 9pm-2am. Steamworks: Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. Touche: Jockstrap Night Sponsored by Full Kit Gear, Free Clothing check.</p>
	Thursday	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. Houndstooth: \$2.50 Minis • \$3 College Beer, \$6 40'S, \$5 Absolut Bombs, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: RuPaul's Drag Race Season All Stars Viewing Party Doors Open 6:30pm, Bubble POP Hosted by Khloe Coulee 9pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars 6 viewing party & Bogo Pizza 7pm, Buy One Pizza, Get One Pizza Half Off (Dine in Only), Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 You Call It's, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Chicago's RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars Viewing Party 7pm, Drag & Games Dance Party 8pm-2am. Steamworks: Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. Touche: Throwback Thursdays 70's & 80's Music & Porn by Bijou Video.</p>

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Daily Specials

<p>Friday</p>	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$6 Pulled Pork or Pulled Chicken Sandwich, \$6 Absolut Mules, \$12 Domestic Pitchers, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: 8/6 Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open with dancers at 6pm. \$5 drink specials.. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 Tito's, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) Shakers: \$4 Domestic Bottles \$5 Well Mixed Drinks, \$10 Giant 23oz Long Islands in 22 flavors. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, T.G.I.F. Show Tunes 3-8pm, Friday Night Dance Party 8pm-2am. Touche: 10/1 Oktoberfest 10/8 WTNB Leather Social 8-11 in Club Room, Porn Poker Party 10pm.</p>
<p>Saturday</p>	<p>@mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 2pm-3am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. Houndstooth: Brunch 11am-3pm \$15 Bottomless Mimosas, \$6 Michelada's, \$2 Breakfast Sliders, \$5 Stadium Cups (ALL DAY), \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets.. Lucky Horseshoe: Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). Sidetrack: Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day Saturday 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. Touche: 10/2 OktoBEARfest Night, Beer Stein Holding Contest. 10/9 Dungeon Master Night S&M Demo @ Midnight, CWB 5pm.</p>
<p>Sunday Funday</p>	<p>@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. Houndstooth: Brunch 11am-3pm \$15 Bottomless Mimosas, \$6 Michelada's, \$2 Breakfast Sliders, \$6 40'S (ALL DAY), \$12 Domestic Pitchers (ALL DAY), \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. Kit Kat Lounge: Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm \$8.95 Martinis . Lark: Free Flowing Brunch 11am-3pm. Lucky Horseshoe: Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 House Shots, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Frozens, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) Sidetrack: Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am Touche: 10/3 Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, Bears VS Lions @ noon, Movie Night 7pm. 10/10 Beer Bust \$2 Bud Light Drafts, Bears VS Raiders @ 3pm, Movie Night 7pm.</p>



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DANCE

	Artist	Title
1	Rain Radio & DJ Craig Gorman	Talk About (Nexus Radio)
2	Kito x Bea Miller	Steal My Clothes (Clean Version)
3	Yves V x HUGEL	Finally
4	Valentino Khan x Nitti Gritti	Your Body
5	Madison Mars & Ralph Aiden	Already Gone
6	MAKJ x MADDS x Mila Jam	Just Sayin
7	SACHI	Down On Your Luck (Dance Radio Edit)
8	Cheat Codes x Little Big Town x Bryn Christopher	Never Love You Again
9	Audien ft. Cate Downey	Wish It Was You
10	SHOUSE	Love Tonight (David Guetta Edited Remix)
11	Kim Petras	Future Starts Now
12	Maddox Jones	Somewhere There's a Plan (Believe It)
13	Shaun Frank	Together ft. Prinze George
14	Gregor Potter	Mean It
15	Bombs Away	Don't You Dare
16	ARTY	One Night Away (Original Mix)
17	Zara Larsson	Right Here (ALOK Remix)
18	Sam Feldt & Sam Fischer	Pick Me Up
19	DallasK x Lauv	Try Again
20	Galantis x David Guetta x Little Mix	Heartbreak Anthem
21	Kygo x Zoe Wees	Love Me Now
22	Raye	Call On Me
23	Jes	Tight Wires
24	Manuel Riva	Back By Sunday ft. Robert Konstantin
25	Sigala	You For Me ft. Rita Ora (Radio)
26	ONEDUO	Erase You (Angelyna Rose Remix)
27	Riley Clemmons x GOLDHOUSE	Headspace
28	Louis The Child	Hate You Cause I Don't ft. Bea Miller
29	Peking Duk	Chemicals ft. Sarah Aarons
30	Billen Ted	When You're Out ft. Mae Muller
31	Surf Mesa Featuring Bipolar Sunshine	Lose My Mind
32	Niiko x SWAE & Zack Martino ft. Kyle Reynolds	Glue
33	Sigrid	Mirror (Paul Woolford Remix)
34	Sonny Fodera x KOLIDESCOPES x Sinead Harnett	Nah (KREAM Remix)
35	MABEL	Let Them Know (Dimitri From Paris Remix)
36	Disco Killerz & Holly T	Up to You
37	Joel Corry x Jax Jones x Charli XCX & Saweetie	Out Out
38	DubVision x AMNL KNGDM	I Wanna Be There (Radio Edit)
39	Eli & Fur X Disciples	The Pressure (Radio Mix)
40	Jonas Blue & Leon	Hear Me Say

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T-MOBILE SOUTH STAGE

FRI

5:00 DJ Laura B
6:00 Pride Drag Show
7:00 Kristine W
7:45 Pride Drag Show
8:45 VINCINT

5:00 DJ Zel
6:30 VJ Bryan
8:30 Avi Sic

6:15 CATFIGHT
7:45 Chicago Spirit Brigade
8:15 Rod Tuffcurls

SAT

12:00 DJ Laura B
1:00 Pride Drag Show
2:30 Shangela
3:15 Katie Kadan
4:15 Pride Drag Show
5:30 Brooke Eden
6:30 Pride Drag Show
8:00 St. Panther
9:00 Mýa

11:00 DJ Vlad
1:00 Spencer H
2:30 ArianaDJ
4:00 Ethan Cole
5:30 DJ Ca\$h Era
7:00 Diox
8:30 Miss DJ Meg

12:45 Chicago Gay Men's Chorus
1:30 Chicago Spirit Brigade
2:00 iPop
4:30 Boy Band Review w/Toxic ft. Garek
6:45 Bev Rage and the Drinks
8:15 Sixteen Candles

SUN

12:00 Start: Miss Foozie's Pet Parade
12:00 DJ Laura B
1:00 Pride Drag Show
2:30 Debbie Gibson
3:15 Pride Drag Show
4:30 Dancing Queen ABBA Salute
5:30 Pride Drag Show
6:30 Mila Jam
7:00 Pride Drag Show
8:10 Crystal Waters
9:00 Nina Sky

12:00 DJ Martin
2:00 Rae Chardonnay
3:30 Janky
5:00 Jesus Montanez
6:30 X-tasy
8:00 Apollo Xo

12:30 Chicago Spirit Brigade
1:00 Miss Foozie's Pet Parade Awards
1:30 Peach Presents Takeover w/Supes Base
2:00 Unfriendly Black Hotties & DJ Ca\$h Era
3:00 Mother Nature
4:00 Jamila Woods
4:45 Selah Say
6:00 Orisun
7:00 Roy Kinsey & Friends
8:00 Peach Presents Takeover w/Supes Base
8:45 The Vixen Presents Black Girl Magic

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The one and only Johnny Mathis

By Gregg Shapiro

There is only one Johnny Mathis. With a career now in its eighth decade, beginning in the 1950s and continuing today, he has touched multiple generations with his plush vocals and radiant personality. Known for such hits as *"When Sunny Gets Blue," "It's Not For Me To Say," "Chances Are," "The Twelfth of Never," "Misty," "Wonderful! Wonderful,"* and *"Too Much, Too Little, Too Late,"* just to name a few, Mathis has always had a way with standards, as well as tunes of the winter holiday season. The Gilmer, Texas native was raised in San Francisco where he learned early about music and performance from his musician-father, Clem. In addition to being musically gifted, Mathis was also athletic, even once besting NBA legend Bill Russell in a high-jump meet. Around the time he was invited to the 1956 Olympic trials in Melbourne, Australia, he also had the chance to go to New York to record his first album. The rest, as they say, is musical history. Mathis, a true all-seasons performer, was kind enough to answer a few questions in advance of his upcoming concert tour celebrating 65 years of romantic music.



Gregg Shapiro: Mr. Mathis, your long association with the music of romance made me wonder if you could choose your top three most romantic songs of all time?

Johnny Mathis: I have no idea! You love one one day and the next day you say, "Oh no, I like that one better!" That's the way most singers are about their music. I talked to some of my favorite singers, people like Nat King Cole and Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine, and they felt the same way.

One day you like this and another day you like that. A lot of times it has to do with how you feel about the way your voice sounds with one song or another. Sometimes it sounds really good, and you think you were made to sing that song. Other times you think, "Oh well, I did a good job but maybe somebody else sounds better doing it."

GS: You have a long history of singing duets and have performed them with artists such as Deniece

Williams, Jane Olivor and Barbra Streisand, to name a few. What makes you so good at playing well with others?

JM: [Laughs] I like those girls! They're pretty and they're good singers. You meet them and you hit it off. Then you say, "If you like me so much, why don't you sing with me?" (They say) "OK, I'll do it!" That's about how it goes.

GS: Is there a current artist with whom you'd like to sing a duet?

JM: Jennifer Warnes. I just love the quality of her voice. You can't buy that. You can't learn it. I heard her for the first time singing "Up Where We Belong." I would be honored to sing with her if she is ever available.

GS: Is there anyone with whom you wish you had sung a duet but you didn't get a chance to?

JM: Oh, my goodness, I could name you a thousand people that I would have loved to perform with. The thing is, you have to be grateful for what you have and what you've done and hope for the best that is to come.

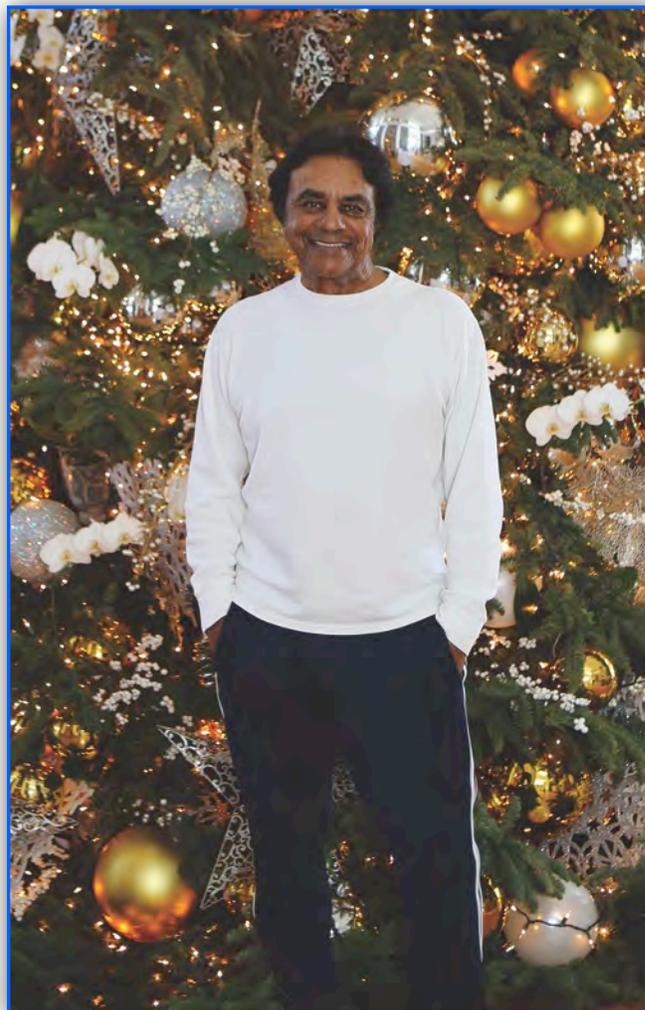
GS: Seeing as how you are known as "The Voice of Christmas," your 2021 tour schedule has a couple of Christmas concert dates in December, one in a warm climate (Clearwater FL) and one in a cold climate (Chicago). What do you like best about performing Christmas concerts?

JM: You bring Christmas to wherever you are. I remember being raised in San Francisco. During Christmas, the sun was out and it was warm and toasty and everything. Somewhere else in the North it's nice and cold and the snow is coming down and it looks like Christmas. You bring Christmas with

you, from your heart. It's what's in your heart that counts.

GS: Because you also have a reputation for being a foodie, did you, like so many others, bake any sourdough bread while isolating during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?

JM: [Big laugh] I think baking is the most difficult thing about cooking! I'm a terrible baker. I love the wonderful baked goods that are available, especially in California. I choose to go with the people who do it brilliantly and marvelously. I buy my food from specialty places, and I love it.



Sometimes I do find a way to enhance my life by preparing foods. But baking is a science, and it's very difficult and I don't pride myself on my baking [laughs].

GS: Finally, I had the honor of interviewing you a few years ago at the time your Johnny Mathis Sings the Great New American Songbook album was released. Is there a new Johnny Mathis album forthcoming?

JM: I was thinking about that recently. Of

course, the times have changed so much, including the people in charge of all these places that I have been involved with at the record companies and the music companies and what have you. So, as far as I'm concerned, I'm just a person who has to have the material. If they don't supply it for me, then I'm going to have to wait until there is a way for me to record again and get it out. But I do have performances scheduled for many months ahead in the near future, so I will be singing and performing. But as far as recording is concerned, that's a big question mark.

GS: It's interesting because you started your career with record albums, LPs on vinyl, and now vinyl is making a very big comeback. Maybe this is a chance for you to return to vinyl again.

JM: Let's hope so [laughs]!

Johnny Mathis will be at the Rosemont Theater Saturday December 11 at 8pm, for tickets visit www.JohnnyMathis.com

GRAB HOLLY

Failure to Thrive

By Holly Maholm

"The Queen would like to speak to you urgently." So saying, Sassy nodded her head in the direction of the rear of the pole barn, and soon she and I were admitted to the stall given over to the use of our Queen Penelope. The Queen motioned for me to take a seat near her, which I did.

"Holly," she began, "I want to speak to you about a matter which has only just been brought to my attention. It is a matter which concerns your species, though not you personally.

"As Sassy recently explained to you, the hearts and souls of unicorns are sympathetically entwined with the joys and struggles of a great many other species who – like cousins, ever-so-many-times removed – share with us this bountiful, fruitful earth. The loss of even one species to extinction – a tragedy which we have experienced in the past – is intensely painful to us, and strikes at the very foundation of our existence.

"Accordingly, we unicorns are ever-vigilant to identify instances in which an entire species may be in danger of dying out. It is for this reason that I must give you – a member of the Species Human – a warning.

"Recently, we in the frolic noticed what we judged to be a troubling reduction in the number of baby bottles, strollers and diaper bags to be seen among visitors to the Village Square. At first, we thought this was due to mere random events, not evidence of any deleterious trend in society. However, I asked Siri to assist me in doing a little research on this subject in your global library (you call it "the internet"), and the result was both unexpected and disturbing.

"The fact is," she continued, "your species is in sharp decline, which, if not reversed, will unavoidably result in the extinction of the Species Human. Yes! In most of the world – and particularly in this country – the human birth rate is only half, or less than half, of what is needed to prevent the dying-out of your race.

"Now, you may believe this is no great tragedy – that humans already over-populate the Earth to a considerable extent, and there will be plenty of time to institute corrective measures, should this lack of births become serious." The Queen stopped speaking. I could see her age was telling upon her, and the stress of sharing what she had to say was fatiguing. Accordingly, Sassy took over.

"There are two reasons why this problem is so dangerous. First, your numbers may drop precipitously before you grasp the seriousness of the

situation. Next, it may take a long time for you to reach a decision – as a species – as to what steps you think may solve the problem.

"But wait! If you are honest, you must acknowledge you may not find a solution! After all, for a woman to give birth, she must make that choice freely and willingly against a backdrop of many relevant factors, and if an insufficient number of young women elect to become mothers, what alternative could the 'general society' adopt that would not be painful, coercive, and destructive of her civil rights?

"You and your fellow humans, Holly, are displaying a kind of 'psycho-pathology' which we call 'Failure to Thrive.' Yes. You have all of your material needs readily available to you; you are not under threat from predators, natural disasters or incurable pandemics that might



extinguish your species. Also, you humans alive today are the wealthiest ever to inhabit the planet! You have sophisticated systems of agriculture, transportation and health care; you have enormous cities and great universities where science is venerated.

"All but the poorest among you can afford hand-held devices which allow you to tap into your internet, and there are games and distractions at your fingertips to offer you endless entertainment.

"And yet, despite this enviable and never-before-equalled wealth and power, you humans are choosing not to reproduce yourselves! Is there, perhaps, some subtle way in which you regret your very existence? Something that prevents you from doing what is necessary to bring into this world a new generation to enjoy – and build upon – this storehouse of plenty?"

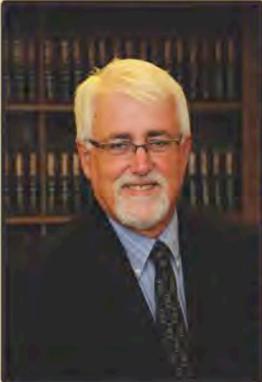
Sassy fell silent, and the Queen spoke. "I do not mean to present this problem to you, Holly, in any accusatory way. I know you have three children who live elsewhere, so it may be a bit frustrating for you to have this conundrum laid before you. Nevertheless, since you and Dot are the only humans with whom I can speak upon the subject, I cannot stay silent.

"I want you to go away, Holly, meditate upon the problem, and try to ascertain what may be the cause of this 'Failure to Thrive.' If you are able, please suggest a cure. There is much that depends upon your answer."

(To be continued)

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

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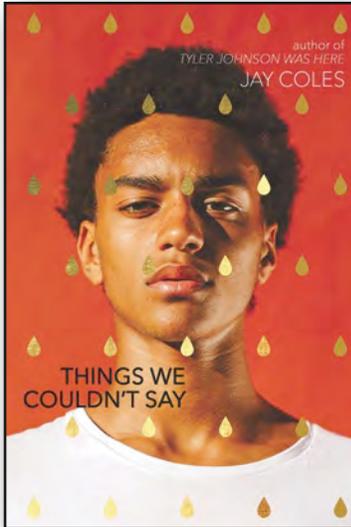


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GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"Things We Couldn't Say" by Jay Coles
c.2021, Scholastic \$18.99 / higher in Canada 320 pages



You'd like an explanation, please. Why something is done or not, why permission is denied, you'd like to hear a simple reason. You've been asking "Why?" since you were two years old but now the older you get, the more urgent is the need to know – although, in the new book "Things We Couldn't Say" by Jay Coles, there could be a dozen because.

Sometimes, mostly when he didn't need it to happen, Giovanni Zucker's birth mother took over his thoughts. It wasn't as though she was the only thing he had to think about. Gio was an important part of the basketball team at Ben Davis High School; in fact, when he thought about college, he hoped for a basketball scholarship. He had classes to study for, two best friends he wanted to hang out with, a little brother who was his reason to get up in the morning, and a father who was always pushing for help at the church he ran. As for his romantic life, there wasn't much to report: Gio dated girls and he'd dated guys and he was kinda feeling like he liked guys more.

So no, he didn't want to think about his birth mother. The woman who walked out on the family when Gio was a little kid didn't deserve his consideration at all. There was just no time for the first woman who broke his heart.

It was nice to have distractions from his thoughts. Gio's best friends had his back. He knew pretty much everybody in his Indianapolis neighborhood. And the guy who moved across the street, a fellow b-baller named David, was becoming a good friend.

A very good friend.
David was bi-sexual, too.
But just as their relationship was

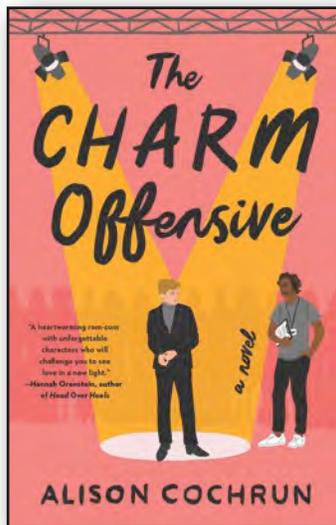
beginning, the unthinkable happened: Gio's birth mother reached out, emailed him, wanted to meet with him, and he was torn. She said she had "reasons" for abandoning him all those years ago, and her truth was not what he'd imagined...

There are a lot of pleasant surprises inside "Things We Couldn't Say." From the start, author Jay Coles gives his main character a great support system, and that's an uniquely good thing. Gio enjoys the company of people who want the best for him, and it's refreshing that even the ones who are villains do heroic things.

Everyone in this book, in fact, has heart, and that softens the drama that Coles adds – which leads to another nice surprise: there's no overload of screeching drama here. Overwrought teen conflict is all but absent; even potential angsts that Gio might notice in his urban neighborhood are mentioned but not belabored. This helps keep readers focused on a fine, relatable, and very realistic coming-of-age story line.

This book is aimed at readers ages 12-and-up, but beware that there are a few gently explicit, but responsibly written, pages that might not be appropriate for kids in the lower target range. For older kids and adults, though, "Things We Couldn't Say" offers plenty of reasons to love it.

"The Charm Offensive: A Novel" by Alison Cochrun
c.2021, Atria \$17.00 / \$23.00 Canada 368 pages



The applause is all for you this time. It's deafening, really – perhaps because there's a standing ovation beneath it. All the work you did, the emoting, the emotions, you know how much your fans appreciate it. So take a bow. Drink in the love. As in the new novel, "The Charm Offensive" by Alison

Cochrun, that's one thing that's sometimes missing in life.

Dev Deshpande was good at his job. He knew it, his colleagues knew it, it was fact. He might personally be terrible at love – case in point: he was still smarting from a three-months-ago break-up with his boyfriend, Ryan – but Dev was a pro at his job as producer for the reality TV show, Ever After. In fact, he'd been in charge of making dreams happen for six years' worth of beautiful Ever After contestants; it helped that he believed in fairy tales.

Maybe one day, he'd find his own Prince Charming.
Just not this season.

This season, his lead director made him handle the "prince" instead of the usual "princesses," and that was a challenge.

Charles Winshaw was twenty-eight, devastatingly handsome, extremely wealthy, and a nervous, introverted nerd who rarely dated. Geeky, awkward, and prone to panic attacks, he sincerely had no clue how to be romantic. Truth was, he was only there because his best friend and agent put him on Ever After to counter a reputation for being weird.

Still, Charlie was weird, and it was up to Dev to make him work for the show.

Shoring up Charlie's confidence didn't work, and neither did a pep talk. He couldn't seem to just perform a role without freaking out and it was becoming obvious. By the time Dev's assistant suggested having a few practice dates, Dev was willing to try anything.

He took Charlie to dinner. He spent time doing jigsaw puzzles with him, and he got Charlie to relax a little. If sparks flew, well, it was one-sided: Charlie was completely straight.

Wasn't he?
You know what's going to happen in the end, don't you? Of course, you do. You'll know it by Page Thirty, step-by-step, with virtually no surprises, which leaves a long way to the final sentence of "The Charm Offensive."

Now, it's true that this novel is cute. It has its lightly humorous moments and author Alison Cochrun gives it a good cast, from contestant to show creator. It doesn't lack details; in fact, reality dating show-watchers will feel right at home here. It even has the ubiquitous panoply of exotic locales for the "challenges" that the contestants must do.

At issue is the length of this book. There's too much of it, too many shirts that creep up, too many mentions of vomit, too much needless drama, too many will-he-won't-he, when we know full well he will. This extra doesn't ratchet up the tension, it makes things slow.

And so: cute story, familiar scenes, good characters in "The Charm Offensive." But if taut is what you want in a rom-com, leave this book and bow out.



Photos
By
Anthony
Meade



GRAB A FILM

By Delven Shaw

FILM

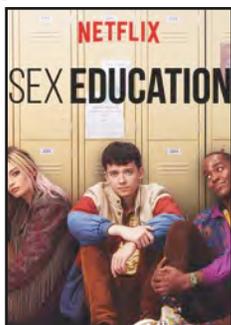


EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE is a powerful explosion of joy.



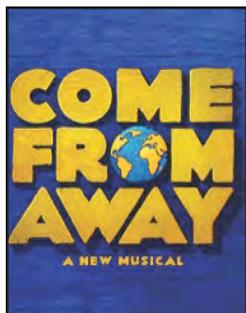
Everybody's Talking About Jamie is musical you will love or hate, but I suspect it years to come drama kids everyone will

SEX EDUCATION The title is the only thing wrong.



If you enjoy films about young people finding their way, there is no greater pleasure than the horribly named Sex

COME FROM AWAY comforts.



Come From Away shines a beacon of comfort, as the unlikely events of 9/11 forced 7000 airline passengers to land and overnight in the tiny town of Gander in Newfoundland. As town folk and

be singing these songs of liberation and celebration. *Jamie* started as a BBC documentary which was then turned into a movie and is now an Amazon smash. I hope the real Jamie and his mom are making millions and living on Easy Street!

Max Harwood is a joy as the young teen whose desire to become a drag queen propels our journey. His mother, the sensational Sarah Lancashire, his best friend Pritti (**Lauren Patel**) and a gay pathfinder (**Richard E. Grant**) give him tons of love and support to counterbalance the horrible dad who walked out of his life. There are many hijinks in the school, and some scenes of bullying – not all of it done by students. But Jamie and his mother are strong,

Education. It is far superior to other school shows like *Elite* or *Young Royals*, both of which I really enjoyed. *Sex Education*, now in Season 3 on Netflix, is the full package as it explores a rainbow collection of students, their loves and losses, and most of all – their very complex sexualities.

Nothing is easy about this show. It can be graphic and might introduce you to concepts you don't know yet. But this, along with works like *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, are the wave of the future where gay, straight, and non-binary characters deserve equal time and respect.

Our hero for *Sex Education* is Otis (**Asa Butterfield**) who has a gift for solving other people's problems while making a mess of his own life. His mother Jean

passengers alike try to figure out the events of horrible day, the town rises to provide food, shelter, and most of all - friendship – to those who are stranded.

Filmed live on stage at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theater in New York City, the musical grabs you and refuses to let go as its relentless pace tells a tale that is familiar yet fresh. **Christopher Ashley's** direction of the musical looks great on film, as we watch his excellent ensemble create airplane seats, meeting halls, and mountain tops with only a collection of wooden chairs and tables. The results are breathtaking.

The characters are all based on real people. An older woman meets a man from Texas. A mother from Brooklyn cannot reach her first responder son. Kevin and Kevin's relationship is strained

and the time we spend with them in the second half of the film is powerful. Who can resist amazing sons of love between mother and son?

Jonathan Butterell directs with great abandon, with the screenplay by **Tom MacRae** based on the stage musical by **Buttrel** and **Dan Gillespie Sells**. I don't think the score will win any awards, but the songs are serviceable, and the energy of the student ensemble is infectious.

Jamie covers some of the same territory as *Billy Elliot* which had a much more experienced creative team. But in this season of musicals new and old – *West Side Story*, *Come From Away*, and *Anette* to name but a few, *Jamie* deserves his crown.

(**Gillian Anderson**), her partner Jakob (**Mikael Persbrandt**), and his daughter Ola (**Patricia Allison**) are the core characters we follow in their beautiful town perched high above a river valley.

But it is Maeve (**Emma Mackey**), as tough as the trailer park she lives in, and flamboyant Eric (**Ncuti Gatwa**) now dating a closeted jock (**Connor Swindells**) who steal our hearts. The stories of these students, and the family members who are both challenged and loved by them that make *Sex Education* hilarious and heartbreaking.

Creator **Laurie Nunn** has brought to life an irresistible middle-class village. Perhaps, thanks to this groundbreaking show, we will soon be living in a world where labels are all replaced by love.

to the breaking point. But the singing, dancing, and love from the stage embrace's the audiences in a giant hug.

The large ensemble cast is excellent, as is the folk inspired band. It is clear they all love telling this story, which has now become a cultural touchstone for the 9/11 stories which might have been lost.

Gander may never be as famous as musical theater environments like *Brigadoon* or *Camelot*, but if the people of Gander have any things to say about it, their important story will always be told.

There are a lot of queer culture available screening right now. Check out the two-minute reviews at DelvenShaw.com for more!



Photos By
Anthony Meade



**Hell in a Handbag Productions
Opens Its 20th Anniversary
Season with
THE GOLDEN GIRLS: The Lost
Episodes, Vol. 5 – SEX!
Now through October 23, at the
Leather Archives & Museum**

Hell in a Handbag Productions welcomes back audiences this fall with the return of Chicago's favorite drag seniors in its long-running parody *The Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes, Vol. 5 – SEX!*, written by Artistic Director **David Cerda** and directed by **Madison Smith**.

The *Golden Girls* stars original cast members **David Cerda, Grant Drager, Ed Jones** and **Ryan Oates** as the Geriatric Fab Four, joined by **Lori Lee, Max McKune, Michael Rashid** and **Danne W. Taylor**.

In episode one, "The *Pleasure Dome*," Rose and Miles' relationship

needs spicing up and what better way to do that than a trip to the latest Miami hotspot, The *Pleasure Dome*! Of course, Blanche and Dorothy accompany her to provide "emotional support." Meanwhile, Sophia has a mysterious part-time job that keeps her out all hours of the night.

In episode two, "*Blanche Makes a Deal*," following a household accident that nearly kills Sophia, Blanche's guilt drives her to do the unthinkable: take a vow of celibacy! Can Blanche keep her promise to God? Will the truth about what actually happened come out? Will the *Smurfs* get Rose, or can she outwit them? See for yourself in Chicago's irreverent long-running parody show.



Handbag will require proof of vaccination and masking at all performances. The entire cast and crew is vaccinated.

Tickets are currently available at <http://www.goldengirls5sex.eventbrite.com>

**THIS WIDE NIGHT
October 8 – November 13, 2021
at Theater Wit**



Shattered Globe Theatre, in association with Interbang Theatre Project, welcomes back audiences this fall with the Chicago premiere of Chloë Moss's drama *This Wide Night*, directed by ITP Artistic Director

Georgette Verdin, playing October 8 – November 13, 2021 at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

This Wide Night will feature **Aila Ayilam Peck** and **Linda Reiter**.

Lorraine, released from prison after twelve years inside, treks to her former cellmate Marie's new flat. Marie, dodgy and ashamed of their shared past, hesitates to welcome Lorraine back into her life. But no one makes Marie laugh like Lorraine. Can two friends, uniquely bonded by their former circumstances, find belonging in each other once more? This gutsy story of female friendship and winner of the 2009 Susan Smith Blackburn prize is inspired by real accounts of women in a UK prison. *This Wide Night* holds and humanizes two formerly incarcerated women in an isolated studio that may or may not be equipped for real freedom.

Comments Director **Georgette Verdin** "I believe audiences will find

this play even more resonant after living through a pandemic for over a year. We've been forced to reinvent our day-to-day, find new purpose and manage our anxiety as we navigate this strange new world. Much like Lorraine and Marie, we too have a whole new understanding of the devastating toll that loneliness and isolation take on one's body and soul, as well as the light and laughter that can stem from any hardship."

Additionally, two performances of *This Wide Night* will be available for live streaming during the run. Shattered Globe Theatre is closely monitoring the news and data surrounding the Delta variant, and has a plan to go fully virtual in the event that it is not safe at the time of the production for our community and audiences to congregate in person.

Tickets are currently available at www.sgtheatre.org, by calling **773-975-8150** or in person at the Theater Wit Box Office.

**Six Performances!
Comedian MARIA BAMFORD
Returns to The Den Theatre
October 14 – 17, 2021**



Following a sell-out, six-show run in 2019, comedian **Maria Bamford**, star of the hit Netflix comedy series

Lady Dynamite, returns to The Den Theatre for six performances October 14 – 17, 2021 on The Heath Mainstage, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

Maria Bamford is revered for her deeply personal and experimental comedy about mental illness. She starred in the surreal, semi-autobiographical Netflix comedy series *Lady Dynamite*, about a comedian who suffers a nervous breakdown, and is the star of three unconventional hour-long stand-up specials: *Weakness is the Brand*, *Old Baby* and *Maria Bamford*, the special, special, special! Maria was the first female comic to have two half-hour Comedy Central Presents specials and starred alongside **Patton Oswalt, Zach Galifianakis**

and **Brian Posehn** in the Comedy Central series *The Comedians of Comedy* and Netflix's *Comedians of Comedy: The Movie*. She also created and starred in the cult hit web series *The Maria Bamford Show*, in which she plays all the characters.

The Den requires proof of vaccination for all guests, staff and performers and adheres to all CDC, state and local safety guidelines. Additionally, masking is required for all guests during performances. For the most current information on The Den's COVID guidelines, visit thedentheatre.com/covid19-policy.

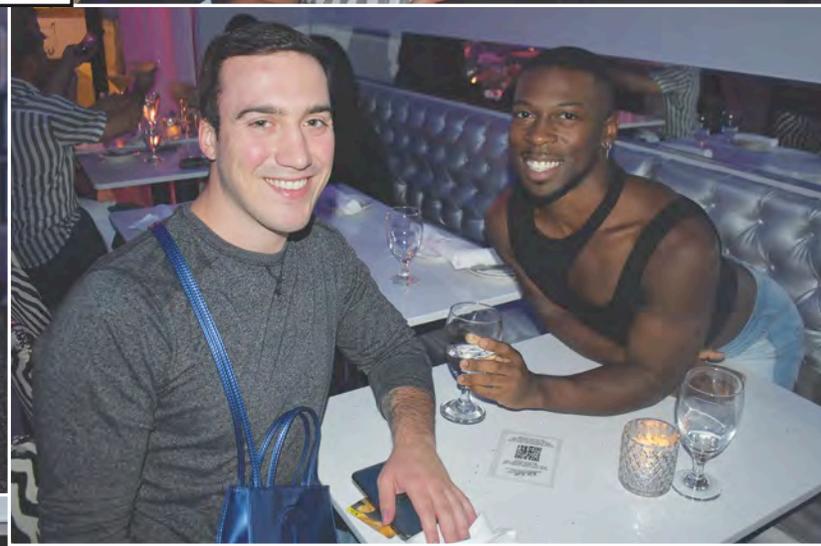
Tickets (\$25 - \$55) are currently available at thedentheatre.com or by calling **773-697-3830**.



RED BULL VODKA



Photos By Anthony Meade



PRIDE FEST ADDS 3RD DAY AND MORE ENTERTAINERS OCT 1-3



Chicago Pride Fest®, now spanning 3 days from October 1-3, will be packed with even more live music and entertainment! Newly added headliners include: **Debbie Gibson, Jamila Woods, Katie Kadan, Nina Sky & Mila Jam**. The festival recently announced adding Sunday October 3, following the cancellation of the Chicago Pride Parade.

Previously announced artists also appearing are: **Mya, Shangela, VINCINT, Crystal Waters, Kristine W, Brooke Eden** and **St. Panther**.

The entertainment also includes local favorites such as: **Black Girl Magic with The Vixen** and other artists produced for Sunday by Peach Presents, **Dancing Queen: ABBA Salute, Sixteen Candles, Boy Band Review w/special guest Toxic feat. Garek, Rod Tuffcurls & the Bench Press, CATFIGHT, iPop, Bev Rage & the Drinks** and MORE!

The Waveland Dance Stage is likewise loaded with Chicago's hottest DJs and special guests.

COVID-19 protocols that were in place for Northalsted Market Days will be repeated: attendees of Chicago Pride Fest should be fully vaccinated or wear a mask. The majority of bar and restaurant establishments on Northalsted require proof of vaccination for entry (with a few requiring a recent negative test). Free COVID testing will be available at both the north and south gates prior to entry into the festival and both testing and vaccinations will be available from Northshore Clinical Labs prior to and at the festival. More information on testing and vaccination availability prior to the festival is available at northshoreclinical.com.

Northalsted Business Alliance Vice-President and festival organizer **Mark Liberson** is excited for the return of the festival. "We're grateful that vaccinations have enabled the return of events this year, allowing LGBTQ+ people and allies from all over the midwest and beyond a meaningful opportunity to celebrate life and community together."

A \$15 suggested donation for entry helps pay performers, festival workers, and funds community programs. Entry donations from previous festivals also helped to pay for the Chicago Pride Crosswalks: 14 rainbow paved intersections that make up the longest

installation of its kind in the world. To see the full stage schedule and lineup visit <http://www.pridefestchicago.com>

THE ANDERSONVILLE WINE WALK RETURNS FOR ITS 15TH YEAR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2021 3 pm – 6 pm



The Andersonville Chamber of Commerce (ACC) welcomes back its annual Andersonville Wine Walk on Sunday, October 3 from 3 pm – 6 pm.

Enjoy a Sunday afternoon of sipping, strolling and shopping through Andersonville's beautiful northside historic district. Now in its 15th year, participants may choose from two routes, Cork or Bottle, generously curated by In Fine Spirits and other local participating businesses. Several stops also include delicious food pairings. Before embarking on a tour of local businesses transformed into tasting destinations, attendees will check in at US Bank, 5340 N. Clark St., where they will receive a commemorative wine tasting glass and route card highlighting each wine.

For everyone's safety, Andersonville Wine Walk is a vaccinated-only event. All participants will be required to show proof of vaccine and a valid ID at check-in. ACC will be following all other mandated CDC health guidelines.

To see this year's participating locations and routes or to purchase tickets visit <http://www.andersonville.org/events/wine-walk/>

CHICAGO LGBT HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT SIDETRACK SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6



The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, celebrating its 30th year, has announced that it will hold a scaled-back version of its annual induction ceremony for 2021 inductees on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, from

5:30-8 p.m. The event will be held at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, Chicago **Mayor Lori Lightfoot** will speak and present the awards to the individual inductees. The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame will also present a virtual version of the awards presentation on October 28.

The event is by invitation only, a departure from previous ceremonies which were open to the public. "We were concerned about keeping the event to a manageable size both for health and budgetary reasons. We have not been able to do the normal fundraising we would normally do to underwrite such an event," explained Hall of Fame co-chair, Rick Karlin. "All attending must provide proof of vaccinations and masks are required," added co-chair Kathy Caldwell. We are taking every effort possible to make certain that this is a safe event."

This year's inductees include the following individuals and organizations:

- **Chicago Urban Pride** Planning events and programming for Chicago's African American LGBT community for more than twenty years.
 - **Ginni Clemmens** (posthumous) One of the earliest openly queer recording artists and was an important part of Chicago's folk music scene.
 - **Lisa Isadora Cruz** An advocate for transgender rights among minority communities.
 - **Thomas Hunt** Better known in his persona of Mz. Ruff N Stuff, he is a nightclub promoter, entertainer, and fundraiser for many community organizations.
 - **Wayne Johnson** The winner of the Today Show's national "Domestic Diva" contest and a contributor on local television shows.
 - **Otis Mack** Comedian, promoter, host, and emcee extraordinaire and CEO, and founder of Heavy Diva Productions.
 - **Claudia Mosier** A therapist and active member of Chicago's LGBT community for the last 43 years.
 - **PRIDEChicago** The management and planning team for the annual Pride parade for the past 47 years.
 - **Ralph Rosario** DJ, producer, and Grammy nominee, he has released several full-length albums and remixed tracks by many headlining artists.
 - **Betty Lark Ross** A founding member and later co-chair for the Chicago chapter of Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers' Network (later renamed GLSEN.)
 - **Kirk Williamson** A journalist who has covered Chicago nightlife for 11 years. The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame also posthumously honored an ally, as a "Friend of the Community"
 - **Lana Hostetler** (posthumous) One of the earliest allies in Chicago's second wave of LGBT civil rights work in the 1980s, she co-founded Equality Illinois.
- For more information visit <http://www.chicagolgbthalloffame.org>



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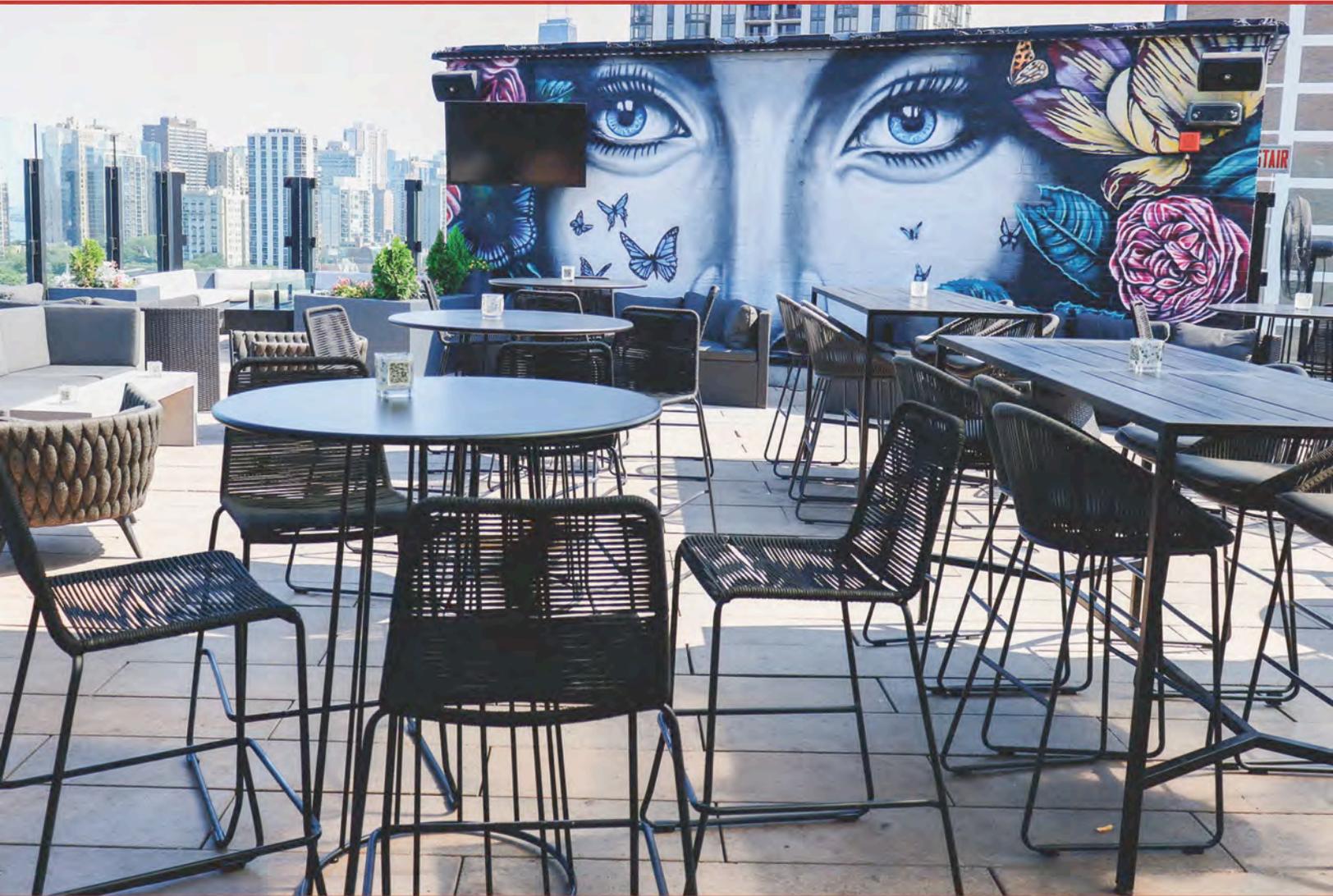
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