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GRAB

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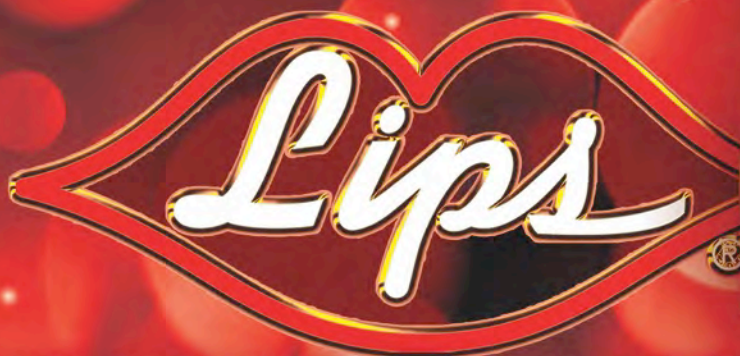
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1961 - 2019

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GRAB DOMINIQUE



Dominique Jackson Won't Stop Surviving

The 'Pose' star on the gender fluidity of her latest role, pushing through the pandemic and how 'X-Men' saved her

By Chris Azzopardi

Model and actress Dominique Jackson can't say a thing about the third and final season of one of the most groundbreaking LGBTQ+ series ever made. It's mid February when we connect, just weeks before it was announced that seven new episodes of "Pose," the FX drama about New York's drag ball subculture during the HIV/AIDS crisis, will premiere May 7. And then it will end, with a tide-changing legacy forever linked to its name.

When it debuted in 2018, the series set a record for the number of out LGBTQ+ people in its cast, especially trans women of color. At the time of our talk, Jackson said the cast was in the process of shooting. But when pushed

to offer even the slightest tease of what's to come, she remained playfully taciturn about her character: "All I can tell you is Elektra is going to be Elektra."

Elektra Wintour, of course, is the fiercely resilient house mother, who last season formed her new house, the House of Wintour, and went full-on dominatrix. In season two's last episode, in a leather bustier, with a whip in her hand, she ordered a client to heel. And then there's that dead client whose body she housed in her apartment.

So no, Jackson's life doesn't completely mirror that of her character. But their experiences are, to some degree, shared. Like Elektra, who is the fictional protégé of ball-culture icons like

Crystal LaBeija, Pepper LaBeija and Paris Dupree, Jackson also found refuge in the underground world of ballroom culture while in Baltimore and New York in the '90s, after a period of childhood trauma she experienced while living in the dual-island nation Trinidad and Tobago. She jumped around to several houses primarily populated by Black and Latinx trans outsiders, eventually settling into the House of Sinclair in NYC, a safe haven that helped her survive homelessness and substance abuse.

Aside from her breakout role on "Pose," Jackson is upending gender norms on the third season of the Starz series "American Gods," a series about



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the culture clashing of Old and New Gods. She embodies the latest incarnation of the shape-shifting “Mr. World” as a ferocious, bat-wielding, glam Black woman, now called “Ms. World.”

Just after giving a keynote address at the National LGBTQ Task Force’s Creating Change conference, which was virtual this year, Jackson spoke about how reliving Elektra helped her survive the pandemic and why “Pose” actors other than Billy Porter deserve awards acknowledgement. She also explained how the superhero fantasy world of “X-Men” aided in her survival as a trans woman, even though she initially hesitated because “everyone, the people, are talking about it” on the internet. In other words, they really, *really* want Dominique Jackson to play Storm.

Chris Azzopardi: How’re you doing? How has lockdown been for you this past year?

Dominique Jackson: Lockdown was kind of a push to revitalize myself, a push to really look back at myself, look back at my life, understand the things that were happening for me and start to create what I wanted. Of course, in the beginning, there was a panic, there was great fear, there were even times where I just felt like, you know, just give up. Because during the pandemic, we were locked down and it was like, “Oh my gosh, I’m blessed with all these amazing opportunities and now I’m gonna lose them.” There was that fear. And then George Floyd was murdered and that just pushed everything over the top. And trans women were being murdered back to back every week. I was ready to give up. I didn’t give up, but I was ready to give up. I just felt like there’s no place for us in this world. If they were killing Black men, what are they gonna do to trans women? And there we were being murdered.

CA: What kept you going?

DJ: I’m the type of person that I really looked into myself first. I tried to find out what I could do to make things better, and in speaking to people and doing little Elektra things on TikTok, it gave me hope reliving my character, to really just do something besides just sit in the house and worry.

My fiancé and I were doing challenges together. That really helped to brighten me up, pull me out a bit. And I realized that sitting there and panicking was not going to help me. It was just gonna make me sick. It was gonna keep me in that depressive mode, and I had to fight through it. I remember how I



fought through not having a green card and fought through wanting to be on television, just fighting all my life, and I was like, “Now is not the time for me to stop.”

CA: I read recently that when we’re experiencing despair it’s important for us to remember past moments of resilience in our lives. It can get you out of that spiral.

DJ: Yeah, it did.

CA: You famously don’t do many

interviews. Based on what I’ve read, you don’t like talking so much about your success, because you kind of feel like it paints a false narrative for the trans community as a whole. Is that right?

DJ: Well, yeah. I’m really selective with interviews because I feel like sometimes it’s just, “OK, let me get the story.” And you give the story and you keep reliving your traumas. It’s just something that is put out there over and over and over again; it becomes exhausting reliving your trauma. I’m reliving trauma by



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some of the things that we have to do on "Pose." So, for me, I want interviews to be about and really for my community. I really want them to have a message that's going to be sent to my community, and not just an article to say, "Oh, we represented the trans community; we have Dominique Jackson."

CA: So how do you navigate that behind the scenes? How do you know who to talk to and who not to?

DJ: I'm a person that believes in doing research, and I have a great management team. So they know exactly what I'm looking for. And the other thing is, I'm about my work, and I'm about putting that onto the screen. And I put everything that I have (into it), because I want people to understand that being trans is just a part of my journey. That doesn't mean that I can't be a great actor. It doesn't mean I can't be the best doctor there is, it doesn't mean that I can't mow the lawn or lay concrete. It doesn't limit me. And I want my community to know that hard work does pay off.

CA: I'm curious to know what some of the questions are about being a trans woman that you don't want to answer anymore. And do you feel like it's a tricky situation that you're in given the fact that you've become

this accidental activist?

DJ: Well, yes, and you see that's why I'm selective with my interviews. Because I am, kind of, and that's what I've been deemed. It was not what I was trying to do. It just happened. I realized I was getting so many responses on Instagram of how I inspire people, and I was looking at myself going, "Who, me?" For me, it's not about, "Oh, look at me, I'm an activist." It's just that I know that I want what I want, and I know that I'm going to have to work hard to get to it.

And questions — it depends. If I'm speaking at a college or I'm speaking to my community, it's a different story. But when it comes to my surgeries, some people ask some really stupid questions like, "What made you want to do that?" And I also have a book. So I feel like, you know, sometimes people can just read the book. I mean, it's as raw as possible. And you know, you can get that information.

CA: I'd like to shift gears to "American Gods." From what I understand, you didn't even have to audition for the show; the role was offered to you. Before, you had to really fight for roles. So what did it mean to you to just be offered a role like this?

DJ: It was beyond phenomenal. It was just a thing of like, I'm validated, I'm

seen, they see me as an actor. And that's what this is all about: It's about the visibilities, about being seen, it's about being acknowledged, and being acknowledged so that people don't fear you. This is not about acknowledgement and validity to say, "Oh, look, I'm a queen." This is about: I am here, I am a human being just like you, so see me, allow me the comfort and allow me the ability to fail, if that's how you see it. But don't judge me just based on my journey as a woman.

CA: Do you find that you are now being offered more roles in general?

DJ: (Laughs.) Well, I've only really been offered two. (The other was in the movie) "Chick Fight," and still, of course, I did a little reading for them. It feels great. It's just a phenomenal feeling, and to know that at times I felt ashamed that I didn't go to school for this. But it just goes to show that sometimes, some things are just in you.

Working at (Bronx LGBTQ Community Center) Destination Tomorrow and raising kids in the past, I always say, "You have to guide kids," because if someone was there to say to me, "Look, I see you like to build characters and act, I see you love the stage" instead of limiting me from the stage by saying to me, "Look, only girls do that" or making it about gender — it was limiting to me. And so, when I



danced and I did ballet, I was laughed at, and I was like, "Listen, I wasn't even doing this for anything but for the art, for the love of being able to escape normality for a second and bring something else to life and see people enjoy it." I loved when I danced and people just sat in awe. It made me feel like I had purpose.

CA: Is that the same feeling you get when people watch you as Elektra and they tell you how much they love you in that role?

DJ: Sometimes that can be a bit overwhelming, because, again, I wasn't receiving love like that before. So it's like, "Wow." It's comforting to the heart, it makes me feel like I'm a part of the human race. It makes me feel like I belong.

CA: Regarding your role as Ms. World on "American Gods," what do you think that we can learn from her?

DJ: Well... (laughs), that's a really, um, kind of difficult question to answer since this lady is walking around busting heads open with bats. So, I don't recommend that you walk around, bashing people in the head with bats for having an opinion. But Ms. World, again, it's about a woman, and people don't understand, when you are marginalized,

anything that you get makes you feel like you are coming out of that when you have faced oppression.

So, as a Caribbean woman, as an immigrant, as a Black woman, as a trans woman — as all these women combined to make my whole — I see strings, I see power, I see now we're not looking to those that are in power. When we create Loki, it's usually this male thing. So therefore, when we see Ms. World, we see that a God can transform, a God can change, and Mr. World now is of the world. And being of the world, you should be inclusive of everyone.

CA: How have superhuman fantasy roles been helpful to you in navigating your own identity?

DJ: Well, OK, I don't want to really say this, but I have to. Because I really don't wanna talk about it, because everyone, the people, are talking about it. For me, I'm just honored by them talking about this: But growing up the X-Men was very dear to my heart. Because, at that time, I was basically homeless, and couch-surfing at times. A group of us were staying at one of our friend's grandmother's houses; she was in the hospital at the time. And so we were all gathered there because that was our place to stay for the moment. I didn't have to pay for a hotel for the night; it

meant that I didn't have to go to the street. So when we found comfort and warmth, we kind of gathered there. And there was the "X-Men" saga, "The Dark Phoenix Saga," that was playing at that time, and we were just so enthralled.

And while growing up, of course, I watched the "X-Men" and I loved them. I loved them, but it was in that moment, and again in meeting my children's family in Baltimore, and then coming to New York, we all watched the "X-Men" because the "X-Men" represented us. We would go to the grocery store and help someone carry groceries. We would do everything for someone, and they would still turn around and talk down to us and curse at us and throw things at us. Imagine you helped someone to their car with their groceries and they turn on the light and they realize that you're different and then they take their fruit and throw it at you and tell you to get away from them. You just helped them.

For me, Storm had an accent; I'm Caribbean. So Storm was just my girl, my go-to. I love her character. I love everything about her. And it was the resilience, the beauty of her, the resilience of where she came from as Ororo Munroe, from her origin stories of being in her village, of even having a nephew and going back wanting to help



her village but yet she protects her village even when they called her the Weather Witch. But she still protects them. And I see that in a lot of the trans community. We are so pushed to the side, but yet we're there to be mothers, we're there to be fathers. We're there to protect people. We have kids of our own. So the superhero fantasy, for me, was always her, because it not only helped us escape, but it let me know that people saw and would realize that at some point in time that being different or strange from what society deemed to be the norm didn't make us bad people.

You have no idea, if you sit back and listen to the things that people would say about us, I would even be afraid of myself. Before I even understood who I was, I would hear people speak, and the way in which they spoke about people like myself, I was like, "Oh my god, I need to kill myself because I know I'm different."

CA: I feel like every young person needs a role model like that, because oftentimes we don't have ones in real life to look to, so we have to look to imaginary characters.

DJ: She-Ra: Princess of Power was

another one. I love She-Ra.

CA: Regarding "Pose," what are your thoughts on the response from the LGBTQ community who think it's time for other actors from the series to be recognized for their roles and their accomplishments on the show?

DJ: Well, yes, I do believe that my castmates should be recognized for their work, especially Angelica Ross and Mj Rodriguez. Billy has been given his flowers, and I am extremely ecstatic for him for that. As far as Indya (Moore) and the rest of the girls, I do believe that they should have been nominated at least for some of the awards. Because we're not just telling a true story or doing research to tell a true story — we're telling our own lives.

We are reliving our trauma, we are being triggered constantly by things that we overcame in life, and constantly giving it back and giving all our energy just to be able to show people what we go through and those that are going through it that they're not alone. So, I believe that recognition should be there for my castmates. For myself, I really, really want to be undeniably everything. I really want to go into fantasy roles. I

believe that there's a lot more I have to learn and I have to give before I start receiving awards. (Laughs.) I'm so serious because I just feel like, you know, Elektra is me. She's dear to my heart. She is the woman that I said I would never become, but the woman that I was surrounded by all my life. I want the opportunity to show that I can play outside myself, like with "American Gods." Give me a vampire role and I am there.

CA: When it comes to trans representation, what is the next frontier? Where do we go from "Pose," which has been so groundbreaking, obviously.

DJ: Yeah, "Pose" has been extremely groundbreaking, but we have other things that have come about. We have "Legendary" on HBO Max. Hollywood is opening their eyes and realizing that this is not just a cash cow. These stories need to be told, and especially in this time. I feel like we are gathering all these stories, telling the truth of everything, removing the blinders from people's faces, so that we can move forward and really, really get to equality.



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GRAB OLIVIA

COVER

She's still the one that we want: An interview with Olivia Newton-John

By Gregg Shapiro

Now in her seventh decade as an entertainer, Olivia Newton-John has proven herself to be a versatile artist. First, of course, as a five-time Grammy Award-winning singer. Then as an actor in the wildly successful movie adaptation of the musical Grease, as well as the camp classic Xanadu (directed by Gene Kelly!). She also displayed her serious acting side AIDS drama It's My Party, which reteamed her with Grease director Randal Kleiser. Olivia also made her mark as a writer with her 2018 memoir Don't Stop Believing, newly available in a paperback edition. More recently, Olivia returned to her first love of singing, teaming up with her daughter Chloe Lattanzi (from her first marriage to actor Matt Lattanzi) for the bestselling single "Window in the Wall." Olivia was kind enough to take time out of her busy schedule to answer a few questions.

Gregg Shapiro: Olivia, I'd like to begin by congratulating you on the success of "Window in the Wall," your duet with your daughter Chloe Lattanzi which hit #1 on its release date (January 22, 2021) on the iTunes

Pop music video chart. What does such an accomplishment mean to you?

Olivia Newton-John: I'm just thrilled that the song resonated, because I had no plans to record and I didn't go out of my way to look for a song to record. This song came to me and it had purpose. This lovely woman who I'd met at a health clinic a few years ago and whom I didn't know very well, wrote me and said, "I had this calling and I know that you should record this song. My cousin wrote it..." And, of course, when you hear that my ears went uh-oh! This is family, so how good can it be? The song came on and it was beautiful. It made me cry and it touched something in me. I just had this knowing that I had to record it. That's what I did! The first person I thought of was Chloe, because it was so personal.

GS: Are there more duets with Chloe in the works?

ONJ: Could be! We're talking about something. It's still in the talking phase, but, yeah, we have a fun idea. Nothing I can tell you yet though [big laugh].

GS: You have a history of duets, including "You're The One That I Want" and "Summer Nights" from Grease sung with

John Travolta and "Suddenly" from Xanadu sung with Cliff Richard. What do you enjoy most about the process of singing a duet?

ONJ: I love harmonizing. I've always done that, according to my parents, since I was a little girl. I would always



Photo By Michelle Day





Photos By Michelle Day



March 30, 2021

GRAB Magazine

sing harmonies to songs I heard. It was just lucky for me that I was able to do that. I love to do that. I enjoy that and I enjoy bouncing off somebody else, rather than just being the only person there. It's fun to exchange energy when you're singing. I've had some wonderful singing partners. I learned so much from Cliff (Richard) because he had me on his show. Then I was a double act with Pat Carroll for many years: Pat and Olivia. I've always loved that part of performing, and you get a chance to work with all these amazing people.

GS: "Window in the Wall" was co-written by a trio of Nashville-area songwriters (Tom Paden, Eddie Kilgallon and Tajci Cameron) which reminded me that your earliest career hit singles were contemporary country tunes, including "Let Me Be There," for which you received the 1973 Best Female Country Vocal Performance Grammy. Can you please say something about your attraction to that attraction to that style of music?

ONJ: It's really interesting because I never thought of myself as a country artist. My manager at the time, Peter Gormley, had managed Frank Ifield, who was a country star, an Aussie guy. He thought my voice really suited that kind of music. I thought of myself as a big balladeer [big laugh]. But really, I started out singing folk music. That was my entrance into singing. Singing folk music, Joan Baez and those songs. They brought those (country) songs to me. I wasn't even sure I liked "If Not For You." Of course, I've learned to love it. It's my husband's favorite song. Isn't that amazing! Initially, it was really the idea of my producers, that style for me.

GS: One of your biggest solo hit singles, "I Honestly Love You," was written by Peter Allen, a gay man. The music video for "Physical" oozes gay subtext.

ONJ: [Laughs]

GS: Both Grease and Xanadu are musicals with strong queer appeal, and It's My Party and Sordid Lives, are more directly gay films. Do you remember when you first became aware of having a gay following and what does that LGBTQ following mean to you?

ONJ: I just think of gay people as people [laughs]. I have had a wonderfully strong gay following and I'm very grateful for that because I feel they're very loyal fans and very sweet. I've always enjoyed the company of gay people. I think they're so much fun. One



Photo By Michelle Day

of my best friends, Gregg Cave, who runs Gaia (Resort and Spa) is gay and he was my mother's friend also. It's just natural to me. They're funny people; I don't know why that's so [laughs]. I like that. I like to be able to laugh a lot.

GS: Your 2018 memoir Don't Stop Believing was just released in a paperback edition with a new foreword. Why was this the right time to tell your story?

ONJ: The truth is that they were going to make a movie about my life in Australia. I didn't really know how

accurate it was going to be. I thought I better write my version because I don't know what they're going to say. It turns out that they did quite a nice job. Delta Goodrum did a wonderful job of playing me, I thought. That's really what spurred it to be. Then I thought, "This is quite interesting!" It's made me remember a lot of things I hadn't thought about and a lot of things since then, too. That was really the instigation. It wasn't the perfect time or the right time, it was just that I wanted to write it so that the record was straight [laughs].

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GRAB KATHERINE

FILM



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An ‘Extraordinary Past’ in the Present Katherine Waterston on why all these lesbian period dramas indicate a ‘problem, not a pattern’

By Chris Azzopardi

A farmer’s wife, the grieving Abigail, and her neighbor, the free-spirited Tallie, can’t quit each other in the queer 19-century romance “The World to Come.” The women, both unhappily married to men, form an intimate bond that explores how isolation and life’s mundanities can be overcome by passionate human connection.

Portraying Abigail is Katherine Waterston, the British star of “Michael Clayton,” “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them” (and its 2018 sequel, as well as the forthcoming third film) and “Alien: Covenant,” while her co-star, Vanessa Kirby (“The Crown,” “Mission: Impossible – Fallout”), plays Tallie. Based on Jim Shepard’s short story of

the same name, “The World to Come,” which was screened at the Sundance Film Festival, originally premiered at the 2020 Venice Film Festival, where it won the Queer Lion award for best LGBTQ-themed film.

Waterston recently talked about researching medieval lesbian nuns for the role; how, even though she appreciates all the lesbian love she’s getting for playing Abigail on Twitter, she doesn’t understand Twitter; and why she thinks that, actually, the making of all these lesbian period dramas highlights “a problem, not a pattern.”

Chris Azzopardi: You narrate the film, and I could listen to you narrate

anything all day.

Katherine Waterston: Aww, thanks.

Well, we were sort of obsessed with the question of, “What does an inner voice sound like?” The writers had done such a good job at coming up with this language that just felt so embedded within this person, so deeply interior, and we all obviously have those voices within our heads, chattering away all day long. But what the hell do they sound like? Do they sound like us? Are they loud? Are they whispers? And I did a lot of bad at home recording before I sort of found a place that felt *not* humiliating. Ha!

CA: For the narration, it seems you

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landed on a whisper.

KW: Yeah. Again, we're just taking cues from the kind of impeccable script. The voiceover was so carefully woven into the story; it was so obvious when we all read it that they'd worked it intricately into the story, and it was in a kind of dialogue with this closed-off person that you see in the film and how she presents herself to others. And so we wanted to just honor the way they had woven it in as opposed to what you often see with voiceovers, the kind of afterthoughts that are tacked on top of the film. We really wanted to do our best to meld it into the story so that you don't really hopefully notice it so much.

CA: Lesbian Twitter has been abuzz with photos and GIFs from the movie, some of which are captioned, "These GIFs of Katherine Waterston made me more of a lesbian than I already was." Just how clued are you into what Lesbian Twitter is saying about you and your role?

KW: I... I don't... I don't understand Twitter. I don't know how to look at it. I don't know how to read it. I am a 900-

year-old great grandmother. I cannot — I'm just from another time and I can't work it out. But I'm glad to hear that; that sounds really amusing. I think I'd really enjoy it, if I could only figure out how to read it.

CA: Is it too early to tell what this movie has done for your lesbian following?

KW: Ha! I think I had a pretty solid lesbian following before this movie! I don't mean to toot my own horn, but I've been informed and, yeah, I've felt the support in the past.

CA: When were you first informed that you had a lesbian following?

KW: Friends told me probably similar things. I don't know that it was Twitter. Maybe Instagram, in some comments.

CA: Was there a particular role of yours that got the LGBTQ community interested in you and your work?

KW: I don't know. (Hesitates.) The thing that's making me pause is that I find it embarrassing to talk about why anybody would respond to my work.

Outside of any particular group or anything, just the idea of like, "What is it about you that people like?," I feel embarrassed to answer that. And I think it's probably better for my work if I'm not so good at understanding that. It's sort of better to keep a distance. But people send you, like you just mentioned, little things sometimes and I've only ever been amused and flattered by those things.

CA: I think what you're saying is: If the lesbian community is too excited by your work, you might just play lesbian roles for the rest of your career. Ha!

KW: Ha! No, no, no! That's not the concern. I think playing the same kind of roles over and over and over again is underrated. I think there's a sort of obsession with trying to show the many different things you can do, but if I only encountered really, really amazing scripts about lesbian women for the rest of my career, I'd be perfectly happy. I'm just looking for the best material. I'm not so calculating to worry about being typecast in any way.

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CA: I'm asking this question assuming you are straight, but is there a kind of sensitivity to playing a sexuality other than your own that is something you considered when depicting Abigail and bringing this lesbian romance to life?

KW: I think sensitivity so far extends beyond, "Am I gonna play a sex scene in a truthful way?" How you relate to yourself and your orientation extends so far beyond sexuality. It's who you are, it's who you love. So I think it would be such a narrow view (to say), "Gee whiz, am I gonna get the sex scene right?" (Better) to think: "How am I gonna embody this in a much more complete way?"

And when you say the lesbian community is excited about this, that makes me happy. I feel a responsibility to do my job as an actor, which is to imagine experiences and worlds and periods and everything that I've never known and do them justice. So if I am playing a lesbian woman and the lesbian community feels that I've done a crap job, that's a horrible failure on my part. I take that very seriously. But I think it so extends beyond having to play (a) sex scene. But we take these things very seriously, and I think one thing I found sort of challenging with

this role was that I wanted to know everything I could know about women from this period who loved each other and (were) met with terrific tragedy and suffered because they couldn't be together.

There's obviously very little accounts of these women, particularly working class women, farmers' wives. We don't have their journals. We have the journals that were preserved in grand homes in England, like Anne Lister's diaries. There was also these amazing letters from lesbian medieval nuns that were found from the 12th century. One of them addressed the other as, "My sweet honey, sweeter than honeycomb," and I thought it was so beautiful and very Abigail. So you find these things; you kind of go digging around to see what you can connect to.

CA: That is definitely an "Abigail" metaphor.

KW: Yeah, yeah. And these people are just striving to articulate these feelings, not only ones that they've never had before, but that were so outside of their expectations for what they were going to get from life. These women who had been potentially put into arranged marriages, never got to choose a damn thing in their lives, are now having this.

How do I articulate this? It's the sweetest thing. It's the best *bestest* thing, ha! And obviously it's so tragic and awful, but also beautiful. And I was so moved by that moment of required love.

CA: There have been many lesbian period dramas in the last few years, like "Portrait of a Lady on Fire," "Carol" and "Ammonite." And, of course, now "The World to Come." Did you watch any other lesbian period dramas as preparation?

KW: I'm like the only person who hasn't seen "Portrait of a Lady on Fire." But I'm just one of those people who's just — I just watched "The Sopranos"! So I'm on such a delay. Like, I will watch it and I didn't choose *not* to watch it because I knew I was making this film. But I did see "Carol" and I haven't seen "Ammonite." I want to see them. I'm just slow. Ha!

CA: I don't know if you have anything to say about this, but I think it's worth pointing out that the majority of lesbian stories that are being told now seem to happen in the past. There's a lot of commentaries about this topic on social media and in the press, about how there doesn't seem

to be as many contemporary lesbian stories being told right now in film.

CA: That's interesting. I certainly didn't think about that while filming. All I can really think about when I'm filming is the film. And I didn't know "Ammonite" was being made. So I know about the pattern now because journalists have told me. But it is an interesting question, and I think one reason, maybe, is because we've neglected an extraordinary past and we're trying to fill in and build out our histories, and I think that's important to do. And we'll be busy doing that for a very long time because we've just been watching the boys stories for a really, really long time.

There's loads to explore. And three period lesbian dramas is not a lot. It just feels like a lot because, maybe, it's a lot more than it's ever been in two consecutive years ever before. But I think that highlights a problem, not a pattern. It's not a pattern. It's just three

movies. And I think we're all longing for a day where they're not labeled like that, I suppose. Where it's an interesting story that hasn't been told and, "Have you seen this interesting story? Or that interesting story?" rather than the thing that isn't hetero and focused on a

rugged white man. But that is an interesting one. I'm hopeful that it's shifting. Clea (DuVall) just made a contemporary movie (with "Happiest Season"). There are people paving the way.



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3	Silk City x Ellie Goudling	New Love ft. Diplo & Mark Ronson
4	Shane Codd	Get Out My Head (Swarmz & S1mba Mix)
5	Sleepwalkrs	More Than Words ft. MNEK (Clean)
6	Rony Rex	Fabric
7	Niiko x SWAE	I Ain't Going Home
8	Ofenbach x Lagique	Wasted Love
9	L.L.A.M.A x NEYO x Carmen DeLeon	Shake (Main Mix)
10	Martin Garrix x Tove Lo	Pressure
11	Noizu	Summer 91 (Looking Back)
12	Nitti Gritti	Where I Belong ft. RUNN
13	Prince Kaybee x Msaki	Fetch Your Life (Radio Edit)
14	Lodato & Bright Sparks	Good Thing
15	Robin Schulz	All We Got ft. KIDDO (Lodato Remix)
16	Leony	Faded Love (NOØN Remix)
17	Illenium x Dabin x Lights	Hearts On Fire (Lucas & Steve Remix Edit)
18	Gaullin x Katy Tiz	So We Go (Martin Jensen Edit)
19	SAY SAY x ASDIS	Stories
20	Marcus Santoro & Isabelle Stern	It's Not About You (Original Mix)
21	Tyron Hapi x If Found	Could've Been Us ft. Emily Falvey
22	Joel Corry x Raye x David Guetta	Bed
23	Nathan Evans	Wellerman (Club Remix Edit)
24	Felix Cartal x Kiiara	Happy Hour
25	Lucky Rose x Jason Walker	Help
26	Gorgon City x Drama	You've Done Enough (Radio Mix)
27	Toby Romeo x Felix Jaehn x Faulhaber	Where The Lights Are Low (Radio Edit)
28	Riton x Nightcrawlers	Friday ft. Mufasa & Hypeman (Dopamine Re
29	DJ Snake & Selena Gomez	Selfish Love
30	Lucas Estrada & AJ Salvatore f. Calica	Kiss Me
31	Captain Cuts x AJ Mitchell	Stuck In My Head (NITE MIX)
32	Glass Animals	Heat Waves (Oliver Heldens Remix Edit)
33	Jonas Blue x AWA	Something Stupid (Radio Mix)
34	GATTUSO	Somebody
35	Evan Giia	Stay Up (Main Mix)
36	Karen Harding x Shift K3Y	Morning
37	Sunnery James & Ryan Marciano	What If ft. Hannah Ellis
38	Nervo	Gotta Be You ft. Carla Monroe
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40	Danny Quest x Cheat Codes	That Feeling ft. Hayley May

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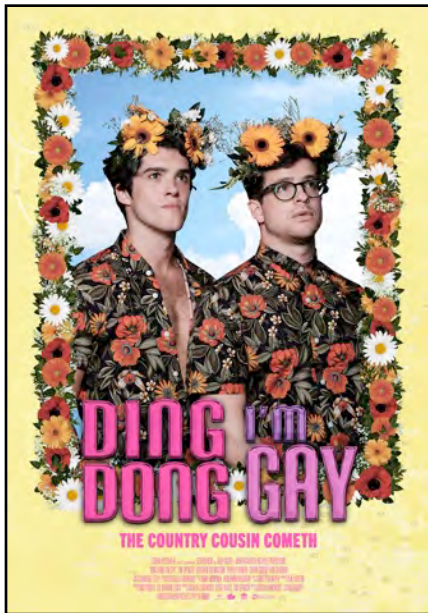
By Delven Shaw

FILM



These are glory days for LGBTQ filmmakers! Mainstream platforms like HBO and Netflix crave a steady diet of queer films, while smaller platforms like Dekkoo, Here TV, TysonPlus, and even GayBingeTV are hungry for content. The quality can waver, so *ALIVE IN THE DARK* with Delven Shaw gives you short and sweet reviews of what to watch!

DING DONG, I'M GAY is fun, fresh, and free!



Web series have definitely had an ebb and flow – only the ones with the best writing and performances have survived. But I would count *DING DONG* as one of those – a great cast, empathetic characters, funny situations, and plenty of flesh – within YouTube standards of course, and all in 20-minute episodes.

Tim Spencer is the writer/director/

star of this production, and his quirky, nerdy and needy sexy gay man Cameron is a perfect foil for his cousin Toby (Braydon Dalmazzone) who is new to the gay scene (and who rarely wears a shirt). Cameron is on the search for love, but is foiled by his cousin's escapades, his own vanity – in either case, it is always funny.

When Toby has a virtual affair with Cameron's crush Jack, the fun gets more and more eye-popping. I had a great time watching, and wish *DING DONG*, a new entry from Australia, great success. You can find it here https://youtu.be/MB_wxNutLcc

FALLING is a brutal father/son duel.



If your taste runs more to Arthur Miller and Edward Albee, then *FALLING* is for you.

Willis is a homophobic bastard, and

has been for his long, long life. And in a remarkable achievement, Lance Henriksen makes you feel for him as he angrily descends, threatening to pull all who love him down with him. This is the frame for Viggo Mortensen's *FALLING*, which he wrote, directed, and stars in as Willis' son John who has a husband (Terry Chan) and an adopted daughter (Gaby Velis) – all things which push Willis closer to the edge

Director Mortensen keeps the action fast and curious, as we travel among various decades in the family life piecing together a story of a farm family that – despite a glowing performance by Hannah Gross as Willis' first wife Gwen – cannot hold it together. When Gwen leaves him and then is killed, the seams cannot hold.

Will Willis give up the home and horses that he clearly cannot care for? Will his children (including daughter Sarah played by a luminous Laura Linney) reach Willis and keep him alive and afloat? The climactic scene between father and son is fantastic – I would not be surprised to see it in scene study classes everywhere as a classic battle between men of different ages.

Having said that, these days we should mention the words are tough and the anger abusive. It never feels sensationalized. It sadly, just feels true. And it makes me happy that queer films continue to develop new and intriguing twists that need to be seen on screen. No doubt, there are many family members living with fathers just like this right now.

Visit <http://www.delvenshaw.com> for reviews of *SUPERNOVA*, *BLOOD AND WATER*, *WHY NOT YOU* and the best short film ever – *IF ANYTHING HAPPENS I LOVE YOU*.



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Who Pays the Bills When Someone Dies?

By Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq.

Q: When my lover died, I discovered that he owed \$75,000 in charge card bills and \$110,000 in unpaid hospital bills. Everything that he owned (the house and the bank accounts) was held in joint tenancy with myself. He also had several life insurance policies and IRA accounts which named his children as beneficiaries of these accounts. Do I have to sell the house to pay my lover's bills? Do his children have to use the money from the life insurance and IRA accounts to pay their father's bills?

A: First, the law says that a person can't transfer their property to defraud their creditors or get out of paying their bills. If, however, you and your lover owned the house and bank accounts in joint tenancy before the debts arose then that property will pass to you as the surviving joint tenant owner without deduction for payment of your lover's bills.

Creditors of a deceased person may only go after property in the deceased person's probate estate, which means property your lover owned in his name alone, and does not include joint tenancy property. Also benefits paid under a life insurance policy or IRA account with a named beneficiary is not considered part of someone's probate estate and is not subject to the claims of creditors. Accordingly, the life insurance and IRA money would go to your lover's children and would not have to be used to pay creditors.

If you and your lover were married, my answer would change depending upon the nature of the debt. Illinois married spouses would be subject to several "Family statutes" 750 ILCS 65/5 and 750 ILCS 65/15 (also known as the Family Expense Act). They provide that spouses are not generally liable for one another's debt. The statute states also that your wages, earnings and separate property are not liable for the separate debts of your spouse. However, 65/15 does hold both spouses jointly and separately liable for the "expenses of the family."

The law defines such "expenses" to include medical and funeral expenses, as well as many other services and goods that benefit the family. Therefore any medical bills, including those from a hospital, doctor, clinic, laboratory, etc. would be chargeable upon your property if your spouse should die and the creditors look to you for payment.

Q: My lover died last month and I haven't been able to find his original



will, although I do have a carbon copy. I know he named me as his beneficiary. I called my lover's lawyer hoping that he would have the original will and the lawyer told me that he used to have the original will but, before my lover died, he wrote the lawyer and told him to tear up the will. Now my lover's family tells me that because the will was destroyed, my lover died without a will and they get everything. What are my legal rights?

A: Even though your lover directed his lawyer (by letter) to tear up his will and throw it away, Illinois law does not consider that to be a valid revocation of his will. In order to revoke a will, the destruction of the will (tearing it up) must be done by the person who made the will or by another person in the presence of the person who made the will.

The law requires a revocation of a will to be performed according to the requirements of the law. Because the will was physically destroyed in a manner contrary to Illinois law, the family members will lose and the surviving lover will prevail. The surviving lover can file in court a petition to probate the will using the carbon copy of the original will.

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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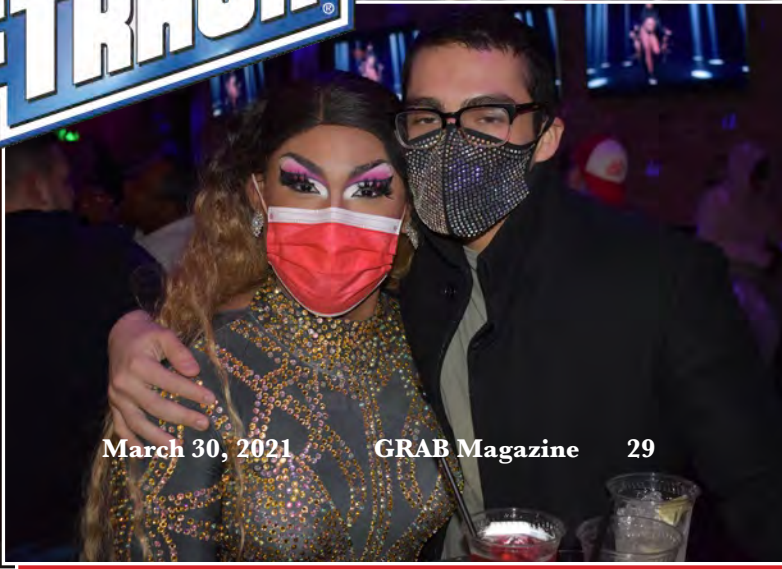
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SIDETRACK

Photos By Anthony Meade



GRAB HOLLY

Tuco Gets His Gay Card

By Holly Maholm

I was in the stable, listening to Scallywag vent about how he never gets enough of his favorite donut (Blueberry Cake) when I heard Tuco call to me from the front door. I walked out to meet him, and he got right to the point.

"Hi, Holly. I hope I'm not interrupting." I shook my head no. "Anyway, I've got something I need to ask you, and it's super-private and personal. If I ask you, can you keep this confidential?" "Sure," I replied.

"Okay," he resumed, "here's my question. You know Aly and I have been spending a lot of time together, and... we've started being intimate. Which has been terrific, cause you know how pretty she is, and how she's totally feminine, and sweet, and hot. But the thing is, she's a tranny, and she's never had that operation 'down below.' So she's still got her 'boy parts,' even though you can't see 'em when she's dressed and walking around.

"But when we're in bed, they're sort of right there where I can't ignore them, even if I wanted to, which I'm not sure I do. So here's my question: If I enjoy having sex with Aly, does that make me gay?"

I pondered a moment, then replied. "So let me clarify a few things. First, the

reason you're asking me is because I'm a tranny, like Aly – though nowhere near as hot. And the answer to your question is plainly important to you, cause from the expression on your face and the tone of your voice, I'm assuming that 'gay' is something you never want to be, and if you have to be gay to keep on sleeping with Aly, you're going to give her up. Am I right?"

"Yeah, that's it," he answered. I hesitated, then had an idea. "Alright, you came to me cause I'm a tranny, but now you're asking about being 'gay,' so we've got to go ask the experts." Saying which, Tuco and I started off for the old Methodist Church to see Mike and Dave. We found them in Mike's office.

I plunged right in. "Tuco and I are here because Tuco has a question. Lately he's been sleeping with Aly, and he's started to ask himself, 'Does that make me gay?' So I figured, who would know better than the two of you."

Mike and Dave were briefly silent. Mike glanced over at Dave, then turned back to Tuco. "So, obviously, if it turns out you're 'gay' – on account of sleeping with Aly, and her having a cock – then that's something you feel is shameful – something repugnant and inexcusable?" Tuco couldn't help but nod his head yes.

Mike turned to Dave and observed, "Looks like we've got to induct another newbie into our local chapter of the Secret Gay Conspiracy. I hope we have another copy of the Official Gay Handbook to give him."

"Absolutely!" (Dave followed Mike's lead.) "Plus, he's gotta learn the Secret Gay Handshake, the Pledge of Gay Allegiance, and the 12 Rules for Dressing Gay."

"And don't forget," Mike enthused, "we've gotta give him his 'Gay Card' – and collect his dues, cause I bet he owes a lot of unpaid dues."

At this point, neither Mike nor Dave could contain themselves any longer, and both began to laugh uproariously. Gradually Tuco got in the



spirit of the joke, as did I. When they finished laughing, Mike spoke up. "Tuco, we apologize. I hope we didn't hurt your feelings. Let me answer your question."

"The person you are having sex with is Aly – not Recon or Fender. Even Dave and I – as gay as we are – are well aware that Aly is by far the finest piece of ass in our little village. Why, half the customers of Donut Time only put up with their high prices because they like to watch Aly prance around in her pencil skirt and three-inch heels. 'Gay' is just shorthand for 'same-sex attracted,' and nobody (!) in this or any other world would believe that you and Aly belong to the 'same sex.'

"And I would be remiss," Mike continued, "were I not to stand up for Dave and me and all the other men who proudly call themselves 'gay.' You are suffering from a case of what is now called 'internalized homophobia.' Meaning: that at an early age your mind and heart were infected with a baseless and irrational hatred. Let me assure you, your revulsion at hearing you might be gay is as unearned as it is unwarranted.

"Finally, I want to give you a little Pastoral advice. Do not miss this chance for happiness. Do not let some... hateful, ignorant slander come between you and the person who might make you happy. You may never get a chance like this again."

(To be continued)

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

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Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame Extends Deadline for 2021 Nominees



The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, celebrating its 30th year, has extended the deadline for nominations for new inductees. The new deadline for nominations is April 30, 2021. The nominations will be reviewed by a committee comprised of current Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame members, after which a slate of inductees will be chosen.

The ceremony for inductees will be held in October 2021. At this point, it has not been determined whether it

will be an in-person ceremony or a virtual one. Last year the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame held its first virtual induction ceremony for its 2020 inductees.

The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame is the first city-sponsored hall of fame dedicated to LGBT people, organizations, community organizations, and allies in the United States. It was founded in 1991 as the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame. Its purpose then, as now, is to honor people and entities, nominated by the public, who have made significant contributions to the quality of life or well-being of the LGBT community in Chicago.

From its founding in 1991 until 2016, the Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame relied on financial and staff support from the City of Chicago. The first Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame ceremony took place during Pride Week and was held at Chicago City Hall. Mayor Richard M. Daley hosted the ceremony and afterward, photos of the inductees were displayed in City Hall. The city ceased funding the Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2016 under then-mayor Rahm Emanuel. At that time, it

was rechristened the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame and has since been supported and maintained by the Friends of the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, with approval from, and the cooperation of, the City of Chicago. The Hall of Fame has no physical facility but maintains a website that allows anyone to visit the Hall of Fame at any time.

Kathy Caldwell, the board's co-chair stated, "It is important to continue to recognize the achievements of Chicagoans, past, and present, especially since so many of the community's original movers and shakers have passed on. We need to ensure that their achievements are not forgotten."

Nomination criteria and nomination forms are available at www.chicagolgbthalloffame.org/nominate.

For more information, email outreach@chicagoLGBTHalloffame.org, visit the organization's website chicagolgbthalloffame.org/ or its Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/56108152083/>.

IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM MILWAUKEE PRIDE



Milwaukee Pride, Inc. - parent organization of PrideFest, Wisconsin's largest LGBTQ+ event - announced today that it is officially canceling the four-day event slated for June. The festival was set to take place at the Henry W. Maier Festival Grounds from Thursday, June 3-Sunday, June 6, 2021. This is the second year in a row PrideFest has been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"After much consideration, we cannot move forward with planning a June 2021 festival without knowing how and when a vaccine will be distributed throughout our community equally" said **Wes Shaver**, Milwaukee Pride, Inc. President. "It is still unclear as to how (or if) public gatherings will happen in 2021 and we cannot risk the health and wellbeing of our community by putting the festival ahead of the people it serves. Now, more than ever, we need to amplify the work of our community partners and increase accessibility and awareness of the many services,

resources, and programs available to support LGBTQ+ people."

Even though Milwaukee Pride is looking for later, alternative dates for PrideFest, we are committed to working with other LGBTQ+ community partners to increase visibility of the opportunities LGBTQ+ people have for their individual health, wellness, and self care needs.

"I appreciate the early decision Milwaukee Pride has made to cancel the traditional PrideFest for 2021 to ensure everyone's safety. Although we are disappointed that we will not be able to meet in person at PrideFest, we look forward to working with Milwaukee Pride and our community partners on other ways to celebrate Pride and support our health, wellness and self-care needs in 2021" - **Gerry Coon**, President/CEO, Diverse and Resilient

Every year, PrideFest hosts a Health & Wellness area that's open to organizations to showcase their programs, services, people and resources that serve the community (as well as other underserved and represented groups). While the physical space is unavailable for 2021, Milwaukee Pride is launching a digital Health & Wellness space that allows quick access to anyone. This digital platform will allow participants a FREE listing, so no cost to the organization, to participate in the state-wide directory. Milwaukee Pride IS accepting donations towards the initiative, but, this is a FREE service and opportunity.

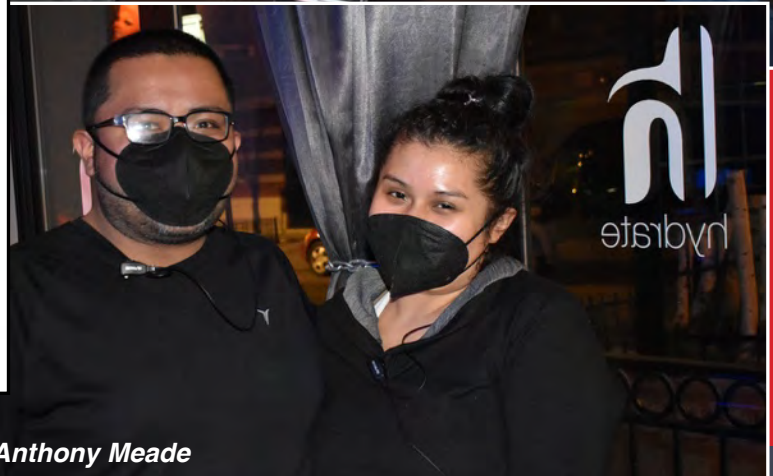
"When I first realized there may be rules, regulations, and guidelines for entry into a public space, I knew we

would not be able to have a June festival," said Shaver. "There are serious inequities within our community when it comes to accessibility to health care, medicine, and COVID-19 testing. The idea that, hypothetically, someone with quicker or more readily available access to health care resources could attend, while others could not- was not an option. PrideFest is a space for everyone. We cannot have any additional factors that create divides and fractures within our community."

The Milwaukee Pride Board of Directors are working with Milwaukee World Festival Inc. leadership on possible alternate dates for later this year, hoping there's a more clear path for hosting safe, public events. The board is also exploring the possibility of different formats and locations if the Henry W. Maier Festival Park is unavailable. Milwaukee Pride will continue to engage with the Milwaukee community on other, smaller events this summer to keep the Pride movement strong and present, adhering to all recommended and mandatory guidelines.

"We don't want people to think there will be no PRIDE this year," said **Luke Olson**, PrideFest Festival Producer and VP of Milwaukee Pride, Inc. "We simply want to ensure we're taking the right steps forward. We hope people trust that our intentions are for the safety of the community, and for efforts for a digital Health & Wellness will continually put access at the forefront of our community efforts year-round."

For more information visit <http://www.Pridefest.com>



Photos By Anthony Meade





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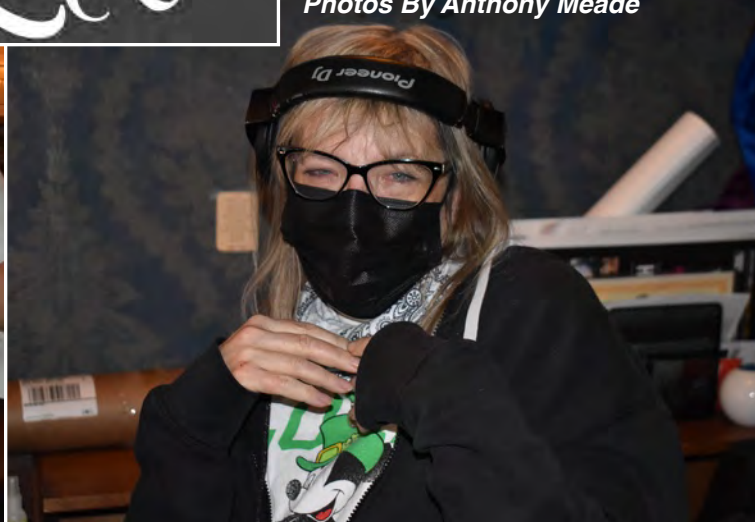


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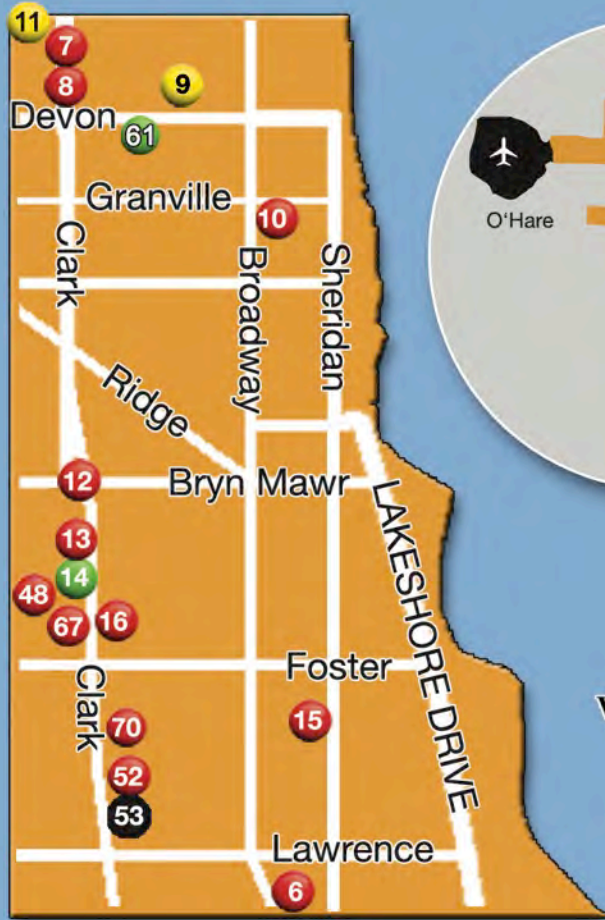
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- GRAB a Bite
- GRAB a Drink
- GRAB Some Sleep
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