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GRAB JOHNNY



Here's Johnny! With 'Queer as Folk' and 'Hacks,' Johnny Sibilly keeps ascending to new career heights

By Chris Azzopardi

If you think you've heard the name Johnny Sibilly, you have. Or at the very least you've seen him, whether on FX's groundbreaking trans-focused series "Pose," where the 34-year-old actor had a three-episode stint as Costas Perez, or on HBO's "Hacks," appearing alongside Jean Smart in one of last year's best new shows. That series is currently in its second season (and still just as deliciously queer).

But the show guaranteed to give Sibilly's profile a generous boost is his role on the reboot of "Queer as Folk," where he plays Noah, a smoke-and-mirrors lawyer. Groundbreaking when it premiered in the U.K. in 1999 and then in the U.S. in 2000, the show was one of the more authentic representations of LGBTQ+ life when it premiered, spotlighting important political and cultural LGBTQ+ issues alongside frank depictions of queer sex.

Peacock's new "Queer as Folk" understands what the show was then and what, in 2022, it has to be now. So, naturally, there's sex. And lots of it.

Orgies, toys, full-view anal. Sex that looks real enough for it to appear to be unsimulated.

But this self-proclaimed "reimagining" also knows that being a queer person in our modern day means, in some ways, what it did in 2000: homophobia, fear and acts of anti-queer violence so horrific they hurt your heart. The trailer doesn't hide the fact that the first episode is a hard, gutting and emotional watch: reminiscent of the Pulse nightclub tragedy in 2016, there's a shooting at Babylon, the local gay club.

Here, Sibilly talks about the importance of threading that hard-to-watch narrative into this reboot, the detailed conversations the "Folk" crew had about queer sex onset, and why he'll continue to play queer characters.

Chris Azzopardi:How have you been doing? You've been really busy.

Johnny Sibilly:Yeah. With the pandemic and everything, and being so busy, it's been truly a blessing. I'm so happy to be working and to be doing

this. I'm really grateful.

CA: During the beginning of the pandemic, were you afraid of work drying up?

JS:It's funny. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was like, "Ha, now the rest of the world knows what it feels like to be an actor or an artist, where your job isn't guaranteed." And then, after a while, it was like, "Oh, wait. OK. What's going on?" But then, I remember I got the call for "Hacks," the first season, and I was like, "Oh, yes. Yes, we'll do this." [I filmed] that in the height of the pandemic, and then "Queer as Folk" when things were tapering down. But then, all the variants were another journey, but here we are.

CA:It sounds like the producers of "Hacks" just called you. Or Jean Smart personally called you.

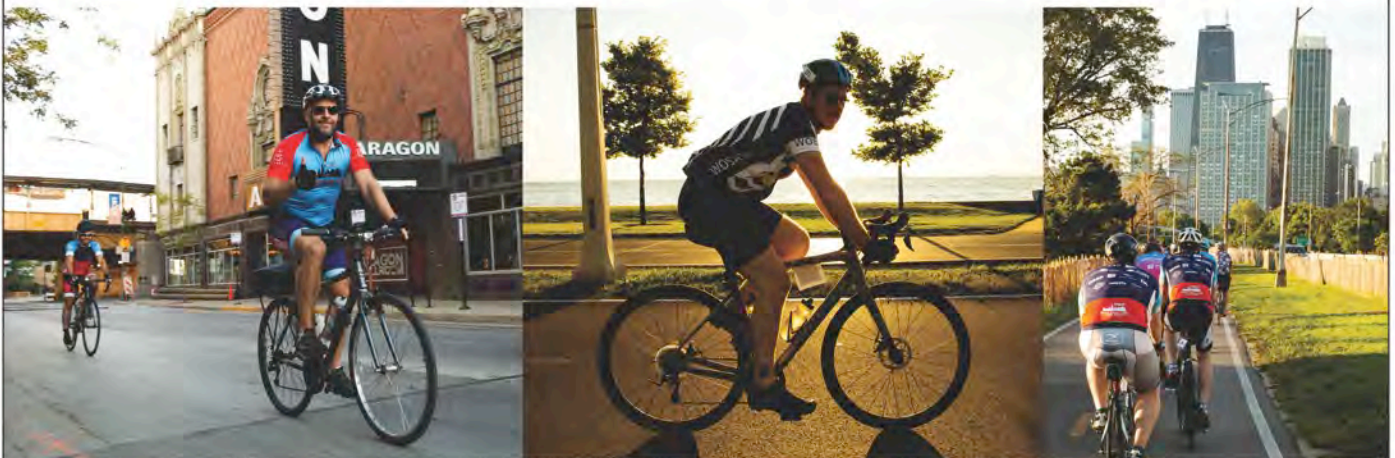
JS:[Laughs.] She's like, "I don't know who you are, but I think you'd be great." Yeah, no. "Hacks" was



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interesting, because it wasn't... I auditioned for it, but it was a Sunday night [when] I got a call asking for my availability, and they asked if I could put something on tape that night to film on Wednesday that week. And then, we got a call on Monday that said I got it. It was pretty quick. "Queer as Folk," not as much...

CA: What was the process for "Queer as Folk"?

JS:For "Queer as Folk," for me, the process in my head started when I found out that there was going to be a reboot made. Back in 2018... I always tell this story, but I put out a tweet when I found out that they were maybe doing a reboot, and I was like, "Who do you guys think they would cast in the reboot?" People said names like Billy Porter and a lot of the actors that are known in the community.

Flash-forward to the actual thing getting launched and the auditions happening, and I messaged my team, as I usually do when I see something that I really like. I was like, "I got to be a part of this somehow." The audition came through, and it was funny, because I was sick with a cold when it came through. I was like, "Oh my gosh, can we push it a day or two?" And they were kind enough to do it.

But yeah, it was that same thing, where you audition, and then you get the call back, and then you do the chemistry session. But it's a month to two months of your time just waiting to

know. And for me, as an actor, I'd rather know right away if it's a yes or a no, so I can, in my head, deal with that rather than waiting and waiting. Because you build up all these things of like, "My life could change," or, "This would be so exciting." But it worked this time.

CA:When I watched "Queer as Folk" as a teenager, the big draw for me then, as a closeted gay kid, was watching guys on screen have sex. And clearly, that's still a big part of the show. Is gauging sexual chemistry an important part of the audition process?

JS:The sexual chemistry, not so much. My only chemistry read was with Devin [Way], who plays Brodie. And it's funny, because when I saw him pop on the screen, I was like, "That's him. That's the one," whereas he did a couple of chemistry reads with a couple different Noahs. But it is interesting, because we were doing it on Zoom, too, so you're not in the room. You don't feel the vibes of what it would feel like.

But I'd seen Devin before somewhere, and I was like, "I know this guy, I just don't know where to place it." And, come to find out, it was years before. He had come up to me on the street and told me that he liked my Instagram videos, because I used to make character Instagram videos. When he told me that finally, I was like, "That's where I know you from."

But anyway, it was just such an easy little flirty scene, that, when you meet a new gay, you're just like, "Hmm..." We clicked, and I guess that's the point of a chemistry read, because I've done chemistry reads before where I was like, "Oh, this isn't really clicking." But it clicked with Devin and I.

CA:What has it been like to be a part of "Hacks" knowing that it treats its queer characters so matter-of-factly?

JS:It's a dream, because the show itself is very much queer-coded, in that there's a strong female character that is rich. So many things that we grew up loving [about] strong female characters, and then to add in the queer characters, not only the ones that worked with her, but just peppering the universe of "Hacks" with these characters was super exciting and important. Because maybe years ago, if a show like this was made, that wouldn't have been the case, but it feels like a very real world.

I feel like Deborah would have queer people around her, and it's been so exciting not only to play these characters in a way that feels real and authentic, but not just feel also like we're just thrown in because they needed to fit a quota, or because a lot of things these days get called out for being too woke, or whatnot, which is crazy in and of itself. But I do love that this show feels like a reflection of what the world looks like.



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CA:What's your earliest memory of wanting to be an actor?

JS:I was always a little rascal, I will say. I loved doing impersonations. When I used to go around the house and be like, "My name's Forrest, Forrest Gump," and whenever we'd go out, my mom's like, "Do the Forrest Gump. Do it." And she'd always push me to do it.

I remember one year, I was signing up for classes for seventh grade, and she's like, "Why don't you do drama?" And I was like, "I want to do French," because all the cool kids were doing French. And she's like, "Yeah, but you're always doing characters and things. You should do drama." And I'm glad that she said that, because it really took me to a place that I needed to be, especially at that point in my life, when sexuality started playing a role in my confidence. I was a very vibrant little kid, and then as I started realizing I was queer, I became the shy kid. Acting and drama really allowed me to spread my wings and show myself in a way that didn't feel like I was attached to my sexuality and hiding that anymore.

CA:Did you find yourself finding a

community within the acting and drama worlds?

JS:100%. I never was that kid that played in the street with friends. I was in my room watching Joan Rivers on the red carpet, and I knew everything there was to know about celebrity culture, but I wasn't one of these kids that played hide-and-seek in the neighborhood. Drama really offered me a place and a space to create friendships and camaraderie and family with people that were like me. Not only queer people, but artists as well.

CA:Where did you go to drama school?

JS: I did a little bit in college. I grew up mostly in Miami, so all of my drama club and theater stuff I did in middle school and high school. And then, in college, I was like, "I don't really need to have a degree in order to be on TV," so I did two years of college in Miami, and then I moved to New York City at the end of 2012 and started just hitting the pavement, doing extra work, all those reenactment shows that you see on Discovery. It was just a steady climb, for sure. It wasn't an overnight "Here's the keys to the kingdom" kind of situation.

CA: If you look at your Wiki page, it's like an episode here, an episode there, an episode here, and then three episodes on "Pose."

JS: "Pose" was funny, because I had just moved to L.A. and they called me back to film the three episodes of "Pose," or two episodes of "Pose" in the first season and then one in the second. But that was my first big thing. It's so nice that my first big series regular role is also another queer show, because a lot of times, as queer actors, people are like, "Oh, I don't know if I want to pigeonhole myself..." and I'm just like, "Oh, thank god we have more opportunities to play gay characters."

CA:It seems like you might be happy playing queer roles for the rest of your acting career.

JS:For the rest of my days. Because, if I do get to play queer characters for the rest of my days, that means that there are queer characters being written and created. The whole point of this thing is to continue to move the needle forward, because three, four years ago, we were all fighting for it. It's nice that they're opening space for us.



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CA:I always think, when I interview a queer actor who plays queer roles, what it must be like to connect with your younger self, thinking, "What would this have meant to 14-year-old Johnny?" Do you ever think that way?

JS:All the time.

CA:And what's that like for you?

JS:I was watching "Heartstopper," and I just had a moment where I had to pause it, and I was like, "Wow, if I would've had this as a kid..." Because it is also a very child-friendly show about sexuality, whereas there hasn't really been a lot of that. "Love, Victor" is one of them, but usually, a lot of queer shows are sex-forward, and that's important, because that's part of the community as adults. But I do definitely think about that 100%, especially with "Queer as Folk."

I remember being petrified of this even being on TV in front of me, and now, I am so unafraid, and so unwilling to go back into the closet in order to present art, that I am very excited to even think about where I started versus where I am now in telling these stories. And I can only hope that, by me being onscreen, whoever is watching can be like, "Oh, yeah. I'm absolutely unafraid to be myself after this."

Did you watch the original "Queer as Folk" growing up?

I watched it in hiding. I wasn't an avid, weekly watcher when it was on Showtime, or before, when it was on in the U.K. But I did go back and watch a lot of it after the fact in 2018, when I found out it was getting rebooted. And then after, when we finished wrapping our season that we just shot, I went back and started watching the Showtime episodes again, because I missed it. I missed telling the queer story, so I was like, "What can I watch that's going to bring me that same kind of feeling?" And it just happened to be "Queer as Folk."

What were the conversations you had with the cast and crew about how to honor the show's legacy while also moving the needle forward?

I can't really speak for anyone else, but I think it was important for me to acknowledge how important "Queer as Folk," both of them, were at the time that they came out. I think it's also important to honor the actors that portrayed these characters at a time when it was not popular, or sometimes even safe, but it was also really



Photo Courtesy of HBO

important to separate myself from all of that, because even online, when it was announced that we were going to be the cast, you have a lot of pushback from fans of the first two original shows that are like, "Why would you redo this? It's perfect the way it is." And a lot of times you read the comments, you're like, "OK, I don't know if 'perfect' is the word, but I understand your love for this show."

But I think it was important to put all of that aside, to know the legacy that it has, and to also be willing to create something new that hasn't been seen before. There's definitely Easter eggs, and little things here and there, that people will be like, "Oh, he's like this character, and this character, and this character combined, if they were one character," which is what I love too, because it is throwing it back to the older versions. But these are queer people that exist in this time, in this space, and I think it's important that we honor the legacy of other queer people, but also showcase that we still very much exist as a very different kind of people now.

CA:With Noah, who would you say that he would most identify with from the original series?

JS:I'd say Noah has a little bit of Michael from the American version. He's got a little bit of Brian in him in certain respects. He does feel a little bit like all of the lead male characters, except for Peter Paige's character, because he is a little more fun, and Noah's getting there, but I feel like Noah's a little more of the daddy of the group.

CA:Even now when I see queer sex on screen, I'm still marveling at the fact that it exists. I definitely watched this and had a lot of appreciation for the fact that they didn't shy away from the sex. What was it like knowing that you were signing up for a show that would mean that sex was pivotal?

JS:You see "nudity required" in the breakdown for the audition, and as an actor, I think it's important for me to push myself and move out of my comfort zone, but I also think it's important that we tell authentic queer stories, and queer people have sex in those stories, just like if we were to watch "Euphoria" or any other show on TV that has cis, heterosexual people.

It's very sex-heavy, and we should be able, and have the space, to do the same. And also, doing it in person, and choreographing it, and filming it, it was very important for me, and Stephen Dunn, the creator, and all the directors we've worked with, to show queer sex in a way that felt authentic and real, even so much as, lube was a conversation. Would we have enough time for lube in this? Would we use spit in this? And I am so grateful that we're having this conversation, because there's been times where I see queer sex onscreen, and I'm like, "Mm, OK. I don't know if that's how we get down, but..." It was really nice to have a collaborative situation when it came to that.

CA:Yeah. I still don't know how Jack and Ennis were able to do it with just spit in that tent.

JS:[Laughs.] Yeah. I'm sure it was very dry in those mountains.

CA:As you know, the whole show is centered on a Pulse-like shooting at Babylon. And for me, admittedly, it was really hard to watch, though I have a real understanding that it's dealing with trauma and working through that. What did it feel like when you got to that part in the script?

JS:I remember when I first read the pilot, I was shocked. I was like, "Oh my god, I did not know that this is where we are going." And then, the more I thought about it, the more I thought how important it was to show something like that. One, because I think there is a responsibility for us as queer people to acknowledge the things that our community has been through, whether it be HIV/AIDS or all of the [other] things our community has been victim to.

I think it's important to present that as truth, and I also think it's super important that we show stuff like that now because we are still undergoing a lot of fire from not only legislation, but bars getting broken into and potentially burned down. We are under attack, and I think it's important that, while we celebrate a lot of queer representation, we also take a moment to understand where we still are in this time.

I really am grateful to the creators for creating space for this story, and not



Photo Courtesy of Peacock

only in a way that shows the tragedy as it is, but also makes it about so much more than the tragedy: makes it how queer people are incredibly resilient and come together in times of strife, as we always have and always will.

Chris Azzopardi is the Editorial Director of Pride Source Media Group and Q Syndicate, the national LGBTQ+ wire service. He has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in

The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

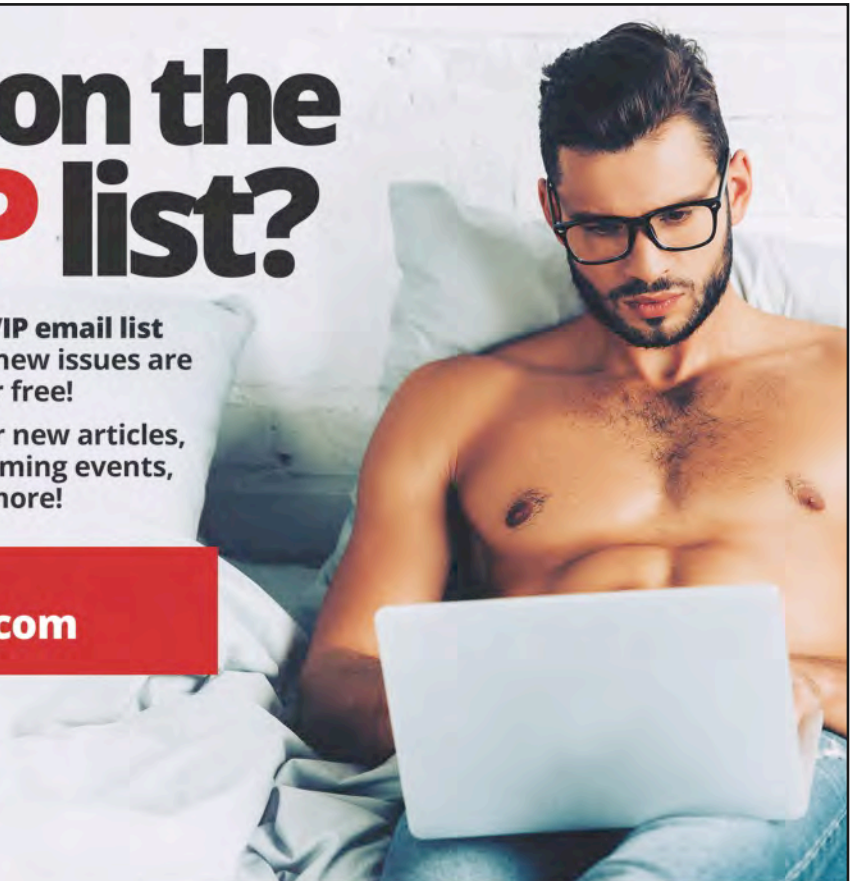
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GRAB A DOCTOR



A Conversation with Dr. Maurice Brownlee, Chief Wellness Officer and Medical Director of Wellness Home at Northstar

By Michael Montgomery

In an everchanging healthcare landscape, Northstar Healthcare has been a guiding light for Chicago's LGBTQ community for more than 30 years. Founded in 1991 by Dr. Daniel Berger, Lakeview's own Northstar Healthcare has been a national leader in HIV treatment research and a key contributor of most antiretroviral drugs of the past 30 years. To date, nearly twohundred clinical research trials have been conducted at Northstar under the direction of Dr. Berger, including the first study of combination therapy for HIV infection in 1992, which led to the AIDS cocktail. This pioneering work and a deep commitment to providing low barrier access to critical HIV treatments made Northstar a beacon of hope at the height of the AIDS crisis.

Recently, Dr. Berger stepped down

from leading daily operations at Northstar (now doing business as Wellness Home at Northstar) and handed the reins to Maurice "Dr. Mo" Brownlee, who has assumed the role of Chief Wellness Officer & Medical Director. As a Board-certified HIV/AIDS Specialist, Dr. Mo is ensuring that Wellness Home at Northstar continues to provide the kind of leadership in LGBTQ medicine that it always has. *Grab Magazine* recently caught up with the new leader at Northstar to see how the first year of transition has been going.

Michael Montgomery: Dr. Mo, Northstar has been a champion for patients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS since the earliest days of that epidemic; it is fair to say that Daniel

Berger was one of the true medical pioneers of HIV research, especially his work that contributed to the development of the "cocktail." What is Dr. Berger up to these days?

Dr. Maurice Brownlee: Dr. Berger now serves as our Chief Medical Officer Emeritus, and he still comes into the Wellness Home to take care of his patients; many of these individuals have been seeing him for decades and could not imagine seeing any other provider for their care. He also continues to head up our research program. He remains an integral part of our team and we are lucky to continue to benefit from his deep base of knowledge.



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MM: I know it is an overly broad question, but how has the role of Northstar evolved since the early days? Many younger members of our community, who are living in the world of undetectable = untransmutable and PrEP, probably could not imagine what it was like in the early '90s.

MB: Well, it is a blessing that they live in such a different time and environment. The memories of HIV's early days are indelibly stamped on all of us who were around then, and I am grateful that many of our younger patients cannot imagine a time when a positive test was a death sentence. That being said, I hope that they realize that the fact that folks who are positive now can live such full and engaging lives is because of the tireless efforts of so many doctors, researchers, and advocates. We have patients that credit Dr. Berger with saving their lives, and still come here on a regular basis for their care. If something like PrEP was around in the '90s, people would have given anything to get access to it. Our job is to offer access and to continue educating and providing guidance, not judgment, and we want people to know what their options are.

MM: Dr. Mo, your own background in HIV medicine is extensive. What did you see in this practice that convinced you to move here from Atlanta?

MB: My decision to move to Chicago was intentional. I relocated to this area for one reason, to work side by side with my mentor Daniel Berger. The combination of Dr. Berger's leadership in HIV/ AIDS research and his comprehensive approach to treating the whole person has made Northstar a mainstay of the LGBTQ healthcare community for more than 30 years, and I wanted to be part of it.

MM: How is Wellness Home at Northstar different from the Northstar Healthcare that Dr. Berger's patients have known for the past several decades? How has the feedback been after a year?

MB: Honestly, not much has changed. Dr. Berger had always focused upon wellness and prevention rather than sickness; at the height of the pandemic, Northstar was known as a state-of-the art treatment and research center for people with HIV/AIDS. We have stayed current with the development of emerging research in this area, and both I and Dr. Berger plan to continue our focus upon the

forefront of HIV medicine. Patients with HIV/AIDS are living longer, which is one of the reasons we are constantly emphasizing prevention and wellness care over responding to sickness. In fact, we now refer to our doctors, nurse practitioners, and clinical staff as Wellness Providers or Wellness Specialists.

Also, it has always been a personal goal of mine to be a leader in closing the disparity gap in care, which requires us to offer access and to be more inclusive. We recently opened the Wellness Home on Halsted to serve patients on the Southside (at 3416 S. Halsted in Bridgeport). We also identified a lack of expertise that we wanted to correct, so we recently hired our first female doctor to help us navigate the needs of Women's Health (especially those that are unique to LGBTQ women), as well as a Family Practice provider to introduce patients to wellness services during adolescence; we know that the sooner a person makes use of health resources, the longer and healthier their lives are. As always, we will continue to have a diverse and caring team of professionals at Wellness Home at Northstar; we have always understood the need to reflect the



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traditional healthcare atmosphere. Our Wellness Home locations operate in a very un-clinic like environment; I personally worked side-by-side with our team to ensure a lovely, comfortable space that further increase the level of warmth and security our clients experience. Our staff is committed to being welcoming and attentive, and we proactively try to lower any barriers our clients may encounter. The goal is to provide patients with wellness and health care in a safe and thoughtful way.

MM: So, while Northstar has been renamed “Wellness Home at Northstar,” your company’s name is “Baal Perazim Wellness and Health Services.” Can you explain the origin of that name?

Lakeview community if we are to remain flexible in catering to its needs.

MM: So... “Wellness Home.” Explain what that means to you and for your patients.

MB: I began looking at health disparity in Chicago in 2017. Convinced there must be a solution, I expanded on what Dr. Berger had already started and developed the Wellness Home Initiative in 2018. The Wellness Home model operates on the evidence-based tenets of Trauma-Informed Care, which takes

into consideration the prevalence of adverse experiences and their impact upon one’s lifelong health. Traumatic life events have been shown to even impact one’s ability to stay engaged with the traditional healthcare system, and there is an immense body of research to support this.

However, instead of assisting individuals with their healing, the traditional healthcare system often contributes to the stress and trauma so many patients experience. Hence, building a Trauma-Informed culture required doing so in a non-

MB: A name can say a lot about a company – where it comes from, what it produces – but for us, “Baal Perazim” is far more than just a brand. Baal Perazim (ba-al peh-raw-tseem) means “breakthrough” and is the site of David’s victory over Goliath and the Philistines. Now you know, I am a good churchgoing man from Georgia, and you know we know our Bible [laughs]. That battle was a struggle against an overwhelming foe, and sometimes it feels like that when trying to address health disparities that that have plagued the traditional healthcare systems for years. Dr. Berger fought that fight when he founded Northstar, and we are continuing with that legacy. The name embodies the soul and spirit of who we are, what we have always been, and what we strive to be.

About Wellness Home at Northstar Healthcare:

Today’s Wellness Home at NorthStar provides Integrative Behavioral Health, LGBTQ Women Health, Medical and Nutritional Infusion Therapy through the Lime Infusion Lounge, Aesthetic and Clinical Weight Loss Management through the Daniel S Berger Institute of Mind, Body and Soul, and Sleep Apnea treatment. To learn more about their services, please visit www.wellnesshome.org



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GRAB MICHAEL

Fathers' Pride: An Interview with Daddy-Artist Michael Turchin

By Mikey Rox

Pop artist Michael Turchin – and his husband, NSYNC's Lance Bass – welcomed fraternal twins to the world in October 2021, which makes this June a milestone month for the proud papas: Not only are they celebrating Pride, but also their first Father's Day. In a recent interview, Turchin details his newfound dad life, plus how you can pick up his Pride-inspired prints to benefit The Trevor Project.

Mikey Rox: When did you and Lance know you were ready for kids?

Michael Turchin: Independently from each other, we both grew up wanting a family, and so when we first started our relationship, the prospect of children was always on the table. We've been with each other now for almost 12 years, so a few years back we decided it was finally time to start that journey – and I'm beyond thrilled that we did.

MR: This is your first Father's Day as parents. How will you celebrate?

MT: It sure is! We're so excited to finally be able to celebrate this day. I think we'll probably spend a nice day at home with the kids since it's really all about them.

MR: It's Pride Month! What's a proud papa moment you've recently had?

MT: It doesn't seem like much but our twins finally started sitting up and playing with each other and it's been such a joy watching them explore each other and their surroundings. It seems like they accomplish something new every week, and every time my heart expands more and more.

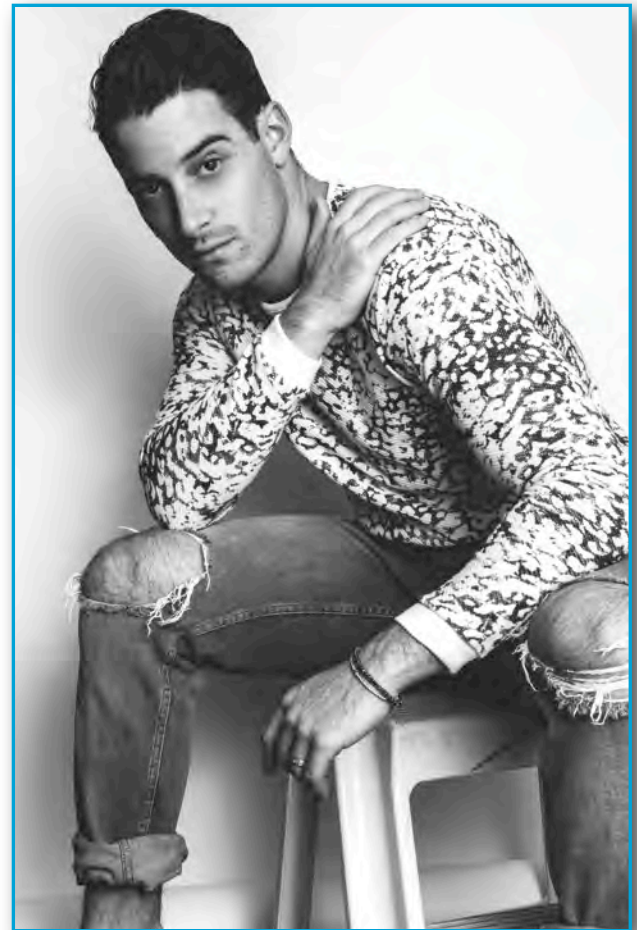
MR: What are you most looking forward to as a new dad?

MT: The thing I'm most excited about is celebrating the holidays and experiencing it all again through their eyes. The older you get, holidays seem to lose their magic and so I can't wait to see their excitement and joy.

MR: What's been the most unexpected challenge?

MT: I think the biggest – although not very unexpected – challenge is the lack of sleep. I'm still trying to get used to it. Luckily I love my babies more than I love my sleep because it sure is exhausting... in the best way possible.

MR: How do busy parents like yourselves co-parent?



What tips do you have for other new LGBTQ+ parents?

MT: My husband and I are usually on the same page so we don't butt heads too much, but we definitely have our moments. I think the best way to co-parent is to keep the communication flowing and always support one another. We take turns with the kids most days so the other can nap, and we've built a great support system of friends and family that can always be there when we need a helping hand – which has been a lifesaver on many occasions.

MR: Do you find time to relax, decompress? What does that look like these days?

MT: As busy as we are with our jobs and kids, we do make a point to take time for ourselves. We've taken several staycations in the city where we live so we can get away and recharge without being far from home. Periodic spa days have also been a real treat. The more relaxed and uplifted we feel the better we are as parents, so taking



the time whenever you can to help yourself is so important.

MTR: Finally, does Lance sing lullabye-bye-byes at night? (Sorry, we had to...)

MT:He does! Both Lance and I always sing around the house to each other, and now with children the singing seems to never end.

In celebration of Pride Month, pop artist Michael Turchin has partnered exclusively with ArtSugar, the cutting-edge, charity-driven contemporary art retailer offering an assortment of striking framed prints and decor from the most popular global artists on social media. ArtSugar and Turchin have launched ready-to-hang framed art prints of two of his rainbow-themed original artworks. Proceeds from each sale will benefit The Trevor Project, the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ+ youth.

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBTQ+ lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels



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Hell in a Handbag PRODUCTIONS

GRAB JULIO

“Vase” value: An interview with gay writer and actor Julio Torres

By Gregg Shapiro

Gay writer and actor **Julio Torres** seems to be everywhere these days. In movies, effortlessly drawing focus as he did in Nikole Beckwith’s 2021 comedy “Together Together” (co-starring trans actor Patti Harrison). On TV, Torres’ comedy writing for “SNL” earned him an Emmy nomination, while a current project such as HBO’s “Los Espookys” continues to gain him a growing following. Now, when you walk into your favorite bookseller (independent, preferably), you will find Torres on the bookshelf with his colorful new picture book “**I Want To Be A Vase**” (Atheneum, 2022), featuring illustrations by Julian Glander. Julio was gracious enough to answer a few questions in advance of the book’s publication.

Gregg Shapiro: Julio, congratulations on the publication of your first picture book *I Want to Be a Vase*. How long did it take to complete the project from its inception?

Julio Torres: Thank you! It took about a year. What took the longest was shaping it and the marinating of the idea. Once it was clear what it was going to be, it was a fairly quick and easy process. When I say it was a year, that also includes finding and working with an illustrator, collaborating with Julian (Glander), the illustrator.

GS: I’m glad you mentioned Julian. What made him the perfect choice to provide the images and illustrations for *I Want to Be a Vase*?

JT: I was looking for the book to have a sort of uncanny feeling to it. At first, I thought, “What if it’s photographs? What if we take interesting photographs from telling angles of everyday objects?” I was resistant to the idea of traditional children’s illustrations because, as beautiful as so many of them are, it didn’t feel like they were right for the

story. Then we found Julian who really split the difference between an illustrator and a photographer. When you look at the plunger, you should see a plunger, not so much a beautiful drawing of a plunger. Because it’s in the mundane that the humor and the story really comes alive. I like that his work looks like pictures of a dollhouse or something. Also, I wanted it to feel like the kinds of images that kids are attracted to now, which are not tender watercolors. They’re computerized images. I thought instead of fighting that, embracing it.

GS: How did you know that a book was the right shape for *I Want to Be a Vase* instead of a video representation, an area in which you’ve worked before?

JT: I wanted the book itself to be a beautiful object. I grew up as a kid who loved coffee-table books. Taking in the images on every page and enjoying them. I was excited to create an artifact that was like that. That felt almost like a kid was opening a coffee-table book that and they were taking away something, rather than being talked down to.

GS: The main character in *I Want to Be a Vase* is Plunger. It’s Plunger whose want is expressed in the title of the book. Is there particular significance to the character being a plunger as opposed to say, a measuring tape or an ice cube tray?

JT: I think that a plunger felt right because no one is happy using a plunger. When someone is using a plunger, they wish that they weren’t [laughs]. Thinking about objects and



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PRIDEFEST 2022

☺ WEEKEND LINEUP ☹

FRIDAY! FRIDAY! FRIDAY! FRIDAY! FRIDAY!

JUNE 17

FRIDAY! SATURDAY! SATURDAY! SATURDAY!

JUNE 18

**PLEASURE
PARK**

10PM-
1AM

FEAT. RAMONA SLICK
SAINT & BITCH PUDDING
MUSIC BY VITIGRRL

**THE SATURDAY
NIGHT DRAG**

10PM-
1AM

SHOW
WITH LUCY STOOLE
MUSIC BY STASNEY

LATE NIGHT WITH

RIKAB

1AM-
4AM

LATE NIGHT WITH

DJ TESS

1AM-
5AM

their purpose or their jobs, that is one that would be like “I really don't want to do this.”

GS: Plunger's most vocal opponent is a vacuum cleaner who spends most of the book trying to put the kibosh on Plunger's wish to change. Why did you choose a vacuum cleaner to be the naysayer?

JT: If you're a vacuum cleaner, as an object, you work in one of the most cut-throat industries that you can. I feel like vacuum cleaners are constantly on the verge of being replaced by a better vacuum cleaner. Efficiency is such a part of being a vacuum cleaner, and a vacuum cleaner is all efficiency. You're only as good as the job you do as a vacuum cleaner. Every advertisement is like. “This one's better. This one's lighter. This one's faster.”

It's a very competitive world. To me, someone whose whole identity is tied to succeeding in their industry and maximum efficiency is very quick to judge those who are not happy where they are. If you are doing well and you feel like you're doing well because you work extremely hard, hearing someone going through an existential crisis can be annoying to people like that. That's why I felt like a vacuum cleaner was appropriate.

GS: The vacuum cleaner has a turning point when they say, “I was worried something bad would happen if you got to be whatever you wanted.” Was this line of thinking, reminiscent of that espoused by the more conservative element in our country, part of the inspiration for the book?

JT: Yeah, absolutely. I was interested in doing a few things with this story. I think that the entry point to the story is your more traditional hero's journey/power-of-the-individual kind of storytelling, which most stories for kids are. Predicated on this notion that you, the reader, are special and different and you will succeed against all odds. I think that way of storytelling is so intertwined with the American dream and the idea that you, the individual, will work hard and you will succeed.



But then I wanted to take it a step further and be like, “What about the other people around you? They have their own hopes and dreams.” I would love to motivate kids to search for their own happiness and, along that journey, motivate others and help them to find their own happiness. Because I think that the “you, kid, are special” story is wonderful. But I think that it should have a comma, “and so is everyone else [laughs].” You have your own wishes and hopes and desires, those around you have their own wishes and hopes and desires that are just as valuable as yours.

The vacuum cleaner is an important voice because, in your search to being yourself and finding your true self and expressing who you are and feeling safe doing so, there will be naysayers along the way and these naysayers are every bit as complex as everyone else. Rather than making a book that was punishing to the antagonist, I wanted one that was inclusive, and asks the questions, “You're saying no, but why? What's beneath that?” Which is why I felt like the vacuum cleaner didn't have to be defeated, it had to learn and grow.

GS: Unfortunately, book-banning is becoming increasingly popular as a weapon used by the far-right. Are

you at all concerned that *I Want to Be a Plunger* has the potential to be banned?

JT: Oh my God! I suppose it wouldn't surprise me. It's very disconcerting because [laughs] a Right-Wing child has every right to be their happiest, truest self as any other child.

GS: But the Right-Wing parents might disagree.

JT: [Laughs] Right, because the kids are not the ones buying the books. I think that there is this hysteria around the idea that entertainment and media want to destroy or permanently change a world that is otherwise good and perfect. Just like the vacuum cleaner, I think that if they step back and realize that just because it works for you doesn't mean it works for everyone. Also, does it work for you [laughs]? I think it's an important question. Vacuum is overworked. Vacuum didn't realize that vacuum could use some help.

GS: If *I Want to Be a Plunger* was adapted for TV or a movie, whom would you like to hear voicing Plunger?

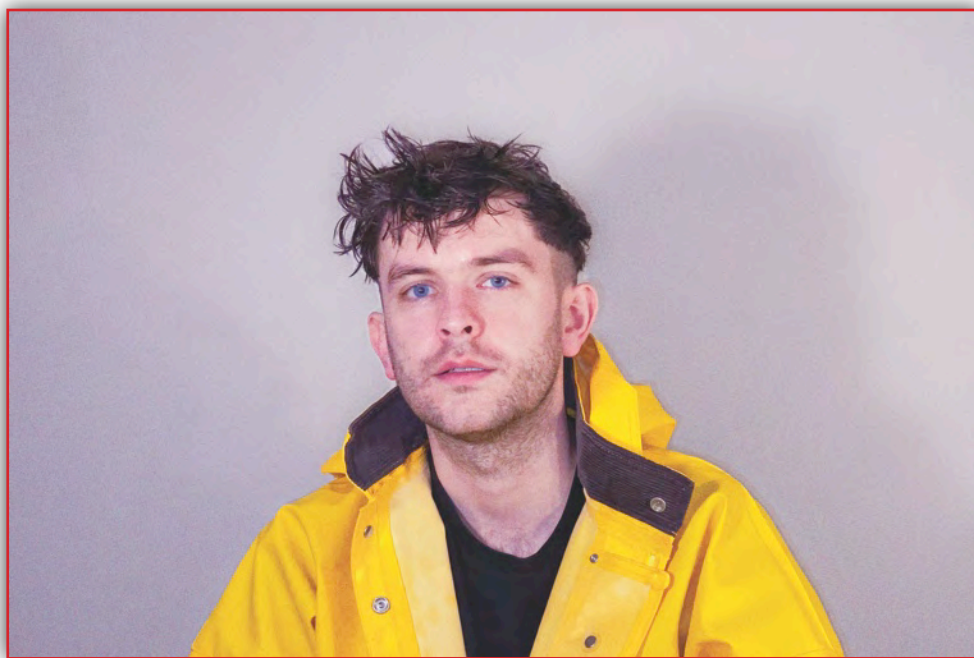
JT: That's a very interesting question. I never thought about that. Maybe someone who, when you hear the voice, you hear plumber. Something a little gruff so that the character has to overcome that other part of the

expectation. "You don't sound elegant and refined like a vase, so you couldn't possibly be a vase." John Goodman or something.

GS: Speaking of movies, I loved your scene-stealing performance as Jules in *Together Together*. Do you have any upcoming film roles you'd like to mention?

JT: Thank you! I wrote and directed a movie that I am editing now. God knows when that will come out. Other than the new season of the HBO show "Los Espookys," that's what's on the horizon film-wise. We had to stop "Los Espookys" in 2020 like everyone else because we shoot in Chile. In addition to COVID, there were all these international restrictions around it that became an immigration/bureaucratic nightmare that our fantastic producers had to navigate. There were so many false starts to the second season, but we finally finished it earlier this year and we're editing it now.

GS: Finally, we're speaking a few days after Kate McKinnon, Pete



Davidson, and Aidy Bryant departed SNL. Do you have any thoughts about that that you'd like to share as an Emmy-nominated SNL writer?

JT: I was there. I went to see the show. It was really beautiful. I got to work with all of them. Kate, in particular,

was a very early champion of my work. I always felt so welcome and appreciated by all of them. I'm very happy for them.

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GRAB KHLOE

Enchanté, it's Khloe Couléé

By Chez Ordoñez

Behold! I have met some queens in my day, ranging from those who are snatched to those who simply looked, well, scratched. From the moronic to truly iconic, ya know.

Through mutual friends, gay empowerment benefits (afterparties), and the typical thotting and plotting, I met the gifted (yes honey, gifted), Khloe Couléé.

If memory and the remaining serotonin serves me correctly, we were first introduced via my bff at his birthday party?* Something like that. The important piece here is that it was Beyoncé themed so every single boy was dressed to tea in the most glamorous attire. I was immediately in awe of Khloe and everyone could tell (insert blushing emoji). From personality, to overall presentation, she was all 10s across the board. Khloe was it and I was simply lit (allegedly) because I was encouraging her to do drag full-time. Gag.

You may recognize the iconic last name. She is indeed a legendary child in the very powerful house, Maison Couléé, with its reigning Mother, Shea Couléé (Mogul, Maven, Model, Activist, and Icon).

So when I heard that Khloe Clouléé was performing at Pride in the Park I lost it. This is something everyone must-see. So I decided to call a girl up and give me some tea on her performance, thoughts on overall queer issues, and more.

Listen up now...

Chez: Baby... how are you?! What's the tea and what's new, besides gracing us at Pride in the Park on Sunday, June 26?

Khloe: I'm good! Thank you for connecting with me about this! I saw



the article you did on Janky, I loved it, but what tea are we gonna be spilling on here now?! [Cackles and giggles]

Chez: Don't worry, this is going to be fun for sure. Let's just catch up because just I love what you do. You're art is just everything, so please tell the children how did you get "into it" – in drag and outside of drag when you out down the wig and the pumps?

Khloe: I guess I knew that I had a gift when I noticed I could do things that others couldn't normally do. Something so simple as the ability to dance or as simple as hold a two-step. I had about it when I was able to do things that a lot of people couldn't normally do in simple ways. Like, if you think about it, something as simple as dancing or holding a two step. In terms of drag, like many kids growing up, we all played in our mother's stuff. You don't know that's drag at the time, but it is.

Chez: Was that your awakening or aha moment? I strongly believe that everyone has a few defining moments in their lives – that aha moment I guess – and it should hopefully propel you to the chapter in your life.

Khloe: I think my aha moment was really brave is when I said, "I'm gonna' be a Drag Queen". That moment happened really after my mom showed me the very first season of RuPaul. I knew I wanted to do that, and in 2018, I went to Berlin [nightclub] and I got it.

Chez: Omg, that's amazing. Like your drag mother or your actual birth mother?

Khloe: My actual mother introduced me to RuPaul and drag.



(Literally muted my phone because I started to feel those tears forming)

Chez: [Clears throat] This definitely sounds aha to me.

Khloe: I'm a person who feels that in order to truly move forward sometimes you have to go back. We do those things to humble ourselves. My journey started in Berlin. I went in there like every other performer. There are some girls who didn't make it, and I'm sorry they didn't. However, most of us went in there with the mindset of being hungry for the same goal– we all wanted to be somebody, someone important.

Chez: [Singing "Sister Act"]. "If you wanna be somebody, if you wanna go somewhere, you better wake up and pay attention"

Khloe: [Paying Chez no mind she continues to say]... and of course, we were there to make money. I went in there and I said "this is what you want to do, let's go for it, let's see what happens." I applied myself. Next thing you know, I look up and blink, and I'm sitting right here. It's a lot to look back on and has taught me so much.

Chez: This is what I like to uncover in an artist because people only see what they are presented on stage.

Khloe: One thing I can tell you is that me and my sisters collectively hate is when interviewers always ask the same reguditated questions; we are so much more, and more complex than simply our drag names or the year we started drag. Ya know...

Chez: Did you just read me?

[Pause]

Chez: Bottoms are people too!

Khloe: We are! We are!

[Uncontrolled cackles... mostly from Khloe tbqh]

Chez: Anywho, now we know some of the backstory, tell me today, what gets you off... creatively? What makes you wild?

Khloe: Haha, omg, that question in itself is wild! Ok, umm.. That's such a complex question to answer because when I look at myself as a Virgo, we analyze every fiber of our being. For example, when it comes to hosting, because I'm currently a host of so many gigs right now like Pop-Up Thursday's at Roscoes, and other things I have done, I'm just always so intrigued by off-the-wall characters like Joanne the Scammer and Madea but at the same time I like to walk around and make people laugh and feel comfortable. I want them to have a good time.

Chez: So you a real good host and make people feel real comfortable, but you just not that way when you travel, huh? Oh, okay.

Khloe: [Laughs] omg, not that! I mean that it's these characters you can't seem to understand what they are doing or what they are going to do next, and whatever crazy journey they take you on you somehow get to the destination and it's worth it. That's my type of creative person I love: Edgy, creative, different and off the cuff humor.

I'm also obsessed with popstar divas and fashion icons like Janet Jackson, Doja Cat, Tinashe, and people fully-realized concepts. And last but not least, fashion as if Baby Spice and Posh Spice was fused together.

Chez: Is that what it means to be a Couleé for you? The Baby Spice of the group?

Khloe: Well, I came into the family as THE LAST ONE. Make sure you put that in bold letters, THE. LAST ONE. (As we are both laughing Khloe says "I want Shea to read that one.")

But, honestly, coming into the family I did not have that much knowledge of Shea at all, but I did know it was a big honor to have someone like her to approach me and want to bring me into her family. It has been such a journey – learning about each other and being there for each other. People don't realize the things that happen behind closed doors and that life happens off the stage like everyone else. So when I walk into a room, whether its a gig at a club or just hanging out with people, no one truly how proud I am to walk into a room and say "Hello, I'm Khloe Couleé." It has nothing to do with her being on



TV;

its the fact that the the person who is my mentor is also my best friend.

She saw something in me and vice versa. To have build such a bond with her and my other sisters is really an amazing feeling, and as a queer person I think a lot of people can relate just how power chosen family can be, and what it means.

Chez: Queer or not, unless you've had to have a chosen family it's very difficult to grasp that concept. It makes me happy that you have this and can express this.

How magical is it for you to have the entire Maison Couleé performing on that Sunday, June 26? If that's not some divine ministry, I dunno what is... so you have to tell me what you have in store for us at Pride in the Park? How are you gonna slay us? GIVE. IT. TO. ME.

Khloe: I'm not giving you any teasers! I got nothing for you because you need to be there to witness this. Of course Shea is gonna Shea to that is everything right there. For my

performance, expect something amazing, especially whenever Bambi and I team up. We aren't coming to play, we are coming to slay!

Chez: On a closing note, as Shea's daughter, rumor has it that we may or may not have the Queen of Queens performing on our stage...

Khloe: Are you trying to get tea out of me?! Is this that?

Chez: I asked an innocent question unbeknownst to me and thee.

Khloe: The only thing I can say today is that I find it very unfair how Bianca Del Rio came in out of nowhere and took everything, but that's about it! Catch Khloe Couleé, Shea Couleé and the entire Maison Couleé at Chicago's Pride in the Park on Sunday, June 26.

Go to PrideParkChi.com for tickets.

Follow Pride in the Park on Instagram @PrideInTheParkChicago and Khloe Couleé @khloecoulee

GRAB GEORGIOS



Going Greek with Georgios

By **Chez Ordoñez**

Greek DJ, Georgios Spiliopoulos aka GSP, is truly electronic music's Greek Freak. His label "Queen House Music" is the number one label in the circuit scene. A music career wasn't always so clear cut though, and in his formative years as a DJ, he balanced jobs as a math and physics teacher while also spinning at bars, clubs, and private events in Greece. A trip to Barcelona and Ibiza exposed him to the draw of large-scale festivals and clubs, and awakened his passion for music and the power it gave people. He knew at that moment he was a DJ.

In 2018, Georgios met his husband, and moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. (and oh honey, I was innocently double-tapping through those Insta pics) Nowadays, as a veteran DJ and global talent powerhouse (top), managing two record labels, producing sickening events, and spinning in front of thousands of adoring fans at some of the world's most prestigious festivals.

One of those festivals is Chicago's Pride in the Park which is all about

immersive Pride experience built upon an inclusive queer celebration that brings together all-star musical performances, legendary drag queens, and unrivaled local partnerships with a mission of love, music, and community. As one of the biggest queer outdoor festivals – last year alone welcoming 30,000 attendees over the weekend – and this year set to be even bigger, gayer and more stunning with the Grammy-winning duo The Chainsmokers; Alesso; RuPaul Drag Race winners Shea Coulee', Monet X Change, and Pryianka, J. Worra, Saucy Santana, Rebecca Black, Janky (featured in the previous *_Grab Magazine_* edition) and many more.

As European spirit animals, Georgios and I got to chop it up about the power of culture abroad, and the worldly view it provides. We connected on how the Queer scene, passion for electronic music, and more forward-thinking views on sexuality are beginning to reach the states through queer and pop culture. I thought back to the first time I heard his set. The

passion and electricity that he pours into his mixes is legendary, definitely a Pride soundtrack.

The more we talked I just felt a strong connection with our views of the past, current, and the future of queer culture and music's role in it all. There's no question that his artistry is crafted with precision and is intentional – producing the most majestic of beats and feelings.

Here is some of our convo.

Chez: So let's get right into it... what gets you off... musically?

Georgios: When I DJ, nothing makes me more wild and happy than seeing people's smiles and excitement on the dance floor. It's that almost religious feeling we offer and empowers me further to make every person even more happy.

When I'm in the crowd, I get so excited to hear new things. It brings so many emotions and allows me to see both sides of the artist. I can see how they express themselves, while I'm expressing myself on the dancefloor.

Chez: I love that. It's a unique

perspective only DJs would have and I'm sure influences their style. How would you describe your style of music? How do you express yourself as a musician?

GSP: Growing up I was a student of all genres of music, all the different shapes, sizes, and colors of sound. If you can name it, I played it. In a jazz club, in a rock club, in this club, and in that one. So that was good for me growing up to really study music in all its different forms. It was important for me to incorporate all these elements into my music.

I don't really have a specific genre per se – I see all these newer DJs and they only know one type of music, not a body of work. But growing up and experiencing many different places has helped me to have my own style, which is an incorporation of all genres into house. My style of music is not genreless, but more so a mix of elements that we play in the gay scene. It's electronic and it's house, incorporating many different elements, percussions ethnic styles, and lots of vocals.

Chez: What did the idea of Pride mean to you when you were first coming out in Europe and now as an adult in the States?

GSP: Pride for me, at this point in my life now means accepting and celebrating who you are and what you stand for. Also, being a part of Pride, where we celebrate the progress that has been made as a community over the years means so much. I was brought up in a time where this was a stigma, and I was in the closet for so many years. Right now, feels like the time to celebrate everything we've gone through, and where we are today.

Chez: That's so true and very relatable to me. When I look at Pride in the Park, it's truly a unique and new style of how to celebrate our Pride. We have queer staples that are extremely important and we must fight to keep such our Pride Parade's (Chicago's is finally back and on the same Sunday morning as Pride in the Park), along with Pride Fests, etc. But having an LGBTQ outdoor music festival is new and another great way to celebrate our queerness. I just love it.

GSP: Right! And to see how big we have become. Because you know, the first Pride was a riot. Globally, Pride events have struggled through the years to become more mainstream and noticed, so now having such a big



queer festival and at a location where major music festivals occur – that's a national event and perhaps seen as it's for everybody, not just for us artists or people who identify as LGBTQ. We are able to celebrate in a safe space and also experience amazing artists while also building more allies.

We can celebrate and embrace who we are in front of the world; we can see the support from everybody and it's beautiful.

Chez: I couldn't agree more. It's powerful. Do you feel that music has a role to play in LGBTQ progress? Obviously, it's a key part of how we celebrate, everybody likes dancing to music, but do you think music as an art form has a specific purpose for Pride? I interrupt music as a way of defending, protecting, or empowering queer people.

GSP: Definitely, yes. To begin with, music is the number one ingredient to spark a movement, to start a celebration. Specifically in the gay scene. I think music has played a crucial role in the movement for LGBTQ + rights. Gay clubs and dance provided a safe space – a place for queer people to come alive, and many artists pushed

social boundaries through their performances; by embracing and celebrating themselves. So yes, music has played a very crucial role in our progress.

Chez: I think that's one of the main reasons why I love Pride in the Park so much to be honest. Such diverse talent, with once again having major headliners perform for a Pride event. The Chainsmokers and Alesso both identify as straight and are such strong allies. The Chainsmokers are very well-known for their queer and Trans advocacy, and now they're being promoted and also performing alongside such amazing queer performers... I just love this.

GSP: Me too! As a queer artist, having such big names, especially on this stage is special. At Pride in the Park, these performers are also showing their support and celebration of our community. I think it's important to have that and we should never lose it. It raises awareness for their fans to notice our movement and become allies as well.

Our community listens to all types and styles of music. This helps to really raise how queer performers are treated and paid as well, especially if you are a

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Monday	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$4StoliCocktails (Any Flavor). @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlies: Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close. Hydrate: Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm, Bottles of Wine 50% off with dinner entree purchase. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 4pm, Dancers 8pm. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11 am, \$5 Well Drinks. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. Steamworks: Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. Touche: Euchre Night Come out and Play 7-10pm, Clubroom Open</p>
Tuesday	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. Hydrate: 8/10 TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm 50%off Bottles of Wine with purchase of an Entree. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$3 House Shots, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11 am, \$5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. Steamworks: Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). Touche: Hardcore Cruisin Open 10pm' Sponsor Leather 64Ten. No cell phones/Wifi.</p>
Wednesday	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$4 Premium Well Cocktails. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis Lark: Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light \$5, Select Wine \$5, Well Cocktails \$6 5-7pm. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails. Buy One Pizza Get one half off Die In Only Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Buy One Pizza Get one half off Die In Only Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 Miller Lite Drafts, \$4 Stolis (All Flavors), \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11 am \$5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Taylor & Ariana 4th Wed of month – all 9pm-2am. Steamworks: Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. Touche: Jockstrap Night Sponsored by Full Kit Gear, Free Clothing check.</p>
Thursday	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Whiskey, Rye & Bourbon. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. Hydrate: RuPaul's Drag Race Season All Stars Viewing Party Doors Open 6:30pm, Bubble POP Hosted by Khloe Coulee 9pm. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails . 7pm Extreme Bingwith Vian Dejour. 50%off Nachos or Tatchos \$8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks Tradional Flavor Only. Lucky Horseshoe: Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 You Call It's, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11 am, \$5 Deep Eddy Cocktails Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Open 2pm-2am, \$5 Drafts & Cans, \$6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, \$7 Glasses of Wine, \$8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, \$5 Bud Lights 4-6pm Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, Chicago's RuPaul's Drag Race Viewing Party 7pm, Drag & Games Dance Party 9pm-2am Steamworks: Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. Touche: Throwback Thursdays 70's & 80's Music & Porn by Bijiou Video.</p>

GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

Daily Specials

<p>Friday</p>	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts \$3 House Shots. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 4pm-2am. Charlie's: 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close. Houndstooth: \$6 Pulled Pork or Pulled Chicken Sandwich, \$6 Absolut Mules, \$12 Domestic Pitchers, \$5 Chambongs, \$3 Fireball, \$22 Bud Light Seltzer Buckets, \$22 Mexican Beer Buckets. Hydrate: 8/6 Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$8.95 Martinis. Lark: Happy Hour 5-7pm \$4 Dud Light Drafts \$6 Well Cocktails .Every Friday from Meeting House Tavern: \$5 Tito's, \$7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) Shakers: \$4 Domestic Bottles \$5 Well Mixed Drinks, \$10 Giant 23oz Long Islands in 22 flavors. Sidetrack: Open at 3pm, T.G.I.F. Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. Touche: 5/13WTNB Leather Social. Friday Funder for Ride for Life 8PM, 5/29 Cowboy RoundUp</p>
<p>Saturday</p>	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Lagunitas IPADrafts \$5 Premium Well Cocktails \$12 mimosa Carafes. @mosphere: \$5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 2pm-3am. Charlie's: Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. Lark: Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch 11am-3pm Lucky Horseshoe: Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$5 Signature Margaritas, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). Sidetrack: Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day Saturday 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. Touche: 5/14 Dungeon Master Night S&M Demo @midnight, 5/21 GEAR Night & IML Send off for MrChicago Leather 2019 Saber ONYX, BNC 6pm.</p>
<p>Sunday Funday</p>	<p>2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . \$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort \$4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), \$5 Signature Margaritas \$12 Mimosa Carafes. @mosphere: \$6 Jack Products, \$4 Domestic Draft, House Shots \$2. Baton Show Lounge: Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. Cell Block: Open 2pm-2am Charlie's: Queeriod! Every other Sunday 5pm – 7pm, Singational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. Hydrate: Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. Kit Kat Lounge: Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm \$8.95 Martinis . Lark: Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch 11am-3pm Lucky Horseshoe: Open with dancers at 3pm. \$5 drink specials. Meeting House Tavern: \$3 House Shots, \$5 Premium Well Cocktails, \$12 Mimosa Carafes, \$5 Frozens, \$5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, \$4 Tallboy Beers. North End: Open at 11am, \$3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview: \$10 Champagne Bottles, \$5 Juice Kits, \$3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets \$25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) Sidetrack: Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am Touche: BEER BUST \$2 Bud Light Drafts & Sodas Club Room open 6 pm Movie Night 7pm</p>



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	Artist	Title
1	Armin van Buuren & Sam Gray	Human Touch
2	David Guetta & Becky Hill & Ella Henderson	Crazy What Love Can Do
3	MelyJones & Charles B	Do You Remember (Coopex Edit)
4	Kx5	Escape ft. Hayla (Radio Edit)
5	Jonasu & Rêve	All Night & Everyday
6	Audien	One Last Dance ft. XIRA
7	Steve Aoki x Marnik x Leony	Stop The World
8	Firebeatz	Don't Stop Moving
9	Manuel Riva & Alexandra Stan	Heal Your Soul
10	KREAM	Pressure
11	MadBoys	We Made It
12	Alesso & Zara Larsson	Words
13	Thomas Gold x Jex x Hugo Cantarra	Wasted
14	John Newman	Waiting For A Lifetime
15	Seamus D	Like That
16	Just Kiddin	Change My Mind
17	Anton Powers x ManyFew	These Are The Days ft. Liv Dawson
18	MO	New Moon
19	Charli XCX	Beg For You ft. Rina Sawayama (Charlie Lane R
20	Alesso & Sentinel	Only You
21	ARTY	So Good To Me
22	Anitta	Boys Don't Cry (NIIKO & SWAE Remix)
23	Zookeeper & Jen	Taking Over Me
24	Swedish House Mafia	Heaven Takes You Home
25	SIDEPIECE	Don't Keep Me Waiting
26	Joel Corry x David Guetta x Bryson Tiller	What Would You Do
27	Franky Wah	Come Together
28	Cosmic Gate & Olivia Sebastianelli	We Got The Fire
29	Swedish House Mafia & Sting	Redlight (Radio Edit)
30	Oomlout	It's Tricky
31	Jonas Blue & Sevens	Angles
32	Tujamo	Down
33	Kungs	Clap Your Hands (Robin Schulz Remix Radio)
34	SAINT JHN	The Best Part Of Life (Imanbek Remix)
35	Keanu Silva x Toby Romeo x SACHA	Hopeless Heart (Radio Edit)
36	Mabel x Jax Jones x Galantis	Good Luck
37	Jaymes Young	Infinity (dEVOLVE Remix)
38	Farius & Cristina Soto	On My Mind (Edit)
39	Lucas & Steve x MARF	Give Me Your Love
40	Ted Bello & Robbie Rosen	Purpose

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Grounded in a vision of healthcare rooted in principles of queer liberation, antiracism, and equity, we are forming our union to protect each other, our patients, and the communities we serve. We are forming our union to protect the unique culture and vision that has made Howard Brown such a special place of change and healing in Chicago for marginalized groups.



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GRAB ROGER

Disinherited From an Estate Plan

By Holly Maholm

A: The following are five factors that I've seen that lead to people being disinherited from a relative's or friend's estate plan. Knowing these factors will hopefully help ensure that you will avoid being disinherited:

1) Never Call or Visit. This is far and away the most significant factor that leads to disinheritance. It should be so obvious that it goes without saying. Unfortunately it's not. I've seen countless scenarios where children or other relatives expect that they can go years without visiting a relative, or months without calling a parent, and still expect to be provided for in their estate plan.

2) Threaten Not to Visit. Many relatives subtly threaten or pressure other relatives in various ways, including by extremely subtle insinuations that they're "too busy to visit" unless XYZ occurs. The problem arises in two scenarios: first, where subtle threats are successful and they embolden the threatener until the parent reaches a breaking point and reacts by disinheriting the threatener; or two, where an elderly relative's physical and emotional capacities for patience have degenerated due to natural aging processes, and therefore he's much more easily "ticked off" than before, and reacts by disinheriting the threatener.

3) Be Judgmental About the Relative's Money. As a relative ages, some unsavory people start to see dollar signs behind everything the relative does with his money. For example, if an elderly parent in his late 80s buys a new car, a child may think: "what a waste; he doesn't need a new car because he'll probably pass away in a few years." Keep something important in mind: it's your relative's money and he can do whatever he darn well pleases with it up until the moment he's dead.

There's no need for children to make remarks about how things are "too expensive" or ask "do you really need that." Now, I'm not talking about scenarios where a parent has fallen under the undue influence of another unethical person, or where a parent has lost the mental capacity to make prudent decisions with his money (in those cases relatives should intervene). My point is that many acts of disinheritance could be avoided if

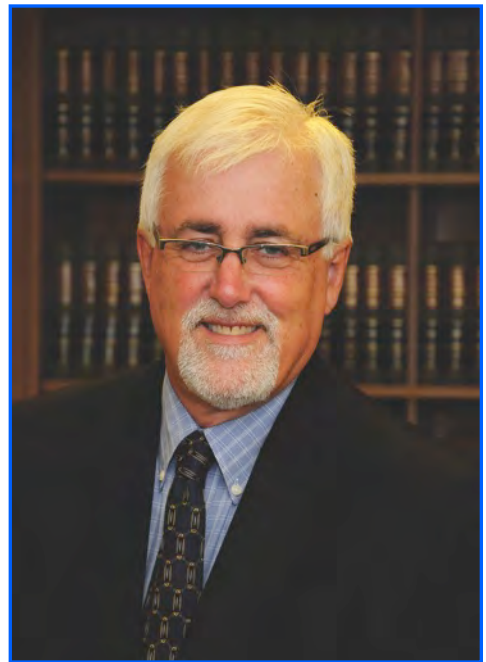
children and other relatives showed the same deference to elderly relatives (who are still of sound mind) with regards to finances as they did when the person was younger.

4) Argue About Minor Things. Who cares what color mom painted her family room? Who cares if dad decided to give nephew Jimmy an extra \$20 for gas money when he came to visit because Jimmy recently lost his job? Are any of these really life-altering events worth triggering a conflict with a relative about?

Many times it's wiser to just let the small things go rather than trigger an argument about them with a relative. Almost every argument about minor things arises as a result of someone speaking angrily in the heat of the moment, whereas if the person paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and thoughtfully reflected for several seconds, he would realize the wisdom of holding his tongue.

5) Prematurely Clean Out Your Parent's House. I'm talking here about scenarios where a parent is declining and will likely pass in the next year or two, and a child tries to get a "jump start" on making the estate administration process easier by removing items from the parent's house. Usually, it's not so much the removal of the items per se that leads to the anger; rather, it's the signal that the child is acting presumptively, or that he sees his parent's passing as a "imminent" reality (which it may in fact be, but the message being communicated to the parent by the child is one of disrespect).

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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Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of AIDS Garden Chicago at Belmont Rocks - Photos By Chris K.



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GRAB HOLLY

Lauren and Doug are Inconvenienced

By Holly Maholm

If you have been following along with my account of how Mike and Dave have struggled to convince Lauren – a pregnant high school girl – to allow them to adopt her child, you will have seen many milestones passed. First, upon my prompting (me being a lawyer), we stopped briefly to ascertain the “convenience of the Law.” However, this way-station being fatally compromised by its subservience to the “convenience of Lawyers,” we quickly moved on.

Next was the “convenience of the King” (or - our society not recognizing any form of hereditary aristocracy - the “convenience of the Government.”) But again, we found this mode of analysis to be all-too-easily subverted by an omnipresent and ill-disguised tyranny, notwithstanding that tyranny has been forced to recognize certain essential and jealously-guarded civil rights. Going further, we identified the “convenience of Lauren” (the mother) as a viewpoint worthy of consideration, and afterwards, we acknowledged the “convenience of Doug” (the father) to be equally deserving of recognition.

Where, then, have we arrived? What greater and more subtle “convenience” is there that might convince Lauren to give birth to her

baby, and give that child up to be raised by a gay couple?

Sassy and Dot headed off to the pole barn, where they intended to consult with others of the unicorns. I was permitted to tag along, but only on the condition that I keep silent and avoid offering any comments or advice. That consultation being had among the unicorns, a plan was developed and put into motion. And that plan requiring my participation, I agreed to do as I was instructed.

Next day, I waited in town at the stables, where Dot and I set out chairs in one of the stalls in the back, for privacy. Not long after, Phyllis arrived, accompanied by two persons whom I had not expected to see together in the same place – Lauren and Doug. We took our seats, and Phyllis began.

“Hello Dot... and Holly. I have already explained to Lauren and Doug that the two of you are representing Mike and Dave, who have expressed interest in adopting Lauren’s baby. Then, yesterday, Dot called me and suggested this meeting, so that Lauren and Doug might share their current thoughts on this proposal. Accordingly, I’m going to let Lauren and Doug speak.

Now, Lauren was an attractive young woman, with green eyes, an olive complexion (her mother hailing from Puerto Rico), and a veritable medusa of uncontrollable curls and coils which she tied back into a bun behind her head. Lauren began.

“Honestly, I’ve hardly had a chance to think about what Mike and Dave are proposing. Ever since I became pregnant, I have experienced nothing but frustration and inconvenience. First, everybody treats me like I’m the victim of some unspeakable tragedy. The kids at school - even the grown-ups - talk to me like I’ve come down with some hideous disease that I should be ashamed of, and the less said about it, the better.

“Then, there are others who go out of their way to make me feel like I did something wrong, and that I should just admit my guilt and do whatever is necessary to make the problem go away. But I don’t feel like I did anything wrong! OK. We didn’t plan this,” (she glanced at Doug), “but lots of things happen in life that don’t get planned out in advance, and some of those things



are really important – and are good things, too!

“Then, finally, it makes me mad that everybody just disregards how I got pregnant in the first place. I wasn’t raped. No! Doug and I have feelings for each other, and we only did what we did because we felt so strongly at the time. Are we the first young couple to express our love the way Mother Nature intended? We just did what comes natural for two people who love each other, and OK, the condom broke, or something, but that doesn’t take away our feelings.” Lauren fell silent, and Doug spoke up.

“So far, my parents have told me to stay away from Lauren, and Lauren’s mom has warned me to stay away from her daughter. The few times I’ve tried to go up to Lauren at school to talk to her, everybody gets hysterical, like I’m trying to assault her or something, so I’ve had to avoid her in public. Then there are those nosy, judgmental people who ask ‘Are you going to marry her, now?’

“It’s so unfair! I’m being treated like a jerk who ‘got what I wanted,’ but who now expects Lauren to deal with the pregnancy all by herself. But that’s not true! I still have feelings for Lauren, and I want to ‘do the right thing,’ – if I can just figure out what that is.”

(To be continued)

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

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GRAB JEREMY



Love story: An interview with *I Love That For You's* Jeremy Beiler

By Gregg Shapiro

Have you ever been channel surfing and found yourself enthralled by an item – jewelry, a purse, an ensemble, home décor or kitchen utensils – on a home-shopping network? What about becoming so captivated by the grinning, well-lit pitch-people that you don't even think of changing the channel? Then you realize that you're dialing the phone and reaching for your credit card. If so, you're sure to adore the new Showtime series *I Love That For You*, co-created by gay writer/actor Jeremy Beiler and SNL favorite Vanessa Bayer. Bayer plays the lead character Joanna, a young woman who survived childhood cancer and dreamed of becoming a spokesperson for a home shopping show. Co-starring Molly Shannon, Jenifer Lewis, Matt Rogers, and *My So-Called Life's* Bess Armstrong (as Joanna's mother), *I Love That For You* is a dark comedy that allows Bayer to draw on her many-layered acting skills. Jeremy Beiler was gracious enough to answer a few questions shortly after *I Love That For You* premiered on Showtime.

Gregg Shapiro: Jeremy, did you know that you wanted to be a comedy

writer while you were attending Columbia College in Chicago, and while you were in Chicago, did you partake in the city's famous comedy and improv scene?

Jeremy Beiler: My interest and involvement in comedy actually predates college. I did do some comedy in Chicago; I did a little bit with Improv Olympics. But previous to that, in high school (in Madison, Wisconsin), I actually had a sketch comedy, public access television show with my high school friends. Our moms would drive us down to the TV station and we would make sketch comedy every weekend. That same sketch group – we all went to separate colleges, but we'd come back in the summers and continue to make stuff. Then we all moved to New York together and continued in New York in the early aughts, doing comedy in New York. That really the biggest influence on me, that group.

GS: You co-created the Showtime series *I Love That For You* with Vanessa Bayer. Did you first meet her when you were a writer for SNL, and if so, do you

remember what your first impression of her was?

JB: Yes, I met her at *SNL*. My first impression of her, really, was as an audience member prior to that. I just loved watching her. I was such a big fan. As a viewer, I thought she was so hilarious. She's from the Midwest (Ohio), as I am, so we kind of had that Midwestern way of being and that kind of connection right off the bat. I was there for a year and a half before we really started working too much together. I actually just remembered now that I got her old desk when I first came to *SNL*. She moved to a different office and I sat at her old desk, which is kind of fun [laughs]. About a year and a half in, which is probably like 2016 or maybe 2015, I can't quite remember, she pitched this idea to Ryan Gosling for the Christmas show about a couple who still believed in Santa Claus.

GS: The "Santa Baby" sketch, right?

JB: Yes. I was like, I think that's a great idea. I think we had written some stuff together previously that didn't necessarily get on air. But we would

have so much fun staying up late writing together, even if stuff didn't get on. But that one was sort of our first sketch that just went really well and we worked really hard on and was extremely fun. Ryan Gosling was great. Then it connected with audiences. That was the first moment where we realized, "Oh, we have something fun here that might work." We started writing together every week. We had some other stuff on the air. I would often write her "Weekend Updates." It felt very organic and natural. Then we left SNL at the same time and we both realized we, separately, had ideas for a show set in the world QVC.

GS: When did you and Vanessa come up with the concept for *I Love That For You!* and how long did it take for it to come to fruition?

JB: We were having brunch at some point in New York in probably 2017 or maybe 2018 and Vanessa said she had this idea for a show set at QVC and I, probably three years prior to that, had begun writing a script of my own set in the world of QVC. At that point, we started developing it for fun and writing it with no real destination in mind. It was just enjoyable for us. We would get together and put together a pitch. Shows (in development) have what they call a "bible," and we called ours the Torah [laughs], and we started writing our show Torah. We were writing characters and plotlines and ideas, figuring out Vanessa's character. We pitched it together. First to Michael Showalter and (media company) Annapurna, and they really wanted to work on it. Then we got (writer) Jessi Klein and then we all went out to networks and got a few offers, but Showtime was incredibly enthusiastic, and it felt like such a great home for it. We went to Showtime. But all told, this was a five-plus years process, because we also had year-long COVID delays. It took quite a long time.

GS: In *I Love That For You*, we get to see Vanessa's acting range up close, such as her ability to go from high comedy to drama in one breath. The scene with her character Joanna and Molly Shannon's Jackie, when she talks about the bracelet, is pure gold. What's it like for you to watch that in Vanessa?

JB: It's so thrilling. She's such an amazing actor and comedian. It's just so rare that somebody can be so undeniably funny and then also emotionally open and grounded. It's a wonder of the world to watch her. It's also thrilling, not just as someone who makes the show, but also someone who gets to watch the show that we

make, but even more than that it opens up a fertile world in terms of what you're able to write and what you can create in the show and the plot lines and the moments when you know that somebody like that can step up like Babe Ruth and just hit a home run every time. You start to take bigger swings in the writing. You start to do more interesting, more fun, riskier and more exciting writing. That's the best feeling in the world.

GS: Vanessa's own experience with childhood leukemia figures prominently in *I Love That For You*. Do you think that mitigates the negativity of the way that Joanna plays the cancer card for personal gain?

JB: It's partly her story. She brings all the authenticity to that storyline. She lived it. So, I think that's an ingredient there. In terms of mitigating the negativity, I don't know that our expectation is that because she went through this that the character gets a free pass for being somewhat monstrous. I think it's very important to us, and it was in developing this show, that if this is a person who's going to make this move, and is going to do this, it's going to have real consequences. What she does is awful [laughs], and it will be portrayed as such.

GS: While not necessarily a gay show, *I Love That For You's* gayness is unavoidable. From gay actor Matt Rogers' Darcy to the fierce Jenifer Lewis, who was one of Bette Midler's Harlettes, as Patricia...

JB: ... oh, my God [laughs]!

GS: I've been around a while, so I know all this kind of stuff.

JB: I know that, too! [Laughs] when I told my husband that we got Jenifer Lewis he just absolutely lost his shit.

GS: And I'm going out on a limb here about Perry, who might be a queen, or just Southern.

JB: [Laughs]

GS: Can you please say something about the queerness of ?

JB: I love that you're picking up on Perry's situation, which is sort of intentionally ambiguous, but will go somewhere fun. I guess I didn't overthink it, really. I'm gay and somehow the character of Darcy was very easy for me to write [laughs]. I also think when you talk about Joanna's

label of being sort of the cancer person; it's not in any way comparable, really, but I think there is a universal understanding of when you are something, people label you as that. "OK, that's what you are." For me, that was a little bit of a way into the character, just from some of my own experiences. "OK, you're gay. Now that's your thing. You're a gay person." There's that aspect underpinning some of the show, too. But I would say we didn't overthink the queerness. Matt is an incredible performer and we wanted to uplift and shine what he naturally does. Also, hopefully, it modulates the well-trod area of the gay assistant. Doing something a little more interesting with him, as well. There's a lot of queer people involved in the show, and it feels like a natural extension of the human beings that are making the show to have some of that be on screen.

GS: I previously mentioned Molly Shannon, who is also an SNL alum. The part of Jackie plays like it was written for her. Was it? And what has been like working with her?

JB: It's one of the great pleasures of my life to work with her. Such an honor. She's unbelievable. I bow at her feet. She's so good. We developed the show and pitched it and had characters fleshed out up to episode one, basically, before we had it cast. We didn't, at the outset, write the character for her. But, thereafter, once you do a pilot, you spend all this time building an entire season and every episode. It's almost like that's where the building of the character begins. At that point, we did have Molly and so the season is written for her. It is written very much with her in mind. She, just like Vanessa, can do anything. She's unbelievable. It's been amazing to work with her. I'm so grateful.

GS: *I Love That For You* is part of a long tradition of workplace comedies. Do you have a favorite that you looked to for inspiration?

JB: No [laughs], I don't really. I think there's a reason that workplace comedies exist. Partly because we all go to workplaces, and we can all identify with it. For me, the inspiration for the show in that world was much more my own experiences in workplaces [laughs].

GS: *I Love That For You* lovingly pokes fun of the home shopping cable networks phenomenon. Have you ever purchased anything from HSN or QVC?

JB: Oh, absolutely I have [laughs]. What's funny is I started watching it

many years ago as kind of a joke. It's like you can't look away. What are these people doing? What is this? It's so mesmerizing. I watched initially to laugh, and then I'm like, "Why am I not turning this off? Why is this still on? Why do I want it to stay on [laughs]?" And then you're like, "Well, that actually is a pretty throw blanket made by Catherine Zeta-Jones' company Casa Zeta-Jones. Maybe I will buy that [laughs]."

punch-ups at home over dinner table [laughs]. I would say one of the challenges is that we can get very [laughs]... it's very important for us to have real lives. To not have work encompass every possible corner of everything. One of the challenges is leaving work at the door sometimes. Not having that be everything.

GS: Your husband Jason Kim, whom you mentioned, is also a writer, for TV and other media. What are the challenges and rewards of being married to someone working in the same industry?

JB: Oh, my gosh. Well, our pillow talk is really all about our agents [laughs]. It's amazing, actually. He's an incredible writer and an incredible person. One of the joys is that you get to come home and talk to somebody who actually understands every aspect of this business. There's a shorthand there. He's a huge reason I'm successful in any way, because he is able to offer me, from such a loving place, this great advice, and great input on how to navigate this career and even how to write certain things. We run ideas by each other, and we share things sometimes. The joys of it are being able to connect in that way and be seen and be understood. To also have essentially free

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Steppenwolf Theatre announces casting for new production of Tony-nominated play Choir Boy June 16–July 24, 2022



Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the nation's premier ensemble theater company, announces casting for its new staging of the Tony Award-nominated play *Choir Boy* by Oscar-winning Steppenwolf ensemble member **Tarell Alvin McCraney** (*Moonlight*), June 16 – July 24, 2022 (press opening on Sunday, June 26 at 6 p.m.). Directed by **Kent Gash**, the production features **La Shawn Banks, Sheldon D. Brown, Richard David, William Dick, Gilbert Domally, Tyler Hardwick and Samuel B. Jackson**.

Choir Boy – threaded throughout with soul-stirring a cappella gospel hymns – is the story of a young gay Black man and his battle between identity and community. Pharus Young is a senior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys, an institution committed to building “strong, ethical Black men,” where he endeavors to be the best leader of the school’s prestigious choir in its 50-year history. But in a world built on rites and rituals, should he conform to the expectations of his peers in order to gain the respect he desperately seeks? This Tony-nominated play is an elegy to quiet rebellion, filled with the sound of longing and aspiration.

tickets for *Choir Boy* are on sale now at steppenwolf.org and the Box Office at 312-335-1650.

Chicago Storefront Premiere! Kokandy Productions Presents CRUEL INTENTIONS: The '90s Musical



Kokandy Productions Will launch its Tenth Anniversary Season this

summer with the Chicago storefront premiere of *Cruel Intentions: The '90 Musical*, a flirty and fun, nostalgia-packed show laced with hits from '90s including No Doubt, Jewel, Britney Spears, Garbage and many more. Created by **Jordan Ross, Lindsey Rosin** and Roger Kumble and based on the film by **Roger Kumble**, Kokandy's production is directed by Artistic Associate **Adrian Abel Azevedo** (he/him) with music direction by Isabella Isherwood (she/her) and choreography by Laura Savage (she/her).

Cruel Intentions will play June 9 – August 7, 2022 at The Chopin Theatre (Studio), 1543 W. Division St. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

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

About Face Youth Theatre premieres GAYME CHANGERS, A COMEDY ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISM



About Face Theatre brings its 27th season to a close with a world premiere comedy created by and starring the About Face Youth Theatre ensemble. *GAYME CHANGERS* presents a hit reality television show in which contestants compete to be America's next Social Justice Superstar™, until one team uncovers a billion-dollar truth hidden behind the spectacle. *GAYME CHANGERS*, playing June 18-24 at The Den Theatre, is directed by **Vic Wynter**, devised by the AFYT ensemble, written by **Kirsten Baity**, and produced by **Sharon Pasia**. Tickets Available at <http://www.aboutface theatre.com> Or by calling 773.784.8565

GENE SISKEL FILM CENTER PRESENTS JUDY! A JUDY GARLAND SUMMER CENTENNIAL: JUNE 1 - JULY 30



From Wednesday, June 1st through Saturday, July 30, the Gene Siskel Film

Center presents *Judy!* A Judy Garland Summer Centennial Retrospective, a series of nine films celebrating one of cinema's most memorable and beloved performers, the incomparable **Judy Garland**, to mark the 100th anniversary of her birth (June 10, 1922). The series will demonstrate Garland's depth of talent and dedication to her craft, with iconic films alongside lesser-seen titles that range from her early work to one of her final performances on the big screen. Seven of the nine films will be screened on 35mm prints.

"An icon and a legend, Garland brought joy and music to countless moviegoers. It is our pleasure to honor her with a snapshot of her illustrious and exceptional career," says Gene Siskel Film Center Director of Programming **Rebecca Fons**.

Films to be screened in the series are: **Vincente Minnelli's** charming, "unmissable" (*The Guardian*) big-screen smash, *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS* (in 35mm; June 1 & 4); Minnelli's rapturous wartime romance, *THE CLOCK* (June 8 & 11), featuring Garland in her first non-singing starring role; the astounding (and only) cinematic pairing of Garland with Fred Astaire in *EASTER PARADE* (in 35mm; June 15 & 18), featuring a score by Irving Berlin; the Chicago-set *IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME* (June 22 & 25), a musical adaptation of the 1940 film *THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER*, also featuring **Buster Keaton** and a young **Liza Minnelli**; Garland's final pairing with **Gene Kelly** in *SUMMER STOCK* (in 35mm; June 19 & July 2), featuring the spectacular finale of "Get Happy"; **George Cukor's** *A STAR IS BORN* (in 35mm; July 6 & 9), featuring an incandescent Garland in her first of two Oscar-nominated performances; Vincente Minnelli's *THE PIRATE* (in 35mm; July 13 & 16), set to Cole Porter tunes and featuring Gene Kelly as a lusty pirate; a classic of post-war cinema, *JUDGMENT AT NUREMBURG* (in 35mm; July 20 & 23), which features Garland in her second and final Academy Award-nominated role, along with a star-studded ensemble, including Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Marlene Dietrich and Montgomery Clift; and *THE WIZARD OF OZ* (in 35mm; July 27 & 30), featuring Garland in her most iconic role, along with some of her most iconic performances, including "Over the Rainbow."

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July 13 & 16: THE PIRATE (35mm)
July 20 & 23: JUDGEMENT AT NUREMBERG(35mm)
July 27 & 30: THE WIZARD OF OZ (35mm)

GRAB A FILM

By Delven Shaw

ELITE SEASON Starts Slow But Scores In End.



With its fashion and rainbow sexuality, the Spanish Netflix series *ELITE* follows a pattern that reached new heights with *GLEE*. Season 1 had intriguing storylines, as three lower-class high school students - including Nadia and Samuel - were granted scholarships to the elitist private school Las Encinas. The students' houses are spectacular, as is the school - with its fantastic swimming facility, massive computers, and a spacious campus complete with a pond. Blonde jock Guzman (**Miguel Bernardeau**) and Nadia (**Mina El Hammani**) forged a steamy romance despite conflicting social classes and religions, creating the ELITE creed of defying the odds to achieve successes of the heart.

Closely paired with this heterosexual romance were gay and lesbian storylines, bringing a substantial queer fanbase. The relationship between Nadia's brother Omar and Ander engaged audiences as they flirted, committed, and consummated even as Ander battled cancer.

For me, Season 5 was slow to ignite, bogged down by lots of school policies and a costumed dance party which, frankly, no longer shocks.

The series is famous for its many bare butts and breasts, and the new season will not disappoint.

We meet hunky new star Iván (**André Lamoglia**) when he has lost his way to the locker room. He is nude in the showers with Patrick (Manu Rios) instantly. He may be bi or pansexual but claims to be straight, and his father Cruz is a handful. Or is Patrick a daddy's boy?

The stakes rise as the episodes focus on Patrick's antics and Samuel's continued trust in Benjamin. The season provides a satisfying climax, probably leading to another season.

You may sometimes wonder why Samuel (Itzan Escamilla) is still in school. Or if the cleaner Cayetano will finally earn the heart of Prince Philippe (Pol Granch), now accused of criminal behavior. Will the principal (Diego Martin), also Patrick's father, ever get a grip on his school and his family? And how long does it take to fly from Madrid to Ibiza?

ELITE may be remembered like *Dynasty*, a guilty pleasure that irritates, intrigues, and inspires its legion of fans. The legacy of ELITE may be the celebration of a new generation of

European actors who will make an impact in many films for decades.

CYRANO's Great Cast Can't Overcome The Score.



I have always been thrilled by the story of *CYRANO*, as the title character with a big nose thinks his beloved Roxanne can never return his love. Since the play by Edmund Rostand premiered in 1897, it has been told in hundreds of ways, including some great efforts like Steve Martin's film 'Roxanne' from 1987. Alas, this new musical, *CYRANO*, despite the excellent star power of its unique star Peter Dinklage never takes flight because, frankly, the musical score is not memorable.

Christian (**Kelvin Harrison Jr.**) is typically heroic and handsome, and Roxanne (Haley Bennett) is virginal with wild desire underneath. When Christian appeals to Cyrano to help him woo Roxanne by writing love letters to her, our tragic star finally has a chance to express himself. *CYRANO* generally scores because the rhyming couplets of the original are hilarious and are wonderfully self-deprecating. Once again, great love and great loneliness are a linked pair.

The production design is top-notch all the way around. The costumes by **Massimo Cantini Parrini** for the large ensemble are lovely and plentiful. There are excellent sword fights, and the settings and production design are stunning.

However, the score by **Aaron Dessner** and **Bryce Dessner** is a colossal disappointment. Some of the choreographic choices - like the large ensemble of soldiers dancing romantically together - seem to come from another movie. I was stunned to learn that the project had been developed at Goodspeed Opera House and had an Off-Broadway run.

That illustrates the power of a star like Peter Dinklage. The concept sounds exciting, but without a memorable score sung by vocal talent that can lift you out of your seats, the project remains interesting but earthbound.

FIRE ISLAND is A Queer Splash of Summer Loving.



I recommend watching *FIRE ISLAND* with a big fruity drink surrounded by friends. It has a tremendous multicultural ensemble, a bit of literary pedigree, and some laughs - the biggest of which might be the cast screeching the opening theme! With powerful abs and curvaceous butts on display in skimpy clothing, who could ask for anything more?

Joel Kim Booster stars in his own screenplay, inspired by **Jane Austen's** *Pride and Prejudice*. Five friends who have vacationed together for ten years learn their Fire Island rental is now sold. But no one is packing or savoring memories, but the annual shenanigans are shadowed by melancholy.

Booster plays Noah, a hot gay who always scores. However, this year, he has decided to wait till his virginal friend Howie (Bowen Yang) gets some first. Phones fall in pools, men fall in love, and the friends do drugs, dance, and drink. The film includes multiple minor characters who pack the dance floor and prowl the meat rack. Big bearded gym boys are still the most hunted.

Noah is irritated and intrigued by Will (**Conrad Ricamora**), an out-of-place, joyless man most comfortable when buried in a book. As he and Noah connect and misfire, it seems unlikely that either will ever find his heart's desire.

Nick Adams plays Cooper, whose body armor abs enable his sinister goals. Margaret Cho is Erin, the house's owner and mother of this chosen family. Yang has dazzled at times on *Saturday Night Live*, and Cho has fantastic comedy specials that are a must-see. But neither of these two funny performers have memorable material here.

Director **Andrew Ahn** keeps the hijinks moving briskly, and the drone imagery from the island contrasts the natural and manufactured beauty. Conversations about racism occur, followed by another round of drinks, which eases the pain. There are no big scenes of love, rage, or romance. Even the sex is subdued, making this adaptation almost family-friendly fluffy fun.

If you are new to queer films, this is a perfect way to kick off pride month. If you have seen many gay movies, you may note what is new and what will always be. You won't be surprised when the opening bars of *Last Dance* underscore the setting sun. Donna Summers - once again - has the final say.

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GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"Playing With Myself" by Randy Rainbow
c.2022, St. Martin's Press \$28.99
256 pages



It takes two to tango. And foxtrot, and waltz, and polka, for that matter. You might dance in a circle with other couples but those are couples, remember, not lines of people boot-scootin'. No, it takes two to tango and spaghetti kiss and to sing a duet but, as in the new book "Playing with Myself" by Randy Rainbow, it just takes one to podcast.

People ask Randy Rainbow all the time if his last name is real. Yes, it is, he writes with glee, and it's one of the best things his father ever gave him. Because, seriously, could there be a more fitting name for a gay "topical comedian"? Being in the limelight has always been in Rainbow's blood: he recalls staging a Disney play for neighborhood parents when he was very young. He was the lead actor, the director, the stage manager, and the costumer. His playmates were rather less-than-enthusiastic but the parents applauded, and Rainbow was hooked.

It probably helped that his mother was a big Broadway fan and so Rainbow grew up with show tunes. As an adolescent, he collected soundtrack CDs and, after he was introduced to "a form of religion that was... Barbra Streisand," he collected videos of certain performances he grew to love best.

Also as an adolescent, he grew awkward. His other religion was crunchy snacks and he spent a lot of time in his room; his parents had moved the family from New York to Florida; their marriage was in shreds, and it took awhile for Rainbow to get his confidence back. Still, it wasn't until he was in high school that he found that old rhythm, his scathing sense of humor, and a cadre of like-minded theater-and-drama friends.

After graduation, Rainbow returned to New York, where he ultimately found his community and sharpened his talent.

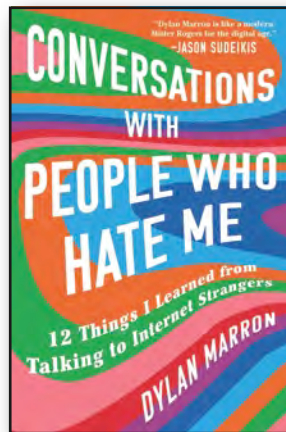
Restaurants and clubs kept the lights on while he was learning to monetize the podcasts he was making, when an agent told him that he was "still a nobody!" "Enter," says Rainbow, "the 2016 presidential candidates."

You didn't really think "Playing with Myself" would be as hilarious as author Randy Rainbow's videos, did you? Yes, this book's funny but alas, not quite as LOL as his parodies.

You probably won't mind, though: Rainbow's biography is still plenty entertaining, nonetheless. From his first pair of Ruby shoes to the shoo-off he jokingly gives readers at the end, we get a peek at how he gained what he admits is "an encyclopedic knowledge of Broadway musicals," how his sense of humor was honed, and how that all led to a library of YouTube bits that roast those in the news. Politicians seem to be special targets for Rainbow – not surprisingly, as you'll see here – but anyone's fair game for the needling.

"Playing with Myself" is slightly bruised by an overdose of name-dropping, the presence of which may surprise nobody. Still, if you don't hate on that and you love a little faux-pearl-clutching, this book is two good to pass up.

"Conversations with People Who Hate Me: 12 Things I Learned From Talking to Internet Strangers" by Dylan Marron c.2022, Atria \$27.00 272 pages



Sometimes, it just makes you feel gruff.

Seriously, the internet should be the G.O.A.T. invention. It should be a place to connect with friends and share laughs, a safe place to go when you want to be yourself. It should be a place to tell your story, free of danger and full of truth. Nobody should butt heads online, or be victim of a bullygoat. Instead, as in "Conversations with People Who Hate Me" by Dylan Marron, we gotta deal with the trolls.

The fact that Marron had a "HATE FOLDER" in his email should speak volumes.

As a gay man and a writer-performer, he expected a certain amount of negativity online; that's the nature of the internet. But as a creative employee of Seriously.TV, the emailed hate, death threats, and homophobia just got to be too much.

Before his job at Seriously.TV, he'd acted, reported, waited tables, and cultivated a "prompt" that served him well. "What am I going to do about it?" is what he asked himself every time he was faced with something that bothered him and this time, the answer was a series of conversations with haters who'd commented.

He began to mine the HATE FOLDER for people to talk with.

The first was a guy Marron calls "Josh," a decent guy who was a lot like Marron. Their conversation, done remotely, was a hit with fans and it gained Marron a lot of "points." In a small way, it gained him a friend, since he and Josh came to an understanding. Marron was happy with that, and with subsequent "Conversations..."

But after he quit his job at Seriously.TV to go it alone, he found himself at an impasse.

The old way of doing his conversations needed to expand to include a wider angle and different guests. Marron imagined himself bringing together hater and target on bigger subjects. He'd learn more about people – and in the process, he'd learn more about himself.

The lesson was underscored a few Sundays ago: something huge happens, something loud, and everybody's got an opinion. "Conversations with People Who Hate Me" helps show that we can talk civilly about issues without insults.

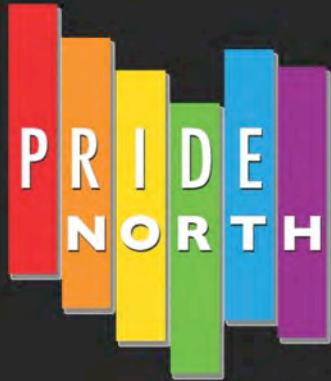
But will haters – the people who presumably need this book – be willing to read it?

Surprisingly, on one side of this book, author Dylan Marron shows that that's entirely possible: once he approached his interviewees, many people who hid behind the 'net rued their actions and words. Granted, the haters he hosted were highly, carefully curated, but Marron's approach shows hope.

The other side of the book is the one that teaches tolerance and a sort of Zen approach when you're the target of a troll. Haters gonna hate, as they say... but with enormous grace and thoughtfulness, Marron offers better ways to perceive it.

Readers looking for another way to invite open dialogue, and those who are aghast at spewing commenters on social media will love this book. If you want to do better, "Conversations with People Who Hate Me" could help make happy bridges.

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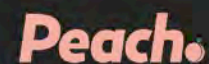
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