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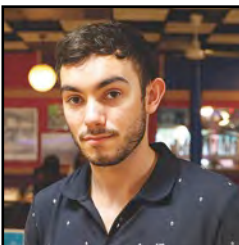
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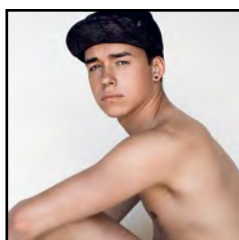
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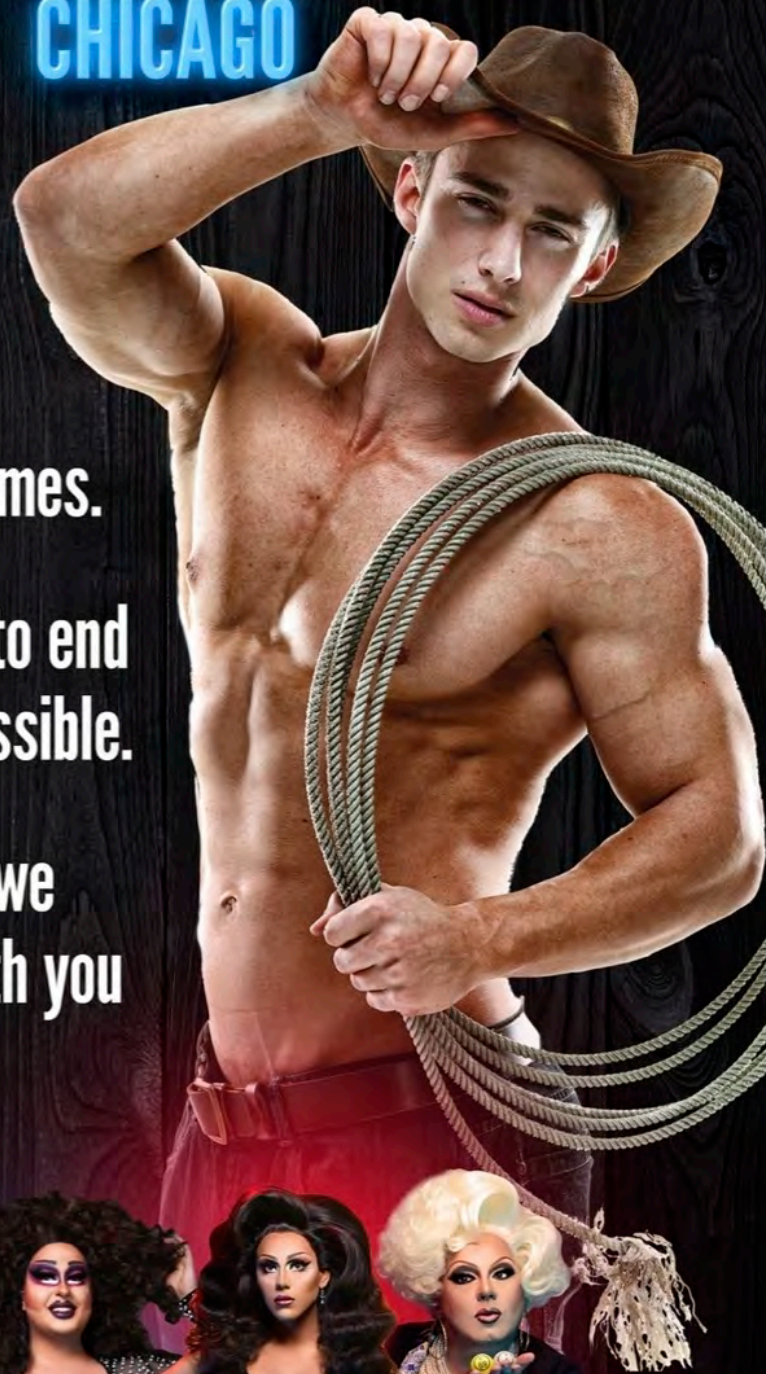
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GRAB WILSON

Wilson Cruz Knows the Power in Storytelling *Visible* exec producer talks new LGBTQ docuseries, his groundbreaking gay teen role and what he'd tell his younger self

By Chris Azzopardi

The first openly gay actor to play an openly gay series regular in a leading role on TV, Wilson Cruz has witnessed firsthand the changing tides of TV representation. Cruz paved the way for shows such as *Will & Grace* and *Ellen* with his portrayal of Rickie Vasquez, the troubled gay Latino high schooler on the teen drama *My So-Called Life*, which ran for one season in 1994. Cruz was 21 when he played Rickie.

Now 46, the actor reflects on the role as one of the interviewees in the new Apple TV+ five-part documentary, *Visible: Out on Television*, which, along with Wanda Sykes, he also executive produced. Emmy-nominated filmmakers Ryan White and Jessica Hargrave directed the series.

Through a wide range of archival footage and interviews with actors, journalists and activists, the docuseries investigates how TV has shaped the American conscience. During it, Cruz recalls auditioning for *My So-Called Life* and turning back to late veteran casting director, Mary Goldberg, and telling her: "I don't know if I'm ever going to see you again, but please tell whoever wrote this that it means a lot to me, that it would have made a difference if I had seen this when I was 15." Then, as Goldberg replied, the twist he didn't see coming: "Don't worry," she said, "you're going to be able to tell it yourself."

Here, Cruz talks about the docuseries' evolution, Rickie as his

own personal catharsis, and his issue with studios casting straight actors to play gay as awards bait.

Chris Azzopardi: How did you get involved with 'Visible'?

Wilson Cruz: Seven years ago (political activist and *Visible* producer) David Bender, who had been working on this project for many years, reached out to me because he was interested in interviewing me for the documentary, for obvious reasons (laughs). We had a long lunch and it became pretty clear really quickly that I had a passion for this subject matter, but also that I had access to many of the people he wanted to interview just because of the nature of my career and my relationship with GLAAD for over a decade, and so I could be very helpful to him. That's how it happened.

Eventually we interviewed 60 people on our own, and it became clear that this was going to be more than two hours and that we were going to need some help. We came to Apple and Apple brought on two amazing documentary filmmakers, Ryan White and Jessica Hargrave, in order to finish the film and really mold it. Then I came back on to help them continue to bring them who they needed to speak to, and also to make sure that we always had an eye on this not just being a documentary about the LGBTQ

movement but really about how television was used as an agent of change by the movement.

CA: How do you think 'Visible' broadens the historical perspective of the LGBTQ experience?

WC: I think that there's a lot that we forget just because that's the nature of the human experience. But what the series does really well is to remind us of what happened just within some of our own lifetimes – that, yes, we have come a long way and a lot of work went into getting us here. A lot of people risked a lot in order to have this conversation. It wasn't just LGBTQ people – it was LGBTQ people and the people who love them who took up the baton when we were unable to, when we weren't being hired to tell our own stories or we were afraid to come out and be public about it. We needed people who were willing to take on those roles.

More recently, we forget that the way the network news was talking about HIV and AIDS during the height of the epidemic was incredibly problematic, and that the only people who were going to save us at that time was us. That's when GLAAD was created. That's when ACT UP was created. It was this community that really started to say, "If you're not gonna save our lives, we're gonna have



Photo By David Miller

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to save them ourselves and we're going to have to demand that we be seen." We could no longer afford at that time to be invisible and that's where visibility started to really begin in earnest.

CA: *In the doc, you talk about how playing Rickie helped you reconcile with your father. Your experience with him – being kicked out of the house after you came out to him – was written into Rickie's story, and he watched that storyline play out. How did that moment illustrate to you the power TV can have?*

WC: I talk all the time about how television is an intimate medium: We are in your bedroom, we are in your living room; we come into your homes and you invite us in and we tell you our stories. In my personal experience, it was an invitation to my father to see me because Rickie Vasquez was very much who I was when I was a teenager, and his life parallels mine in many ways.

My father and I didn't speak for a year, but within that year he was able to turn on the television and I was able to have a conversation with him that I couldn't have physically and he learned a lot about me and about what my life had been like. He was moved to a new place and it gave him permission to reach out to me, and I have that series and that character to thank for the supportive father that I have today. That's no overstatement. So it is a testament to the intimacy of television and the power of storytelling.

CA: *Looking at the work that you've taken on, from 'Noah's Arc' on through 'Star Trek: Discovery', the transformative power of representation seems to be something you still believe in.*

WC: Whenever I take a project on, one of the first things I ask myself is, "What is the message that this is going to leave an audience member with? What are we offering through this?" The other thing that it is for me is that so many actors are like, "Oh, I don't want to play too many gay roles (laughs) because I just don't want my career to be about that." Whereas I have gone out of my way to look for roles that I feel will add to the conversation. I've wanted to have those opportunities.



Photo By Bobby Quillard

CA: *Why do you think that is when so many other actors go in the other direction?*

WC: Because, with the first role I had on *My So-Called Life* as Rickie, I got to see how powerful that story could be and I wanted to continue to tell stories like that, and I felt like there were few people who were willing and excited to take on those roles and here I was.

CA: *As for your part in Hulu's 'The*

Bravest Knight', the first children's animated series to have openly gay characters, what about that spoke to you?

WC: My brother who's also openly gay and married to his husband had just had a baby or was pregnant when they approached me to do *The Bravest Knight*. I thought it was a great opportunity for me to give a little gift to my nephew. On top of that, I think there aren't enough children's programs that depict families like the one we do on

The Bravest Knight, because there are thousands of LGBTQ families in this country who would love to see their lives reflected back at them and their children so they know they're not alone and that their families are just as valuable as anybody else's.

CA: *Have you been able to gauge what it means to 'Star Trek' fans to have a more LGBTQ-inclusive 'Star Trek'?*

WC: Yes. For 52 years people have been clamoring for real LGBTQ representation on *Star Trek*, and to be a part of the couple who actually gives that to an audience is overwhelming. People reach out to us all the time, and I'm excited for people to see season three because we're expanding it in a very special way.

CA: *In a very special gay way?*

WC: That's all I'm gonna say. (Laughs.) I want to keep my job! But there is a lot to look forward to in season three for LGBTQ fans, that's for sure.

CA: *You've known Anthony Rapp since 'Rent'. Rapp originated the role of Mark Cohen on Broadway, and you later joined as Angel Dumott Schunard. What's been the best part about getting to work with Anthony, who plays your lover in 'Star Trek', all these years?*

WC: Well, first of all, he's one of the most supportive actors that I've ever worked with. We are a team, we are a unit. But the best thing about working with him is that, because we find this couple in the middle of their relationship, there was very little work we had to do in order to get to know each other. We brought with us a 22-year history of friendship, and so I feel like it comes across on screen that these two people know each other and genuinely love each other, because we do.

CA: *Since you're both gay men playing gay men on 'Star Trek', I wonder: Do you think LGBTQ roles should go to exclusively LGBTQ actors?*

WC: No, I'm not going to say that we should only be the ones allowed to play them. But I will say that I think what an LGBTQ actor brings to an LGBTQ role is different; there's just something innate and lived-in that comes across, but that's not to say that a straight actor cannot give a powerful performance. What is worrisome to me is when a production will hire a straight actor to play that role because of some notion that because they're a straight actor that it's that much more difficult to take on this role. So it's awards bait. These are our lives. These are experiences for a lot of people. And if you're a straight actor playing these roles, I think it's important that you acknowledge and understand that.

I will say that in terms of trans actors playing trans roles, I think that is incredibly important because there are so many trans actors out there who are just waiting for the opportunity to be able to tell their own stories. Especially in terms of trans people of color and trans women of color and trans men of color, we need to see more of them.

CA: *In the doc, actor Ryan Phillippe, who played a groundbreaking gay character on 'One Life to Live', reads a letter from someone changed by his character. Where do you keep the letters you've received?*

WC: Well, seeing how I live out of a suitcase these days (laughs) ... actually, I don't have a lot of the stuff from the old days anymore. I have to tell you that most of the young people who watched *My So-Called Life* back in the day didn't really reach out to me until years later when I would see them out publicly and in person, when they were adults, because so many people were processing their own stuff when that aired. But the onslaught (laughs) and the daily messages I received from

people who felt and feel it necessary to reach out to me to tell me how powerful it was for them is very real. It happens almost daily on social media. It's just a trail of tears.

CA: *When was the last time you revisited episodes of 'My So-Called Life'?*

WC: It's been a while. I think it's hard for me to watch myself, and I think the last time I watched it was about 10 years ago with my brother at home, but I think that was it.

CA: *I ask because I've noticed that Rickie is so embedded in your identity that you get choked up just talking about him. What about him gets you emotional even now?*

WC: (Sighs.) I think what's important to me about it is he was a way for me to

process my adolescence, which wasn't easy. I think that's probably why I haven't watched it too, because when I did it I literally saw it as a way to walk through those experiences again and leave them there on that stage and then be able to walk away from them and move on. But for me, when I think about him, and if I do see an episode every now and then, it's visiting your teenage self. You just want to hug them. You just want to say to them, "It's going to be all right." And I just want to grab him and say, "I'm gonna be fine." But he does – he means everything to me because without him none of this would have happened. He set the trajectory for my career and also gave me my life's passion of making sure our stories are told, and part of his legacy is *Visible*.

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GRAB MELISSA

How Melissa Etheridge Learned to Let Go of Fear

The LGBTQ icon has chosen to focus on the 'beautiful change' the COVID-19 pandemic will bring

By Chris Azzopardi

Throughout her dynamic three-decade career, Melissa Etheridge has beat cancer and weathered the devastating emotional toll of the AIDS crisis. Having overcome her own battles, the music legend consequently became a beacon of strength, resilience and survival and has turned her tribulations into musical catharsis.

Given her collective courage in facing life's most unexpected challenges, I decided to turn to her recently. I wrote to the music legend and LGBTQ activist on Twitter to ask if she'd be willing to speak to me about how she's handling the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic and its resulting fallout the day after a national shutdown that closed schools, workplaces, restaurants and forced promoters and artists to cancel tours. Etheridge was about to play a long stretch of shows in the United States and Europe, but that was canceled too.

During our interview, Etheridge brought her cool head and optimistic outlook as we discussed the unsettling state of our dramatically changed world.

Chris Azzopardi: *How are you? And I mean that.*

Melissa Etheridge: You know, we are all well. We're in the new day, the new world, like all of us, and trying to figure this all out, but we're all good.

CA: *Considering everything, I'm glad to hear that. This is our new not-normal normal, isn't it? And it's like, how do we shift to this new life that we will be living for probably quite*

some time.

ME: Yeah. Well, one, the music industry's been hit so hard. I try not to worry, but it's like ... I worry. My whole crew and band – I'm not making any money, and it's like, Whoa. All of a sudden it really hits you, and it's like, Come on, is this two weeks? One month? Two months? How long am I not gonna make any money? I can certainly get by for a while, but my crew and stuff – I try not to worry. But it's going to be a big, fat hardship.

CA: *You were about to go out on tour when some shows began being canceled because of COVID.*

ME: Yeah, yeah. Well, it was gonna go till May and then I was gonna have a little bit off in May and June, and then I was gonna go over to Europe at the end of June and come back to America.

CA: *And you thought, for a time, that you'd brave it.*

ME: (Laughs.) Yeah. I was like, "No, no – I'm not scared of nothing!" But then, all of a sudden, it was like, "Oh, no, never mind. I get what we're doing now." It became that the thing that we can do to keep this from spreading is to keep away from each other.

CA: *I took a run today and I don't usually run, but I had your song "I Run for Life" on and it was getting me through so I just looped it. I just played it four times in a row and ran through my neighborhood. It was a great feeling. And I'm realizing that we have to look to small joys right now. For me, that was a small joy. Where are you finding your small joys right now?*



Photo By Lauren Dukoff



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ME: I'll tell you what I'm doing and I just finished: I've been going live on Facebook every day at 3 o'clock PST. It just helps me so much. I do two or three songs and just say hey to people. We kind of meet together at the same time and thousands of people all over the world are joining me and it really means a lot.

CA: You said it helps you – how so?

ME: Oh gosh, yes. 'Cause that's what I do. I sing for people. And when a body sings, it heals. It brings just as much joy to me as it does to other people.

CA: So in addition the financial impact of canceling your tour, it sounds like there's also a personal loss for you.

ME: Oh yeah. I had taken a big break the last time. I was on the road in November and I was like, "I'm gonna take the holidays off and really not get that going until March." That's a big, long break for me, and I like to get up in front of people and I like the adoration of thousands of people, you know (laughs). It makes me feel good! I'm a road person. I love gettin' on the road with my crew and my band and playing music. I just love it. I do that. That's what I do. I love it.

CA: What's so hard to come to terms with is that in times of crises, live music has helped heal. But we don't have that now, and might not for a while.

ME: Oh, it's just awful.

CA: But you're doing what you can to connect with fans on social media. How about connections in your personal life? Is your family with you?

ME: Yes. My two older kids – one is in New York City and she got out and went to a friend's in Washington D.C. and she's staying there. I have another

in Denver and he's OK. I wish they were all here. My two little ones are here with my wife, so we're camping out here. And we take walks and do stuff – and we're six feet from our neighbors, but we're all much more friendly because it's that connection that we miss.

CA: I remember you told me about three years ago when Trump got elected, "I will not fear." With this, are you scared? Do you fear? And if not, how did you get to that place of fearlessness?

ME: It started 15 years ago with cancer, how I understood fear and how I understood what our everyday is made of, what our world and reality is made of and all its choices and that choice

all of a sudden we're like, "Wait a minute. I want that." I think this is going to change our whole system. It's going to change our education system, it's going to change our health system, it's going to change because there's going to be such a humongous economic crash that we're going to have to change the way our system is set up.

CA: We will be forced to make major shifts in these various paradigms once we get through this.

ME: Yeah. Big corporations are not gonna have anybody to buy their products soon if they don't look and say, "Something's gotta change." And we're going to change leadership. I truly believe that. I truly believe there will be

a huge leadership change and it's gonna be people with new ideas and new ways of doing this. So this sort of quantum leap that we all felt could come since 2012, there's big change coming, and we all wanted it. It's sort of like this big bow that's been pulled back really far and finally there's gonna be so much desire for that



Photo By Lauren Dukoff

always comes down to two basic emotions: love or fear. All the other emotions can be categorized in there.

I have many choices of how to respond or react to this virus, to everything that's going on with it. I could be very fearful. I could be fearful for my health, fearful for our system. I could choose fear. Or I could look at it and go, "OK." And sometimes it's hard to do this, to say, "I'm going to look at this and I'm going to see what is the loving outcome that can happen here." And I choose to do that every day.

Like I've said, I look at my neighbors and all of a sudden I'm looking them in the eyes, all of a sudden people are wanting that social connection. Take that away from us and

change now because of understanding how interconnected we are. We're gonna see that change, and 10 years from now we're gonna look back and go, "Wow, it was really, really hard but I'm glad it happened because these changes were made." So that's how I don't fear. I constantly think, What's the good? Look for the helpers. Find the Italians singing on the balcony. There's beautiful things that show what our humanity is. That's what we can do now. That's how you don't fear.

CA: And I think you're right: This will bring us into unity.

ME: And it starts with leadership change and that's going to come in a



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few months. I think it's going to be huge. People are going to go, "That sucked, and we're not going to go through that again." (Laughs.)

CA: How did the first live stream go?

ME: Aww. It was so, so sweet. It felt so good, and it was so great to see people from all over the world. And that's the thing: The whole world is going through this. The whole world! And music really goes beyond language and goes straight to the heart and I love that. I feel being a musician is being a healer.

CA: A song that helped get you through your battle with cancer is helping me get through this, and it's Patty Griffin's "When It Don't Come Easy," from her album 'Impossible Dream', which I've had in heavy rotation while physically distancing. Where does a song like that take you?

ME: Sometimes I don't know what it is about a song that can do that, but a song can just hit a part of your emotional center and it can be in the voice, it can be in the music, it can be when she just sings, "If you get lost, I'll come out and find you; if you forget my love, I'll try to remind you, stay by you when it don't come easy." Just knowing that one human being sang that to another human being, and then just knowing that it exists in our emotional world can fill that part of you up. So, I'm so grateful for all the other musicians who have

inspired me and do that because that's our job, and it's our time to do our job now.

CA: You're feeling the call?

ME: It's funny: I'm feeling the call to perform. I'm a little overwhelmed by the writing right now because I'm right in the middle of it. You sit down and you go, "It's too big to look at, it's right in front of your face." There needs to be a

little distance. Maybe in a few days, maybe when I see what this really is.

CA: Then you might start jotting down some song lyrics?

ME: Oh yeah. I was already in my writing mode. I was already starting to write for my next album. This is going to be a very interesting album. (Laughs.)

CA: What are you listening to right



Photo By Lauren Dukoff

now in your place with your family to help get you through this?

ME: Reggae always makes me happy. Bob Marley. Some old-school stuff. But my wife and I watched *West Side Story* and then we watched Barbra Streisand in *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*. Barbra Streisand just makes you feel good. So we're kind of finding comfort in that.

CA: And I saw you were playing Monopoly.

ME: Oh, yes. The kids love that. They love it a little too much (laughs).

CA: It's a long game, but you have a lot of time now.

ME: We have a lot of time, and they are fierce – they're not gonna quit. They play it till the end.

CA: And toilet paper – you good?

ME: It's funny: Just a few months ago we were saying, "Why don't we make hemp toilet paper? Wouldn't that be great?" And I wrote to my friend and went, "Why didn't we listen to ourselves? Why didn't we start making hemp toilet paper?"

CA: What were your quarantine essentials? Did you make a run over the weekend?

ME: I actually just went this morning because we have a really great pantry. Because I have two kids, I kind of keep things stocked, so we were fine. But the thing that we always like to do is go to the market a lot because we like really fresh produce and fresh food and that's the hard part. But I can't find brown rice anywhere! So I'm hoping we can replenish and everybody will be OK. And I have to make sure we have salad every day because this is not the time to not be healthy, so fresh produce is the thing.

CA: What are you most grateful for right now?

ME: My wife. Social media. I'm glad I got Netflix. And I'm really grateful for the neighborhood I live in. If I gotta be here every day, I'm grateful for my yard and my house.



CA: Is there a song you sing while you're washing your hands?

ME: Some people are doing "Bring Me Some Water." If you sing the first verse and the first line of the chorus. "Bring me some water, I gotta wash my hands." Bring me the water! (Laughs.)

CA: What words of wisdom would you like me to send out to the LGBTQ community?

ME: I would say a couple of things. Just because we're isolating, don't emotionally isolate. It's easy for some of us in the LGBTQ community to do that. Find a way to connect with people. Find the people you can check in with every

day and do that. Telephones, social media, whatever the way. And take care of yourself first. Stressful times really lower our immune system, so it's super important to drink a lot of water and to stay hydrated and exercise. Taking a run, taking a walk. Really, really important. And also know that change happens – change always happens. And we're in the midst of it. These are historical times. Come from love. And be smart and stay healthy but understand that this too shall pass. It always does, and it will. And there's great change coming because of it. Good change. Beautiful change. For all of us.

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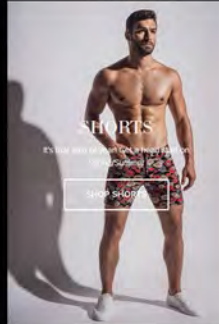
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GRAB THELMA

MUSIC

Turning our world around: an interview with Thelma Houston

By Gregg Shapiro

It's 1976. Before Donna Summer felt love and Evelyn "Champagne" King felt shame. Before the Bee Gees got night fever and were staying alive. Before Sylvester felt mighty real, the Village People checked in to the YMCA, and Gloria Gaynor survived, Thelma Houston had one simple musical request, "Don't Leave Me This Way." Ahead of the disco curve by a good year, Thelma Houston led the pack with her impeccably produced hit single, a song that sounds as fresh almost 45 years after we heard it for the first time. Houston, who has a long history of love and support for the LGBTQ community, is back in the clubs with the new track, "Turn Your World Around", a collaboration with Bimbo Jones. She was kind enough to answer a few questions in early 2020.

Gregg Shapiro: *Your signature tune "Don't Leave Me This Way," is one of the best examples of musical cross-pollination. It was written by the legendary songwriting team of Gamble & Huff and was first recorded by Philadelphia International artists Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes who had a minor hit with it. Then came your Tamla Records mega-smash, which was later featured in the Diane Keaton movie Looking for Mr. Goodbar. How is it that you came to record the tune?*

Thelma Houston: I was at a recent awards show where Suzanne de Passe [of Motown] was being given an icon award. I performed the song there. When she got up to accept the award, she told the story of how it really happened. She was driving to work from Malibu and she heard the song. She pulled over immediately to call me. She thought it could be a smash hit. Of course, back then, there were no cell phones, so she had to pull over and go to a payphone and call. All I know, from my side, is that I got a call telling me to go out and get the album and listen to it and tell her what I thought. Hal Davis, who had worked with the Jackson 5,

and Suzanne got together and they came up with that signature sound for the song. It was put together to be a disco hit.

GS: *Did you ever get to meet the late Teddy Pendergrass, the lead singer of Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes?*

TH: Oh, yeah! I worked with Teddy. One of my biggest tours was with Teddy Pendergrass. I knew Teddy when he was a drummer for Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. He was fine and cute and all the girls liked him [laughs]. Everybody had a crush on Teddy, even before he became the lead singer.

GS: *The song took on new meaning during the early days of the AIDS crisis and came full-circle when it was covered by gay band The Communards, led by Jimmy Somerville. Are you familiar with their rendition and, if so, do you remember how you felt when you first heard it?*

TH: Let me tell you a funny story. I think we were in Switzerland. I had a performance the next day. The Communards were performing and I went to see them. His manager knew that I was there. When Jimmy started

singing "Don't Leave Me This Way," they gave me a microphone. I got up and started walking and singing and he was like [squeals]. We've met several times. The first time we met I think we were both doing the Pride parade in either New York or San Francisco. It was so funny because I was singing my version of "Don't Leave Me This Way" and then they were doing their version. The crowd loved them both! That, to me, just goes to show what can happen when you have a good song. It can be interpreted in different ways and the song can stand on its own.

GS: *There is a long history of mutual love, affection, respect and admiration between you and the LGBTQ community, including your fantastic performances at different Pride festivals. What does your LGBTQ fanbase mean to you?*

TH: It means a lot. Before I recorded "Don't Leave Me This Way" I had a lot of support. My family was in Long Beach and I moved up to L.A. to be closer to the recording studio and what I had to do up here. My fans and my friends, were my hairdresser, my dressmaker, my make-up people. These were my support. We used to hang out a lot and go dancing at Catch



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One and all of that. Then, this terrible thing came along that was taking away our friends. We didn't know what was going on. At that point we were doing what we could to help our friends who were sick. If somebody needed a little help with finances or somebody needed their dog walked, we did what we could, especially as things started getting organized. I've been there for all of that. In return, after the Disco Demolition in Chicago and disco started to get bad press and the major agencies no longer had a dance department, and I didn't have a large R&B base, even though "Don't Leave Me This Way" crossed over, when that backlash came and I couldn't get work at other places, [the gay] community would hire me. I had work. I was blessed to work continually. There was a mutual love and respect because they supported me and I supported them.

GS: I got a little choked up just then. That's very powerful.

TH: Well, that's the truth. That's where that comes from. It's everlasting!

GS: You provided vocals for the slamming new Bimbo Jones track "Turn Your World Around". How did the collaboration come to be?

TH: "Turn" was a writing collaboration between Bimbo Jones and myself. I've worked with Lee Dagger from Bimbo Jones before. He has done some remixes for me. That's how the song came about. We wrote the song a few years ago and it was a lot of fun.

GS: What was it about the song that appealed to you the most as a singer?

TH: I enjoyed the writing and working experience and am looking forward to more!

GS: Are there additional collaborations for which we should be on the lookout?

TH: I actually recorded a song with Morrissey that happens to be the first single from his new album that has just been released around the world. The single is called "Bobby, Don't You Think They Know", so check it out.



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POSITIVE THOUGHTS

HIV

Positive Thoughts: Finding Hope in *Crystal City*

By Jeff Berry

In the trailer for the new feature-length documentary film *Crystal City*, Rob, who is living with HIV and four years sober, says that during his time dealing and using crystal methamphetamine he discovered “there are addicts everywhere, from people living on the street to business executives of major entertainment companies – from the gutter to the penthouse.”

New York City, which is experiencing a 300–400% surge of crystal meth use, is the backdrop for this gritty, graphic, but ultimately inspiring and hopeful film infused with heart and compassion. It follows 12 gay men over the course of one year, some actively using, others in recovery. (A word of warning: some of the scenes of people smoking and injecting crystal meth may be difficult to watch.)

David Fawcett, author of *Lust, Men, and Meth: A Gay Man’s Guide to Sex and Recovery*, is interviewed throughout the film, and is also one of the film’s producers. *Crystal City* is filled with bits of information about things like the origins of crystal meth in the U.S. (known as “mother’s little helper” to housewives during the 1950s) and high-quality animations depicting the science behind the drug, such as how it can alter the dopamine receptors in the brain with continued use.

The power of crystal meth overtakes most users with consistent use, the movie tells us. 10,721 people died from overdoses in the U.S. last year. It’s estimated that 50% of gay men who are using crystal meth will seroconvert, acquiring HIV and other infections such as HCV.

“A small percentage of addicts do seek recovery,” says Fawcett. “For them, quitting the drug is just the beginning of their journey.” Ninety percent of those in recovery will relapse at least once, we are told.

The hope and inspiration of *Crystal City* springs from the men who are followed in the film through various stages of recovery and use. “One of the things about getting sober is that you have people you can talk to,” says one individual, “and before, I didn’t have

that.” In an almost ironic twist of fate, the community that people discover in recovery is the connection they were initially seeking when they started using in the first place. “I’m damaged goods,” says Rob. “No one’s going to want me – I’m untouchable.” *Crystal meth* offers users an exit door, freedom, oblivion, and makes everyone weirdly equal, says another.

It’s not just a gay issue, says Fawcett; it’s a problem for our whole society, and something we need to begin to think about to address. “The first step is to see what we have in common with a crystal meth user, instead of, ‘Oh, that’s not me, not my problem; it could never be me, why don’t they just get it together.’”

Fawcett encourages us to ask ourselves, “What are the similarities here, what are the vulnerabilities I might share that I see in that other person, and what solutions have they discovered that might be relevant to me?”

The award-winning film, which has been making the film festival circuit over the spring and summer, is available on iTunes and Amazon. Positively Aware magazine asked the film’s director, producer and editor Terrence Crawford, director of Formerly Productions LLC, what his motivation was for making the film and what he hopes it will accomplish.

Jeff Berry: What inspired you to make this film?

Terrence Crawford: *Crystal City* began as a 20-minute-long student film for Sam Pollard’s documentary production class [at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts]. At the time, it was called *Crystal Clear*. Ultimately, we scrapped and



Terrence Crawford

reshot all of the footage when producing the feature, but the basic premise remained the same. Two of the original characters in that short version appear in the 90-minute iteration.

I was inspired to create *Crystal City* in part because of the persistence of John Maidman, the film’s cinematographer and producer. After watching my short film, he believed that he could help provide the resources and cinematographic talent necessary to produce a feature-length documentary on recovery from crystal meth addiction in NYC’s gay community.

I personally have been in recovery from crystal meth addiction since early 2015 and share much of the same history as my documentary subjects. Sobriety and the 12-step model of recovery has dramatically improved my life for the better ever since. However, for years, I was embarrassed to share my experience in recovery even with friends and family.

This is because crystal meth addiction is a largely taboo subject in conversation and it can be difficult for recovering addicts to be open about their history with loved ones. In part, lack of representation in film and television plays a major role in the stigma associated with meth addiction. Most other documentaries and scripted films about addiction focus primarily on the tragedy and despair of active using without offering solutions or hope.

I wanted to make a documentary that reduces this stigma by representing a group of crystal meth addicts as talented, resourceful and intelligent

people in recovery capable of long-term sobriety and life improvement. My intention is for the general public to relate to these recovering crystal meth addicts, not to pity them as hopeless cases. *Crystal City* is primarily a call to compassion.

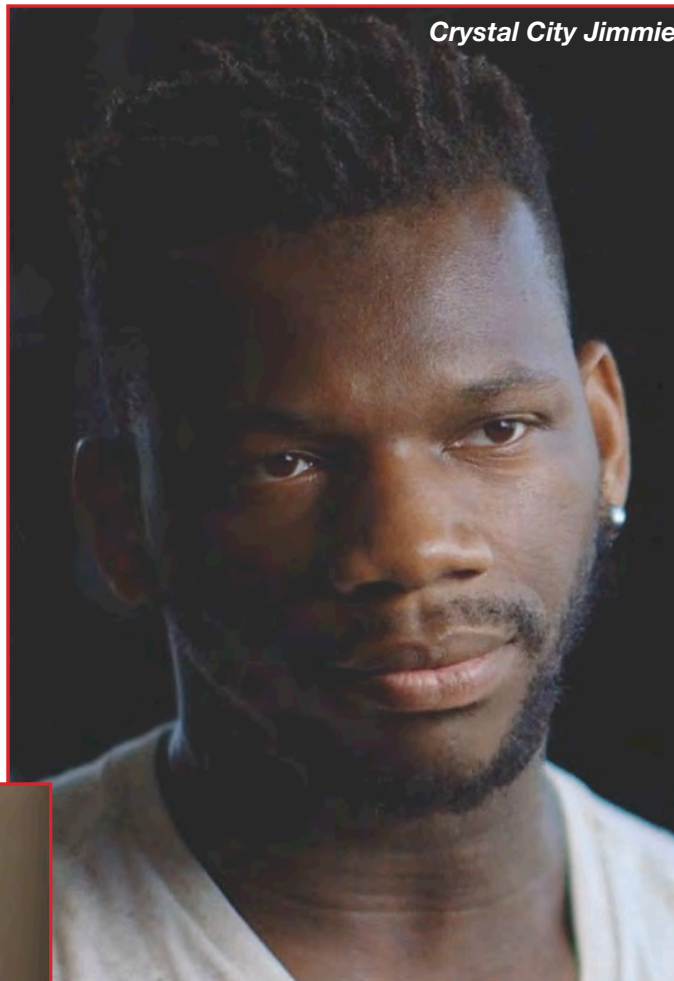
JB: What do you hope people will take away from the film?

TC: I want audiences to leave the theater with a fresh perspective on people in recovery. I hope the audience remembers that crystal meth has been around for over a century – used by heads of state, combat soldiers in World War II, 1950s housewives, and finally by LGBTQ communities. Audience members should understand that methamphetamine releases four times as much dopamine as cocaine and six times as much as sex. So much dopamine is released, in fact, that nearly everyone who repeatedly uses methamphetamine is at risk of becoming dependent, regardless of predisposition. After all, meth addiction impacts people from all walks of life, gay and straight, from the gutter to the penthouse. Hopefully our audience will relate to these documentary subjects and recognize that addicts in their own lives are capable of success and redemption.

JB: Anything else you would like to add?

TC: I hope viewers aren't turned off by the heavy subject

Crystal City Jimmie



Crystal City Rob

matter and will give the film a chance. The overall arc of the story is about redemption with a hopeful, uplifting tone. Also – while this isn't explicitly covered in the film, harm reduction treatment modalities such as GMHC's "Recharge" program [in New York City] are receiving the most resources and funding from the city and department of health. The film isn't opposed to harm reduction because 12-step programs and therapy aren't necessarily a good fit for every addict. Abstinence should be the ultimate goal in my opinion, but it's best to meet each person where they are at in their recovery and not to shame them if they are unable to maintain sobriety. As stated in the film, the most effective treatment options tend to involve some sort of community and peer support. It's very difficult to recover in a vacuum without the help of a supportive social network.

Watch the *Crystal City* trailer: vimeo.com/313886794. The film is available to stream or purchase on iTunes and Amazon.

Jeff Berry is the editor-in-chief of *Positively Aware* magazine, and Director of Publications at Test Positive Aware Network in Chicago. Find him on Twitter @PAEditor. This column is a project of Plus, *Positively Aware*, *POZ*, *The Body* and *Q Syndicate*, the LGBT wire service. Visit their websites – <http://hivplumag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com>, <http://poz.com> and <http://thebody.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.

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5	R3HAB & Julie Bergan	Dont Give Up On Me Now (Original Mix)
6	Meghan Trainor	Wave ft. Mike Sabath (ARKADI Remix)
7	Rony Rex	Milk It ft. Carla Monroe
8	Jax Jones & Martin Solveig Present Europa	TEQUILA ft. RAYE
9	Luca Debonaire	I Found You (Dark Intensity Radio Edit)
10	Yves V	We Got That Cool ft. Afrojack & Icona Pop (Radio Edit)
11	Lucas & Steve	Perfect
12	PNAU	All Of Us ft. Ollie Gabriel
13	Lady Gaga	Stupid Love
14	ManyFew vs. Marcus Santoro	For You ft. Hayley May
15	Shirry D & Terri B	Say You Want Me (Radio Mix)



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GRAB ROGER

The Impact of COVID-19 on Estate Planning

By Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq.

In a matter of weeks, the COVID-19 outbreak has changed the world in completely unprecedented ways. The vast majority of us are staying home and practicing social distancing and self-isolation to do our part in flattening the curve of infection.

Estate planning has been impacted as well. It is important that clients take note of issues in this area of law that have since emerged.

Plan for Incapacity. Carry with you a wallet card with contact information for emergency caretakers. If you have a pet at home, carry a pet card to inform emergency care providers that there is a pet in your house that needs care.

Have an ICE (In Case of Emergency) entry in the address book of your cell phone. That listing can help the paramedics call your LGBT partner, spouse or friend that you chose, if needed, while you are riding to the hospital in the ambulance. Also, make sure your apartment building, has

updated contact information for you and who can enter your apartment and have access to the important documents to assist you. You may not want your niece that you have not seen in more than 20 years gaining entry to your apartment because she is your closest blood relative.

Share Finances. Everyone should make a will, power of attorney for property and power of attorney for healthcare. Share details of your financial affairs with your spouse or partner. This should include the location of all assets and vital documents such as insurance policies, passbooks, deeds etc. Each person should list the names, addresses and account numbers of every bank, mutual fund and brokerage account; policy numbers for health disability and life insurance policies; car registration and title numbers; credit card numbers; employer pension account numbers, and make sure the other person has a copy of your list. The lists should also include IRA accounts with beneficiaries, pension funds and profit sharing plans, annuities, safe deposit boxes, location of valuable antiques, jewelry etc.

Not Safekeeping Documents. You need not always give copies of your trusts, powers of attorney, etc. to other people (agents and fiduciaries) who may need to implement them. However, you should communicate to the interested people their role, what kind of documents exist, and where they can find them if the need arises. If these people cannot reach the documents when needed, implementation will not be smooth. Many times clients do not know where their documents are. Keep copies in each person's car and suitcase when you travel.

Old Powers of Attorney. Powers of attorney are wonderful documents in theory. Working with them can sometimes be a chore, though, especially when trying to convince



others (like banks) to accept them on their face. An "old" power of attorney is more difficult to deal with than a fresh one because a question arises as to whether it is still good or whether it has been replaced. I suggest that you "refresh" your powers of attorney every two to three years by restating them.

Outdated Beneficiary Designations. Always verify who the named beneficiaries are for each asset that does not pass through a will. Individuals will often name someone other than their LGBT partners/spouses as beneficiaries on employee benefits such as life insurance or 401(k) plans. It is extremely common for clients simply to forget that a previous unmarried partner or parent is still named on an IRA or life insurance policy. For individuals who wish to leave a portion of their estates to a charity, designation of a charity as a direct beneficiary of some or all or a tax-deferred account is often preferable to making a bequest in the will that will be funded with post-tax dollars.

Power of Attorney for Health Care. The agent and successor agent(s) under your health care power of attorney should be made aware of its existence and the location where it can be found in the event the agent needs a copy of it for purposes of implementation. The healthcare power of attorney is only effective if the agent is aware of it and can obtain a copy when it needs to be used. Further, it is your agent's or your responsibility to communicate the health care agency to your healthcare providers.

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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But it seems this crisis has not yet reached its limit and as the uptick in infections continues, the order to close has already been extended to April 7th and most likely will be extended even further.

You all know that besides their wages, the guys have always relied on the tips you passed along to them when they served you at the bar. And for the past two weeks and now into an uncertain future, those lost tips will make or break their ability to survive this crisis.

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GRAB HOLLY

You're Dead to Me

By Holly Maholm

If you have followed along with me thus far in my account of my time living among the unicorns, you may have gotten the impression that our little town – home to Donut Time, the stable, and – just outside the city limits – the Horse Rescue, orchard and farm – constitutes an island of refuge surrounded on all sides – but at a distance – from those raging storms and cloudbursts of bigotry which so afflict our LGBT community. But you would be wrong. Not every breeze that blows through our village is gentle, nor are those winds always at our backs.

I was seeking accommodations; not for me (I needed to keep my room at the stable, where unicorns were often in residence), but for Cindy, Aly, and the three Outlaws. (Xandra had expressed a strong desire to continue to occupy one of the bedrooms on the second floor above Donut Time, and her Grandma Lily would be happy to take over the second bedroom, to be vacated by Cindy and Aly. In preparation, I contracted to have one of those mechanical stairlifts installed, so Grandma Lily could come and go as she pleased.)

Now, with me needing five bedrooms,

I knew I needed the assistance of a real estate agent. And having been a resident of our little town for some time, I recalled having seen – on many occasions – versions of a large and colorful real estate company's yard sign appearing here and there around town; such advertising placard invariably featuring a photo of a middle-aged woman captured in a moment of supreme and ecstatic happiness, suggesting (no doubt) the similar feeling you (prospective lessee of real estate) are certain to enjoy, should you decide to retain "Barb" as your personal guide (and exclusive agent) for all things "real property" in our town.

I walked across the Green to a side street (Pine) where I knew Barb had her office, and arriving there, I went in. As my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I saw Barb on her phone. She glanced up and noticed me (and I having "Naive and Gullible Prospective Lessee" written all over my cotton blouse and denim skirt), she quickly broke off her call.

"Come right in!" she enthused. Then coming around her desk to greet me, she struggled to grasp who had come in her door. In seconds she realized I was transgender.

I introduced myself and explained that I was looking for a long-term lease of a property having at least five bedrooms. She did not at first respond, so I added that the rooms were for workers at Donut Time. But still no reply.

It slowly dawned on me that – thought I had seen her picture on countless yard signs around town – I had never seen her walk in the door at Donut Time. (Upon further consideration – observing the shape of her body and counting her chins – I concluded she did not suffer from any aversion to donuts.)

At last Barb broke the silence. "Yes, well, my name's Barb, and – obviously – I know all about Donut Time. I've walked past it many times. Don't you have those... 'people' working there? You know, the ones I used to see at night standing out at the corner on the square?"

"Yes," I acknowledged. "The very same. They've been running Donut Time for almost three



years now." Another awkward silence ensued.

"You should know," she resumed (in the same tone of voice my high school math teacher had used when pointing out the simple, inexcusable errors I had made in my homework), "my husband is the pastor at the True Holiness Baptist Church over on Oak Street. Has been for years." Then resuming, in the same dismissive and condescending tone of voice, "We already know everything we need to know about you people. If you can't find a decent place to live, you have only yourselves to blame."

She walked around me, pushed open the door and held it open for me. "I know just the place where you and your tranny friends belong. Just go back to the square and look for Number 9. You can find it yourself."

And thereby, I had all the proof I needed that Barb was possessed of an unwavering faith in the precepts of her Holy Book. Here she was – a real estate agent, working on commission – yet she had escorted me (a customer with money to spend) out her door and into the street.

I returned to the square and soon found Number 9. There was a "For Rent" sign out front, and looking up at the building's large and imposing façade, I saw that the name of the previous proprietor – a man who had operated his business in our town for many years – had been erased, leaving behind only the word... Mortuary.

(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)

CHAZ CARDIGAN'S NEW EP, VULNERABILIA, IS OUT VIA CAPITOL RECORDS/LOUD ROBOT



Chaz Cardigan, the first artist jointly signed to Capitol Records/Loud Robot, released his new EP, *Vulnerabilia*. Loud Robot is the new record label from **J.J. Abrams'** production company, Bad Robot.

He will support *Vulnerabilia* with a U.S. headline tour that launches at Baby's All Right in Brooklyn, NY on March 31. The run, which will include shows at Beat Kitchen in Chicago April 6 and will wrap up at Moroccan Lounge in Los Angeles, CA on April 22. He'll join Barns Courtney on tour thereafter.

"A girl told me one time after a show that my set made her want to call everyone she knew and tell them she loved them, and I think that's what I want people to get from my music in general," Chaz says. "I'd love for my songs to make them feel more secure in whatever emotions they're feeling, even when those emotions are a little scary. I want everyone to feel confident in their vulnerability."

The follow-up to Chaz's 2017 album *I*, *Vulnerabilia* unfolds in a genre-bending take on pop,

inventively detailed yet steeped in timeless melody. Although he made several tracks in collaboration with **Jamie Lidell** (Lianne La Havas, Hailee Steinfeld), Chaz produced the EP on his own and played every instrument.

With its title taken from a portmanteau Chaz dreamed up after completing a silent retreat at a monastery (something he does annually), *Vulnerabilia* is a deeply introspective body of work, closely informed by the moments of intense vulnerability that have shaped his own life – including coming out as queer to his parents and a brief period of homelessness. On the anthemic lead single "Not OK!", for instance, he puts forth a profound revelation about the need to celebrate imperfection.

For more information on Chaz visit <http://www.chazcardigan.com>

GREYSON CHANCE RELEASES NEW TRACK "DANCING NEXT TO ME"



Rising star **Greyson Chance** released his new track "Dancing Next to Me" along with an accompanying music video via Arista Records. The single was produced by close collaborator, **Teddy Geiger**, who is the executive producer on Greyson's new album set for release this year.

The video was directed by **Edgar Daniel** (Ava Max) and was shot in a warehouse in Los Angeles. The video aims to explore the iteration of human interaction, from rising sexual tension to falling emotions. "Dancing Next to Me" continues to showcase Greyson's ongoing evolution as an artist and what's to come from him in 2020.

"Dancing Next to Me" arrives on the heels of Greyson's headlining portraits World Tour. During the U.S. leg, he partnered with The Ally Coalition, and at each show, the organization introduced attendees to a charity in their respective communities in need of support. Having played to fans all across the world last year, Greyson will excitedly return to Europe this spring to play several major cities, including Madrid, Stockholm, Berlin, London, Moscow and more. Greyson will continue to tour worldwide throughout 2020.

A native of Edmond, Oklahoma, Greyson came into the national spotlight in 2010, after an unforgettable performance of Lady Gaga's "Paparazzi" was viewed by over 60 million people on YouTube. What followed was a plethora of national television appearances and world tours. Greyson came out publicly in 2017 and uses his platform to be a resource and champion for others in the LGBTQ community. He recently signed with Arista Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment. Upon signing with Arista, Greyson released "Boots" last fall. The song was critically praised by Billboard, VMAN and PAPER Magazine who claimed it was a "confident step into a new era of Chance's now decade-long career."

Greyson will release new music throughout the year, leading into an album and 2020 world tour for further information, visit www.greysonchancemusic.com.

KAYZO & BAD OMENS PREMIERE COLLABORATIVE SINGLE "SUFFOCATE" VIA ALTERNATIVE PRESS



Genre-defying producer/DJ, **KAYZO**, and rock band, **Bad Omens**, have premiered their collaborative single, "Suffocate". "Working with Noah and Joakim of Bad Omens was rad," says KAYZO of the writing and recording process. "We recorded a

ton of epic guitar riffs and one thing led to another and 'Suffocate' was born." "Suffocate" is KAYZO's latest from a series of collaborations released over the past few months, including "Ghost in the Bottle" with **Ray Volpe**, "Rules of the Game" with **Lil Texas**, "Battle Drums" with Atreyu and "Braincase" with Substronics. These collaborative singles, released via Welcome Records, follow up Kayzo's most recent full-length album, *Unleashed*. In support, Kayzo will be hitting the road for his *Unleashed* and *Lights Out* Tours, kicking off next month. The former will feature live elements such as a rock band to support the innovative DJ, while the latter will be a more downscaled, DJ booth-centered production.

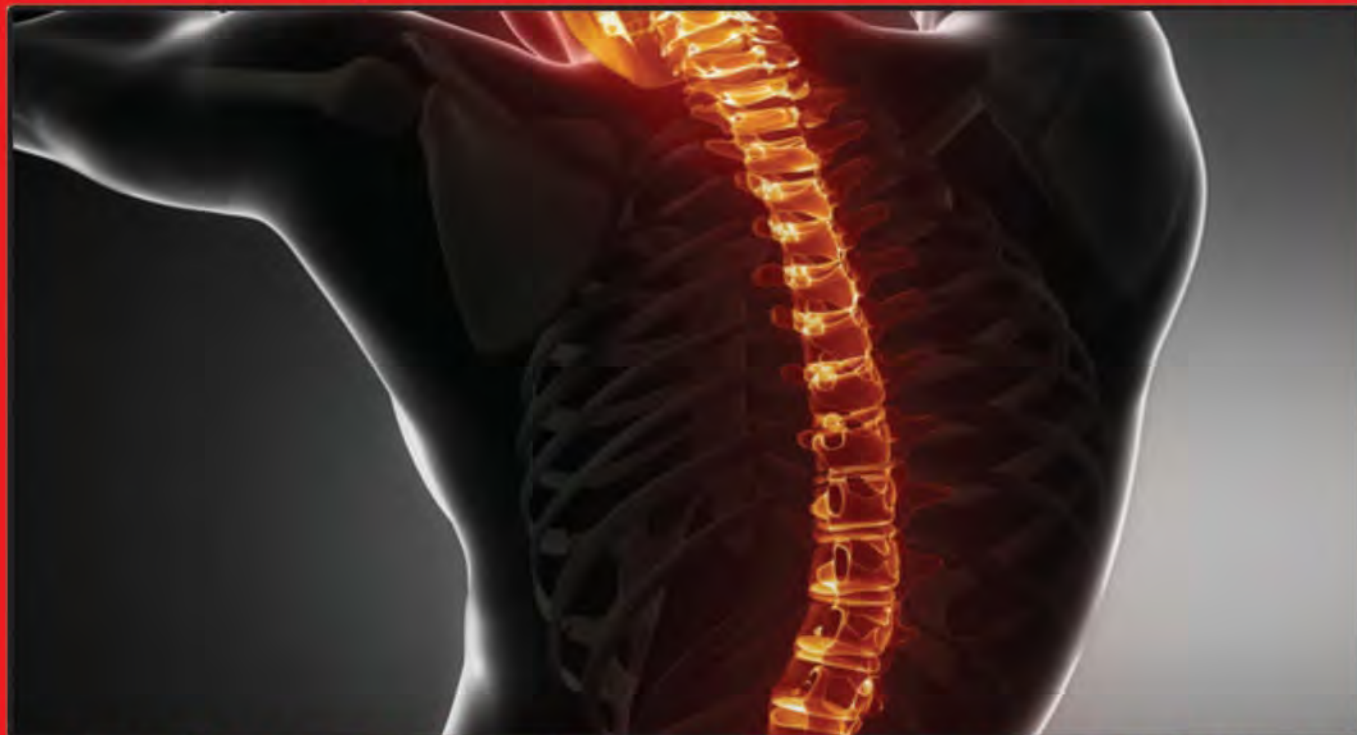
Houston-born, Los Angeles-based electronic artist Kayzo, née **Hayden Capuozzo**, is one of the fastest-rising producer/DJs of this

decade. From his beginnings as an eager student at the Icon Collective music production school in L.A. to his official debut as the winner of Insomniac Events' Discovery Project competition in 2012, Kayzo has graduated from budding producer to breakthrough artist in just over five years. Recognized as one of Billboard Dance's 100 Artists of 2019 (#67), Kayzo is today a bona fide global act.

His debut album *Overload* was released in January 2018 on Kayzo's own Ultra Music imprint, Welcome Records. Featuring a stimulating, cross-genre blend of rock theatrics and electronic futuristic, *Overload* has amassed over 21 million streams on Spotify alone.

"Suffocate" is available for purchase/streaming on all online platforms.

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GRAB TROY

Back in the Game

Former Varsity Baseball Pitcher Turned Helix Studios' Exclusive Discusses Life After Troy Ryan

By John Stein

Kacey Edenfield was a junior in high school and the star pitcher of his varsity baseball team when he boldly came out as gay to his teammates. His peers shunned him. His coach cut him from the starting line-up. Even Kacey's dad, a former professional baseball player, turned his back on him.

Kacey decided to turn in his uniform and give up his dream of playing college ball. After high school, he left his Tennessee home for Colorado and within the year, he would leave everything else he knew from youth – including his birth name – and find international fame as Troy Ryan, one of Helix Studio's most popular gay adult performers. He starred in 27 films over a multi-year span from 18 to his early 20s.

That was six years ago. He made the decision to walk away from porn in 2017, putting Troy Ryan to bed once and for all and returning to life in Tennessee. He also returned to his first love of baseball and today, he hosts the Balls and Brews sports podcast. We spoke with Kacey Edenfield from his Tennessee home.

John Stein: What was it like to grow up as the son of major league baseball player?

Kacey Edenfield: It was interesting! My friends thought it was really cool, and I was proud of him.

JS: Were pressures put on you to also be a star athlete/baseball player?

KE: He never pressured me. In fact, he didn't care if I played baseball, basketball... it didn't matter. He was supportive of what I wanted to do. But, eventually I fell in love with the game and decided to pursue it.

JS: What led to your decision to come out as gay in your junior year of high school?

KE: I partially came out to get a guy's

attention. He said he didn't talk to closeted guys because of the drama. But I also did it for my own mental health and wellbeing. The first person I told was my mom, and then my best friend, Marissa. They were the first to know.

JS: How did your athlete

father react to his son being gay?

KE: At first it was a rocky road, to the point we had to go to counseling. But after the counseling, he was supportive. He even let my high school boyfriend stay over a few times.

JS: Did any of your teammates offer support?

KE: Most weren't very supportive. They would still talk to me, but I never got to hang with them outside of baseball and school. They always had excuses as to why they couldn't. The one teammate I did have that was sort of supportive of it was one of the underclass guys, so, we didn't hang out a ton. But I still appreciated the support nonetheless.

JS: What led to your decision to forego college? Was playing college ball the only reason for going?



Photo Courtesy Helix Studios

KE: Baseball was what I wanted, but I couldn't have. College was still on the plate for me, but one of my best friends asked me to move to my dream city in Denver, and I couldn't pass the opportunity up. That decision is what led me to my adult film start.

JS: How did you find your way to becoming Helix Studios' exclusive Troy Ryan?

KE: Right before I moved to Denver, I was flying back from Hawaii with my family and while going through the Seattle airport, a guy hit me up on the gay dating app, Jack'd. He said he was a recruiter and suggested I apply. I knew I'd need money for Denver, and it seemed like fun so I gave it a shot. Two weeks later, Helix called me, asked to fly me out to Las Vegas, and the rest is history!

JS: What were some of your best experiences in adult porn?

KE: The best experiences I had were off camera. Helix really is a family-like atmosphere, and the friendships I made during my time there are friendships I hope to have for the rest of my life. Dinner with everyone, playing the Xbox, hosting club events, and just spending time together. It was great.

JS: What were some of your worst experiences?

KE: I never really had any bad experiences. Early on, when I was new to the industry, it was hard to read a bunch of random people on the internet critiquing my body and appearance. That was probably the hardest part. But eventually I learned to pay attention to the compliments and interact with my following, and that was a great experience.

JS: What did you learn about yourself doing adult porn?

KE: I learned to be a little less reserved and to embrace unpredictability. My start into porn was unexpected, but I wouldn't change it a bit.

JS: Did being an adult film star impact your dating life?

KE: No, it really never affected my relationship life. I dated out of the industry, just because in the industry, everyone knows everyone and I didn't want that drama. But at the same time, it was hard for people out of the industry to understand that it really is just a job and no feelings are involved. I only had one main relationship during porn.

JS: Is he the reason that you decided to leave porn?

KE: Yes. He never asked me to stop. I had been doing it before I met him, so he knew it was a job. He even travelled to Las Vegas with me to meet everyone. But I could just tell, every time he dropped me off at the airport, how dejected he looked. Eventually it came to a point where he was more important, so when it was time to renew my contract, I took a step back and thought about it. I decided my relationship was more important.

JS: Did your father ever become aware of your film work?

KE: He was made aware by a vindictive

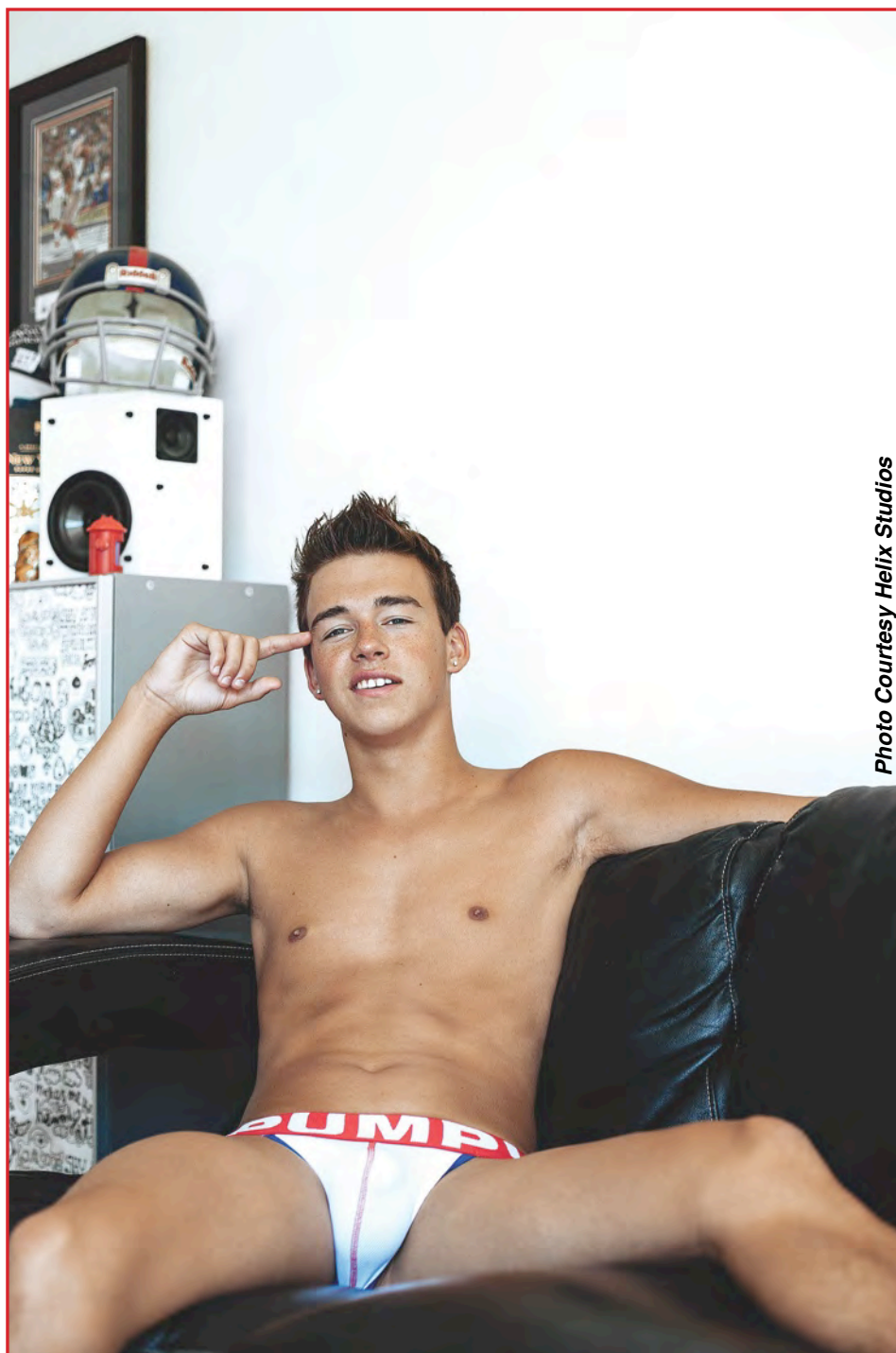


Photo Courtesy Helix Studios

ex at the time.

JS: What was his response?

KE: Once he found out, he told my family. The reaction was about as to be expected. We didn't talk for a few months. It took him some time to process. Now he's my biggest supporter, and hypes me up every chance he gets.

JS: How about your old teammates, are they aware of your film work?

KE: Word spread like a wildfire once someone at my old high school found out. Teachers, coaches, everyone knew. None of them said anything to me, and I don't talk to any of my old teammates now. Once we graduated, I fell out of touch.

JS: Looking back now, would you have done anything differently?

KE: Absolutely not. I have no regrets about anything. I look back with fondness.

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Photo Courtesy Helix Studios

JS: What about baseball? Have you picked up a ball and bat lately?

KE: I've played a little beer league softball, and helped coach my little brother's travel ball team, but that's about it. I'd love to find a men's wood bat league around here, so I could get up on the pitcher's mound again and sling it.

JS: Who is your favorite team?

KE: I'm a diehard Atlanta Braves fan, and tend to go to three or four games in Atlanta every year. I went to NLDS Game 1 with a friend from work last year, my first playoff game. That was a cool experience. Also, the Tennessee Smokies, the Double-A affiliate for the Cubs, are about thirty minutes away

from me. Thursday nights they do dollar beer nights, so that's hard to pass up.

JS: Tell us about Balls and Brews, your new sports podcast with your straight friend.

KE: Balls and Brews is a podcast my best friend Johnse and I do. It's a good time! We bring friends on occasionally, drink some beers, debate sports, everything. It's basically our daily conversations with each other, recorded. We jab at each other a little, and just have a good time with it!

JS: Would you consider doing adult film work again?

KE: If the right opportunity presented itself, absolutely. But I doubt it'll

happen. I'm at a stable point in my life right now with a successful career, surrounded by good people. It'd be hard to add adult work back on top of all that.

JS: What is your current situation?

KE: I'm currently talking to an amazingly sweet guy I met a couple months ago. It's early, but I'm excited! Haven't been this excited about anything like this maybe ever, so stay tuned and keep your fingers crossed. I think I found a winner.

Visit [HelixStudios.net](https://www.helixstudios.net).
Listen to Balls and Brews: <https://anchor.fm/johnse-hatfield>.

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2625 Samuel Shepard Dr (*Bathhouse*)
Rehab Bar & Grill - 314-652-3700
4054 Choteau Ave (*Bar*)

OHIO

The Club Columbus- 614-291-0049
795 West 5th Avenue (*Bathhouse*)

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1637 17th Street NW
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58
Devon

Hollywood Beach

Foster

Lawrence

Wilson

Montrose

11

7

8

Devon

Clark

61

9

12

13

48

14

67

16

Clark

70

52

53

6

Ridge

Bryn Mawr

Clark

15

Foster

Lawrence

6

6

6

6

6

6

6

6

6



Ashland Ave.

Fullerton Ave.

2

North Ave.

Chicago Ave.

Grand Ave.

5



WRIGLEY FIELD

Addison

Clark

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

Belmont

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- GRAB a Bite
- GRAB a Drink
- GRAB Some Sleep
- GRAB Some Culture
- GRAB a Towel

71

68

E 71st St.

S Jeffrey Blvd

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