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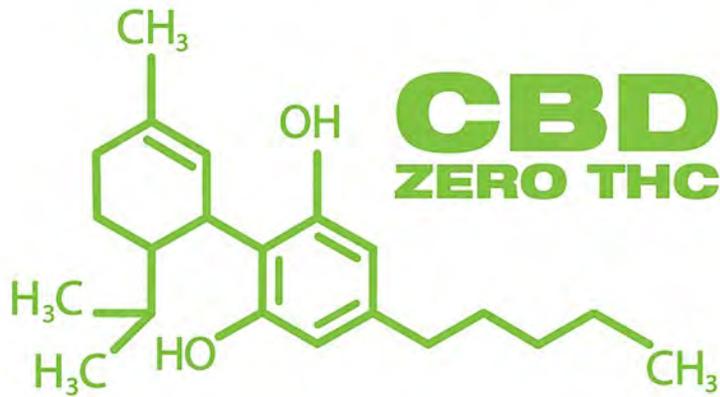


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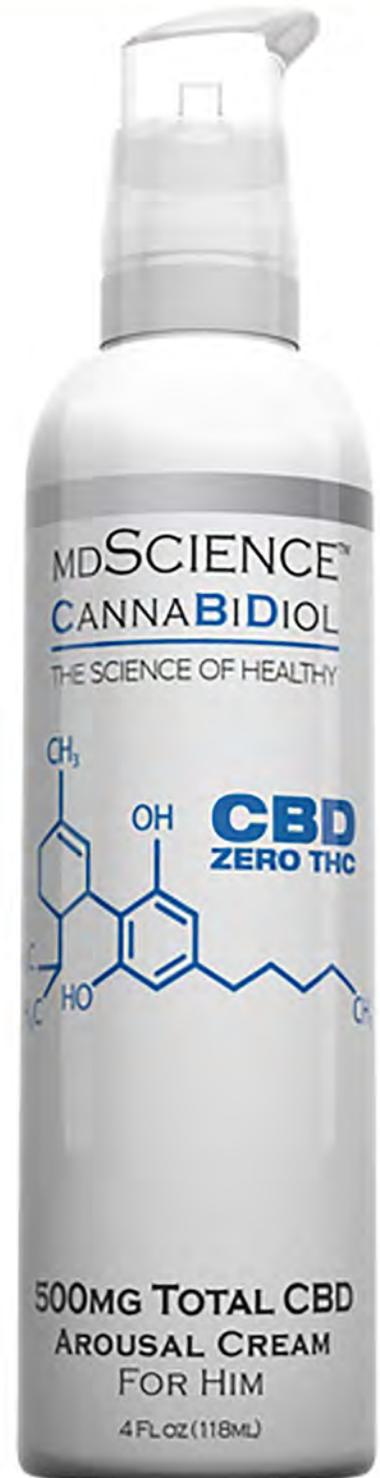
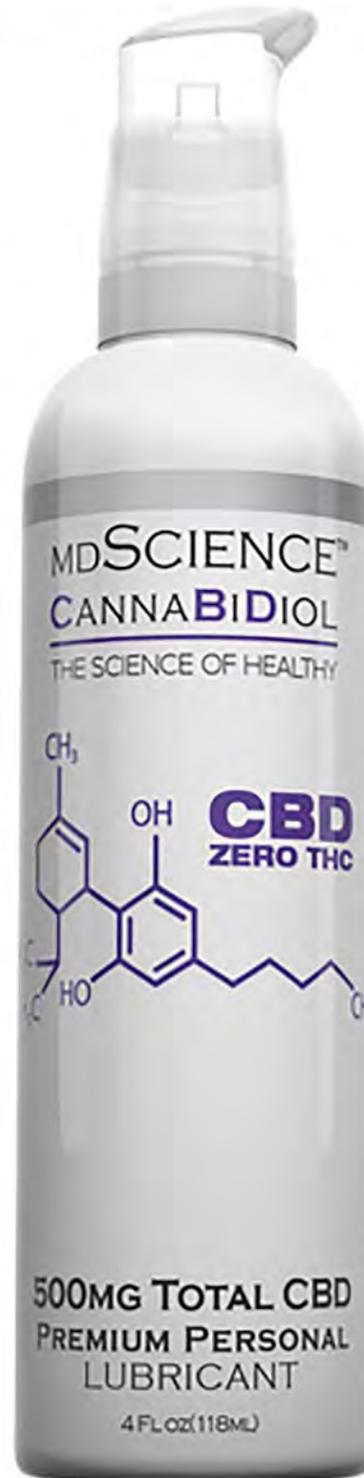
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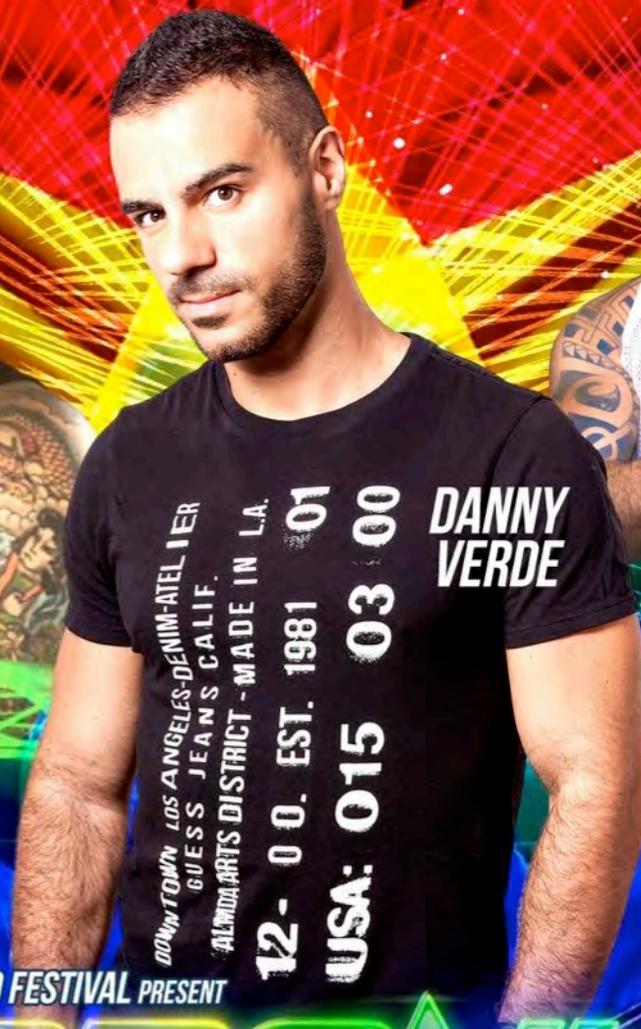
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In Memorium

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 1961 - 2019

**Cover:
11 Year**

**Anniversary
HAPPY PRIDE**



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GRAB HAAZ



Photo Courtesy of Apple TV+

Haaz Sleiman to the Rescue

Actor talks visibility, his gay Marvel kiss and why he wants to play James Bond

By Chris Azzopardi

Actor Haaz Sleiman is on a mission to take part in stories that broaden the pool of queer perspectives on the screen. And if you already know his work, you know he's on a roll.

For "The Son," an episode of Apple TV+'s acclaimed anthology centered on the immigrant experience, *Little America*, Sleiman portrayed a gay Syrian refugee trying to gain asylum in the United States after his father brutally condemns him for kissing a man. Sleiman must be doing something right: The episode has been banned in 10 Arab countries and in Russia.

Then, in writer-director Mike Mosallam's indie rom-com *Breaking Fast*, which is currently seeking wider distribution while also making its virtual Pride rounds this summer, Sleiman plays a gay Muslim Arab navigating life, love and loss in West Hollywood during Ramadan.

But the queer storytelling mission that's so important to Sleiman, who has also starred in *Nurse Jackie*, 24,

Veronica Mars, *The Good Wife* and *Jack Ryan*, will reach towering heights when he plays the husband of gay superhero Phastos in Marvel's *The Eternals*, due in theaters in early 2021.

Here, Sleiman talks about telling stories that are long overdue, how Madonna's sex-positivity influenced him as a gay man, and why he makes a convincing straight guy onscreen.

Chris Azzopardi: After "The Son" aired, what kind of feedback did you get from LGBTQ immigrants whose experiences were similar to Rafiq?

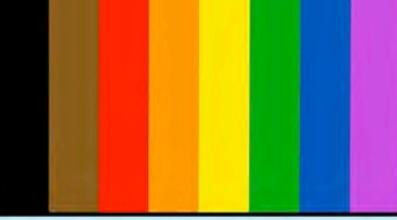
Haaz Sleiman: I am so grateful for amazing, positive feedback on Instagram, just comments thanking me and saying they felt seen. The importance of what we do, and storytelling and television itself, is that you can feel like if your story is being told, you matter somehow. It was really just very gratifying.

By the way, the lovely gentleman I got to portray, Shadi Ismail, was floored

by how it came out and felt it was exactly what he went through. He was in tears. So, for me, I'm just very happy with the way it came out and how LGBTQ people have been receiving it. This is a story that should've been told a long time ago; it's long overdue. We're finally getting it, and I really think it's about time.

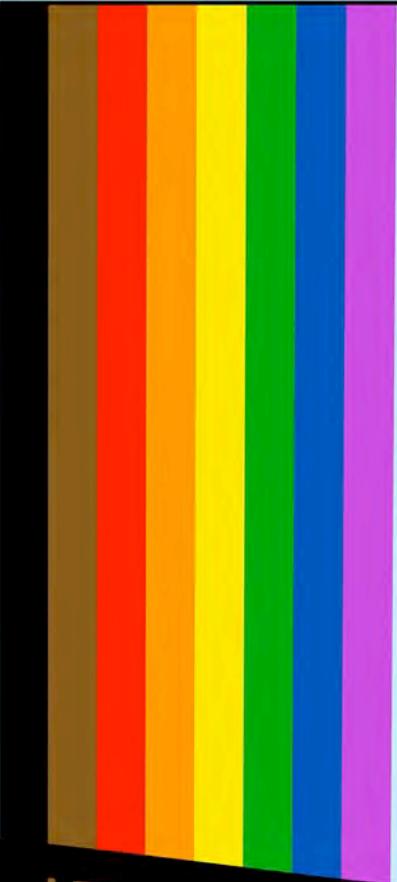
CA: Regarding representation, who did you look up to as a gay boy who grew up in Lebanon?

HS: Great question. I grew up in Lebanon in the '80s – there were a lot less options. And also, I was in Lebanon, so it's even more limited there. So just one word: Madonna. She was really it. Now, in all my interviews, Madonna comes up. (Laughs.) But she was that for me. She really represented hope for me. She was really the first person who actually told me that I was OK, that nothing is wrong with me; she gave me hope that, yeah, I can actually have a bright future for myself, and I



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can get what I want, and that there's nothing wrong with that. As a gay kid, I really loved strong women, and so in that sense it made sense I looked up to her. I was inspired by her and really, honestly, if I didn't have Madonna in my life as a child I don't know if I would've been able to survive.

CA: In *"The Son,"* Rafiq's friend, Zain, is a Kelly Clarkson fanboy and finds comfort in her song "Breakaway." What's a song that kept you going during your time as a gay man living in Lebanon?

HS: I was a very interesting child, I guess you could say. An old soul. So I always heard people being like, "What's wrong with Haaz? He needs to be like normal children. He needs to play with children." I never understood that. I felt bad about that. The reason I'm saying all of that is because it also applies to what I'm about to tell you.

I think I was kind of sophisticated in the sense that I really was a feminist when I was a kid. And I don't know why but I really had a strong empathy for women. I really cared about them. Whenever I would see that women are not treated fairly or equally, it really upset me. So, for me, the songs that really moved me and affected me are when Madonna would sing lyrics about doing things that women are not supposed to do, and her breaking the rules and her being so rebellious in the sense that, yeah, I'm gonna have sex

with this guy and I'm gonna be so happy about it and I'm not gonna feel any shame the next day. Whenever Madonna was equal to men, whether it's in her lyrics, in her music, that's what really empowered me because I saw, through her, that I can be like that as a gay man. That's really what inspired me and empowered me the most.

I would say a lot of her sexual songs do that for me. I'm a very sexual person and I'm a big flirt and it's just something natural for me; it's second nature. So I flirt with women, I flirt with men; it doesn't matter. And, for me, anytime she was free and uninhibited in expressing her sexuality in her songs that was very empowering, because in Lebanon and in most Arab countries sex is a shameful subject to talk about.

CA: You've been open about being, as you've said, a "total bottom." But at the same time, you've acknowledged that being so sexually transparent could hinder you career-wise. Why do you think that would affect your professional life? And has it?

HS: Look, I'd be lying to you if I said I'm not worried about how it's affected that and my career. I'm not delusional. I'm aware that there is an effect; I am aware that we are evolving; I am aware that we are making a lot of progress. But there's a lot more to be done.

I think my biggest fear was that it would affect my career. That's why I didn't come out before I came out, and I really just thought it was going to affect my career. Then, afterwards, I got to the place where I didn't care anymore. I didn't care about my career. Respecting myself became a priority.

CA: Before you officially came out in a video posted to Facebook in 2017, you were asked about your sexuality by *The Advocate*. How do you reflect on denying being gay in that interview? Do you feel public figures have a responsibility to be out if they're LGBTQ?

HS: For public figures, no one has a responsibility to save the world. I think everyone has the responsibility to be honest. Look, you could say a lot of people play the game and are really clever. Trump is one of them. They're really good at faking it. But I really think public figures, absolutely: their main responsibility is to be truthful, because if they're not then they're not enlightening the world. I think public figures' job is to enlighten the world. More than ever now, today, we need that. And that I believe in my heart of hearts is my job, my responsibility.

Of course when *The Advocate* asked me about my sexuality it was awful. I really struggled afterwards because I lied. I said I was straight. I betrayed myself. I betrayed my fans. I betrayed the people who admire my

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Photo Courtesy of Apple TV+

work. I also felt I was a hypocrite. That really ate from the inside. That, combined with the evolution of it all and all the different shows, like *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and the massive killing of trans women of color, all of that just made me finally come out.

I don't know. After many years of lying and not coming out and just basically disrespecting myself and betraying myself, it's clear to me today that, whether you're a public figure or not, the most important thing is to really live your truth. Be authentic. And that applies to anyone. It doesn't matter who you are or what sexual orientation you are. That comes first. And then after that everything else falls into place. My favorite artists in the world are all authentic and respect who they are. The ones I look up to, they're all an example of that.

CA: You're a lead in Mike Mosallam's feature film debut 'Breaking Fast'.

How does that movie fall in line with your goal of centering queer stories that typically aren't told?

HS: I think the majority of the world is not aware that there are openly gay practicing Muslims. I've had so many conversations about this with a lot of gay and queer people. My friend is an opening gay practicing Muslim. They exist. And there's a lot of them. So this film simply is making those people visible, no different from how finally the world is making trans people visible

because they were not visible for the longest time. Now, finally, they're seen.

CA: The internet was thrilled to hear that you'd be sharing a kiss with your husband, Phastos, in 'Eternals', the first Marvel film to feature a gay married couple; they will also be raising a child. What did it feel like to witness the excitement around such a historical moment in pop culture for the LGBTQ community?

HS: Marvel is purposely and intentionally trying to put out a positive image of a queer family for the whole world to see, from kids to old people. That's huge. Visibility at a level that is unprecedented. We got to humanize a queer family who have a son, and we got to really show how loving queer families are.

I actually even believe that queer families are healthier than straight families, and I really think their journey shows that in a beautiful way. So I'm very proud that I was a part of it. I'm very grateful that I got to humanize a queer family on a global level and I can't wait for the world to see it. And I think what 'The Son' did was also revolutionary. For women, for LGBTQ people, and for other marginalized people and ethnic minorities, there's a movement happening; there's an elevated level of consciousness, globally speaking.

And you asked me, "Do you think coming out is gonna harm my career?"

I'm excited to see what's gonna happen with that. Meaning, I'm excited to start seeing openly gay actors play straight. I would be excited to play James Bond, for instance. And by the way, I've had some training in Lebanon. When I was a teenager I really had to sell it to make people think I was straight. I had to have a girlfriend, I had to befriend straight boys to look like a badass. I really pulled it off. The reason I'm so convincing playing straight roles is because I did that in Lebanon with my family.

CA: And you'd play a straight James Bond, not a gay one?

HS: I would play a straight James Bond because I think it would be a big statement that an openly gay actor is playing a straight iconic figure. That's more challenging for the world. I think, for me, I'm interested in playing the roles that would challenge the world's thoughts and perspectives about each other. That's the most important thing for me: to really change the conversation.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi 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 DYLAN

Chillin' with Dylan Rice

By Gregg Shapiro

There aren't many up and coming gay singer/songwriters who can say that they were given the seal of approval by queer royalty at the start of their careers. But Dylan Rice can. Styx co-founder and bassist Chuck Panozzo not only collaborated with Rice on his 2002 demo, he also performed onstage with Rice at the 2006 Gay Games closing ceremonies in Chicago. Rice, who relocated to San Francisco in 2016, recently answered a few questions about his life and music.

Gregg Shapiro: Dylan, how long have you been living in San Francisco and what precipitated the relocation from Chicago?

Dylan Rice: I moved to San Francisco in 2016. It wasn't easy leaving the tight-knit music community of Chicago, where I learned how to craft a four-minute rock song, hustle to get a gig and grow as an artist in a safe space where I could make rookie mistakes. I had been braving those long winters for 20+ years, turning 40, and I felt an itch for a new queer adventure out west. I grew up a closeted queer kid in the hostile pressure valve of Salt Lake City during the '80s. I had dreamed of escaping to San Francisco, where I visited my aunt as a kid, to become my authentic self. I saw men holding hands in leather chaps, and even though I didn't know exactly who I was, I felt an inkling of: This is freedom, this is peace, this is where I want to be. Turns out I wanted to walk where Harvey walked. I wanted to dance where Sylvester danced. I wanted to write where Allen wrote.

GS: What do you like best about San Francisco?

DR: Besides being a gorgeous city with the pastel Victorian architecture and the dizzying hills that seem to smack dab against the Pacific, I love that social justice and art run in the blood here. San Francisco is one big experiment in



Photo By Christopher Manning

making the world a better place by lifting up the people who were forgotten or oppressed and throwing the biggest, most fabulous festival at the same time. I love that Pride here is a citywide phenomenon that all walks of life clamor to celebrate. I love that Folsom Street Fair is a shining beacon of democracy and freedom, but in a very San Francisco way. The city just keeps on experimenting, challenging itself, iterating, and reinventing.

GS: What can you tell me about your work at the San Francisco Entertainment Commission?

DR: I get to be a civil servant who is hopefully informed by my work as a musician and producer. A lot of what we do is regulate entertainment venues and amplified sound. I'm very lucky to be in a position to support the entertainment community through promotion and outreach programs. I love geeking out on creating toolkits and FAQs [laughs]! I've always been drawn to helping artists and creative entrepreneurs find the resources they need to thrive. I'm witnessing that city government can strike a balance between supporting a thriving art and entertainment scene and protecting the



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safety of the public. I'm also very lucky to work with such amazing, smart, and dedicated staff and commissioners.

GS: How is the pandemic affecting your job?

DR: The entertainment and nightlife industry is experiencing an existential crisis; here and across the globe. My job is to get the word out as quickly as possible about all of the latest rules and financial assistance and best practices that affect bars, restaurants, music venues and the industry at large. The situation keeps changing - the virus is a moving target. There is so much uncertainty and loss and fear in the community. To some extent, my job has also been to listen to the community and honor those stories. Recently my office helped launch a storytelling campaign - #DearSF - honoring and chronicling those stories of

entertainment venues and small businesses impacted by the pandemic.

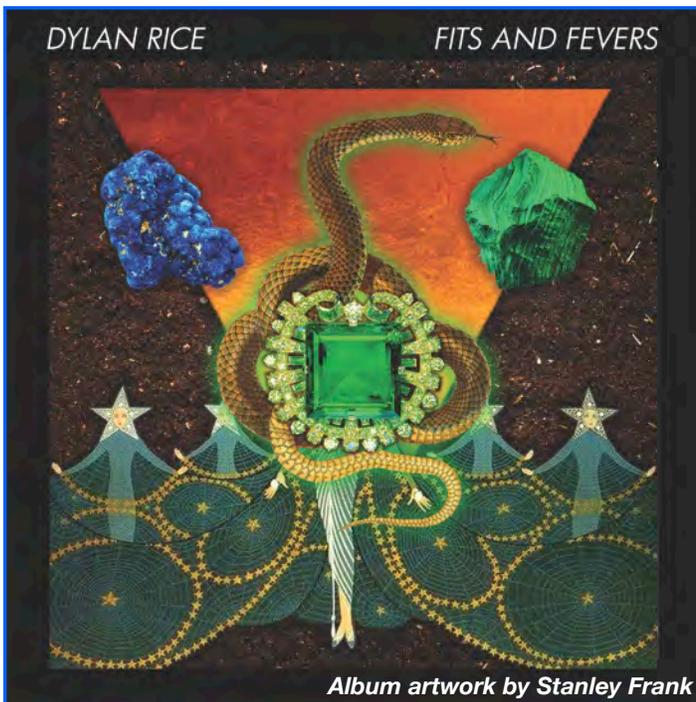
GS: Were the songs on your new album "Fits and Fevers", your first solo album in 10 years, written specifically for this record or were they songs you'd been working on in the interim?

DR: Between the new album and the last solo one, I was singing in the synth-rock band Software Giant in Chicago with Johnny Iguana. I loved that moody New Wave musical period, but I was missing my guitar and folk-rock roots. "Fits and Fevers" became a mix of older anthem-heavy songs that had been simmering beneath the surface for several years and newer ones that came bubbling out of me when I moved here as I was redefining my queer identity in a new setting. When I got here, I met producer/engineer Adam Muñoz at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley.

We totally clicked personally and creatively - he got my Rock-Americana-Goth vibe. We recorded much of the album at Fantasy. It was one of the last projects there before it closed.

GS: "Throes" really stands out because of its reference to SoMa. How has San Francisco been a songwriting inspiration?

DR: "Throes" is my love letter to the queer leather bars in SoMa. I decided to make an old-timey country ballad out of it, like if Johnny Cash wrote a song for the queer leather bar set. Instead of "A Boy Named Sue," it's a tale of characters desperately looking for love and redemption in the dark corners, in the backroom. There is "Hank with an app who dances in your lap" and a drag queen named "Rosaline who steals the show with her cataclysmic crow." There is wild love, heartbreak and loneliness in those transformative spaces.



DYLAN RICE

FITS AND FEVERS

Album artwork by Stanley Frank

GS: I also noticed the album includes themes of survival, which can be heard in the songs “A Garden of You” and “Tent City Chorus”.

encampment would sound like if they had a voice in a Greek tragedy - how their defiant and self-reliant spirit would survive the fall of the “kingdom” of civilization. They chant: “We don’t need

DR: Both songs are about survival in the urban decay, but one is present day and one is dystopian. “A Garden of You” is an urban pastoral about the culture workers who use art to cultivate justice and equity in the neighborhoods that need it most. “Tent City Chorus,” on the other hand, is apocalyptic and tries to imagine what a homeless

your life... We don’t need a home for your conscience.”

GS: In terms of your music and performance during the pandemic, what tools are you utilizing for those purposes, and what do you hope to do musically when it is safe again?

DR: Since the pandemic hit, I had to cancel my album release show in April at Ivy Room. It was gonna be this amped-up full band show and then the world went into lockdown. I’ve been taking to the streaming platforms on Facebook and Instagram as an intimate way of getting my music to my fans, having fun with merchandising. I’m about to release a Fits and Fevers tea blend with Eli Tea from Detroit. It contains Colorado lavender! When we can finally gather in music venues again, I plan on getting the band back together, doing the Biggest Do-Over Show Ever. It’s gonna feel like a religious revival. And I refuse to sing through a mask. If it’s behind a scrim with backlighting, well then, we can talk [laughs].

For more on Dylan Rice visit his website at <http://www.dylanrice.com>

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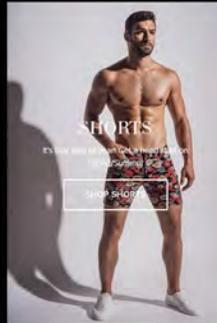
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GRAB BRIAN

“Coming Out” of COVID-19

By Brian Falduto

Whether it was something you started brainstorming right away or something that occurred to you somewhere along in the quarantined state of the world, “How can I use this time to reinvent myself?” is likely a question you’ve thought about in the past however many weeks or so. We are in the slow but sure process of unfreezing things and that thawing process is coincidentally coinciding with Pride Season. I feel it’s a good time to discuss how the queer community specifically can “come out” of this stronger as our resilient type tend to do after trying times.

I remember when I finally came out of the closet my senior year of college, I wanted the world to stop for a moment. At that time, when the truth about who I was became non-negotiable, I didn’t know that coming out is actually a healing process. I didn’t know that I would have to spend the next chapter of my life battling 14 years of internalized homophobia and discovering a rejected self that was hidden in shame. Instead, I just waltzed into my twenties completely out of tune with who I was and with very little time to figure it out. I had to navigate my new role as a gay man while finishing college, getting a job, ending a relationship, moving into my first apartment, and all the while having to provide status updates to friends and family that were anything but reflective of what was going on inside.

During this healing chapter I didn’t know I was entering, the most important improvements on my relationship with myself have come during the quiet moments. They’ve often arrived right when I’ve started to slow down, or even more often when I’ve crashed and burned from going too fast. They’ve arrived on nights where I was alone with nothing but my own thoughts and feelings to keep me company. And they’ve arrived in the form of hurt. When I look back at some of the perceived tragedies of my twenties, I see that they were actually the biggest moments of growth.

Quiet. Loneliness. Tragedy. Does any of the above sound familiar? Look, we all know at its core that this

pandemic is a bad thing with a negative impact. It comes with so many unanswered questions and troubling concerns. But I’d like to propose an additional way of looking at it and that is as the healing time that I, and perhaps we, have been waiting for.

If you think about what being in the closet is, it’s a form of compartmentalization where we disassociate from aspects of ourselves that don’t feel important or worthy enough to present to the world. Those beautifully valid parts of our being get tucked away in the back of our mind and covered with lies and then when the lies get removed, there’s still shame and so then we cover up even more with busy schedules and vibrant social lives and beautiful photos of ourselves posted on Instagram so that no one has to see or deal with the real core of the problem which generally tends to be a lack of love for ourselves. After all, we don’t know who it is that we are loving because we haven’t had the chance to heal. The amount of instant pride we expect from those that come out as LGBTQ after living an incomplete life is basically what it’d be like to ask a brand new dancer to perform triple pirouettes proudly even though they’ve never tried anything like that before.

If this time of being quarantined has been particularly difficult for you, a good question to ask is, “Why?” And pay attention to what comes up. Is it something you’ve been avoiding? For



me, some of the difficult moments have been the uncomfortable ones where I’ve realized how many aspects of myself were still being skipped over with the hustle and bustle of normal life. When these thoughts and feelings get uncovered after years of collecting dust, they can be a bit surprising. And as anyone who’s ever been in a haunted house knows, not all surprises feel good.

I love Pride Season. I love getting my shortest shorts on and coordinating tank top colors with my friends. I love partying and celebrating a part of myself I never thought I’d even acknowledge, never mind flaunt around the West Village. And it’s okay to grieve the loss of all that. But what if this June is a little less about pride and a little more about healing? It is yourself that you should be most proud of anyway so who better to celebrate it with than you. Perhaps if we get a little quiet with ourselves this year, we can be even louder & prouder next year than we’ve

ever been before.

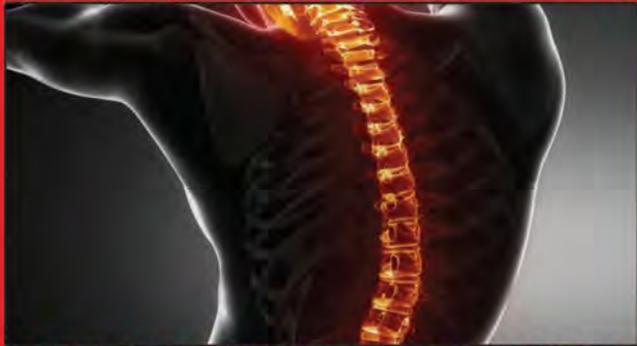
I wrote this piece prior to the recent current events involving the Black Lives Matter movement. I want to add that I stand in full support of that messaging and I encourage everyone inside and outside the LGBTQ community to get loud and take the action needed against racial injustice. Let us remember, though, what the Lesbian American writer, feminist, womanist, librarian, and civil rights activist Audre Lorde said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare." On the topic of healing, it's clear that America needs just as much healing as prescribed above for LGBTQ persons, if not more. Let us make sure we lead that effort by doing that work on ourselves while we stand up for what we believe in. We can be of better help this way as it is physically impossible to pour from an empty cup.

Brian Falduto is an ICF certified LGBT Life Coach but he is best known for his child actor days as "that gay kid from School of Rock." Recently named by PrideLife Magazine as "one of the 20 most influential, outspoken, & optimistic individuals on the planet," Brian wrapped a cross country #PrideTour this past summer inclusive of Sacramento Pride, RI Pride, Brooklyn Pride, Dallas Pride, & more. His Now This News interview has reached an audience of just under 5 million & he's had similar reach with his Advocate essay. Brian's latest single, "Like a Wave" dropped just last month & is now rippling its way through the digital streaming world. Brian is the lead in a new series, Fishing, which will hit the web soon. Additionally, Brian has launched "The Gay Life Coach Podcast," which will be hosted by Brian & will feature some of the queer community's most prominent storytellers. Meanwhile, you can catch his latest life coaching podcasts on his website or follow him on Instagram @thegaylifecoach.



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A photograph of two shirtless men embracing and smiling at each other. They are positioned in front of a large, circular rainbow gradient. The man on the left has his arm around the man on the right. Both are wearing black athletic shorts with a small logo on the side. The background is dark with a subtle pattern.

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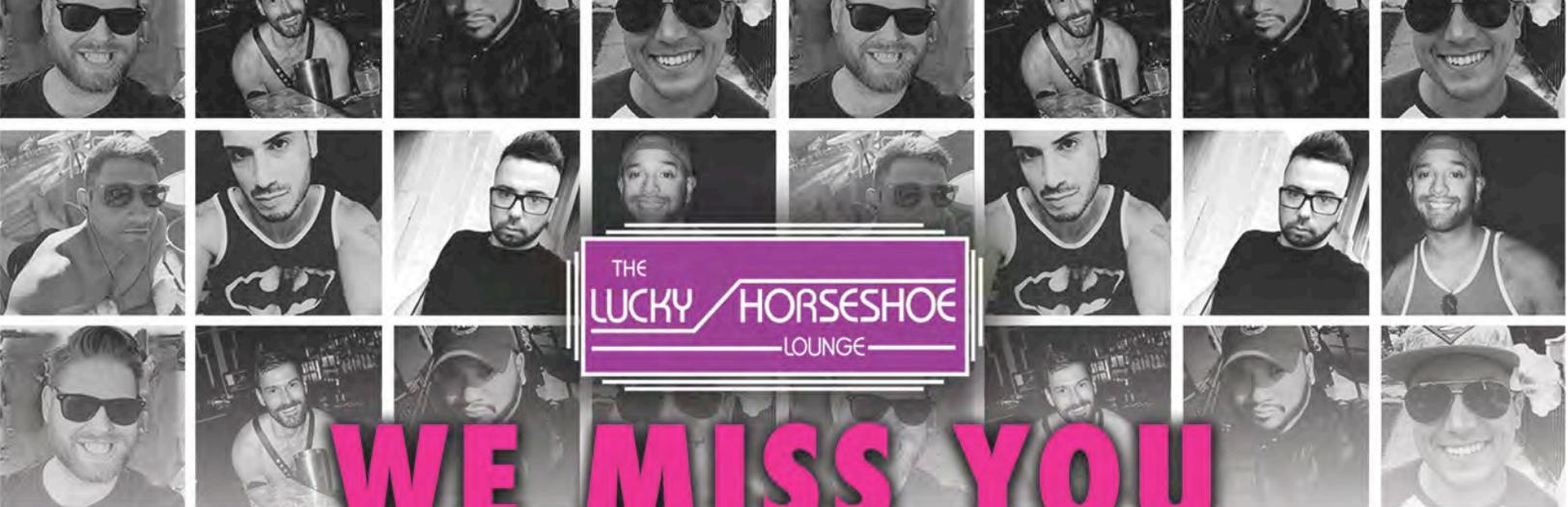
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2	Doja Cat	Say So (Jax Jones Midnight Snack Remix)
3	The Magician	You and Me
4	Jax Jones & Martin Solveig Present Europa	TEQUILA ft. RAYE
5	Jax Jones & Ella Henderson	This Is Real
6	Da Buzz	Touch My Soul
7	Riggi & Piros x VENIICE with RANI	My Feelings
8	DJ Licious	Atmosphere
9	Laidback Luke & Steff Da Campo	We Found Love (Radio Edit)
10	Marc Benjamin & DNKMG	Horizons ft. Able Faces
11	Michael Calfan & Martin Solveig	No Lie (Radio Edit)
12	Jonas Blue x Paloma Faith	Mistakes
13	Galantis & Hook N Sling	Never Felt A Love Like This ft. Dotan (VIP Edit)
14	Tritonal & Man Cub	Worth It All
15	Rush & Hydro x Rush & Crush	Give Me Your Lovin'



Sukie de la Croix and Owen Keehnen need your assistance once again!

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GRAB JOHNNY

Hot Hands Johnny Gets Real on *Inside Helix*

By Matthew Blanco

At 6'2" Johnny is hands down the tallest of the Helix boys. He grew up in a strict religious home in Indiana. After being kicked out at 18 for dating someone outside of his family's faith, he found work as a farmer and then a welder. He eventually made his way to Chicago where he landed a union job as a pipe fitter.

In his spare time, Johnny does what most guys do: plays video games and works out. He eschews labels, referring to himself as an equal opportunity fornicator. Still, he isn't shy about his proclivity for bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism. In fact, in addition to his work in gay porn, Johnny is a popular BDSM cam model. He also stars in the new Youtube reality show, *Inside Helix*. We caught up with Johnny Hands from his home in Chicago.

Matthew Blanco: Is there a story behind the name, Johnny Hands?
Johnny Hands: Yeah, there's a bit of a story. When I was picking out my porn name, I originally wanted to go with Johnny Deepp or Johnny Depph, but when I googled the names, they were already taken! I got a bit stuck on the name Johnny. My friend suggested Hands as a nod to my seven years as a welder.

MB: Good story! What have you been doing to keep yourself busy during the quarantine?

JH: I've been cooking every day. I'm on a bit of a Korean binge. I'm also hooked on Minecraft and have been playing a fair amount of *Valorant*.

MB: What do you miss most about life pre-COVID?

JH: It will sound lame but I miss the gym. I need to release a lot of pent up energy.

MB: Your Youtube show has really taken off! Tell us about *Inside Helix*.

JH: *Inside Helix* chronicles what it's like to be a Helix model during awards season. For the most part,



Photo by Alejandro

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MB: Are you a big partier?

JH: No! Pretty much the only time I party is when I'm in Vegas with Helix.

MB: We see a lot of hooking up between Helix models on the show. Is that normal?

JH: I don't know if I'd call it normal, but I wouldn't call it uncommon.

MB: Don't studios frown upon talent hooking up off-camera?

JH: Models hooking up when they have to film the next day doesn't always make everyone at the studio happy. For the most part, though, we are all pretty professional when it comes to our obligations and making sure that we're ready to perform when the cameras start rolling.

MB: What do fans learn about the Helix guys from Inside Helix?

JH: I think the big thing that I've noticed is a lot of the guys are very different than they seem. Guys who appear very quiet or shy at first often come out of their shells once they start to find their place in the dynamic of everything.

MB: How did you get your start in adult film?

JH: Through webcamming. After camming for about six months I quit my day job and started making adult content as my sole source of income.

MB: How did you connect with Helix?

JH: If I remember correctly, Tyler Hill came into my chat room and suggested I apply to Helix. Then I ran into Kyle Ross at XBIZ Miami, and he also suggested I apply. Finally, it was another male cammodel who ended up going to the studio side that convinced me to apply and see what Helix was all about.

MB: What was that first day on set like?



Photo by Alejandro

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JH: Oh, the first day on set. I remember I was super nervous! I really wanted to do well, but I'm terrible under pressure. My first scene was with Dylan Hayes, and we filmed in what Helix refers to as the Charger room. To be perfectly honest, the thing I remember most was how hot it was in that room. We kept having to stop so we could run the AC to cool down!

MB: Was joining Helix a wise decision?

JH: I love it! You've got a bunch of guys all staying in the same house, and most of the time we're all hanging out together, either watching movies, playing video games, eating, and partying. Everybody, for the most part, gets along pretty well, and everybody does the best they can to look out for each other.

MB: There is no drama between any of the guys? Really?

JH: So, I won't lie, there's some drama between a couple of models. I try really hard to stay out of it. As far as I'm concerned that's their business and absolutely none of mine.

MB: Who do you connect with most on a social level?

JH: I don't know if I could pick just one. I really like hanging out with Ashton Summers because he's so funny. Corbyn Colby and I pretty much play Smash Bros non-stop and just shit talk each other the whole time. Max Carter is super sweet. He doesn't stay at the Helix house but always comes down to hang out.

MB: Is there anyone in the studio that you might consider taking it to the next level?



Photo by Alejandro

JH: There are a couple I would consider dating, sure, however since I've started taking on more behind the scenes and camera responsibilities, I really want to keep things as professional as possible with everyone

in the studio.

Watch Johnny Hands in YouTube's "Inside Helix" (<https://youtu.be/rwAoYDsOrHc>). Visit <https://www.helixstudios.net>.

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GRAB ROGER

Stonewall: A Global Celebration of Pride

By Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq.

LEGAL

It was a drag queen in New York no longer willing to accept police harassment who, 51 years ago, threw the first bottle at a police car that ignited the Stonewall riot and began a quarter-century of civil protest in the LGBT community for the same rights as are afforded every straight American.

The right to legally marry, to avoid discrimination in housing, public accommodations and employment, to have legal safeguards in our relationships as LGBT couples, to receive partnership and employment benefits if one member of a couple should die or become disabled, to rectify normal disputes regarding a couple's property and to serve our country honorably and with pride in the military.

Ghandi was successful in fighting the discrimination against Indians in South Africa by promoting peaceful,

mass arrests when the Indians were forced to carry registration cards. Martin Luther King was successful in promoting the civil rights of blacks by using nonviolent demonstrations, marches and peaceful, mass arrests. The spark that started the fire of the black civil rights movement was Rosa Parks, a small black woman, who was willing to be arrested for the "crime" of sitting in the "whites only" section of the bus.

In our own lives, everyday, we can tell the nation that there are gays and lesbians in this country unwilling to suffer legal and civil rights discrimination. We individually can show the country that we are strong enough to take the heat, strong enough to pursue our rights in the political and judicial arena.

It isn't a lack of legal rights that for centuries has deprived us gay men and lesbians of our freedom, nor was it the

AIDS epidemic. Nor is it bigotry. In my opinion, it was our own shame, a morbid failure of self-respect and sane, self righteous anger.

It was our sense of shame that held us captive to being victims, it was our shame that enslaved us to not pursue our civil and legal rights, told us not to celebrate the specialness of our lives and cherish the gift of being a gay man or



lesbian woman. Shame told us that we could not pursue a better life on an equal basis with the rest of society as openly gay men and women.

How well we succeed in our struggle for legal and civil rights will not be determined by our popularity with the public but by the strength and unity we have to carry on the struggle. Our willingness to support each other by creating our family of pride will enable us to know that we are not alone and that we can put into action the principles of gay pride and create for all of us our basic civil and legal rights.

What can we do individually to increase our sense of pride. The most powerful thing I know of is to come out publicly to our friends, family members and our employers. Coming out is the most powerful statement we can make that says it is okay to be who we are.

If we have pride in being gay and lesbian, we will not accept the premise that we are doomed to suffer tragically or lead unfulfilled depressing lives. If we have pride, we will seek to empower our lives and advance our interests and rights. Truly the level of our pride is evidenced in the demands we place on society for equality and civil rights under the law.

Each person can make a difference.

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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GRAB HOLLY

A Time to Refrain from Donuts

By Holly Maholm

“There is a time for donuts, there is a time to refrain from donuts.” So says the Good Book (Ecclesiastes 3), and today, in our little town, this was as much wisdom as I needed.

It was late afternoon, and a “Closed for the Day” sign hung in the window at Donut Time. The launch of our new venture had gone off without a hitch (except one, which I will describe shortly). Customers who had placed their orders in advance had received the donuts and coffee they expected, and same-day orders were likewise delivered on-time and (as to coffee and latte) still hot enough to burn your lips.

The chariots and rescue horses had performed as predicted. After some initial skittishness, the horses gentled to the commands of their drivers – the Outlaws – whose voices (and smells) they knew from the stable, where horses and drivers alike found warmth and shelter. Those horses and chariots were now tied up in front of Donut Time. Inside, the drivers of those chariots – as well as all the other workers at Donut Time – were gathered together in the booths, where an atmosphere of good humor and

general merriment prevailed. At last Xandra struggled to her feet, and all fell silent.

“Cindy just handed me the totals for our first day of home delivery, and I am happy to report that we beat our projections! Our walk-in trade was down only a little, and we had a lot of unexpected same-day orders for delivery. Plus, we had no customer complaints. So all-in-all, it was our best day ever!” Her words were met with spontaneous cheering and cries of “Donuts Forever!” and “Power to the Donuts!”

The hands on the clock having reached Early Bird dinner time, the six Retirees departed for their retirement home. Then, before anyone else could leave, I asked Cindy to call a special, all-hands Staff Meeting to be held later that same evening. There was some grumbling about the need for a staff meeting – including fears expressed concerning a certain person (unnamed) who (when she has an audience) never fails to find endless enchantment in the sound of her own voice – but all agreed to attend.

I went into the kitchen, where I found Xandra boxing up the Special Order I had placed earlier that week. She glanced up and offered, “I’ve got your order ready. Do you want to try one?” She handed me a pastry; something new and unique I had been eagerly anticipating, and which did not disappoint.

“I call this a ‘Unicorn Horn,’” Xandra declared. (I had to smile.) In fact, this Special Order was destined for the stable, where Victor, Fletcher, Sassy Pants, and the other unicorns were waiting. I was so grateful for their support and encouragement that I had arranged a special treat for them. Which was: A funnel-shaped pastry-shell – buttered and baked like a cannoli – filled with a unique, “unicorn-friendly” filling consisting of organic rolled oats, brown sugar and cinnamon – cooked to the consistency of butter crème frosting and filling each pastry-shell to the brim. Xandra had baked ten dozen of these treats, all packed carefully in boxes. These I forthwith carried out front to one of the chariots, where I stowed them away securely for the trip to the stable – and that frolic of unicorns so impatiently waiting.

But as I say, “There is



a time for donuts, there is a time to refrain from donuts.” Early that evening, at the hour appointed for the dreaded Staff Meeting, everyone assembled on the sidewalk outside Donut Time. In my most apologetic voice, I announced, “Friends, I’m sorry, but our meeting has been cancelled.” (Insert general sigh of relief.) “Instead, we’re going to have a celebration – paid for by Donut Time! – over at The Watering Hole!” Instantly, everyone rushed in the direction of The Watering Hole, Wellington’s foremost (and only) tavern, sports bar and purveyor of beer and ale.

There, the owner had reserved several tables for our group, and soon my friends and I were celebrating with cheeseburgers, wings, corned beef, patty melts, brisket, chilibogs, French fries, onion rings, tater tots and multiple malt beverages. (But no donuts.)

Nevertheless, there was one disturbing note. Xandra called me aside and confided, “Something bad happened today. Grandma Lily was taking phone orders, but it turns out, for four of those orders, the caller gave a fake address. When the drivers got to the street, there was no such number.” “That’s alarming,” I agreed.

Xandra continued, “I asked Cindy if she knew who could have done this, so she suggested I take Grandma Lily over to that real estate office on Pine. Grandma Lily went in and – after speaking to the woman there – confirmed, ‘That’s the caller who placed the fake orders.’ I thought you should know.”

(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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What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes, COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

TITUSS BURGESS RELEASES "DANCE M.F." – PRIDE EDITION VIDEO



Tituss Burgess is quickly emerging as one of the entertainment industry's most versatile and dynamic performers, with his work in television, film and theater, generating both critical and

commercial acclaim. Adding to his diverse talents, Tituss is thrilled to be releasing his first piece of music aimed squarely at the dance music culture and this year's many unstoppable virtual pride celebrations.

Dance M.F. is a sultry sexy stomper of a track with an attitude that is certain to bring comfort and escapism to our currently socially distanced souls. This song is a love letter to all the party people who in spite of the pandemic, are still committed to "live their best lives", party on down and celebrate Pride safely while in lockdown.

Said Tituss "Dance M.F. was born out of the panic I felt at the onset of the global crisis that has all of us in isolation. It was written for me - until I realized I wasn't the only one that needed to hear it".

The track features vocals by **Imani Coppola** and was co-written by **Tituss Burgess**, **Imani Coppola**, and **Daniel Edinberg** and produced by **Daniel Edinberg**, **Michael Mangini** and **Tituss Burgess**.

Burgess was first introduced to television audiences in Tina Fey's Emmy®-winning NBC series *30 Rock*, where he quickly became a breakout star in the series' fifth and sixth seasons. He went on to star as the indelible character of Titus Andromedon in the Emmy®-nominated comedy series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. Over the course of the series' four seasons, Burgess was nominated for four Emmy®, a SAG Award, two Critics' Choice TV Awards and won both a Webby Award and a Gold Derby TV Award. Among multiple film roles, Burgess was featured in the 2019 Golden Globe-nominated Netflix comedy, *Dolemite Is My Name* alongside **Eddie Murphy**; he'll lend his voice alongside an all-star cast in the upcoming Apple + animated series, *'Central Park'* and will star opposite **Jennifer Hudson** as the Reverend **James Cleveland** in the highly-anticipated 2020 feature film 'Respect'.

To see the video visit <https://youtu.be/3mlkamy6dxg>

YOUNG CULTURE DROPS NEW MUSIC VIDEO "I'LL BE THERE"



It's not often that a rock or punk band will make a hip-hop style mixtape just to clear their creative cobwebs. But that's exactly what

Albany-based three-piece Young Culture did. Formed by school friends **Alex Magnan** (vocals) and **Gabe Pietrafesa** (guitar), who have been playing together for a number of years, Young Culture put out their debut mini-album, *You*, in the summer of 2016. It was followed up with a five-track EP called *Blue*. The former had a song, "*Bedroom Floor*" that featured **Derek DiScanio** from State Champs - a fellow Albany band - on backing vocals. The latter was co-produced by him and Seth Henderson, who's worked with the likes of *Real Friends*, *Knuckle Puck* and *Sleep On It*.

Vocalist **Alexander Magnan** shares: "We're happy to put out good vibes and hope you enjoy watching it as much as we did making it."

Young Culture - completed now by guitarist **Troy Burchett** - toured

those songs and began to build up a solid following, which remains strong today. But instead of working on new material for the band, the pair, fueled by an inherent restless creativity, began to experiment, Pietrafesa sending Magnan different beats to write lyrics over just to keep their inspiration and creative juices flowing.

That influence is very much evident in songs like "*Drift*," co-produced by **Derek DiScanio** (State Champs) and **Sam Guiana** (Like Pacific, Coldfront). "*Drift*" not only redefined who Young Culture is as a band, but also reshaped the perimeters of pop-punk - although it should be noted that they're very wary of being confined to just that genre. As they should be, because there are many more layers to this band.

Streaming now at <https://youtu.be/xlsZcs637uA>.

FAME ON FIRE SHARE NEW VIDEO FOR "HEADSPACE FT. POORSTACY"



Fame On Fire has shared a new video directed by the band and featuring **Poorstacy** for latest single

"HEADSPACE FT. POORSTACY"

The track is taken from Fame On Fire's upcoming debut album *Levels*, due out September 4th on Hopeless Records.

On the collaboration, Fame On Fire shares, "We met POORSTACY a few years ago and instantly clicked. We knew we wanted to work together and collaborate on a song and we're stoked at how it came together. Although "*Headspace*" is about mental health and the darkness that can envelop the mind during crisis, it is also about what can happen when you take risks and blend influences together." Last week, "*Headspace Ft. Poorstacy*" debuted at #40 on the Active Rock chart and continues to be in Sirius XM Octane's most played songs on rotation.

Fame On Fire is genre-defying and pushing the boundaries of rock, hip hop, and heavy music, by unapologetically being themselves. Unpretentious, honest, and boldly brash, Fame On Fire has delivered a diverse, energetic, and emotionally-wrenching collection of songs for their debut album, *Levels*. Holding multiple meanings, *Levels*, is both about going through the motions of life, the various levels, ups and downs that all people can relate to, and about the quest to level-up and continue to progress and move forward. This dichotomy defines a band that is not willing to stand still or be complacent, but one that continuously tries to evolve their sound and craft. *Levels* is available for pre-order at smarturl.it/FameOnFireLEVELS

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Quigley Statement on Landmark SCOTUS Decision



U.S. Representative **Mike Quigley** (IL-05) released the

following statement after the Supreme Court announced their decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, Georgia, ruling that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects gay and transgender workers from workplace discrimination:

"Today, the Supreme Court chose equality over bigotry. This decision marks a historic victory for LGBTQ rights activists across the country and a momentous step forward in the fight to ensure that all Americans are treated fairly.

"While this success is deserving of celebration, the fight is not over. LGBTQ Americans can still be

discriminated against in housing and education and trans women of color face disproportionately high rates of homelessness, sexual violence, and murder. House Democrats have passed the Equality Act for exactly this reason. Unfortunately, Mitch McConnell has failed to bring this historic legislation to the floor for a vote in the Senate.

"To LGBTQ Illinoisans and the LGBTQ community across the country – congratulations on this tremendous achievement. I stand with you in the ongoing fight and I won't rest until no one faces bigotry based on who they love or how they identify."

WNBA Announces Plan to Tip off 2020 Season



After significant discussions with the league's key stakeholders, including the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA), the WNBA has announced elements of plans to return to the court to begin the WNBA 2020 season. The league is finalizing a partnership that would make IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, the Official Home of the 2020 WNBA season highlighted by a competitive schedule of 22 regular-season games followed by a traditional playoff format.

Beginning in July, IMG Academy will be the home for each of the league's 12 teams and serve as a single site for training camp, games and housing. The top priority continues to be the health and safety

of players and staff, and the league is working with medical specialists, public health experts, and government officials on a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure that appropriate medical protocols and protections are in place. Due to the fluid situation resulting from the pandemic, the league and players will continue to review the appropriate health and safety protocols and make necessary changes to the plan prior to arriving on site for the start of training camp and throughout the season.

"We are finalizing a season start plan to build on the tremendous momentum generated in the league during the offseason and have used the guiding principles of health and safety of players and essential staff to establish necessary and extensive protocols," said WNBA Commissioner **Cathy Engelbert**. "We will continue to consult with medical experts and public health officials as well as players, team owners and other stakeholders as we move forward with our execution plan. And, despite the disruption caused by the global pandemic to our 2020 season, the WNBA and its Board of Governors believe strongly in supporting and

valuing the elite women athletes who play in the WNBA and therefore, players will receive their full pay and benefits during the 2020 season."

"As home to some of the world's leading athletes, coaches and performance experts, IMG Academy is thrilled to partner with the top basketball players in the world and the entire WNBA family," said **Tim Perneti**, Executive Vice President, IMG Events & Media. "We are truly looking forward to becoming the Official Home of the 2020 WNBA Season and working closely with the league in providing our best-in-class training and competition environment."

"As in recent CBA negotiations, the WNBPA Executive Committee worked tirelessly to represent the interests of all players as the league planned to launch a 2020 season," said WNBPA Executive Director **Terri Jackson**. "Our society has learned or perhaps has been reminded of an important lesson: women are integral to the economic stability of their families and their communities. The league and the teams' commitment makes a statement."

For more information, visit WNBA.com.

AIDS Run & Walk Chicago 2020 Returns Saturday, Oct. 3



Chicago-area residents will mobilize to create equity and justice for individuals who are living with or

vulnerable to HIV and AIDS at the 19th annual AIDS Run & Walk Chicago on Saturday, Oct. 3. This year's event will feature 5K/10K runs and a 5K walk and unite participants under the theme Forward Together, looking beyond our current state and focusing on what we do to create a better future for people living with HIV and AIDS. A movement is more than a physical gathering; it is the space between our reality and our vision for the future. What tomorrow will become depends on who we are today.

AFC is closely monitoring for updates from local and state health agencies and will continue to assess what additional measures may be required to ensure participant safety. Contingency plans are in development should the event need to be reimaged.

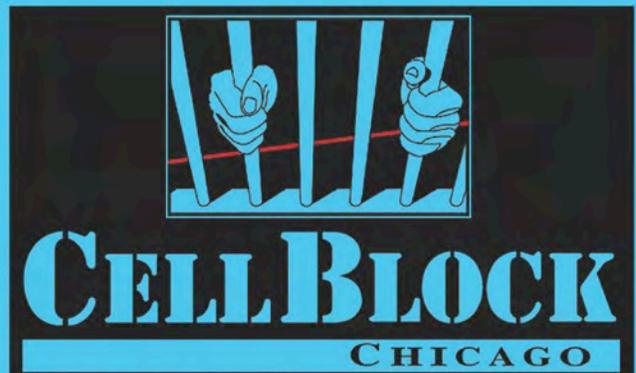
Funds raised through AIDS Run & Walk Chicago will benefit the AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC) and more than 30 partner organizations that provide essential programs and services to Chicagoans who are living with and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and other chronic illnesses. Together, these organizations are working on Getting to Zero Illinois, an ambitious state-wide plan to end new HIV transmissions in Illinois by 2030. More than 60% of the estimated 42,500 Illinoisans currently living with HIV are Chicagoans.

Since it was established in 2001, AIDS Run & Walk Chicago has drawn more than 22,000 advocates and raised more than \$6 million to battle the epidemic. For more information, visit <http://www.aidsrunwalk.org> or call 312-334-0953.

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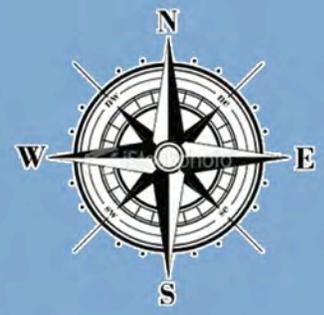
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