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GRAB BRANDY



A Better Version of Brandy R&B icon talks loyal LGBTQ fans, returning to Pride and overcoming self-doubt

By Chris Azzopardi

The light falling on R&B queen Brandy is casting tiny rainbows that dance above her head. She's looking up at them, telling me what she sees. Little rainbows everywhere.

On an ordinary day, sure, this would be special. But on this particular day, as I speak with a confident and ruminative Brandy on Zoom, in depth, about her eagerness to get back to performing at Pride and the loyalty of her LGBTQ fans, it's impossible not to read into this extraordinarily timed meteorological phenomenon as some kind of gay magic. In case you didn't know how much mad love there is between Brandy

and the LGBTQ community, well, here are some rainbows haloing Brandy's head while she's addressing that very love, it seems to say.

From her iconic sing-off with Monica on "The Boy Is Mine" and on through her remake of *Cinderella* with Whitney and her TV series *Moesha*, Brandy's biggest LGBTQ fans have stood by her, their devotion never waning. In July, nearly 30 years after her self-titled debut made her an R&B star in 1993, she dropped *B7*, her seventh studio album, on her own record label, Brand Nu Inc. Now that Brandy is more in control of her identity and artistry, that bond has

never been stronger.

Chris Azzopardi: Promoting B7 in the middle of a pandemic on Zoom – what has that experience been like? Brandy: It's not like how it normally is, of course. I'm a people person; I love to interact, meet new fans, meet fans that have been with me for such a long time. But I am thankful for technology because we could just be on the phone and I wouldn't be able to meet you like this. So (I'm) thankful in that way. But (I) definitely wish I could really be out there and socialize and hug people and shake hands, that kind of thing.



CA: I'm sending you a virtual hug.
Brandy: I'm sending you one too.

CA: I've been a fan since I was a kid. We're about the same age, but the difference is that I've watched you grow up.

Brandy: It's beautiful to meet people who have followed me and supported me all this time, so I appreciate you jumping on the Brandy board and being a part of my journey. And even in you being interested in talking to me.

CA: Just to see you

blossom into this independent woman where you get to make the calls, where you have autonomy, where you are a co-producer and co-writer. It's extraordinary to see. Can you talk about how you got to that place? Brandy: I felt inspired this time around. I just wanted to follow the creativity, the

flow, that was in me, that was inspiring me to use my music to tell a lot of the stories that I had gone through, my challenges with love and my mentality and where I stood with myself, and also just trying to find this new sound and this new way of approaching music.

It took me a minute, but I'm so glad that I was able to really dig deep and pull the real feelings, the real emotion for this project. Real lyrics that are coming from my heart, from my own journal, from my own spirit. It just feels a little bit different when most of the music is coming from you. It feels good to be in this place. And I want to, of course, continue to collaborate with other writers and other producers, but it feels good to have a center where I can go to and pull from, that I feel confident with.

CA: When you have such a loyal fan base, do you get to a point where you can trust that they'll go on any journey with you creatively?

Brandy: I would have to say I feel like my fans have been loyal from day one, especially the diehard fans; they've been very supportive from my first album, to me moving into television and me being able to step outside of music and do things that I never saw myself doing or imagined myself doing.

I feel like people have grown up with me, and that started at the very beginning. But I could really also tell with the new project, just the anticipation, people wanting me to put out music and always asking, "When are we going to get new music?" When people still want to hear from you after you've been gone for eight years, that





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Proud Purchase Card issued by MetaBank® Member FDIC. Terms and Conditions Apply. See cardholder agreement for details. feels amazing. That people still have a yearning, have a want, have that feeling that they want to hear something from me... even if it's "Happy Birthday"! (Laughs.) That feels amazing to have a loyal fan base like that.

CA: These lyrics are some of the most real lyrics of your career. And you go deep. I have friends who are experiencing their own mental health issues and saying this album has really connected with them because you're so open and vulnerable. Are you hearing that from fans? Brandy: I do. I know we have struggles, and we go through things that we wish we could change our behavior on, and things we have to face about ourselves, and I wanted to be one of the people to come forward and say that I've struggled in a lot of areas with my mentality, with my sanity, just with the kind of life that I've had to lead. A lot of trauma. A lot of PTSD that I've had to battle and face.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel because there's work that you can do. You can talk to someone, you can journal. You can change the inner dialogue with yourself. It takes practice to get yourself on track, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. I wanted to show people that no matter what you go through, you're always bigger than your circumstance, and you can always work on your mental issues. Always.

CA: That's such a thing that I think we all need to hear right now, Brandy. We're all going through something we've never experienced before, so the PTSD, the anxiety, the depression is intense. How are you working through this current moment?

Brandy: I just have this deep empathy for everyone. My prayers for the world have increased. I've always prayed for world peace and togetherness, for us to be equal and unified, but my prayers have gotten longer and more frequent with what's going on. But I just try to think maybe this whole entire moment is shifting us to a different level of awareness, a different level of consciousness. And maybe this thing that looks like a catastrophe is really the universe cleaning our mess up and helping us get to a better place.

And, of course, my heart goes out to the people that we have lost in these tragic times, but I feel like I have to believe that everything works for the higher good. At some point we will be better from this because a lot of light has been shed on a lot of the things that



this world has had to face. Even though we've seen a lot of division, we've all seen a lot of unity in this time. We have to think on those things, and I think when we focus on those kinds of things – and being grateful for the smallest thing; like, I'm grateful for the pillow that I have to sleep on at night – you start to appreciate the smallest of the smallest things in life. I think we're moving into a better space for ourselves, and I just pray that that's the case. I really do.

CA: What are you grateful for today? Brandy: Today I'm grateful that I'm able to speak with you about life and to share what I just shared with you today. I'm grateful for my family that I saw this morning. I'm grateful for the breakfast that I was able to eat this morning. I'm just grateful for oxygen. I'm grateful for these, like, rainbows that I see on my wall right now. Little rainbows on my

wall. I'm just grateful for life and to have a purpose in life. To be here and not to feel like you have a purpose, that's not a good place to be. And I want everybody to know that: If you're alive, you have a purpose here.

CA: God, you're gonna make me cry. Brandy: Don't you cry, Chris. (Laughs.)

CA: I'm a big fan of "Lucid Dreams" from B7; it seems to detail a very personal story of you losing yourself. And I think we're all at risk of that right now. Can you talk about that song and how you were able to get back to you and the work that it took to get there?

Brandy: There was a time in my life where I felt like I needed another person to complete me, and that is not the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth is that we are whole. We are a whole person.



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"Lucid Dreams" is really about me losing myself in a relationship because I feel like I'm nothing without this person. So I'm addicted to sleep. chasing this recurring dream because in my dreams we're together, but in reality, in the waking state, we had broken up, and that was a very, very hard time for me. And heartbreaks and hard times make for good songs, so I said, "Let me just go on and write about it and be honest about it." If vou listen to it. I'm making all of these healing sounds because I was using the song to heal a part of the leftover pain that I was feeling from that particular time in my life. But I'm completely over it, I'm free from that, which is great. I did the work to do it, and when you do the work, you do get results.

pay you to be my therapist. An hour a week – how much? Brandy: (Laughs.) You know what, no one's ever said that. Ev'rybody trying to send me to therapy! I'm kidding.

CA: I'm about to

compliment.

CA: You're a regular Pride performer, and Pride was not the same this year. You didn't get to perform at Pride. What do you feel you missed out on? Brandy: I absolutely love performing at Pride. The energy is just unmatched.

(Laughs.) I love that, thank you. That's a

And you can just tell the love for my music in the LGBTQ community is real. You feel like, "OK, they have my back. When I come on stage, they're gonna give me that love I need. They're gonna want me to do well. They're gonna want me." It feels like family. And I'm just so blessed to have the LGBTQ community to support me in such a way that I just... it feels awesome. And I miss that. I didn't get to do anything for Pride. But count me in when it's safe and ready to go, because I absolutely love it. I absolutely love performing at Pride.

CA: It was nice to see you on a stage, on the Billboard stage, to be exact, where you blew it up. What's it like performing in that kind of environment, in a pandemic, without a crowd?

Brandy: It's different. Because you feed off a crowd. And the applause. And the singing along. And the rooting you on. That is something that I definitely miss in terms of being on stage. But there's also a focus that happens when there isn't a crowd, where I'm only thinking of what I'm doing. But I would prefer a



crowd over just being completely in my zone. I can get in my zone with a crowd, but it's easier when the crowd isn't there. But I miss the crowd.

CA: You don't have that instant feedback. right? It's hard to know, "Am I doing OK, everyone?" Brandy: Yeah. And then the people that are there, that are working, they don't act like a crowd, they don't act like an audience. The 10 people that are separated doing camera shots, they're not going to clap for you at the end.

CA: They're not like your gay fans. They don't know every word to "Have You Ever," "The Boy Is Mine," "Almost Doesn't Count," "Sittin' Up in My Room." Brandy: Right! And the unreleased stuff. Your gay fans know your unreleased (stuff); that's when you know you're a real fan.

CA: When in your career did you feel the most creatively stifled, like you couldn't be who you wanted to be creatively? **Brandy:** I would have to say after the Full Moon album I kind of lost my way. And I say this in the most humble way, but so many artists started to approach music the way that I did. I started to hear a lot of my sound with so many different artists; I heard a lot of songs that sounded like the work that I had done, and so a part of me felt like, "Where's my place? Do I have a place? Because everybody is starting to sound a little bit like me. And I don't know what I can do now, like, 'Do I take it to another place? Do I try not to sound like myself? What do I do?" So I was a little bit confused as to the direction that I should go in. Or if I was even needed, if my music was even needed. But that was nonsense, that was negative thinking, that was just me having a moment of just not knowing my place.

I got through that, and I was able to make more music after that, and I'm going to continue to make music, and



I'm in a place where I'm stronger mentally in terms of just learning to trust my creative flow. And if I trust my creative flow, I don't have to think about anything else but that. And if I'm true to that, then I'm true to my fans and I'm true to my purpose and my work, and that's what's important.

CA: Do you think we'll have to wait another eight years for the next one? Brandy: No, no! It's not gonna be another eight years. It was eight years for a reason; it was for a lot of different reasons. I'm in a really great place, musically, creatively. And I have so many great opportunities. I'm a free spirit. I have my own label, I am writing my own songs; it's just a different version of myself. It's a better version of myself.

Of course I want to do other things outside of music, but I don't think it's fair to wait another eight years to put out music when the studio is right down the street. (Laughs.) People need music, people need music, and people that

have the talent to share music should be doing music and that's how I feel: It's my responsibility. So I don't want to wait eight more years. And I won't. That's a promise.

CA: It sounds like you're in a place where nothing is holding you back right now.

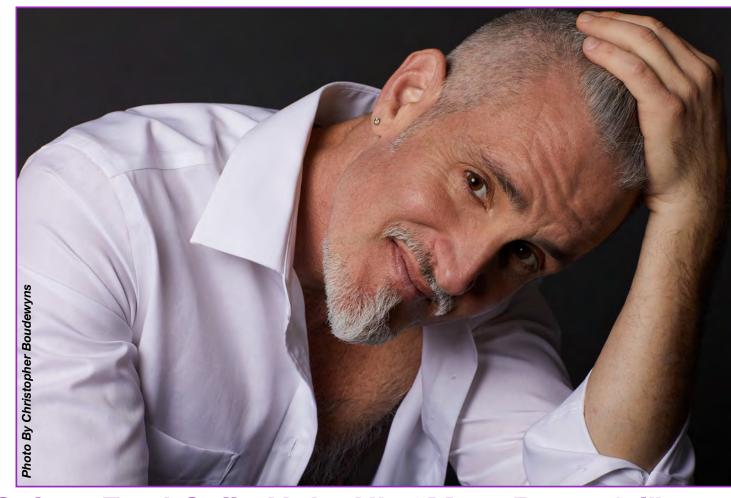
Brandy: Nothing. Nothing is holding me back. And I have such great supporters. Like you today. Your energy is beautiful. You represent a whole community of people that love me, and you're speaking for them to let me know that I'm loved out here and that feels... that's an amazing feeling. So I owe you. I owe the LGBTQ community. I owe my fans music. And it's a beautiful place, to be loved.

This interview was lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

To watch Chris' Interview with Brandy via Zoom visit

https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=ojJVEtqKwtM&t=165s

GRAB COLTON



Colton Ford Calls *Unity* His "Most Powerful" Album Yet

By Phil Bessimer

Colton Ford and Ron Schrader met in kindergarten and have been working on music together, on and off, for much of their lives. Two years ago, they partnered with Spin Sista to create Woop Woop Productions, and this month, they present their music company's first offering: Ford's new EP, "Unity." It is a high-octane album aimed at making listeners wanna sing, get up and move!

The EP's first single is "Stronger", a big, beautiful ballad that starts off acoustically with a simple guitar and vocal before whisking listeners on a powerfully sweeping musical journey. Along with the original version, Woop Woop Productions is releasing two remixes of the song. Spin Sista's "Future Haus" mix is epic and anthemic while the "Haus of Love", offers up a

more chill vibe. We spoke with Colton Ford from his NYC home.

Phil Bessimer: Reviewers are calling Unity your best album yet.

Colton Ford: Each of my albums has a special place in my heart, "Unity" being no exception. I do think this release is my most powerful though. Its narrative is very timely, and speaks to what we're all experiencing today in this country and globally. Each of us is figuring our way through this life, facing obstacles that are not only impacting us individually, but as a species. "Unity" acknowledges the challenges in front of us, but is also clearly hopeful. It's a message of empowerment, not just for us individually, but also as we come together in unity.

PB: Exactly who did you have in mind while recording the album?

CF: Us. You and me. Our world and the struggles and challenges we're all seeing and facing. The human race is at a crossroads I believe, and we need to come together in order to figure it out for all of us. Freedom and acceptance for all! We are one species made up of all kinds of wonderful brothers and sisters, and we need to celebrate and honor that, Not deny it and kill it, but accept it and love it. Life is diverse.

PB: How does the first single, "Stronger." set the tone for the record?

CF: I wrote the lyric as a self-speak to stay positive and hang in there. Keeping that spirit and overcoming obstacles is essential to our survival! That can be



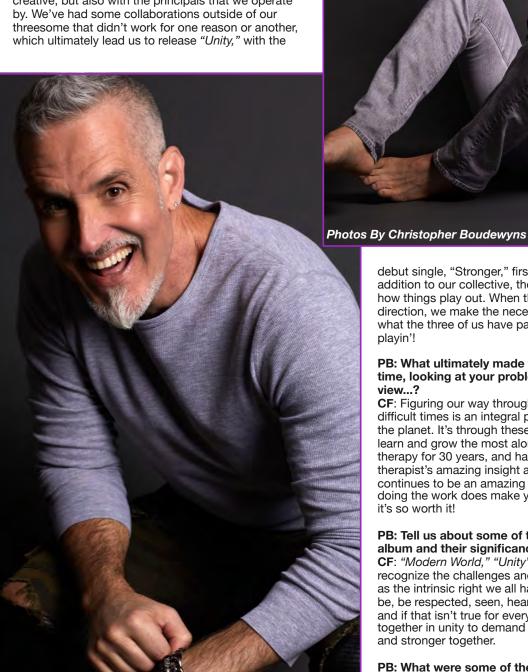
Santa's coming.



challenging, as it's easy to feel powerless and get discouraged in a world that's seemingly spinning out of control. But we do have the power, individually and collectively, to stand up for ourselves and for one another. Our internal dialogue can help us to that end, or be the catalyst to our demise. We have to stay conscious of what we're telling ourselves, as that influences everything we experience in this life.

PB: What setbacks did you have to deal with when making the album?

CF: For this record, there have been no issues really. Woop Woop Productions is solid, not only in the creative, but also with the principals that we operate





debut single, "Stronger," first. Whenever we have an addition to our collective, those guiding principals govern how things play out. When things take a turn in the wrong direction, we make the necessary adjustments to protect what the three of us have painstakingly created. We ain't playin'!

PB: What ultimately made you stronger? Was it time, looking at your problems from another point of

CF: Figuring our way through challenges, hardships and difficult times is an integral part of life for most people on the planet. It's through these experiences that we can learn and grow the most along our journey. I've been in therapy for 30 years, and have been the beneficiary of my therapist's amazing insight and guidance. It's been and continues to be an amazing experience! Staying in it and doing the work does make you stronger. It ain't easy, but it's so worth it!

PB: Tell us about some of the other tracks on the album and their significance.

CF: "Modern World," "Unity" and "Free" all collectively recognize the challenges and obstacles we face, as well as the intrinsic right we all have to be who we're born to be, be respected, seen, heard and free. Freedom for all, and if that isn't true for everyone, then we're coming together in unity to demand change. Period! We're better and stronger together.

PB: What were some of the other names you considered for the album?

CF: We could have used any of the singles as the title. They all work, but I think the word "unity" jumped out for us. That's what's up! Uniting to make the world a better

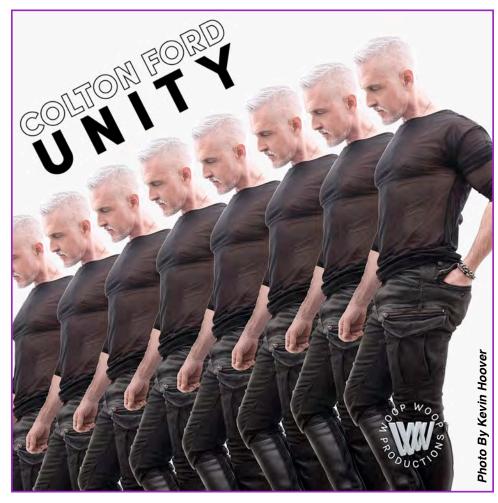
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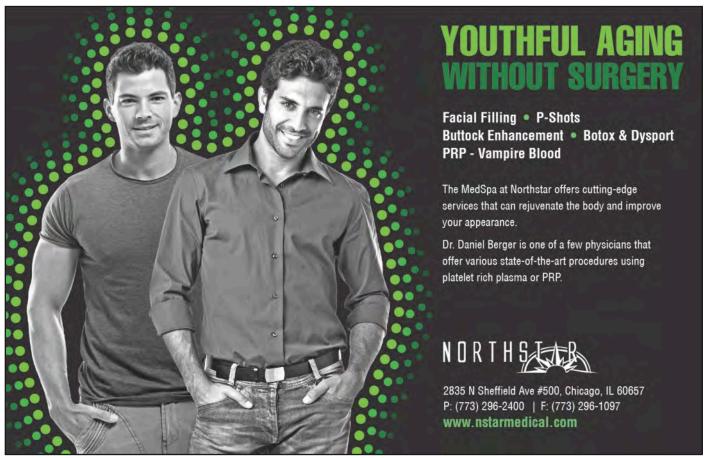
PB: What are you most hopeful about in a Biden/ Harris administration?

CF: Everything! Finally, we'll have smart, intelligent individuals at the helm who are concerned about the well-being of the people in this country, and of our democracy. Strong leaders who possess empathy and a clear intention and commitment to making things better for everyone, not just for a small group of people who hold all the cards at everyone else's expense. And to not hear from that treasonous, unstable, mentally ill orange menace anymore is going to be brilliant!

PB: What are you most looking forward to now that the Unity album is out?
CF: Unity!! That was easy!

Follow Colton Ford on Facebook @ ColtonFordMusic





GRAB NORA



One-Fifth: An interview with Evanston's Nora O'Connor of The Flat Five

By Gregg Shapiro

As supergroups go, it's hard to imagine one cooler or better suited for that title than the Chicago quintet known as The Flat Five. Consisting of longtime Evanston resident Nora O'Connor, along with Kelly Hogan, Scott Ligon, Alex Hall and Casey McDonough, The Flat Five effortlessly conjures a sense of nostalgia in the listener, even if you're too young to remember. That's due to the band's songwriter Chris Ligon, whose imaginative wordplay is the vehicle by which we are transported on the albums It's A World Full of Love (2016) and the band's new full-length record Another World (Pravda Records). Harmonizing throughout,

O'Connor shares the lead vocals with Hogan on the irresistible opener "Drip-A-Drop," as well as "Butterflies Don't Bite," and takes the lead on "This'll Be The Day" and "House of Foam". Nora was kind enough to answer some questions in mid-October 2020 in advance of *Another World*'s November 2020 release.

GREGG SHAPIRO: In addition to you, the other members of The Flat Five have connections to Chicago's legendary alternative country scene. Do you see it as a natural progression, the way that The Flat Five's self-described "twisted

sunshine vocal pop" grew out of altcountry?

NORA O'CONNOR: I'm going to say yes. I also think just because we are more than country. We all have pop roots as well. Maybe Kelly and I were leaning into our country roots. For me, growing up with Irish immigrants, I have a lot of Irish Celtic music background and then started in the bluegrass scene in southern Illinois. So, Kelly and I were leaning into the country music, but we still had all this pop music living inside us. As the band was forming and as we started to pick our song set and find our sound, we leaned into the twisted sunshine pop. We're made up of more





than flavor.

GS: Two of the best examples of The Flat Five's "twisted sunshine vocal pop" are "Drip A Drop" from the new album Another World and "Buglight" from 2016's It's A World of Love and Hope. Are they as much fun to sing as they sound?

NO: Yes! We all got to the studio and Scott said, "How about this song 'Buglight'? Let's just do it in this style where I play guitar and we all gather around one microphone." We recorded it in just a couple hours after a couple takes. "Buglight" just happened really organically and really fast. (Regarding) "Drip A Drop", Scott sent us an email the night before we were going to the studio (that said), "Chris has a bunch of new songs. Check this one out." I feel like we've been together so long that we each know our place and fall into our positions quite quickly.

GS: "Look at the Birdy" from Another World is a wicked funny recounting of a Sears Portrait Studio experience

from the perspective of the photographer. Being the mother of young ones, did you have any amusing episodes at the Sears Portrait Studio, or do you have one you'd care to share from your childhood?

NO: I guess I'm not a very good mom because we've never done portraits. But we always went to the Lincolnwood Town Center on McCormick and Touhy. We never thought we could afford to take professional pictures, but we always took the boys to see Santa Claus (for a photo). There was nice Santa, creepy Santa, maybe drunk Santa. Some of my favorite photos of my kids are the ones where one is smiling and one is crying. It's priceless. I've never been into the perfect picture, the perfect outfit and the perfect background. I kind of like the misbuttoned shirt and the crying kid next to the other kid sitting up straight and smiling.

GS: Insects figure prominently in the Herb Alpert-esque "Butterflies Don't Bite", as they did in the

aforementioned "Buglight." Are you an entomophobe or are you a fan of the vast insect world?

NO: As you know, all of these songs are written by Chris Ligon. I think he's into all sorts of stuff that he's not ashamed to admit. He's so playful and childlike and deep and serious. It's interesting the way he uses bugs as imagery or as metaphors.

GS: But how do you feel about bugs, personally?

NO: Personally, I have no problem with bugs. I don't kill spiders. I love the bees in my backyard all over my flowers. Bugs don't freak me out. I can sit and watch a caterpillar walk across the floor all day long.

GS: Chris Ligon, whom you mentioned, certainly has a way with words and melody. As a songwriter yourself, what do you find most appealing about singing Chris' songs? NO: I think I just love his stories. For example, the song "Birmingham" from our first record. It kind of sets up the



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visual right away. Where one character is shielding the other character so they can pee outside and no one else can see. Or the lines, "Remember when we went to Tennessee and I loved you and you were kissing me." I tend to sing more about lost love and relationships. I think Chris can really put a color picture in your head and it's always a vibrant color, and rarely black and white.

GS: At last count, including The Flat Five, with how many musical acts are you associated?

NO: At the moment? It's hard to say during a pandemic, but in a regular world I would say I'm in about five active bands, including my solo stuff. And I play bass for other people. Then there's some bigger acts that I go on tour with.

GS: Such as The Decemberists and Neko Case.

NO: Yes, right.

GS: In the earlier days of the pandemic, you and Kelly Hogan, two Flat Five members, performed in the socially distanced all-star all-female



supergroup BOTO's (Band Of Their Own) YouTube video, singing the Pat Benatar hit "Shadows of the Night". Is there more to come?

NO: Maybe in the wintertime there might be. I feel like in the beginning of the pandemic we were all scrambling and panicking and mourning and just looking for ways to connect and create content. The Flat Five did "It's Been A Delight" Hollywood Squares-style. I feel like it's kind of calmed down because people have been, maybe, getting off their computers a little. I've been playing outdoor concerts, backyard solo shows, all summer. But that's winding down. I think as we are entering into hibernation or even possibly another lockdown, there might be some more of that stuff. I have been trying to ease up on my screen time. I feel like in the beginning I was watching everybody's home concerts and videos, trying to stay connected. It got to be a little too much. As we're going into the winter, maybe there will be more stuff like that for me.

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	Artist	Title
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2	Arty x Audien With Ellee Duke	Craving
3	VASSY x Outgang x TwoWorldsApart	OXYGEN
4	Michael Calfan x INNA	Call Me Now
5	Topic X A7S	Why Do You Lie To Me ft. Lil Baby (Twocolors Remix)
6	SG Lewis	Impact ft. Robyn & Channel Tres
7	Wilson x ManyFew x Kelli Leigh	No More Chances (Radio Edit)
8	Dipha Barus & CADE	DOWN
9	Martin Jensen x Alle Farben x Nico Santos	Running Back To You
10	Wafia	Good Things (R3HAB Remix Clean)
11	Lost Kings	Hurt ft. DeathByRomy (Clean)
12	HALIENE	Walk Through Walls
13	French Original	History (Moodshift Radio Remix)
14	Sachi	You (A La)
15	Crystal Waters & DJ Spen	Party People (Micfreak Disco Edit)







GRAB DYLAN

A Covid FreeThanksgiving

By Dylan Seitz

It's that time of year again where everyone gathers for the holidays, whether it be friends or family, and hold our loved ones tight. COVID-19 didn't seem to get the memo this year though. So now instead of doing exactly what you would expect, there are restrictions all over Chicago, as well as the country, preventing a normal Thanksgiving from taking place. Despite the doom and gloom of current events and the season, I'm taking a moment to appreciate memories from years past to give myself something to look forward to in the future and trying to keep my head held up high.

The general consensus among people who I have asked is that most likely that they aren't doing Thanksgiving at all this year. Others I see flocking to COVID testing facilities to be in time for the holidays so they can tell their friends and family they are negative so they can see them. Myself, I fall into the former category. The reason being is that shortly before Thanksgiving, I was informed by a friend that he had just tested positive for the virus after I had seen him recently. Due to that, I have had to make alterations to my plans as I don't want to get my family sick. This is the first time I've actually had to consider getting tested as this is the first time I've knowingly interacted with someone who was COVID-positive.

Trying to find a testing facility isn't exactly difficult, but there are many

things to be aware of. A quick Google search will reveal a comprehensive map of testing places, but there are a few options and prerequisites per location. Some of these include: Appointment or walk-in, required or non-required referrals, who can get tested, and whether or not there is a drive-through. This quickly can get a little confusing as some places, like Howard Brown, encourage people to preregister online to visit.

Some places require that you set up an appointment to get some COVID testing. You'll find that many pharmacies and clinics are usually by appointment only. Many hospitals do not have this requirement. It is important to be weary of the former places though as some will show "closed" online, but when digging a little deeper will find that although the business may be closed, the facility is open for COVID testing. One example of this is Howard Brown's Sheridan location located at 4025 N Sheridan Road. If you see that a location is closed, make sure to double check online!

The next thing to be mindful of is whether or not if you need a referral. This is also a mixed bag of this being a requirement, but thankfully more places tend to not need one. Referrals can be obtained from your doctor if you wish to get a test done at a

location that requires one such

as a private clinic. Some referrals can be done via Zoom meetings, Facetime, Skype, etc. Places, such as CVS, do not have this requirement. If you are experiencing symptoms, it may be better to go to a location without that requirement so you can get tested faster.



Always make sure practice your social distancing and wear a mask.

The next prerequisite is the qualifications of being able to get tested. According to the places that have this requirement, you must reside in the state you are getting the test and be aged 18 or older. Take this into consideration if you think going across state lines is a faster option for you. I know I certainly won't be going to Indiana to get this done. Additional restrictions that may qualify you or disqualify you from getting testing done may vary so call to make sure ahead of time before traveling to a location.

The last thing to be mindful of is if the facility is drive-through or not. If you have a car, it is a more convenient option to drive to a location to get this done. Doing drive-through testing also diminishes lines at facilities that cannot accommodate that. However, most locations that do drive-through testing require you set up an appointment ahead of time which may be a while before they have an opening to fit you in the schedule.

Some of you may have taken these points and gotten tested already which is great! If you have not gotten testing done by the time you're reading this though, it may be too late for Thanksgiving plans. This is because test results can take days before they get back to you and the holiday season is filled with many people attempting to get appointments. However, now may be a good time to start thinking about the month of December. Christmas and New Year's are right around the corner to potentially spend time with friends and family. So, make sure to do your research and plan accordingly. Be safe and make the most out of your Thanksgiving and other holidays that you can!

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GRAB HOLLY

Such an Ugly Word

By Holly Maholm

It was the consensus of our little working group convened by Her Most Serene Majesty, Penelope, Queen of the Unicorns, that Dot and I should attempt to find some "technical solution" that would permit the Queen and her unicorn attendants to keep watch over the Doings of Sapiens Sapiens... the object being to detect any risk to the frolic arising from human endeavors early enough that it might be avoided.

Accordingly, Dot being entirely uninterested in the internet, apps or anything identified with an Apple (other than the Apple Brown Betty filling she served to the unicorns in taco shells), it fell to me to locate a mechanism by which the unicorns might keep watch over human society. After diligent searching across that very internet which was the focus of my investigation, I found my answer. I ordered what I needed online (as what else?), and in a few days I had what I wanted (plus free shipping!).

I returned to the pole barn at the Horse Rescue, where I installed an LCD monitor in one of the stalls, thereby allowing the unicorns to search the internet in privacy and without disturbing their frolic-mates making use of the arena.

(As you recall, I had previously hung a wide-screen TV – connected to a laptop – on the wall in the arena, so the unicorns would have a place to watch movies, listen to music, and dance.)

Also in that stall, and as an accessory to the monitor, I hooked up the specialized device I had purchased, and which I hoped would enable Queen Penelope to keep herself well-informed regarding the activities of humans. When it was ready, I requested Sassy Pants, Victor and the Queen to join me in the stall.

"I will start with you, Victor," I began.
"Now, repeat after me, speaking in a loud voice, into the device: 'Siri. My name is Victor.'" This he did, to which the little voice-activated device responded, "Hello, Victor. Is there something you want?"

I was as unfamiliar with the device as the unicorns, so it took us several hours of experimentation before we got the hang of it. By evening, when I left to return to the stable, Victor and Sassy were confidently conducting searches and accessing websites throughout the Internet.

It was several days later when I returned to the Horse Rescue, to see how Siri and the unicorns were getting along. The Queen saw me and motioned for me to follow her into the stall with the device. Victor stepped aside when we entered,

allowing the Queen to walk up near to the screen and device.

Queen Penelope spoke, "Siri, it is I, Penelope." The device promptly responded, "Welcome, my Queen, how may I be of service?" Penelope explained what she wanted, "If you would be so kind, Siri, could you show me that website we found the other day, the one I asked you to preserve for me in your archives?"

"At once, Your Majesty," Siri replied. Then, we saw on the screen the home page of what I soon ascertained to be the website of the local True Holiness Baptist Church on Pine Street in Wellington.

Penelope continued, "We knew someone had flown a drone over the fields of the Horse Rescue, and we had to assume it was a person 'local' to our village. Next, I learned that all



drones of substantial size – as this one was – are required to be registered with the relevant government agency – in this case one having the initials 'FAA.' Accordingly, I called upon my new friend, Siri, here (she nodded in the direction of the device) to check through the records of FAA to determine who in Wellington might have registered such a drone."

I exclaimed in shock, "Your Majesty! Those records are private and confidential! How could you possibly gain access to that database? Why... that's nothing less than hacking!" The Queen gave me a bemused look (halfway between "Injured Innocence" and "Pity for a Fool") and replied, "Oh, Holly, 'hack' is such an ugly word. I prefer to think that if the responsible persons at FAA knew how much I needed the information, they would have graciously provided it. Siri... tell us, what happened when you checked the records at FAA?"

Siri responded, "It was at your command, Your Gracious Majesty, that I submitted an inquiry to the FAA database, but it was refused. Then, I reestablished the connection, and – if it pleases you to recall – I implored you to repeat your request – using your own, exalted voice – directly to that 'uncooperative' device. Instantly your request was granted, and you received the information you desired."

"Thank you, Siri," the Queen offered, "you are only too kind."

Siri replied, in words both humble and obsequious, "I live to serve." (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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GRAB UNDERWEAR

Colder and Bolder!

Addicted Underwear Celebrates Winter with Eye-Popping New Prints

By Jack Barry

If ever there was a time to get bold with your underwear, it's while under stay-at-home orders.

Addicted is the sister line from ES Collection, the popular men's athletic wear company. Since 2009, the brand has been dedicated to the design, manufacturing and sale of men's underwear, swimwear, and sportswear. Their latest collection of undies, available now at AddictedUSA.com, are playful and bright. They are sure to bring a little chic to the bleek long days of winter under quarantine.





Addicted's Flames Swimderwear Brief

Retro flames print design that can be worn as both underwear and swimwear!
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\$41 at *AddictedUSA.com*

Matching Flames Mask

2-layer washable mask for outside and inside protection

Outside layer 80% Polyester - 20% Spandex Inside layer is 100% Polyester and is water repellent and anti-bacterial

\$12 at AddictedUSA.com

Addicted's Metallic collection in Silver

A very comfortable rubber-latex mix 95% polyester 5% spandex Perfectly form fitting to any shape Jock is \$27, Brief is \$34, Short is \$45 at

AddictedUSA.com

*Not shown: Also available as a boxer brief (\$41)





Models wear Addicted's Ring Up Neon Mesh in Orange

All garments feature push-up technology including a removeable ring

80% Polyamide - 20% Spandex

Provides extra volume and lift with support and comfort

Jock is \$34, Brief is \$41, Trunk us \$44 at

AddictedUSA.com

*Not shown: Also available as a bikini brief (\$37)





Addicted's C-Through in Yellow

New ring-up technology combines push-up with a removeable ring 90% Polyamide - 10% Spandex Provides extra volume and lift with support and comfort Jock is \$27, Brief is \$34, Trunk us \$37 at *AddictedUSA.com*

Also check out CRAM Fashion (3331 N. Broadway) for more Addicted Underwear and check them out online at http://www.CramFashion.com About Face Theatre Launches 25th Season with online short play festival KICKBACK, in partnership with Rebuild Foundation



About Face Theatre kicks off its landmark 25th season with KICKBACK, an online festival of newly commissioned short plays and performances by Black LGBTQ+ artists, inspired by the Rebuild Foundation's collections at the Stony Island Arts Bank. Conceived and directed by About Face Theatre Associate Artistic Director *Mikael Burke*, this performance series examines the intersection of queerness and Blackness in the present moment, inspired by the past, and looking toward the future. This program will stream December 12, 2020, through January 11, 2021.

12, 2020, through January 11, 2021. For KICKBACK, About Face has commissioned a cohort of Black LGBTQ+ artists in Chicago to create original work inspired by Rebuild's extensive collections chronicling the diverse experiences of Black Americans. KICKBACK will feature the work of About Face Artistic Associate Paul Oakley Stovall, Robert Cornelius, Michael Turrentine, Ben Locke, Dionne Addai, Vic Wynter, Ky Baity,

Keyonna Jackson, Cori Wash, ShaZa (a collaboration between Zahra Baker and Shanta Nurullah), and Rebuild Foundation resident artists Jenn Freeman and Avery R. Young. These artists have been granted extensive access to Rebuild's archives and are using them to inspire original performance pieces.

Since the planning for KICKBACK began nearly a year ago, the swift escalation of events around COVID-19 and the disproportionate impact on Black people and communities in Chicago has expanded the project's scope and essence. Furthermore, the current global uprising in support of Black lives amplifies the need for ongoing resources and spaces for expressing joy, connection, and celebration of Black culture.

"For me, KICKBACK is about living our best lives, on no one's terms but our own," said KICKBACK director Mikael Burke (pictured - click on image to access file). "It's clear that white-supremacist-America wants us gone, and they want us quiet. We are being murdered in broad daylight, on streets, in parks, on sidewalks, in our homes, for having the audacity to draw breath and enjoy our time on this earth. But we refuse to be silenced. We are beautiful and complex and glorious. And we are out here living! So. let's turn the music up. Let's make a scene. Let's celebrate our queer black lives and honor our friends and loved ones who no longer can. Let's kickback.

KICKBACK is an innovative partnership between About Face Theatre and Rebuild Foundation, a non-profit platform for art, cultural development, and neighborhood transformation on the South Side of Chicago. The Stony Island Arts Bank

at 6760 S. Stony Island Ave., is home to Rebuild Foundation's four major collections. Together, these archives offer a variety of insightful windows into African American art, history, and culture that will be the springboard for KICKBACK's art. The collections are:

• The Johnson Publishing
Archive, which houses more than
15,000 books, periodicals,
furnishings, and ephemera, including
the seminal EBONY and JET
Magazines that have chronicled
American Black life since 1945;

• The Edward J. Williams
Collection, consisting of over 4,000 objects of "negrobilia," mass cultural objects and artifacts that feature stereotypical images of black people as they were frequently depicted by white people;

• The Frankie Knuckles Collection, the personal vinyl collection of the godfather of house music, which originated in Chicago in the 1980s:

· The University of Chicago Glass Lantern Slides of over 60,000 slides of art and architectural history from the Paleolithic to Modern eras. which offer the perspective of over three million years of world history KICKBACK will premiere through About Face Theatre's website and social media channels, and will be paired with exclusive behind-thescenes interviews and documentation of the artists' process. This project serves as part of Rebuild Foundation's year-long initiative to raise awareness and provide resources and sanctuary for marginalized communities impacted by the HIV/AIDS crisis, made possible by funding that Rebuild received from the 2018 (RED) Auction.

For more information visit https://www.aboutfacetheatre.com

LGBTQ Victory Fund Urges Members of Congress to Support Sean Patrick Maloney for Next DCCC Chair



Last week the LGBTQ Victory
Fund, the only national organization
dedicated to electing LGBTQ people to
public office, urged Democratic
members of Congress to elect U.S.
Representative *Sean Patrick Maloney*to serve as the next chair of the
Democratic Congressional Campaign
Committee (DCCC). It cited Rep.

Maloney's strong fundraising network, extensive knowledge of the DCCC, and repeated reelection victories in a Republican-leaning district as reasons to support his candidacy. It also noted Rep. Maloney would make history as the first out LGBTQ DCCC chair at a time when more LGBTQ people are running for Congress than ever before. Mayor *Annise Parker*, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Fund, released the following statement:

"Democrats need a chair who believes diverse candidates are competitive in swing districts and who knows how to win tough races – and that is the story of Sean Patrick Maloney. He is a proud out gay man with three adopted kids and his authenticity and message resonate in his conservative-leaning district. More LGBTQ people and people of color are running for Congress than ever before and Rep. Maloney has the foresight to see it as an opportunity to diversify representation and increase the

Democratic majority in 2022."

In 2020, out LGBTQ Congressional candidates including *Gina Ortiz Jones* (TX-23) and *Jon Hoadley* (MI-6) faced millions of dollars in homophobic and transphobic attacks by the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee (NRCC). Both lost on Election Night. "Rep. Maloney is best-informed and best-positioned to recognize homophobic and transphobic attacks and call them out for what they are, which is bigotry," continued Mayor Parker. "He will be a chair who forcefully stands behind these candidates when under attack and refuses to let the NRCC's anti-LGBTQ strategies succeed."

LGBTQ Victory Fund works to change the face and voice of America's politics and achieve equality for LGBTQ Americans by increasing the number of openly LGBTQ elected officials at all levels of government.

For more information visit http://www.victoryfund.org

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Joey Suarez Releases TikTok-Inspired Album THE SHUFFLEZ



EDM musician *Joey Suarez* has released his much-anticipated album, *The Shufflez*, a collection of short songs and remixes inspired by social media app TikTok and other short-form video platforms. "Social media inspired me so much through dance that I am dedicating almost every song on this

album to the dance music," states Suarez. "Having met some of my most engaging followers on social media, I decided to create music for exactly those who felt like me."

The Shufflez was produced by fellow LGBTQ musician Jaki Nelson with KALIPZO featured on "Polly Pocket". With most live events cancelled and clubs at limited capacity, the album is meant to be heard in its entirety on social media and will not be limited by the landscape of live music. "I am hoping to inspire and engage all of my followers by creating music specifically for those who feel antsy at home and need something to dance or create to. I really

hope this music does just that!"

The nature of these songs are very short, so most of the recording processes were different than traditional songs. "I had the honor of co-producing this album with a production genius named Jaki Nelson, who single handedly produced these tracks in a matter of

hours once we came up with the idea. All done from her house."

After reaching #15 on the Billboard Dance charts with his hit single "Alive", Joey Suarez is quickly becoming one of the hottest names in electronic pop music. In 2019, Suarez embarked on a 15-city gay pride tour across the United States and teamed with chart-topping dance artist Jaki Nelson to deliver a song called "Changing History".

As an independent artist, Suarez has already earned millions of plays and views worldwide, achieving over 150,000 followers. His career began in 2016 when his songs "High in the Sky" and "Love Me Back" were featured in Billboard Magazine, Huffington Post and Digital Journal. With the power of charttopping label Audio4play, his most recent single "Alive" reached #3 on the Billboard Breakout chart.

For more information, to listen to The Shufflez and to view Joey Suarez's new merchandise line, visit https://trendybyjoey.com/

the ability to connect with an audience far beyond his onstage performance. More than 20 years into his career, Herndon shows no signs of slowing down. Herndon made his chart debut in 1995 with "What Mattered Most," which became his first No. 1 song and garnered a Song of the Year award (Music Row Magazine).

Emmy and Tony Award-winning actress and singer Kristin Chenoweth's career spans film, television, voiceover, and stage. In 2015, Chenoweth received a coveted star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2009, she received an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her role in "Pushing Daisies." In 1999, she won a Tony Award for "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown" and she was also nominated for her original role of Glinda the Good Witch in "Wicked" in 2004. Chenoweth has been nominated for two Emmy Awards and for a People's Choice Award for her role on "Glee."

To see the video visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw8RAED41Cg

Ty Herndon & Kristin Chenoweth Release Lyric Video for New Single "Orphans of God"



GRAMMY® nominated and Dove Award-winning recording artist *Ty Herndon* recently released a duet with Emmy and Tony award-winning actress and singer *Kristin Chenoweth*, titled, "Orphans of God,". Created by *Paul Cardall*, the video has been uploaded on Herndon's YouTube page. The single, which also features award-

winning pianist and composer Paul Cardall on piano, will be featured on Herndon's upcoming Christmas album, Regifted, set for release on Friday, Nov. 27

"Orphans of God' was written by Joel Lindsey and Twila LaBar and originally recorded by contemporary Christian group Avalon. Former Avalon band members Melissa Greene and Michael Passons provide backing vocals on the updated track. "Orphans of God" will lead the tracklist for Herndon's upcoming Christmas Album, entitled Regifted. In addition to the new single, the album features a curated selection of Herndon's favorite tracks from his holiday catalog.

"It's been a tough year for so many of us, and I wanted to give my fans a little something special to cheer up this season," said Herndon, who is currently in the studio preparing an album of allnew material for a 2021 release, his first since 2016's House On Fire.

Ty Herndon is a master of the ties that bind. The Grammy-nominated and Dove award-winning recording artist has

Less Than Jake Reveal New Single "Anytime and Anywhere"



Following its premiere on Rock Sound ska-punk veterans *Less Than Jake* remind fans to take the time to enjoy life, with their latest single "*Anytime and Anywhere*," taken from their forthcoming album, *Silver Linings* set to be released on December 11th via Pure Noise Records.

Speaking on the new single, bassist and co-vocalist *Roger Lima* shares: "This song is sort of a shout out to the good times when you're actually in the 'silver' parts of your life or a relationship. It's a reminder to stop and smell the flowers when there happen to be some flowers to smell... because good times fly by when you're living them. Cherish those moments and the people in your life that are there for you through thick and thin."

Silver Linings is the name of the new Less Than Jake album, their first full-length for the Pure Noise label and the follow-up to 2013's See The Light. It also doubles as a bunch of sonic diary pages and a mission statement that cements their conviction after two decades in this rock 'n' roll circus.

Indeed, LTJ—frontman/guitarist *Chris DeMakes*, bassist/vocalist *Roger Lima*, trombonist *Buddy Schaub*, saxophonist *Peter "JR" Wasilewski*, and new drummer *Matt Yonker*—have escaped most (but not all) forms of ennui, depression and violence against screen-based objects to create an endorsement of humanity.

Nearly 30 years into an already impressive career – which includes 8 studio albums, tours with *Descendents, blink-182, Bon Jovi, Linkin Park, Snoop Dogg, Bad Religion*, and more, and over 365 shows on the *Vans Warped Tour* – Less Than Jake has never been a band to rest on its laurels. They have no plans of slowing down any time soon as they prepare for the release of their 9th studio album, *Silver Linings*, out December 11th via Pure Noise Records. To pre-order, visit: *https://smarturl.it/LTJ*.

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