

TORONTO'S PREMIER GAY LIFESTYLE DIGITAL MAGAZINE

MGT

We Know Gay

MY GAY TORONTO

ISSUE #66 JUN/JUL 2019.



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MGT DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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RAYMOND HELKIO

#AIDSVigil: 35 Years And Still Counting

Photo courtesy the AIDS Vigil.



As far as HIV is concerned, we have a lot to celebrate in Canada. The HIV/AIDS movement has transformed the health of people living with HIV as well as impacting public policy and enabling the widespread availability of antiretrovirals. But we're not out of the woods yet.

Globally, there's still much to do including ensuring medication and treatment access for all, eliminating stigma and ensuring adequate supports for long-term survivors. As we near Pride month it's our opportunity to remember all of those who fought for our health as well as the human rights we enjoy today.

Please join the community for a candle lighting ceremony as we honour the names being added to the memorial, as we pay tribute to all those whose lives were ended short because of this horrendous disease.

This year marks the 35th annual vigil which will be hosted by Amutha Samgam and Kerolos Saleib, and will include performances from drag artists Jezebel Bardot and Jade Elektra, Les Chiclettes' Nathalie Nadon and spoken word artist Bryan Deresti.

A Brief History of the AIDS Memorial

In the mid 1980s a group of gay men, led by Michael Lynch, developed the idea for the AIDS Memorial in response to the isolation and fear that so often characterized the experience of AIDS. Volunteers constructed a temporary memorial every year on Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, while working with friends to raise funds in the community to build the permanent AIDS Memorial. Initially, the AIDS Memorial was a place where gay men — by far the largest group affected in Toronto in the 1980s — could grieve, remember and celebrate the lives of those lost.

The permanent AIDS Memorial, designed by Patrick Fahn, opened in 1993 in Barbara Hall Park (formerly known as Cawthra Square Park), behind The 519 Community Centre. Over time, the Memorial became a place for everyone infected and affected by AIDS in the broader Toronto community. Names of those to be honored are engraved and installed each year, by mid-June.

"Cry" by Michael Lynch and "Circle of Stones" by Shoshanna J. Addley are engraved on the first pillar of the Memorial. This plaque recognizes the deaths of those unnamed.

35TH ANNUAL AIDS VIGIL

Tuesday, June 19, 2018 at 8:30 PM

[Barbara Hall Park](#) - 519 Church Street, Toronto - [MORE INFO](#)

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Alternative Pride: Gritty, Raunchy & Full of Spunk

"Making space for queer expression through music, visual expression, love, sex, friendship and art is my passion so it doesn't feel like work." - Aeryn Pfaff, Artistic Director, APF



With Pride's the ever growing corporate influence over Pride Toronto, people are looking for alternative ways to celebrate their queerness in more meaningful ways.

The Alternative Pride Festival (APF) is the brainchild of Matt Troy from Vancouver Art and Leisure (VAL) where the widely successful series of events have become mainstay. Aeryn Pfaff is the artistic director of Toronto's first annual Alternative Pride Festival, an independent, non-corporate, artist-led music and art festival celebrating queer artists and spaces. Taking place over four days, the unique and diverse events include warehouse take-overs, outdoor urban activations, wild gallery parties, and grimy underground after-hours. MyGayToronto recently interviewed Aeryn about the event and what to expect, and there's a lot!

Why is this event important to the LGBT community?

Aeryn Pfaff: Our community is so diverse and our scenes are changing so quickly. When it comes to DIY style underground queer parties and sex-positive parties with underground music, they aren't just happening in little dive bars anymore, we're filling warehouses. We felt it was time to offer Toronto a festival, like the others that happen already during Pride, but geared towards a crowd who like things a little grittier and raunchier. A lot of us, from the people on this poster back to Will Munro and before, have been working to build this kind of scene specifically for queer and trans people, and we think

Alternative Pride Toronto is part of taking it to another level.

What makes Alternative Pride events different from Pride Toronto?

Aeryn Pfaff: Pride Toronto has such a wide responsibility in terms of who they serve. They have to be everything to everyone. They need to represent all kinds of music, they have to represent families and children, and since they take government funding this makes that responsibility even more critical because it's partially taxpayer funded. Their funding from the government and corporations makes sense based on the scale they operate at, but that funding comes with a slight declawing where banks and politicians don't really want to be associated with anything too too raunchy or clandestine.

That's where we come in. We're throwing some sex-positive stuff in some interesting locations that you don't get to party in as often, and we're focussing right in on underground electronic music forms. You won't hear a pop song here, except maybe in a drag number.

How did you become the artistic director for APF?

Aeryn Pfaff: I met Matt Troy from VAL at World Pride in Toronto in 2014 and we hung out for a few days and shared with each other our visions for what we wanted to do to foster more space for creative queer scenes in our respective cities. Years later after VAL had grown even more and I had learned more as an event planner and DJ, we reconnected and worked together on throwing one of my Jackhammer parties at Vancouver Alternative Pride. I loved what he was doing with Alternative Pride in Vancouver so much.

Over this year we've been building the Backdoor parties up in Toronto (they've happened for years in Vancouver) and worked on some events in Mexico City. It's all gone pretty swimmingly, so I think we decided that we trusted each other creatively and he asked me to coordinate this festival. I've really loved the process so far and I can't wait for the actual parties to happen! We're doing exactly what we talked about doing when we met, so it's pretty cool.

What has been the most rewarding part of creating this series of events?

Aeryn Pfaff: I love creating space for the artists I love in this city to shine. I didn't get to fit everyone into the festival this time, but I love to put things together with my friends and artists I admire. The response so far has been very rewarding too. People are really excited and they keep telling me they've been thinking Toronto has needed something like this for a long time. I agree!

The most challenging?

Aeryn Pfaff: These DIY events, sex-positive events, events that go late, events where rave music is playing and weirdo queerdos are hanging out and smooshing are not easy to find space for. Most event spaces are for afternoon cocktail parties and corporate events. They don't wanna host this kind of shit; they're used to serving very mild clientele. You hear "No" a lot and you roll your sleeves up and keep looking. One of our venues, 500 Keele, was shut down weeks before our programming announcement and we had to find a big enough venue that checks all the boxes that Keele did. That was a panicky week.



Alternative Pride Festival

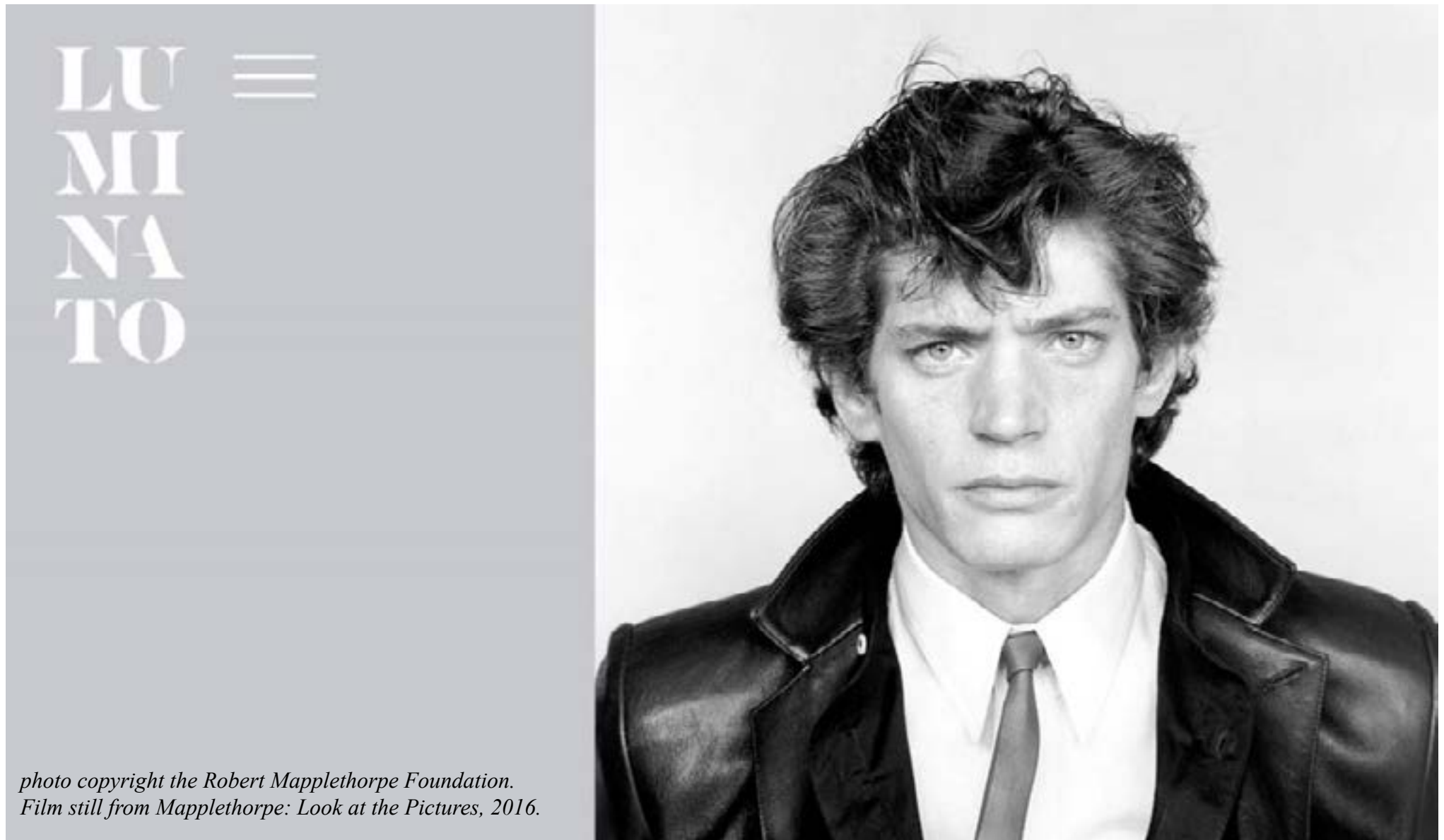
June 20 - 24, 2019

Various locations, see the [full line-up here](#).

RAYMOND HELKIO

Mapplethorpe:

Look at the Pictures



*photo copyright the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.
Film still from Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures, 2016.*

Openly gay and unapologetically shocking, Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial photographs are reexamined in this documentary presented as part of Luminato during Pride.

In an age immune to shock, the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe can still cause a stir. Controversial and unapologetic, Mapplethorpe's images of male gay sex, nudity and sadomasochism pushed contemporary art towards what some museum directors, art dealers and Senator Jesse Helms, labelled pornography. Filmmakers Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato delve into the prolific work that challenged the definitions of censorship and the life of the artist behind the controversy. From his formative relationship with Patti Smith to his fractious rapport with Andy Warhol, his lovers, muses, friends and family open up about Mapplethorpe's true intentions. With unparalleled access to his archive, this striking account of a career cut short by AIDS in 1989 turns up not only the infamous pictures, but the stunning floral and portraiture work of a seminal modern artist. Shut down to sold out, Mapplethorpe's photography shows and life alike are fascinatingly reframed.

Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures

Film screening, \$15

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Harbourfront Centre, Studio Theatre

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DREW ROWSOME

Dante Drakis:

a young god tackles porn, publishing, boxing and sexual empowerment



Gay porn sometimes pretends to be documentary footage. Gay porn stars can be convincing actors with carefully constructed images and personas. Up-and-coming gay porn star Dante Drackis is good at the former but is breaking the mould of the latter. He arrived on the scene in a flurry of scenes where he played the innocent straight guy - and with his long hair, ingenuite face and hairy chest, he looks the part - seduced into gay sex by either coercion, horniness or cash. At the same time he released a book, *BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide*, rather at odds with that persona.

The book is a quick read full of common sense and kinky advice. But the subtext is more intriguing, with a casually sex and kink positive flavour and revelations of the author's particular sexual preferences. Curious, I watched more of Drackis's porn oeuvre which has expanded beyond playing innocent and even ventured into mild kink. His twitter feed, @DanteDrackis, is a mix of porn stills and clips, personal messages, fitness and boxing tips (occasionally in the nude), guitar playing, gaming triumphs, and selfies ranging from comical through sultry to charming.

Drackis was quick to respond - accompanied by several inspirational self-empowerment quotes - to a request for an interview to discuss *BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide* and also promote his OnlyFans page. The day before we talked on the phone, he began hyping two more books on his twitter feed, *Positivity Through Adversity: 20 Commandments to Guide You* and *F*ckin' Millennials: How to Get Them off Your Lawn*. These books are credited to the grandiloquent pen name 'Gilg Amesh' who also has a previous poetry book, *31 Bite-Sized Haikus*. There is also a [redbubble.com](https://www.redbubble.com)

merchandise page credited to yet another name, 'Slagernicus,' a fitness Instagram, and, back to the porn, an Amazon wishlist, heavy on fetish wear and toys, offering the option of receiving a video or stills of the gift being put to practical use.

I no longer had any idea what to expect when Drackis answered the phone. I had planned on discussing porn and BDSM how-to, now I was dealing with literary endeavours and an entrepreneur. And several aliases or personalities. Fortunately Drackis is as transparent as his twitter feed. Self-aware, self-confident, ambitious, and just cocky enough to be endearing. What started as a book promo turned into, despite the early morning hour, a lengthy conversation with an intriguing and aspiring young god.

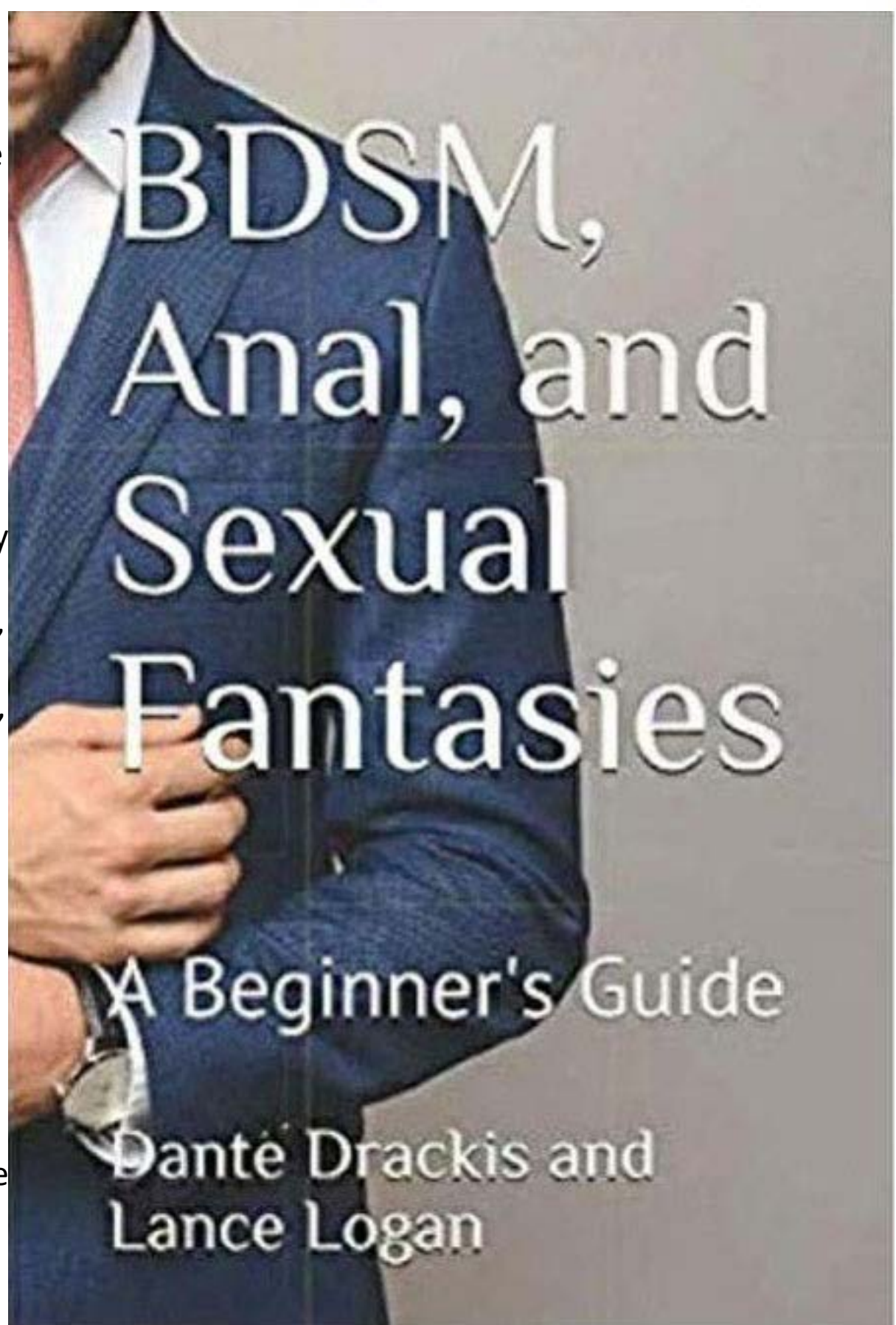
"It's kind of complicated," Drackis understates about his parallel careers in the arts of literature and porn. "I graduated with a degree in creative writing. I didn't necessarily want to be a writer but I was always good at communicating my thoughts in an effective manner. My teacher in college emailed my mom and told her, 'Your son needs to get paid for his writing because he's really good at it.' After all these people told me that, I said 'Fuck it,' and I just started writing. Before I'd made excuses like, it's so hard to find a publisher. I was writing a fantasy novel when I realized that it just wasn't my thing. I love fantasy novels, I like reading them, and writing it was fun, but in the end coming up with a polished, complete work in a fantasy novel is work. It's menial, it's boring. It's a lot of editing and re-editing. And I shouldn't say this but, that's because of the symbolism. I prefer to speak straight to the point, not sugarcoat anything. So I decided to start writing non-fiction."

Which came first, *BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide* or *Bait Buddies*? "The BDSM book was already written, completely and full before," says Drackis. "I had a friend who asked me for some sexual advice and I told him, 'I got you.' I was bored as shit in my classes and I had one class that was mandatory attendance, so I took a little notebook and every day in that class I was pretending to be taking notes but I was actually writing out the entire guide by hand. I typed it up and sent it to him. And then it just sat there in my outbox for like two years."

When he and friend Lance Logan decided to publish a book, "I said, 'I'll make it an easy start, I have a book. All we have to do is edit it and reformat it a little bit and publish it.' It'll be a good way to start the avalanche. A little ball of snow down a huge hill so we can gather momentum. We met up and edited, revised, reformatted and then we published it. Then we [Drackis and co-author Roth Sinodon] did the *Positivity* book and we just published a book about millenials. And we're working on a book about weed addiction."

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Asking about his pen name leads to another ambition. "I use Gilg Amesh because right now those two personalities, my personal one and my porn one, are separate," says Drackis. "I want to keep them that way at least for a little bit. My eventual thing - I'm trying to be a world champion of boxing in my weight





class - and when I get to that point and they bring me that microphone when I win the world champion belt, my immediate statement is going to be, 'Oh, by the way, I'm Dante Drackis,' and I'm going to drop the mike and walk out. That's my plan. My whole goal is to make the world realize that just because you do porn, it doesn't mean that you're a sexually depraved motherfucker. It doesn't mean that you can't be intelligent. It doesn't mean that you're not a nice person. What your job is, what you do in your spare time, does not define who you are as a person. That's my whole goal with this."

But there is another, initially contradictory, reason. "I use a pen name right now is so I can send the books to my family who don't know about the porn. All my friends know about Dante but my family doesn't. I have a huge like 250 people Latin family." I point out that I made the connection without excessive searching. "When you think about it, I blast the books on all of my social media as Dante. I'm taking the risk that at any point in time, some family member will stumble upon that and it will be connected. There's nothing I can do about that. Go ahead and write about it. The only thing I don't want connected is my real name and eventually I'll connect that. It's all about risk and reward and I'm willing to take the slight risk. Worst case is, oh no, my family finds out. What are they going to do? Hunt me down and tie me up to a cross and crucify me? Whatever."

Drackis also has an alias, 'Slagernicus', he uses for his [redbubble.com](https://www.redbubble.com) page that sells t-shirts, mugs, prints, cell phone cases, etc. "It's an old user name. A kid in middle school used it and I just kind of stuck with it. It's an anonymous name I used for streaming and then I thought fuck it, this anonymous identity doesn't need to be separate from my porn stuff. I just somewhat merged them. I'm expanding my name and my image until I become a brand. I don't know, I might as well have my own clothing line, I don't care, whatever I can get my hands into, I will if I want to. I'm just that kind of person."





When asked how *BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide* is selling, he responds, "I got two reviews on Amazon. I do get feedback from the people who buy it, they send me messages about how the book went for them and what they enjoyed about it. A lot of people enjoyed the educational nature of it and then said that it helped them in their personal sex lives, to do things in a different way, try new things, be a bit more experimental. I got a very nice burst of sales in the beginning, but then they sort of slowly dwindled down you have to keep in mind that in a sense I'm still a nobody in terms of the world. Let's say Kim Kardashian published a book, immediately she's going to get a shitload of sales and sales are going to just keep coming in as more people hear about it. But for me, it's like who the hell am I right now? Right now I'm just a random body in the universe."



But he won't be a nobody for long as his porn career continues to heat up. A coffee table version of *BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide* packed with explicit photos of Drackis, the Kardashian formula, would be a bestseller. "That's the whole reason I'm trying to use porn as a footstool," he says, "but also do the writing, also do the streaming and then also be world champion. They're all going to tie together in the end to basically create the image of a fucking god. I want people to realize that within themselves they have the potential to do anything they want. The only thing that

limits you is you yourself. If you say you can't, then you can't. But if you go in with the mentality that you can, then you will."



How did he get started in porn? "I had some modelling profiles online. There was this one site called sexyjobs.com and I had posted a profile on there for Miami. I just randomly got a fucking call, legit, I just got a phone call. The guy was like, 'Hey,' and I was like, 'How's it going?' He said, 'I see you have a modelling profile online, don't get offended but how would you feel about doing porn?' I was like, 'Keep going. My interest has been piqued, continue talking.' He's like, 'I have a shoot today and one of my models cancelled and I need another model.' I'm like, 'Alright, how much is it? Where is it? And what time is it at?' He told me and I was like, 'Okay, I'll be there.' He said, 'Okay, just bring a couple of changes of clothes.' I said, 'Alright,' and that was it. I showed up and I had my first scene which was the Property POV scene. That was it, I was into it. The guy on the phone became my agent and here I am. It's kind of wild. It's like the shot that was heard around the world, the phone call that started it all."

And Drackis has no trouble with the demands of porn. "I enjoy it and it's rather simple because I'm not an anxious person whatsoever," he says. "I could be driving a car and if it was set on fire, I'd just calmly pull over and then get out of the car. I'm not one to panic and lose my shit. I was raised super independent, I basically took care of myself from when I was 12. Making up my own meals, I



never had any help with homework, I never had any help with paperwork. It was just me from very early on doing my own thing. I was in a household with a single mother and she was working until like 7 or 8pm every night. It made me super confident and comfortable in my own skin.”

BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner’s Guide contains, right between ‘Recording’ and ‘Pegging,’ a chapter on roleplay. Does that help with the thespian demands of a porn shoot? “That translates very well into porn. Essentially the acting portion, where we’re clothed and we’re acting out something like I’m a shoplifter and the cop is feeling me up or whatever, it’s easy. I just get into the mentality of that. For example, with Bait Buddies, they’re one of the easiest ones to do because of the fact that I didn’t have to act. They said, ‘Act like a straight guy,’ and I said, “That’s fucking easy.’ I just answered honestly like as if it was myself. Where I have to act differently like some other person in some other situation, I just put myself in their shoes. If I have to be someone’s brother and I have to catch them jerking off and be kind of a fuckface about it and get them to play with me or whatever, I just imagine myself as the brother and that I really want to fuck with him. Then boom I just go off. I’m a very empathetic person and I’m super into philosophy, I’m all about mindset. About viewing things from other people’s perspective. So I just put myself in the perspective of the person I’m supposed to be acting like and take it from there.”



Though Drackis emphasizes that he is using porn as a stepping stone, he takes that career seriously. “The thing is, I’m probably never going to stop it. I’m in it for the long game so I don’t really see a reason to stop. When I do something I like to do it right. And I like to become better than I was before. And then eventually just the best. I want to break the mould of the porn world. Eventually I want to branch off from strictly gay porn and branch off into all kinds of porn. The way I want to bridge that gap is to show people that the way you fuck is probably the most important thing to you when it comes to sexual action.”

To that end, “What I’ve been trying to do with the directors I work with is to get them to give me a little more free reign. Like let me choose the positions, let me take control. Once in awhile they give me a little leeway to have my own say but I’m not quite there yet. I’m trying to get my name big enough that I can be the big dick in the room. Where I can walk in and say, ‘Okay bitches, we’re doing it this way.’ That’s kind of my end goal. I get on a porn set and to me it’s like child’s play with my personal life and how much I did during my college days. Like I’m being restrained and they’re like, ‘Are you okay? This is so weird.’ And I’m sitting there thinking, Jesus Christ, I did this shit in high school. Do you want me to help restrain myself? I want to show to the world, I want to show them truly, what it would be like to have sex with me on a personal level. Rather than the acting kind of shit that I have to do on set.

Obviously a lot of it is fake and it's not exactly how I would have sex with someone."

Then shooting, directing and releasing clips for his OnlyFans page must be a step in that direction. "To an extent," he says. "I do a lot of solo content on there because that's what a lot of people want to see. When I get an OnlyFans subscription, I send them a little message thanking them for subscribing and saying that if they have any requests to let me know. I tell them, here's my Instagram, here's my Twitter, you're welcome to talk to me on there. Most of the time people don't request anything, they say, 'No, I'm happy with your content.' I post every day and have a humongous variety of content on there. The thing I'm lacking right now, I don't do much content with guys and I have very limited content with girls right now. That's simply because I don't particularly like hooking up with guys, it's just my personal taste, I'm gay-for-pay, I prefer to hook up with girls or transwomen. I'm just not attracted to masculinity or males in general."

Gay-for-pay is a controversial area for some but Drackis, in a tweet, tried to clarify his position. "I like dick. I don't like men. And trans girls are NOT a fetish. they are women. Don't disrespect them." Receiving a backlash from disappointed gay men, he tried to explain. "Look I know it's weird, but I consider myself straight. I like cock just as much as most of the gay guys. The difference is, I don't like what it's attached to."

Drackis remains unconflicted but curious about the pursuit of his desires versus his onscreen performances. "If I were to look at my own porn and become attracted to my own porn, how does that work in terms of sexuality? I'm just curious. I haven't done it. I mean I was on set, there's no reason to watch my own fucking porn. But what if I watch it and get turned on by it? Is that super narcissistic? I think it's funny."

Posting daily content is work. "If my content starts running low, I go into complete hunting mode. A lot of women aren't that okay with being recorded. And it takes more time. I have to actively develop friends with benefits, a multiple instances relationship with them before they get comfortable enough for me to broach the subject. Guys are the opposite, I can basically hop on Grindr and find a guy to record with in two seconds."

Both [Michael Roman](#) and [Teddy Bear](#) have said that the OnlyFans model works best when two stars shoot a scene that can be used on both their pages. "That's something that I'm trying to get at," says Drackis. "There's a couple I've been talking to who seem somewhat interested, so we'll see if it pans out. When I expand to a larger fan base, if I'm sitting on let's say 50,000 followers or some shit, at that point it will come a lot easier. Because if I contact one of the female porn stars, they're going to want the exposure of 50,000 people that they can reach through me. The problem is right now that I'm so busy with my other shit, my writing, my streaming, my full-time job, that I can't be diverting hours a day hunting for people."

That full-time job is a demanding one. "I work as an estimator at a mechanical engineering company. People send me mechanical plans and then I tell them, 'It's going to cost you this much.' I scan through the plans, there's this unit, there's that unit, this much stuff to work with and then I put a price on it. Actually it's very boring and menial but there are moments like these where I step out for a phone call



real quick. It energizes me and I go back in inside and blast out a few estimates. The eventual goal is to make enough off of all my exploits that the day job becomes not necessary. Right now I'm able to accomplish all of this shit that I'm accomplishing while devoting around 60 hours a week to my day job. Imagine if I had 60 hours a week to use elsewhere? Those would be very, very beneficial. I could be publishing more books, I could be publishing lengthier books, I could be involved in a lot more scenes. I've had to turn down so many scenes just because I work Monday to Friday. It's a pain in the ass."

But Drackis isn't one to give up. "When I workout, I listen to positional music which is orchestral, like that shit you hear in superhero movies when they're in the middle of the battle, there's this great chorus in the background and all this kind of shit, because then I assume that I'm a god. I'm like fucking Thor. Nothing can stop me or slow me down. And that's how I get through my workout. I've passed that on to some of my friends and they've been able to push through their workouts because of this fucking music. They get into that mentality of nothing's going to bring me down, so if they fail, they count to three and then they get up and keep going. None of us think that we're gods or anything but during the time frame of working out, that's how we consider ourselves and it's like, 'Would a god be taken down by a set of 50 push-ups?' No. Fuck that. So neither will I."

Drackis uses that inspiration in all parts of his life. "It also ties into the whole acting on a porn set. Role play and changing my mentality, my mindset. It's very easy. I should probably write a book about mentalities because it's impacted my life. Changing my mentality to be



positive, it's a whole other world. Everybody's like, 'It's Friday, it's awesome,' and of course I'm happy it's Friday because it's the weekend but it's not like I'm super hyped up because it's Friday. Friday's like any other fucking day of the week. Monday through Sunday are all days of the week, they're all 24 hour periods. You should be having fun and be happy every day. If you wake up depressed because it's Monday and you have to go through another week, then either change your job, change your lifestyle or change your mentality because something's wrong."

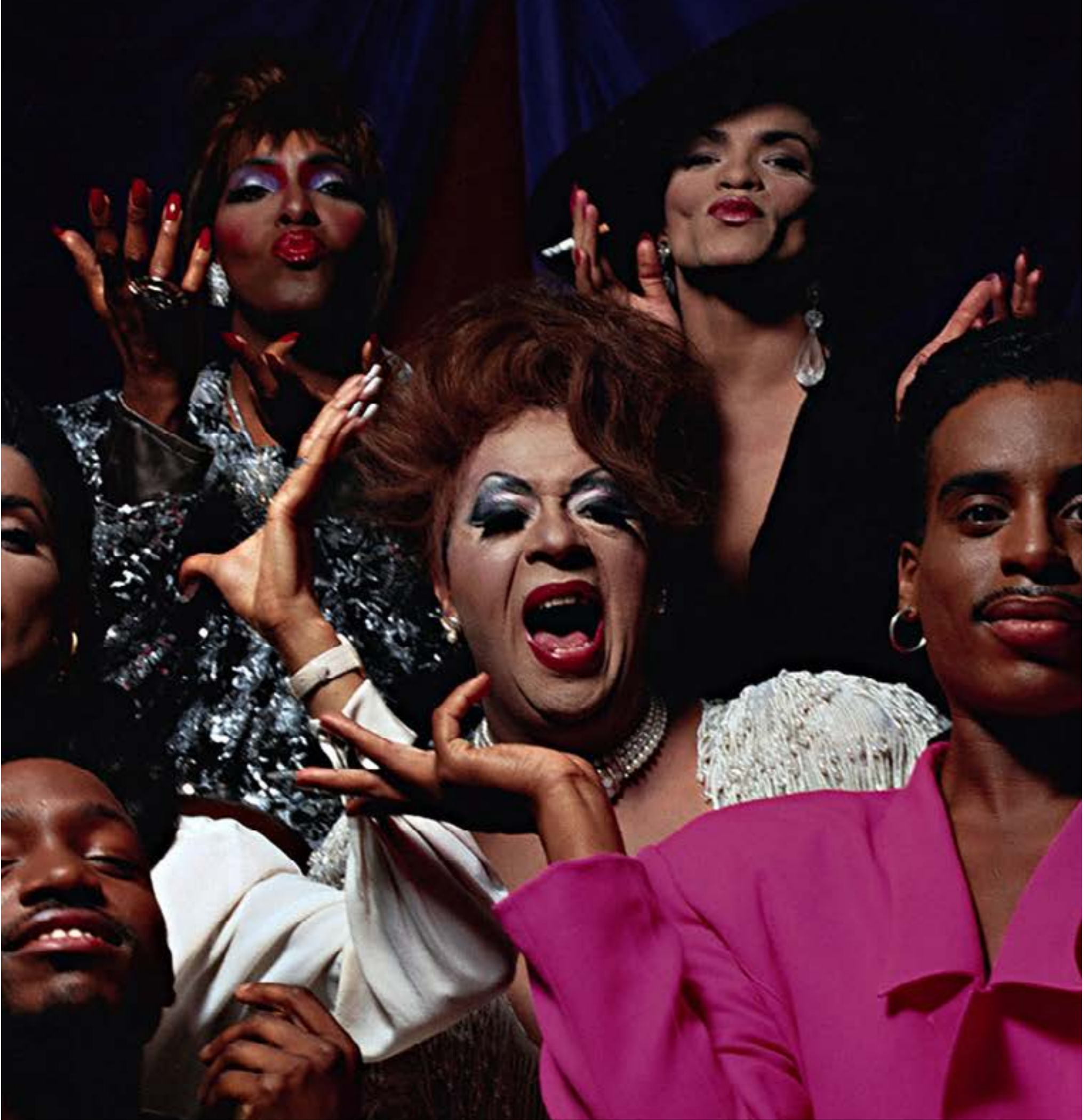
After all positivity worked for Drackis. "The whole concept is hilarious," he says. "because it happened so suddenly and out of the blue. Two or three weeks after I started in porn, they flew me out to California for some shoots and I was walking around Cali and I was goddamn, this is real, this is happening. I'm not just some nobody from nowhere, I'm becoming a person with relevant real world influence. That's why I decided to take it a step further and use it as a stepping stone and eventually as a bridge for my later goals." And his goal bears repeating, "I want people to realize that within themselves they have the potential to do anything they want. The only thing that limits you is you yourself. If you say you can't, then you can't. But if you go in with the mentality that you can, then you will."

BDSM, Anal, and Sexual Fantasies: A Beginner's Guide is available at Amazon

Dante Drackis can be found on Twitter @DanteDrackis, Instagram @DanteDrackis and DrackisFitness, [onlyfans.com/DanteDrackis](https://www.onlyfans.com/DanteDrackis), [twitchtv.com/Slagernicus](https://www.twitch.tv/Slagernicus), [redbubble.com/people/slagernicus](https://www.redbubble.com/people/slagernicus), and his scenes are on multiple porn streaming sites.

PARIS IS BURNING

MGT IS GIVING AWAY TICKETS to *PARIS IS BURNING* at Lightbox



“Where does voguing come from, and what, exactly, is throwing shade? This landmark documentary provides a vibrant snapshot of the 1980s through the eyes of New York City’s African American and Latinx Harlem drag ball scene. Made over seven years, Paris Is Burning offers an intimate portrait of rival fashion “houses,” from fierce contests for trophies to house mothers offering sustenance in a world rampant with homophobia and transphobia, racism, AIDS, and poverty”

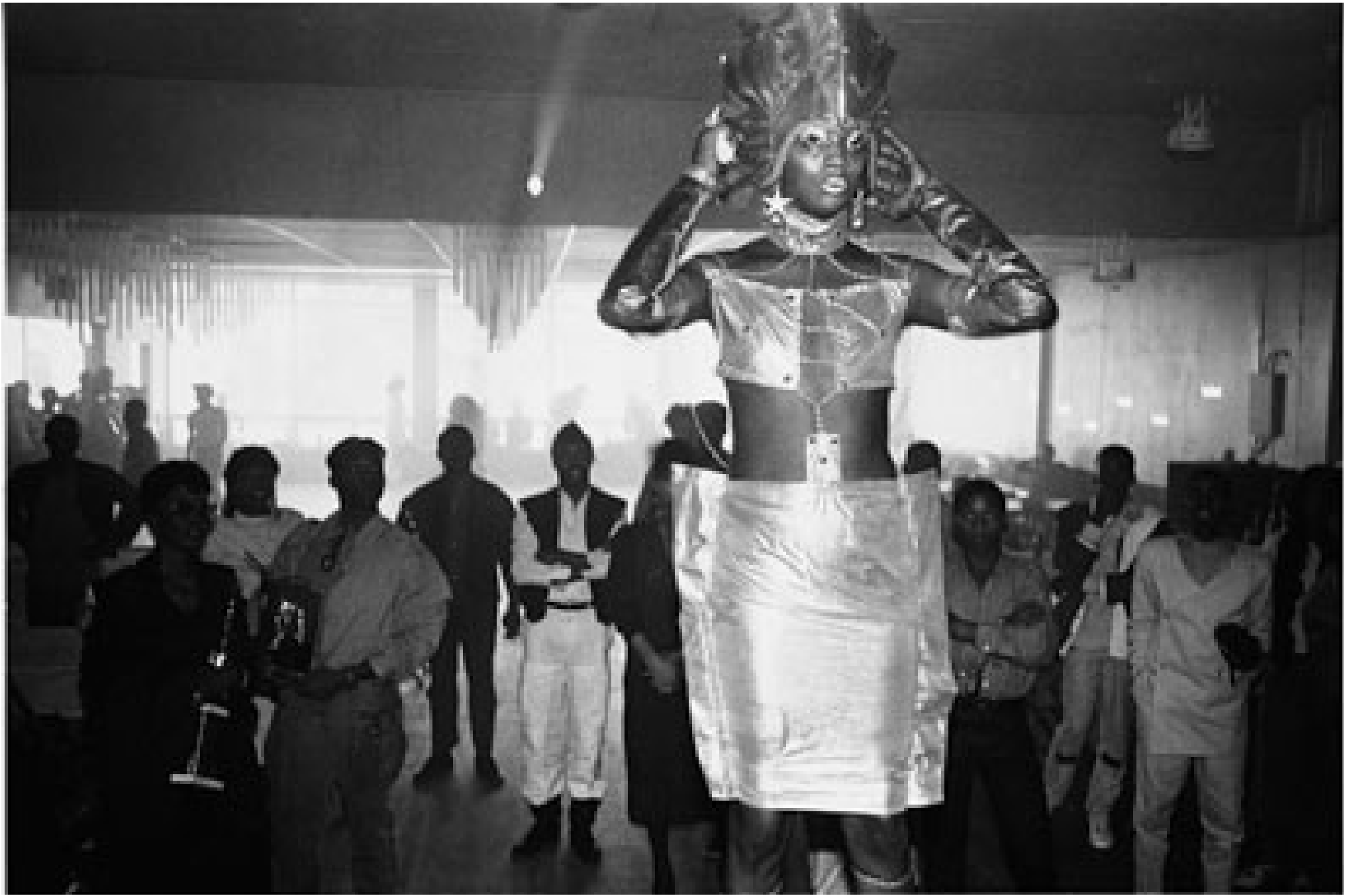
<https://www.facebook.com/filmswelike/>

<http://www.filmswelike.com/films/paris-is-burning>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/339167659>

DREW ROWSOME

Paris is Burning: the legends get makeover they deserve



For a documentary that is, on the surface, so concerned with glamour and realness, to be lovingly remastered and rendered vibrantly clear, is poetic justice. Anyone who has seen Paris is Burning is in for a treat. The grit and grain that marked the film as cinema verite is, for the most part, gone and the colours and sequins pop. When the fabulous Pepper LaBeija quotes Norma Desmond and announces that he is ready for his close-up, he finally gets the one he deserves.

Anyone who hasn't seen Paris is Burning is in for a crucial experience.

Paris is Burning was filmed in the last half of the '80s and released in 1990. It documents not only the underground ball culture and the people in it, but also the beginning of the culture moving into and seducing the mainstream, just before it was partially co-opted, most notably by Madonna.

Watching Paris is Burning now, is not only thrilling but also telling. A remarkable amount of gay slang (now also mainstream) and style is seen as it originated. What was exploring a new and strange subculture is now a historical document about a time that was highly influential. It is also - in a post-Rupaul's Drag Race and years of activism world - sobering to see the roots of drag and the difference in our attitudes towards trans.

The ball footage is exhilarating but the remastering also brings out the backgrounds and enhances the not as glamorous reality of the offstage lives of the characters. They are all beautiful and no longer shocking or odd, they just were the ones who helped pave the way. Elders. And that is the disturbing thing about seeing Paris is Burning after so much, so little, time has passed: very few if any of these people are still alive. Their many dreams and aspirations were never achieved, but at least Paris is Burning did immortalize them and give them the celebrity they so blatantly craved.



They aspired to be "legendary." And now they are.

The film itself is shamelessly manipulative and the stars - LaBeija, Dorian Corey, Willi Ninja, Octavia St Laurent, Venus and Angie Xtravaganza, and the two unidentified underage gay boys - are all articulate and quick with a campy or cutting quip. Any one of them could hold the audience's attention indefinitely. They are also adroit, particularly Venus Xtravaganza, at attempting bravado that is in reality akin to despair and knowing denial. Much like the balls themselves where the competitors take on the costumes of their oppressors and blow them up into a different form of revolution.



The politics are complicated, and as self-aware as the legends are, the hierarchies of race, gender and sexuality are issues they are grappling with, enthralled with, and brutally trampled by. We still are. As I began watching, I started jotting down quotes that I thought were relevant. After filling two pages of notes, I gave up and surrendered to the emotional experience. I will be haunted forever by the sight of a beautiful young black boy discussing his relationship with drag, gender and oppression, while clutching a copy of Betty and Veronica's Double Digest.



When Pepper LaBeija delivers a monologue about race, and we have heard so many describe their aspirations to be "white" and thus "normal," it is heartbreaking in its wisdom. When he, among others, cites [Dynasty](#) as a life goal, we see how camp mutated and bubbled in reality before becoming the cultural common that it is today. There is a sense of circles and concepts resolving but never achieving resolution, not even all these years later. When Octavia St Laurent's ambitions brush up against a photographer and then Eileen Ford, the sense of hope and terror is devastating. A story we still see daily.



A substantial portion of Paris is Burning is concerned with the concept of family. Of those who support and help when biological family and the world in general have rejected or actively turned against. The release of the remastered version of Paris is Burning during Pride month is not just good marketing, it is a reminder that chosen family has always been our biggest strength. That, and being fabulous in the face of oppression.



Paris is Burning screens from Mon, June 17 to Thurs, July 4 at TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St W. tiff.net

RAYMOND HELKIO

To Be Me:

New Web-series About Gender Identity



The series begins with seven-year-old Jordan getting caught by their father, William, playing dress up with their mother's makeup and their favourite purple dress. Fifteen years later, Jordan returns to their childhood home for the first time since leaving for college and discovers memories from their past.

To Be Me is the latest Revry Original series during their Pride Month slate. It is a scripted drama in the form of a queer digital series which tells the story of a young, mid-western African American struggling with their gender identity. Played by Kate Rose Wilburn, a non-binary trans female, along with Emmy award winning actor Kim Estes as their father, and transgender model [Corey Rae](#) as their best friend, To Be Me is here to shed more light on the under supported subject of gender identity.

Amanda Dash and Daan Jansen, both producers on ABC's The Bachelor, joined forces to create this series when it dawned on them that positive and realistic representation for the LGBTQI+ community in the media was few and far between. Dash, who served as a producer and writer on To Be Me, said, "I've been lucky enough to live in cities that are widely accepting compared to other parts of the world, yet there are still instances where I witness others dehumanizing my friends, and it breaks my heart every time." She went on to say, "As a TV producer in today's society, I feel it's not only my duty to cover the subjects that aren't shown enough in mainstream media, but to tell stories that truly reflect the lives of my friends."

Jansen, who directed and co-wrote the series, echoed those sentiments and stated, "It frustrates me that people who are transgender or struggling with their gender identity, do not receive that love and support and have to live their lives in fear. During our research, I met so many amazing people that inspired me to do anything and everything I can to make sure that their stories are being told. All humans, no matter who they are, deserve love and support to be their true selves."

You can watch the full episodes [HERE](#).

SKY GILBERT

Pride: Adults only Please!



I'll tell you what Pride used to be like.

I remember getting ready for the Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Pride float — this would be approximately 30 years ago.

We always decided on the concept first.

Of course I can't remember the concept we chose — all I remember was my job was to suck off a dyke wearing a big, fat, black dildo.

Conundrum. What to wear? Well, I had a sailor shirt, and I knew I could get a sailor hat at the army surplus on Yonge Street, both of which would go well with the tight, white sexy shorts I would jam myself into (the ones where you could see everything).

I also decided that I would have to go on a diet so that I would look super sexy and fabulous on the float. I went on the banana diet, which was basically just bananas (I think you were allowed some oranges for variety). At the time I was also drinking pretty heavily which I didn't intend on stopping, so by the time it got to Pride I had a pretty severe stomach ailment, but: I was skinny!

The day of the parade our float was waiting in line and a very officious Pride Official (aren't they always very officious?) marched up to our float and said "Sorry, you can't do that, there's no more s/m on the floats." You see, the woman I was sucking off was a very tall Asian woman dressed entirely in leather, and of course, she was bare breasted. We got angry at the official and then decided to ignore the orders from officialdom. (I know that because there are pictures of me, —in some book somewhere — sucking off — Joy — that was her very apt name — Joy!)

Anyway, that was the beginning of the end.

The reason explicit sex was banned from the floats was because children would be there.

Huh.

If only we could get rid of the kids!

No, I don't mean shoot them, I'm not that insane, I mean why can't we NOT TAKE THEM TO PRIDE?

Pride is a celebration of sexuality. Do children have sexualities? Nope, they don't. Despite what some nutty sexuality theorist may tell you. Children are often polymorphously perverse (look it up) but of course they become adult sexual beings and make choices about behaviour and labels after they reach puberty (times have changed so much that some may disagree with me even on this). There are family oriented Pride events for children, can the children be there, not at the parade?

So what are children doing at Pride? Why not have Pride at night — like the Mardi Gras in New Orleans — and everyone get down and sexy and grungy and very very dirty? Celebrating sex? Remember sex?

Oh dear . . . I fear . . . I'm very old fashioned.

But Joy . . . can you hear me? Joy . . . are you still there?

Joy . . . I'm thinking of you!

<https://skygilbert.blogspot.com>

DREW ROWSOME

Lough Riot: comic Brendan D'Souza on being part of diverse, hilarious line-up

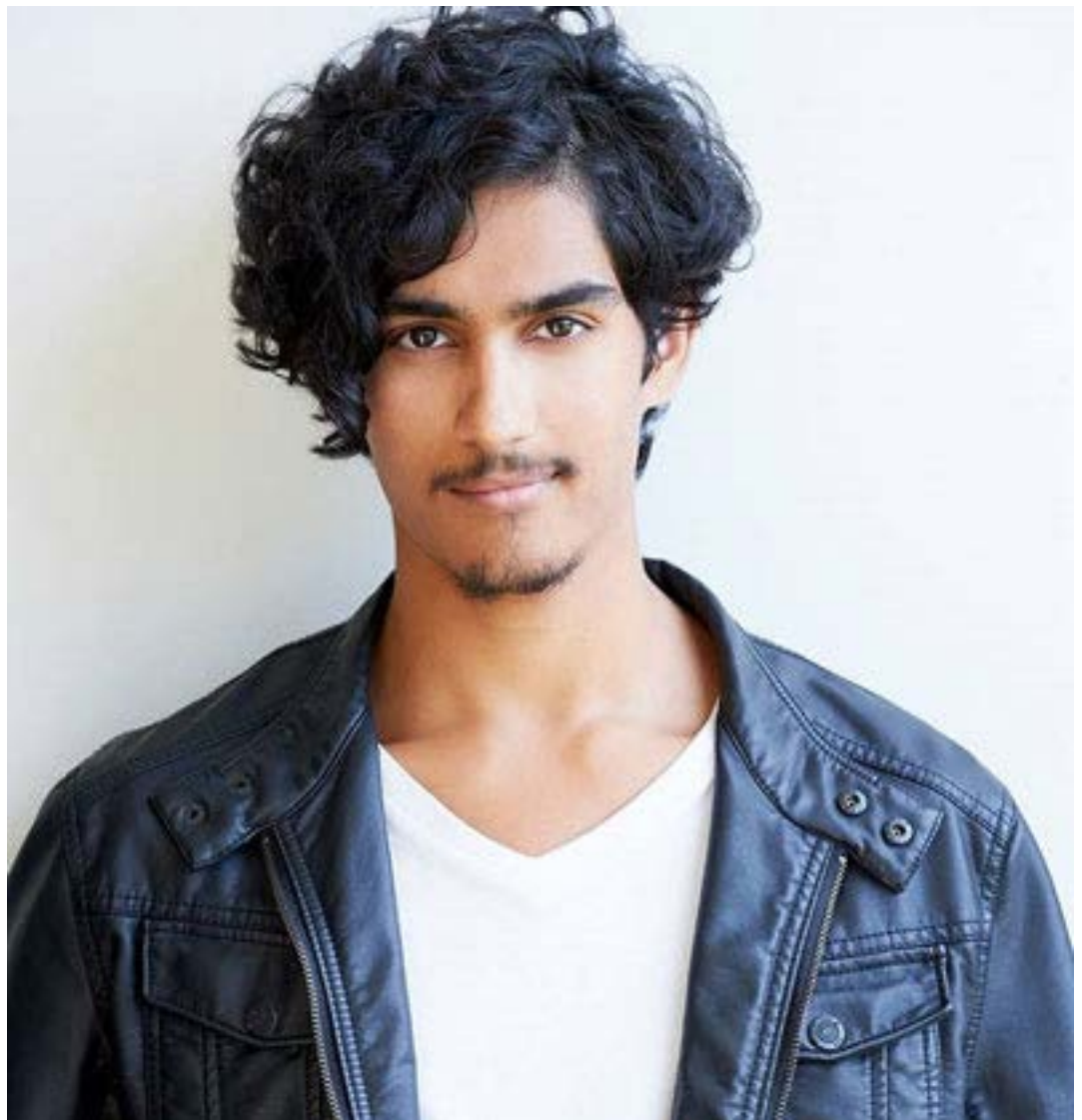


Who says that activism, and Pride, can't be funny? Comedian Brendan D'Souza is on the bill for Laugh Riot, an event billed as "a celebration of us, and of those who sacrificed so much so that we could live and laugh loudly and proudly today . . . Though our show is a celebration, we do not want our audience to forget that Pride started as a riot, and when we celebrate our community that fact should never leave our minds."

D'Souza is happy to explain, "It's a variety show. The majority of the show is stand-up but, because it's a variety show, the acts that are performing music or burlesque are showcasing what they do with their medium. We also have a news desk with segments where we recap the queer news of the last year. Stand-up is typically something that queer people haven't had a huge market in. It's about showcasing what we're capable of. There are so many incredible things happening in the community and all of that is coming together in one spectacular showcase. There's so much going on here that people need to see."

Laugh Riot is curated by head producer Susan Waycik and Chanty Marotisca. "When Chanty started Queer and Present Danger, it started with a show called The Up + Comers," says

D'Souza. "The idea was to give up and coming queer comedians a space to come together and grow. Because we've been doing that for a year and a half, going on two years, we've been able to grow as a



community, support each other and help each other out. As we grow in our numbers, we grow stronger in our abilities, in what we're presenting, the art we're creating. We're also creating more spaces to experiment more with what we can do in comedy."



D'Souza says that being a gay or queer comic "has become increasingly less relevant. Audiences want to hear more diverse voices." He says there are also more POC who are comics but "there are very few queer males of colour in comedy. As a queer man of colour," D'Souza is driven to perform so that "another will see themselves," in a way that D'Souza rarely did.

Laugh Riot is indeed a rainbow of comedy. "We've got trans performers, we've got POC performers, we've got everybody who encapsulates the queer community," say D'Souza. "The idea is to give opportunities to diverse voices, to show diverse audiences themselves onstage as they haven't had the chance to be visible. Susan and Chanty worked together to find a line-up that was diverse but would also showcase the best of our communities."

And it is exciting to be at Buddies which D'Souza calls "a spearhead of the queer arts." And a mainstream queer space. "Since last February there's been a boom in this community and we've done well on our own, but we really need the support of the community outside of comedians to lift us up and galvanize what we're doing. We're gaining traction."

The diverse line-up has some highlights for D'Souza though he notes that the show is "packed with up and comers" and headliner Brandon Ash-Mohammed. He's looking forward to seeing the other headliner, Kyle Brownrigg, who "is one of the five Yuk Yuk's billed gays in the country. Meg McKay, who I'm obsessed with, I don't know how to describe it but she's mesmerizing. Chanty is the first trans person to do . . . well, everything. And Bee Bertrand does an excellent form of stand-up, a storytelling thing that I can't completely describe, you really have to see it. It's something very special to Bee, to talk about it is to give it away."



D'Souza is surprisingly modest for a comic who has become a renowned stand-up artist, and also has a production company planning to change "what the format of a stand-up show can be." To that end they created The Wake for Avril Lavigne: A Part of the Problem Comedy Show. Though it was "not your



average comedy show,” D’Souza insists that “I personally do very traditional stand-up. I have a theatre school background, but that was telling other people’s stories. My stand-up is experience based, everything comes from my lived experience. I’m not good at observational humour. I tell my stories and make them funny.”

While being very passionate about inclusion, creating spaces and crediting other comedians, D’Souza hasn’t been particularly funny during the interview. He agrees to tell his favourite joke, one that always gets a laugh. That slays. It’s also, he insists, the only racy joke in his repertoire, he works clean. He clears his throat and then, with flawless timing, intones, “The worst thing is to find out that the guy whose dick you are sucking is a racist.”

Activism, Pride and a laugh riot.

Laugh Riot is on Fri, June 21 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St.
buddiesinbadtimes.com



PAUL BELLINI

Southern Pride

Sometimes, Malcolm Ingram lives in Toronto. For years he lived above the store above The Cellar in a cool apartment. “Did you see the fucking bullshit they’re doing to my building? I think they’re going to burn it down,” he said by phone from who knows where.

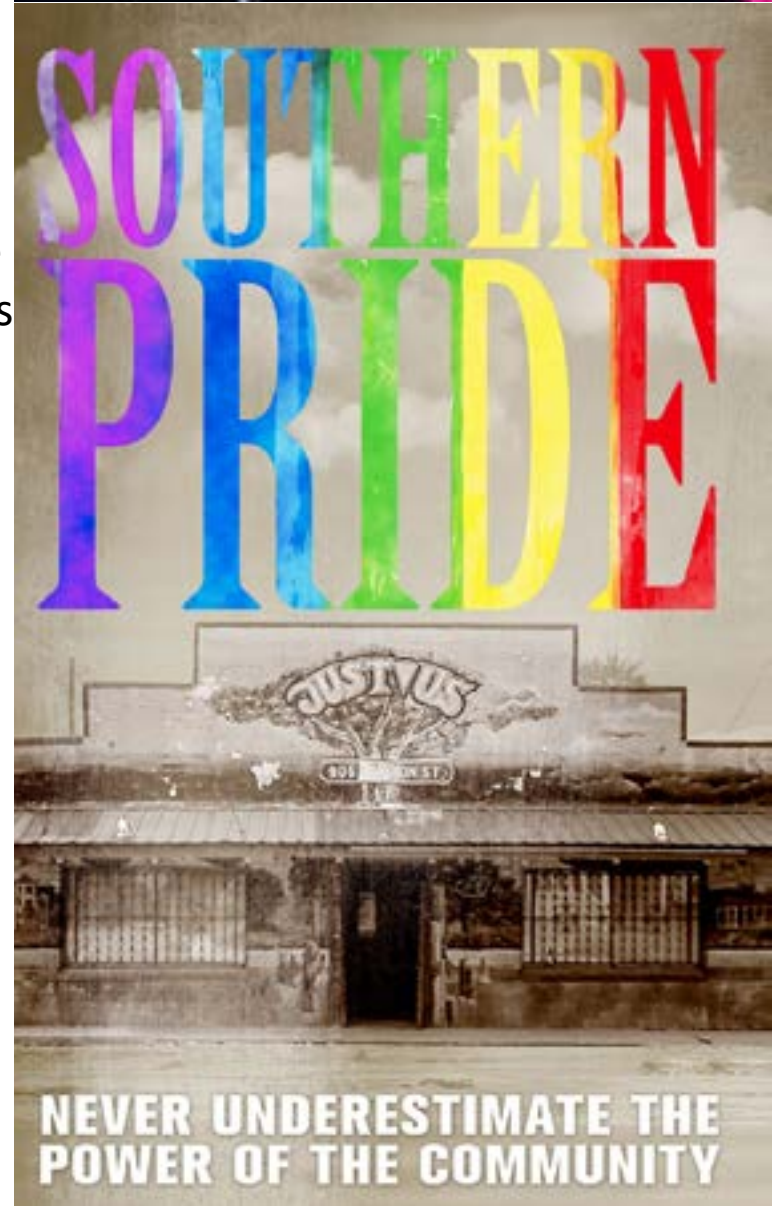
A busy documentarian, he spends a lot of time on the road. Today he was promoting the Pride Month release of his latest documentary, *Southern Pride*, about two lesbian bar owners, one white and one black, trying to put together the region’s first-ever Pride march. “I spent nine months in Mississippi shooting the film,” he tells me. “In Biloxi, I lived in a casino most of the time. Off season it’s only fifty, sixty bucks a night. I was down there the whole time, and became part of the community.” It isn’t the first time the filmmaker was drawn to the Gulf Coast. He first went down in 2006 for a film called *Small Town Gay Bar*. “I wanted to go back to Mississippi and maybe shoot at the two bars I filmed at, but one burned down and the other became a church.”

Like a lot of angry artists, Ingram was inspired by Trump. “When Trump got elected, I got up the next day and decided to make a documentary about the South. I did a Kickstarter two days later and our first day shooting was the same day as the inauguration. We would never have existed if Hillary had won.” The film chronicles the dire situation of queers in that area. “The situation is dire everywhere,” he says of the States. But Biloxi was untried territory. The women and their staffs go through a lot of discrimination and inconvenience and lack of support, but they do prevail. “Those Prides are still happening. They’re in their third year.” What does he think about these queer pioneers? “This movie is all about women. It wasn’t intentional. It’s just that women lead the charge. I found that interesting.”

This is Ingram’s fifth documentary, following *Small Town Gay Bar*, *Bear Nation*, *The Continental*, and *Out to Win*, about gay athletes. “I’m the furthest thing from a jock, so making a movie about queer athletes was a stretch for me. But I make movies about communities.” Next up, he just finished a documentary about his mentor, film director Kevin Smith. All he will say is, “Never make a documentary about a friend.” He also is working on a movie about sex star Jack Dixon. “He’s gorgeous. I want to take a barometer reading of gay male sexuality through this man. He has a very healthy attitude toward sex and I think there’s still a lot of education that needs to go on. The best way to educate is with a spoonful of sugar, and Jack Dixon is a whole lot of sugar.”

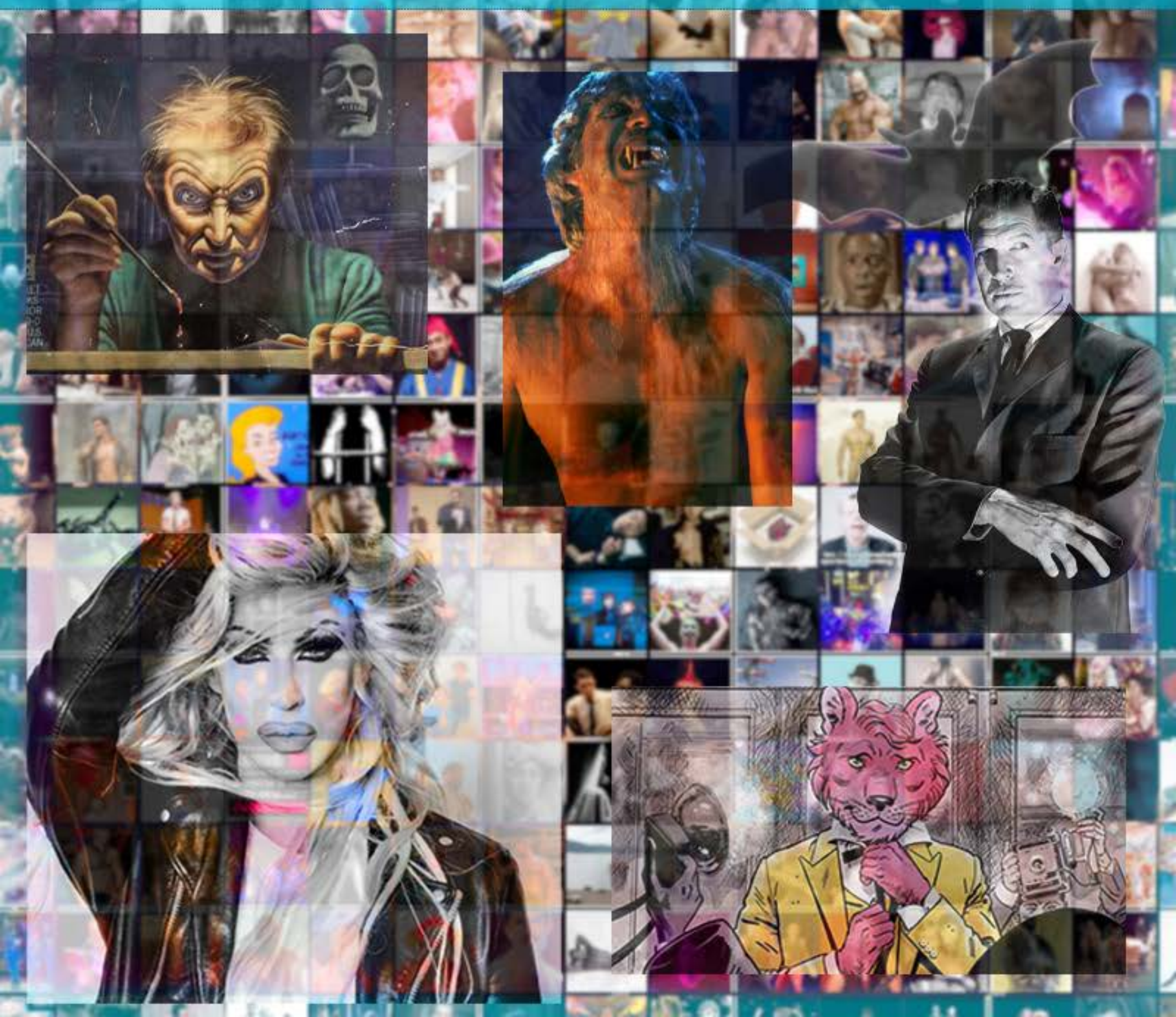
Throughout it all, he maintains a certain independence. “I never went to the government for money,” he says proudly. “All my movies were financed privately.”

Southern Pride will be available on iTunes, Amazon, Vudu, Google Play, Fandango Now, Direct TV, Dish Network, and local cable providers as of June 9, 2019.





DrewRowsome.blogspot.com



DREW ROWSOME

Hustler White Unidentified Collectible No 1 Shades from My Lost Uncle - Missing-Since1979



Cover your eyes if it gets too sleazy bright this summer

With Pride just around the corner, "sleazy bright" is, hopefully, a distinct possibility. To this end My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979 has added to their Hustler White Unidentified line with striking sunglasses, set to be released on Monday, May 20. This is the first part of a two part release with another scheduled for Pride month.

The original Hustler White Unidentified fashion line which was available through the Tom of Finland Foundation store, is completely sold out except for one (1!) anorak, size large. And it will probably be gone before I finish typing. The line - including shorts, tanks and backpacks - was sleazy and sexy, while also bright and colourful. So are the sunglasses.

My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979 is a somewhat mysterious but very fascinating fashion designer. As we discovered when they released their [Paul Goes to Hollywood](#) and [POP](#) lines, the art and inspiration is as crucial as the fashion. As their website says,



Garments and accessories will look good on a man or just hanging in a walk-in wardrobe as arty-farty pieces made of print collage fabric.

The Hustler White Unidentified print pattern is specifically designed in homage to the infamous, and highly homoerotic, Tony Ward fashion shoot with photographer Terry Richardson. As with the [POP](#) line's referencing and borrowing from other artists, the Hustler White Unidentified print design filters the icon and ideas through an art, fashion and gay lens.

As always when receiving a press release from My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979, the text with its charming garbled Finnish into English translations and madcap allusions, sends me to their websites trying to make sense of it all and out of concern that it could all be an elaborate and fashionable Banksy-esque fashion/art prank. And in the Tom of Finland store, I found an interview with Jauni Maunula who is identified as the designer/artist behind My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979. The interview is credited to "by Tom of Finland Store Staff Writer" who I hope doesn't mind if I quote from the interview because it offers a delicious insight into the creation of the original Hustler White Unidentified line and hence, the sunglasses.



Hustler White Unidentified started to evolve from the feelings of my teenage years. If I have to think of one man from that time, he is Tony Ward. My inspiration comes a lot from the popular culture of past decades. During the '90s I was a young boy trying to be a cool guy, raving in the lasers if I got into the clubs with fake ID, wearing bright coloured abstract figure t-shirts and reading the SEX book in french (that version was cheaper). Somehow against these happy times life was a bit dark then, there was AIDS, party drugs arriving to Finland, the gay scene was not that liberal, the whole country was suffering economical depression and so on. Even music television was dealing with these things. Unfortunately that exact TV company refused to show "Justify My Love" video starring Tony Ward and I needed to order the VHS single from the USA. It never arrived.

Tony Ward was/is a fantasy for many of us and he was mesmerizing in Hustler White. At 55, Ward is still modelling - including underwear - and has his own fashion line Six In The Face he refers to as "hand ravaged clothing by Mr Ward." He is, tragically, married to a woman (the wedding happened while he was still "dating" Madonna) and has three children. Judging by his Instagram he should have been pressed into service by My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979 to model the Hustler White Unidentified line and sunglasses.

As Bruce LaBruce's art tends to do, Hustler White made a lasting impression on Maunula,

The film was shown one night only at an alternative film festival in the late '90s. I chose the film because usually at that time people couldn't see gay related films at theatres, especially in Helsinki. And of course because Tony Ward was in the main role . . . Bruce LaBruce was a really interesting name too I

think. I remember sitting in the middle of the theatre, it was empty, only a few people were there. One person left during the amputee sex. Yeah, the scene was strange for me too as I was still finding my own sexuality, but later on I realized that Bruce LaBruce's brutality is the thing I like in his art. At that time the Finnish gay scene was really feminine, in Finland guys were still voguing in high heels at clubs. Bruce LaBruce brought me to the next level of masculinity. There is nothing bad in voguing, I love that too, but I mean LaBruce turned me more in the dark side of gay culture. And after all it it not dark at all. He is just showing different gay stereotypes, more masculine ones, sex and even zombies. And let's not forget the end of Hustler White. If you don't remember, watch it, there is love.



My Lost Uncle - MissingSince1979's Hustler White Unidentified Collectible sunglasses are available as of Monday, May 20 at mylostunclemissingsince1979.bigcartel.com

ALTERNATIVE PRIDE TORONTO

June 20 - 24

Alternative Pride Festival Pass

The 1st annual Alternative Pride Toronto Festival is an independent, non-corporate, artist-led music and art festival celebrating queer artists and spaces. Taking place over 4 days, we present unique and diverse events including warehouse take-overs, outdoor urban activations, wild gallery parties, and grimey underground after-hours - all while raising money for some important Toronto queer charities.

Thursday

9:00pm, June 20

Foreplay! Pride Pre-Party

@ Dundas Video

Join us inside a retro gaming paradise with a sickening crew of iconic drag queen talent and international DJs on the dancefloor!

Friday

10pm-4am, June 21

Nocturnal Emissions - Sex-Positive Gallery Party!

@ Secret Geary Ave Location!

Join us Pride Friday for the premier of this new event as we reimagine a private and hidden gallery into a lucid wet dream of lust, love, and magic. Set inside an indoor celestial garden gallery with a fantasy line up to keep you climaxing all night long!

Saturday

10:00pm, June 22

Backdoor Toronto! Pride Villa Party!

@ Secret Downtown Villa!

Backdoor is a queer warehouse party that reimagines unconventional spaces into queer utopias. Join us at a massive villa we will be turning into an out-of-this-world Pride palace paradise!

Sunday

4:00pm - 11:00pm, June 24

BEARS IN SPACE! Pride Block Party

@ Stackt Market

Prepare for contact as LA's interstellar "Bears In Space" is set to land in Toronto. We all thought this wouldn't be a street party this year, but Bears in Space is here! They come in peace!

10:00pm - 3:00am, June 24

LOVE MIRAGE! Alternative Pride Closing Event!

@ The Baby G!

You've made it through Pride. In the distance, you see an oasis. You get closer and realize, it's real, and it's Love Mirage! A drag & dance party with some of the best drag artists from across the city, from ingénues to gender benders, burlesque beauties and legends and local and international DJs coming together to create an optical and aural illusion for you to get lost in.

DREW ROWSOME

Luminato:

puppets, drama, dance, queer sex and funhouse on steroids



Festival season is in full swing and Luminato - who brought us the spectacle that was the riotous [Riot](#) - dominates June right until Pride. Kicking off with a new production from national treasure Ronnie Burkett is a sure-fire way to generate excitement. Burkett never disappoints and *Forget Me Not* (see review on page 60), billed as a "provocative call-to-arms for poetry and the enduring power of love," is certain to thrill. Because of the logistics of puppet sightlines, tickets are limited and, like Burkett's last masterpiece [The Daisy Theatre](#), the shows will sell out quickly.

Two other stellar homegrown productions return for the festival. [Obeah Opera](#), an "a capella retelling of the Salem witch trials, from the perspective of the Caribbean slave women who experienced it," was breathtaking when it was presented at the arts festival upstaging the Pan American Games. Anyone who missed the extraordinary vocals and powerful women would be wise to grab at this second chance. [Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools](#) was not as breathtaking, but it has been touring and it will be fascinating to see how time and refinement on the road has added to Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory's riveting performance.



My colleague Raymond Helkio has already previewed the screening of the documentary [Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures](#), but it should be noted that it is followed by a discussion on LGBTQ+ Censorship in Art that not only relates to the film, but is central to our very existence as participants in the dominant culture. Mapplethorpe's example is echoed as the 519 Community Centre hosts *The Art of Resistance*, a community-based project on the theme of "Grieve, Rise, and Resist" that promises absolutely no



摄影：李宜洞

ensorship of any sort. Mapplethorpe also factors in Triptych (Eyes of One on Another) which melds eight-person choral ensemble Roomful of Teeth with Mapplethorpe's images as projections, and the poetry of Patti Smith, Tuttle and Essex Hemphill.

Queer genius and trickster [Tomson Highway](#) is the lyricist for The Cave, an "apocalyptic cabaret" featuring animals fleeing a forest fire and climate change. Highway is brilliant and, while the subject matter may be dire, the execution will be moving and magical. Daniel Brooks ([The Runner](#), [Who Killed Spalding Gray?](#)) applies his multi-media sorcery to The Full Light of Day, a "film theatre hybrid about an aging matriarch who must contend with her family's corrupt legacy before she dies." Masquerade brings spectacle and snow filtered through a Russian sensibility.



There are tragically short appearances by international dance troupes with Yang Liping interpreting Stravinsky's erotic masterpiece Rite of Spring complete with lions, and an avant-garde Columbian company saluting two artistic icons in Flowers for Kazuo Ohno (and Leonard Cohen). Africa is represented by Kira, The Path/La Voie driven by chants and drums. Indigenous voices take centre stage in BIZIINDAN! and a 200 voiced choral piece on the water's edge, Maada'ookii Songlines. And "We The North" fever is reflected in the hoop dreams docu-series True North.



There is more, a multitude of choices that is as multi-faceted and easy to get lost in as the funhouse on steroids that is House of Mirrors, an installation haunting Harbourfront for the duration of Luminato.

Luminato runs from Fri, June 7 to Sun, June 23 at various locations. luminatofestival.com

WOODY'S PRIDE 2019



lets
**Have
a Ball**

**PROTECTING YOUR RIGHT TO PARTY
FOR 30 YEARS**

DREW ROWSOME

MGT cover photographer

James Villeneuve

lets the sensuality show



"For me, I would say sensual is like the start of a date," says photographer James Villeneuve whose business, Newcity Photography, bears the tagline 'Let Your Sensuality Show.' "It's filled with curiosity and emotions. It leaves us wanting more. Erotic is more passionate and sexual. I guess I would say it's all a matter of perspective. I do erotic shots when asked, but I like sensual shots the most. Porn is so easy to find these days, but finding something classy, sexy and romantic is harder and that's why I stand out."



Newcity
Photography 



Villeneuve's photographs are, besides sensual, playful and mysterious with a generous use of props, shadows, bare skin and costuming. *"Costumes are fun!",* says Villeneuve. *"They make people feel more at ease, like it's not really them who are modelling. When people are naked in front of a backdrop and shining lights, they sometimes feel shy. I have to tell them how to pose and hold themselves. When in a costume, they become that character. It's actually amazing. Sometimes we get crazy fun shots, and the models require little instructions."*

Sensuality just seemed to find Villeneuve. *"I started as a photo editor. One year, a friend asked me why I didn't expand my photo editing skills into photography and edit my own images. He convinced me that it was a fun way to meet people and develop my skills. He offered to be my first model and to simply make a day of it, shooting. We took lots of shots from fashion to risqué shots, even a few nudes. It was a fun day and I edited some shots for him. He posted them on social media, a shot of him wearing nothing, lying in a field of cannabis. Apparently people thought it was sexy without being too much and loved it."*

A career was launched. *"Not long after, a stunning stranger messaged me asking me how much I would charge to do the same style for him. I was surprised but I did it for fun, thinking how interesting that an attractive man wants me to take sexy shots of him. I slowly made a reputation in this city of not only a sensual style of photography, but also for being professional and discreet with the shots I took. Without a single advertisement, my little hobby became a side business."*

Villeneuve's approach and basic attitude have a lot to do with that success. *"Sensuality is something enchanting to me, rather than erotic or romantic. We all have that side in us, the one we don't often let others see. The one that's confident and strong. You'd be surprised how many people who are physically beautiful actually have less confidence that one would expect. I try to let everyone see the beauty they have. The beauty I see when I look at them. And for a moment, they do. When that is captured, the photo is beautiful. I also just try to have fun. Some models have actually become amazing friends."*

It all has to do with the model being comfortable in front of the camera. *"First, I always say they can bring a friend with them, especially the first time. I always tell them that if they do, that friend becomes my intern and must hold a light reflector. Why turn down free help?,"* laughs Villeneuve. *"We talk for a bit, to break the ice, and I ask them what they expect. I also show them a more detailed portfolio so that they can see what I've done and could replicate if they wanted to. I show them the way I want them to pose, why I want them to pose a certain way, and then we start."*

Because the majority of Villeneuve's portraits are commissioned, he is meeting many of the models cold and he must help them reveal their heat. *"It all comes down to trust and being comfortable with your body,"* he says. *"If a model trusts me and my idea, then the shot will be amazing. If they don't trust me or really doesn't like their body, then it's apparent. It doesn't hurt if they are cute too. And I'm very collaborative with my teams. It's fun when either I have an idea, or the models do. Often, I get pulled out of my comfort zone to try something."*



And sometimes he pushes himself out of his comfort zone. *"The cosplay photos started when I got in touch with Niq van der Aa, a professional cosplayer in Ottawa. He had a genderbend ensemble based on The Little Mermaid, my favourite movie. He was beautiful and the cosplay outfit he created was amazing, however his photo of it was horrid. I took a chance and offered him a deal: I would redo the shot in a more professional manner and, if he liked it, he could use the shot at conventions. As compensation, I would get to keep the merman tail rather than get paid any money. If he didn't like it, then the shots would simply be deleted before being sent to him, and we'd go our separate ways."*

van der Aa was skeptical but, *"With nothing really to lose if it didn't work out, he asked some people about me and found out I was actually an experienced photographer with a good reputation."* And the deal was struck. *"He agreed and although I was excited, I was also nervous. I had just promised a man a shot that I had never attempted before. I drew up a few ideas and plans. We did an outdoor session of the genderbend mermaid as well as an indoor shot of Marvel's Loki. He adored both and now we work together all the time. I try to add a bit of sensuality and fun to those shots rather than the typical 'look at me in the pose from the movie.' It really helps that Niq is such a talented man who believes in my vision every time we create something together."*



Newcity
Photography



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Photography



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Photography 



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Photography

Villeneuve has also branched out with commercial work. *“I was hired a while back to do scenery shots of Ottawa and some macro photography. I even had one of my green bee shots enlarged and hung it in my home. I keep that profile and skill very separate as it’s so different. It’s a very different process as I can’t tell the subject what I want, I have to be more patient. I even had to have my husband drive me around town and help me with my equipment at 1am to get a perfect city landscape at night. Editing city landscapes is very different from editing a personal portrait, enhancing architectural features is not the same as removing acne from a person. It’s something I have pride in, it’s just very different.”*

Villeneuve has also begun successfully exploring a slightly different sensuality. *“I had only photographed men because I knew what was sexy and what was too much. It was what brought me success and I enjoyed it,”* he says. *“I was always asked to photograph women, but I didn’t think I could compete against all the other experienced photographers who specialized in women.”* But, with some help, he pushed out of his comfort zone. *“I had a friend who gave me a few dresses from a prom store and was lucky enough that my reputation allowed me to work with a few female models even though I wasn’t experienced yet. In no time at all, I ended up with closets filled with dresses given to me by stores, fashion designers saying they could make a commercial, and jewelry stores giving me some bling to have my prints with their merchandise in their stores. Being published in several magazines didn’t hurt my reputation either.”*





Newcity
Photography



Newcity
Photography



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Photography



Newcity
Photography 



The differences between the sexes are superficial according to Villeneuve who quips, *"With women, it's completely different and so is the style that I've adapted for them. It's very different because men wear very little while women have a lot more clothing, lashes, makeup ..."* Except when they don't. Villeneuve says his most challenging photographic moment *"was the first time a girl asked me to do a topless session. Thank goodness she was a good friend of mine. It was uncomfortable at first but wine helped."*

While sensuality reigns in Villeneuve's portfolio, there is very little explicit nudity. *"That's a conscious decision,"* he says. *"When it comes to nudes, I prefer having the model decide whether they want those published or sold. There's a few exceptions. I've sold some nudes but I won't post them on my site. Instagram also doesn't allow it, so I place emojis to cover some bits. That being said, if the client posts them online, all the better. One of my favourite of my photos is of a nude Santa and angel."*

He enjoys shooting nudes if the client/model wants it. *"Most of the time, as long as we discuss what they want, I've very open into trying to assist. My only rule is that I be the sole photographer present."* There is one other caveat, Villeneuve and his husband recently became parents. *"My kids come first so I do most sessions after they go to bed. They've met a few of my regulars as I have become friends with a few models. My youngest is fascinated with cosplayers. The kids are also models of mine. What kid wouldn't love the fact that Dad has thrones and costumes in his office? Halloween is never dull in this house."*

When asked what his fantasy shoot would be, Villeneuve surprises. *"Every time I have an idea I want to shoot, I just shout it out and I get to do it. I want to try an angel at the falls and I only have to ask. I want to do a male Sailor Moon - don't judge me on that one - and I get to do it several times with different models. I want to do a naked Santa, and I have men saying they would love to. It's actually fun, my only limitation is geography. No sexy deserts around Ottawa. I guess my only fantasy that would be amazing would be to shoot someone famous I was attracted to. Anyone know Chris Evans?"*





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Photography



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If a reader wants a portrait done,
“They can contact me via Instagram at
newcityphotography1 or my website
newcityphotography.ca,”
says Villeneuve.

“And if someone wants to purchase
a print, they can select one from
Instagram or choose a model and
I can show them a few examples.
If they want to purchase a book, I
create one usually every year. They
are welcome to contact me.”



Klein



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Pride Guide

Pride Month // June 1-30, 2019
Festival Weekend // June 21-23, 2019

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THE
READY
COMMITMENT

DREW ROWSOME



Tales of the City

the chosen family of 28 Barbary Lane



It is impossible for me to objectively review Netflix's revival of Tales of the City. Anyone who has read any of Armistead Maupin's masterpiece novels about 28 Barbary Lane, or watched the original mini-series, has a history with the inhabitants of Anna Madrigal's sprawling home. The main themes of Tales of the City are family and tolerance, and the originals - 1978 and 1983 respectively - put gay, now LGBTQ, people front and centre in a gentle and addictive soap opera. It was a revelation at the time, and the characters quickly became family.

And most crucially and revolutionarily, inspired us to form and appreciate our own chosen families.



The first episode had barely begun and I teared up. When Anna Madrigal, the magnificent Olympia Dukakis, made her first appearance, I moved the box of Kleenex so it was in reach. There is an overwhelming feeling of coming home, greeting old friends, and flashing back to all the extraordinary LGBTQ people who I have been honoured to have in my life. I obviously have little objectivity.

Four episodes in, I am still absorbed and will be binge watching until I am done. The plot is negligible, Mary Ann Singleton (Laura Linney) returns to 28 Barbary Lane for Anna Madrigal's 90th birthday celebration. And all the story threads that were left dangling begin to be resolved. Linney has a tough job as Mary Ann was initially a device to guide non-LGBTQ viewers into the story without scaring them off. She was so whitebread that her acceptance paved the way for tolerance and curiosity instead of discrimination. With that device now, hopefully, redundant, Mary Ann has been recast as almost a slapstick villain and it is a credit to Linney's skill and charm that we still root for Mary Ann.



It is a tonal problem that, in hindsight, plagues Tales of the City in all its incarnations. The characters have to be intriguing, comical and, despite Mary Ann's protestations that they aren't, "freaks." It's a tricky balance and one that is rife within the gay community, trying to be mainstream without excluding or mocking the drag queens, leather folk and gender flexible. It also makes it hard to avoid cliches. But when one is immersed in family, cliches are unavoidable and deviations from the dictated norm become quirks.

Twenty-three years later, things have changed on Barbary Lane. Michael "Mouse" Tolliver has grown into Murray Bartlett who, after [Looking](#), is now the definitive hot but sensitive daddy of San Francisco, has a new younger boyfriend in the luminous Charlie Barnett. Shawna, Ellen Page, has become the central bisexual charmer around who all revolve. And Anna Madrigal is still the wise and warm matriarch. No-one but Olympia Dukakis could spout so many epigrams (though she is mocked for speaking "like a fortune cookie") and have them land with precision and naturalism.

There are new inhabitants with varying degrees of success. Garcia as Jake Rodriguez and May Hong as Margot Park are a couple who are negotiating their love and the reality of transition. The storyline quickly becomes the most compelling thread, simply because of the rawness and the appeal of the two actors who are strong and subtle. The Instagram-obsessed twins are less interesting because, so far, they are treated as a joke that we have all seen before - sometimes familiarity works against a character.

Brian Hawkins (Paul Gross) is still looking for love - it could be said that all the characters are, Tales of the City is at heart, a highly literate and politically charged/aware soap opera/serial - and has found an intriguing feisty foil in Michelle Buteau despite still pining for Mary Ann. Dee Dee (Barbara Garrick) with her acid tongue and equally verbally (and ASL) vicious houseboy Mateo (Dickie Hearts) initially welcome

Mary Ann. And Victor Garber is a mysterious gentleman caller who may, or may not, be a love interest and/or antagonist for Anna Madrigal. And so the plots begin to spin.



The trans subplot is strong as is the relationship between Mouse and Ben. The latter includes a scathing and powerful argument at a dinner where old school gay men collide with the new reality. Gay white cis-gender privilege but a privilege that a horrible price was paid for. It is a conflict playing out daily with *Pride and Buddies* and it is one that haunts even this all-inclusive *Tales of the City*. The hot button issues are not incidental but, as is the spectre and reality of AIDS and HIV, are always lurking on the edges of the frame, an unending struggle and the real villains. We have come so far but there is always something new, or familiar, to struggle with.



Anyone coming fresh to this particular chosen family, or, tragically to [Armistead Maupin](#) and his magical world view, should be up to speed by the end of the second episode by which point all the principle players and their relationships have been established. But be warned, it will be impossible to resist binge watching the entire series and then backtracking to the extraordinary novels and the mini-series that this *Tales of the City* builds on.

Tales of the City is on Netflix beginning Fri, June 7



Forget Me Not: a love letter to Ronnie Burkett's love letter to the magic of theatre, humanity and puppets



Please do not, in any way, misconstrue this as a review. This is, in the parlance of Forget Me Not, a love letter. MyGayToronto asks me to assign one to five stars to every review, for Forget Me Not, I would need a constellation. And practically, unfortunately, I, due to unforeseen and dramatic circumstances, did not get to see the ending of Forget Me Not. Just as we approached the climax, when sideshow/ Punch and Judy stall proprietor Zacko Budaydos is about to marry the dancing bear who is not exactly what it appears to be, and Ronnie Burkett has transformed into a giant wedding cake, our rapt attention was interrupted by fire alarms.

No-one was sure if it was part of the show or a genuine emergency. The arriving fire trucks and the frenzy of the harried Luminato volunteers hustling us out a fire exit into the rain, sirens and flashing red lights, gave us the answer. We stood in the cold drizzle hoping to be let back into the magical world we had cast out of, before slowly dispersing and meandering off. And of course Burkett, who had dealt with a few technical snafus (it was a preview as he noted) with quips and asides, was not flustered by the potential conflagration. We last saw him smiling and saying, "This might just be better than what I wrote."

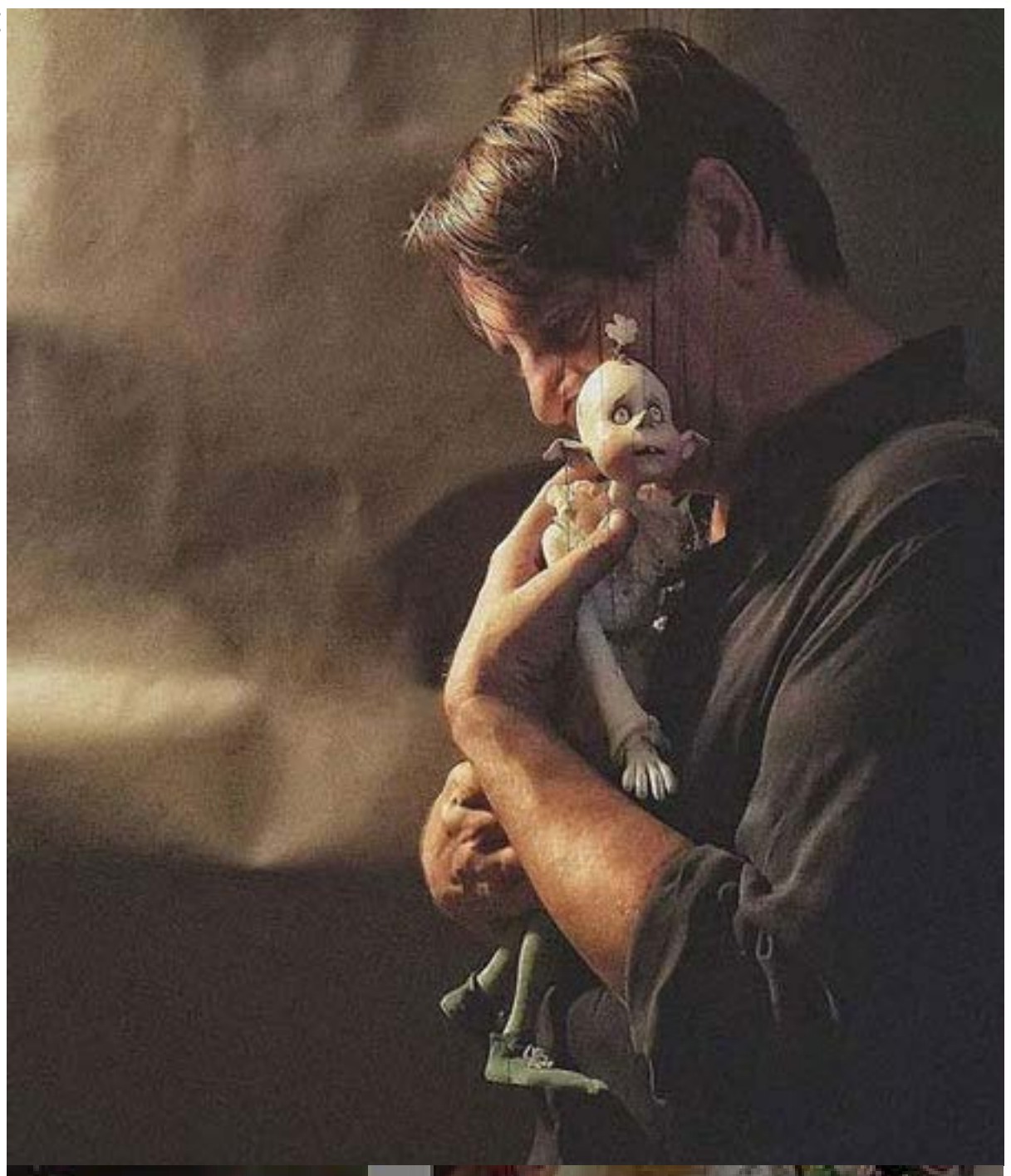
It would be cruel to attempt to encapsulate the plot of Forget Me Not. A spoiler revealed should be more punishable than the extreme horrors that are inflicted in the New Now for using writing, particularly love letters. Suffice it to say that there are several plots that simmer simultaneously with

multiple digressions that illuminate or just entertain. Yes, Burkett is telling a story but he is also deconstructing not only the art of puppetry but also the barrier between performer and audience, and, in the process, the barriers between fellow humans. And fellow puppets.

Audience participation or interaction is something that I am normally leery of. Burkett, the world's most charmingly benevolent dominatrix of a performer, makes it integral. We became props, puppeteers, maestros, lighting technicians, supplicants, and all so eager to do so that we became, for the time of *Forget Me Not* and on into the rainy night, community. Burkett is a master puppeteer, his creations appear to have lives of their own, to breathe and feel, but he also is a master at pulling the strings of his audience. Acknowledging his manipulative tendencies and casually barking out orders, Burkett undercuts it all with a twinkle in his eyes that is a klieg light, and a smile that is of equal wattage. If he ever decides to lead a cult, beyond his artistic one, society is in severe danger of happily drinking Kool-Aid, even the icky orange flavour.

There is not a proscenium stage for *Forget Me Not* - aside from the one that Burkett occasionally adorns himself with as a disguise - and the seating, which won't be used much, is vintage furniture and benches scattered around the playing area. Burkett moves restlessly but purposefully throughout the space, erasing the concept of stage and best or worst seats in the house, and the audience follows or regroup. That would be the only complaint about *Forget Me Not*, the cavernous space of the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre occasionally swallows the voices of Burkett and the multitude of characters. Or perhaps that was the design: to draw us in, to make us lean in so that we become intimate and seduced, like the whispers that are used to give information to *She, The Keeper of the Lost Hand* to compose the love letters that are crucial to *Forget Me Not*.

There is slapstick, an entire mythology, a funeral procession, a smattering of Polari, evocative music



courtesy of John Alcorn, puppets that come to life in Burkett's hands and in ours (Burkett's power is so strong that we believe and it happens), the obliteration of a homophobic Tom of Finland-esque puppet, a tattooed lady and the aforementioned dancing bear. And those are just the moments that come instantly to mind, I was far too busy and entranced to take notes or remember quotes. So maybe the fire alarm - thankfully the theatre and Burkett's props and puppets did not go up in flames - was a blessing. I'll never know the ending of Forget Me Not, but I'll also never have to let the experience end. The emotive state that was achieved lives on, open-ended, and is easily accessible.

The only downside is that we never got to applaud Burkett - I'm sure he had a joke ready about us already being standing for the ovation he richly deserves - but I suspect his self-satisfied smile - when he wasn't in the trance he enters when bringing the puppets to life, it's as if they become linked entities, and we are so close that the magnetic field also envelopes us - as we gasped, laughed and were enraptured, gave him the same reward. That was one rambling sentence but hopefully properly punctuated and to the point. Like Forget Me Not, a love letter.

Forget Me Not continues until Sun, June 23 at the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre, 227 Front St E. luminatofestival.com



DREW ROWSOME



When Brooklyn Was Queer:

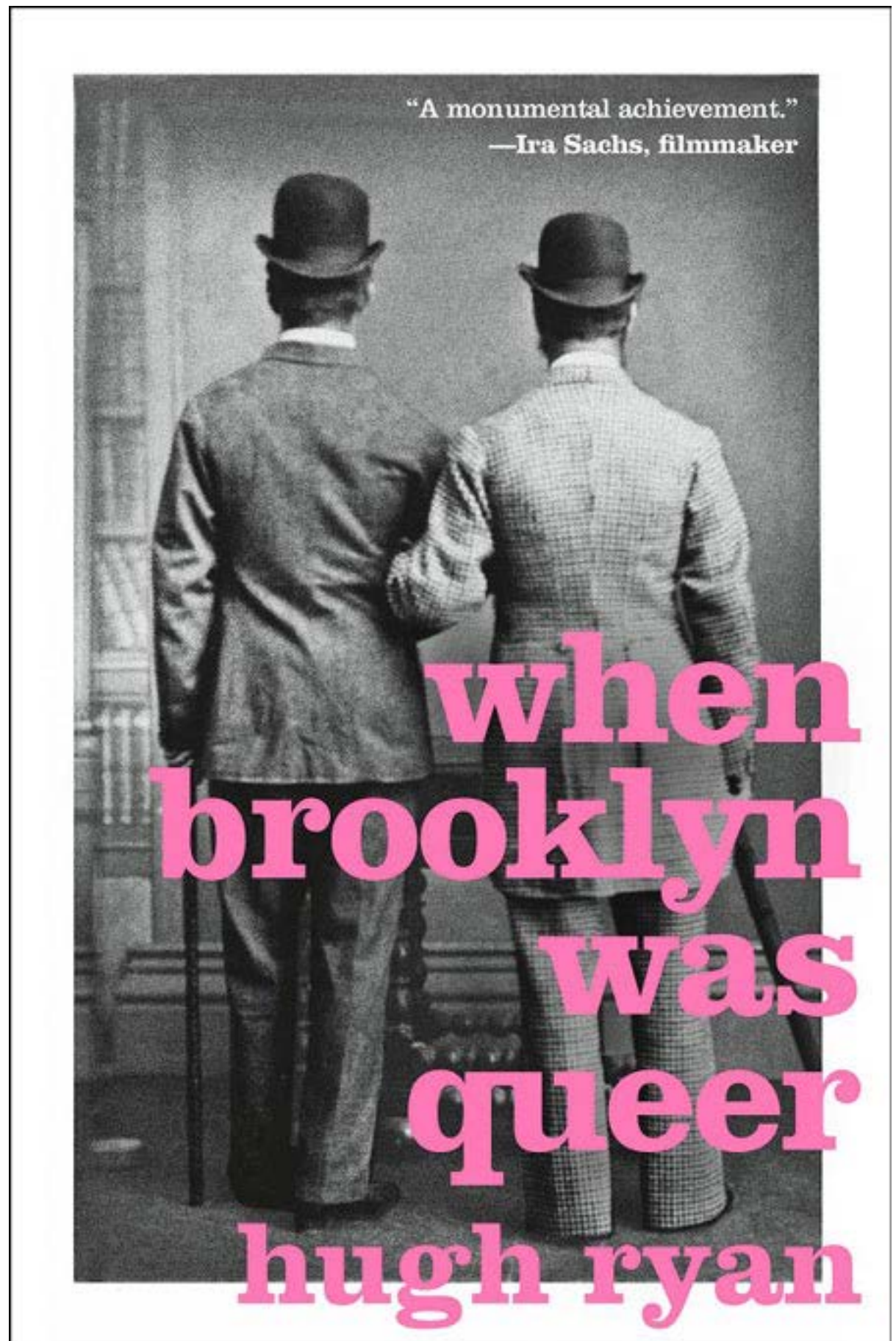
if you don't know you have a past, how can you believe you have a future

When Brooklyn Was Queer can be read for all the fascinating gossipy details and stories about our queer ancestors and be a compelling read. Author Hugh Ryan writes with a breezy stylish flare that, despite the copious footnotes, is more novelistic than historical and keeps the pages turning. And what characters he has to work with drag queens like Foley McKeever aka The Great Ricardo, drag kings Ella Wesner and Florence Hines, poets from Walt Whitman to Hart Crane to Harold Norse, burlesque stars Gypsy Rose Lee and Madame Tirza, and fleets of sailors. All queer icons.

Brooklyn wasn't always a suburb of New York City. At various times in history - and Ryan takes the reader from 1855 to 1969 - Brooklyn eclipsed New York City as an important shipping port, industrial centre and entertainment destination. While New York City had Greenwich Village, Broadway and Harlem as queer incubators, Brooklyn had the docks, an ever evolving series of bars and less than legitimate theatres, and Coney Island. Ryan traces how queer life, before there was even a concept of queer, thrived on the fringes.

While the sailors, often situational or gay-for-pay, were a large part of the creation of the history, Ryan also notes how women working during the war was a godsend for lesbians and trans folk. But Coney Island gets a good share of the attention. As the beachfront grew from elite resorts to the [massive entertainment complex it became](#) before being considered immoral and tacky and was driven into its current shabby state, queers were always there. Long before [Ward Hall](#), sideshows and burlesque were welcoming to queers and the sexually non-conforming, but Coney Island also had a thriving cruising scene and multiple bathhouses that, while not today's explicitly sexual businesses, were sexual hotbeds. It is absorbing, incredible reading.

Ryan spends a lot of thought on how architecture, urbanization and progress have affected queer life. How the queer experience intersected with other marginalized groups, particularly the black community. And of course sex work is also crucial to the development of the queer world. The docks were home to many sex workers of all genders and persuasions, and there is a particularly vivid visit to a male brothel, with an attendant gay Nazi spy scandal, that flourished briefly. Briefly is the key word.





The cumulative effect of *When Brooklyn Was Queer* is not just a history of queer life in Brooklyn, it is an incisive examination of how we deal with queer history. So much historical research and writing does not even consider queer. Much of Ryan's research was done reading between the lines in news articles and scouring police reports. Our history is to be found in arrests and scandals. Ryan is able to chronicle the bustling brawling Brooklyn bar scene by finding which bars were busted and why. The trans sex-worker Loop-the-loop, who deserves to be a folk hero, is recorded only because they were a research subject of Dr Robert Wilson Shufeldt who wrote important and scholarly books like *The Biography of a Passive Pederast* and *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization*.

Repeatedly, Ryan is forced to reiterate his point that much of our history no longer exists and even more has been maligned if not actively erased. He begins with an anecdote about Carson McCullers and Gypsy Rose Lee who lived at 7 Middagh Street in a shared house with WH Auden, Chester Kallman, Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears, Paul Bowles and other luminaries. He then travels back in time to try to piece together what history he can find. The narrative is not seamless, some stories are lost, some queers will never be remembered the way they should be, but it is never less than exhilarating.

It quickly becomes obvious that what today would be heroic and admirable, was then immoral and often illegal. And if it wasn't illegal, someone like the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice would find a way to make it so. The winding moral dilemma of the creation of a treatment program for gay men arrested for being caught having sex in the '50s is dizzying. One of the founders was religious zealot, the other a gay man who occasionally consorted with the felons. There are so many ambiguities and possibilities.

So one can read *When Brooklyn Was Queer* just for fun, or if one has a fascination with what is now, after a long dry spell, geographically a homo hipster haven, or one can marvel at queer resilience and determination. Ryan brings Jane Barnell the bearded lady, Bill the sailor and rent boy and "one of the gorgeous men in 1940s Manhattan," artist and prolific letter writer Mary Hallock Foote, and Thomas Painter who chronicled his search for trade at Coney Island for Alfred Kinsey, to the forefront where they should exist. They are all incredible inspiring people.

Ryan ends *When Brooklyn Was Queer* saying ". . . queer history has always been piecemeal and canonless - a mutual endeavour of shared love." And the tag line to the pop-up museums, much like the exhibits at [the ArQuives](#), that inspired and accompany *When Brooklyn Was Queer*, is the succinct "If you don't know you have a past, how can you believe you have a future?" This past is a glorious if scattershot one that is a pleasure to discover. And it bodes well for a stellar future.





Mr Know-It-All:

The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder and the gleaming wisdom of John Waters

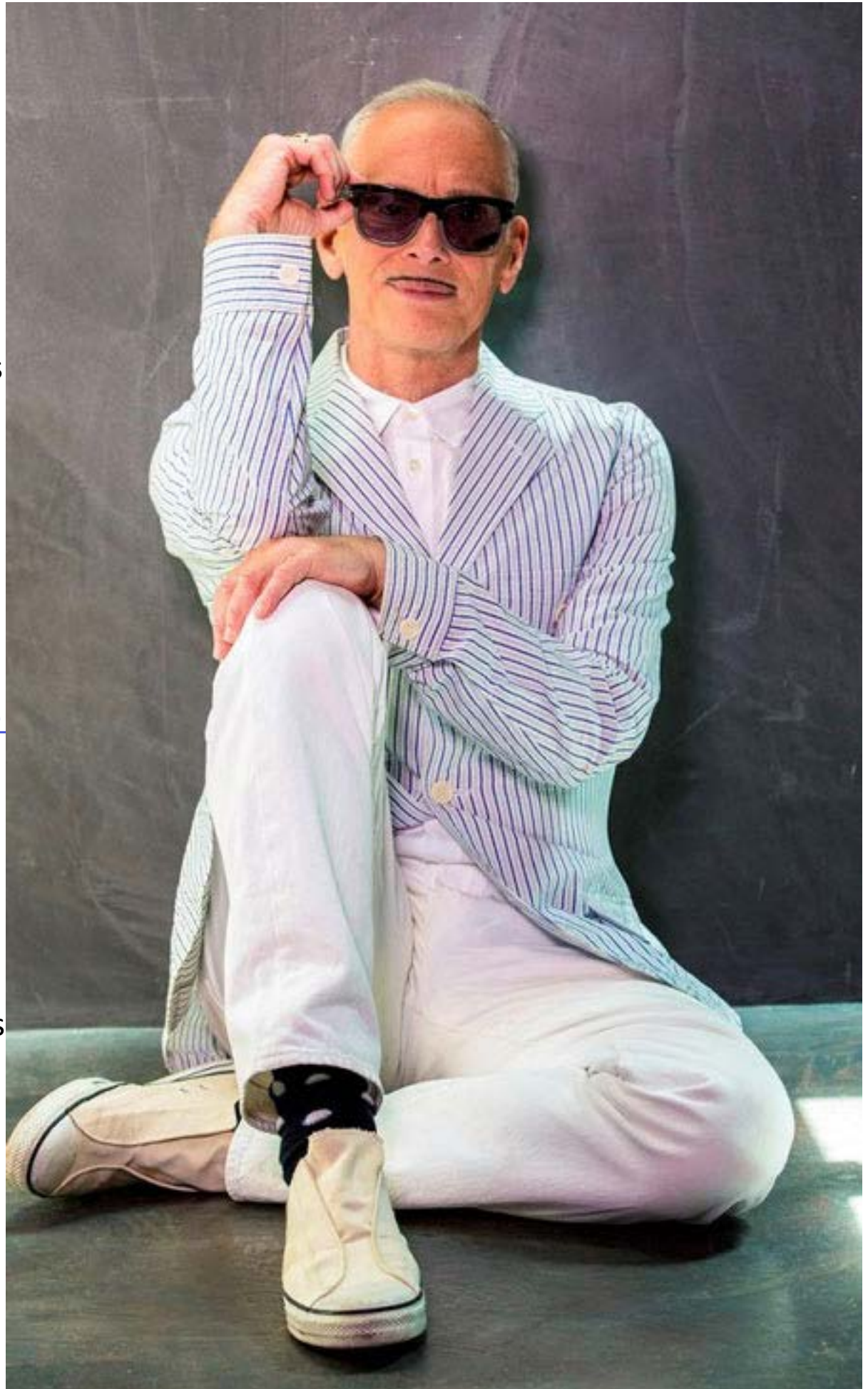
[John Waters](#) begins *Mr Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder*, by complaining that, "Somehow I became respectable." It's more complicated than that, I would consider it more than he became iconic to those in the know or on the fringe of polite society, crossed over into celebrity with just a touch of shock value, and, as *Mr Know-It-All* proves repeatedly, once you are a celebrity, no matter what you do it is considered respectable.

The introduction that follows that sentence is a variation on/expansion of Water's brilliant fusion of self-help and disdainful social commentary that is [Make Trouble](#). Here he is indeed an "elder," that slightly disreputable favourite uncle who is prone to exaggeration and comic asides in order to make some crucial facts and dispense indispensable advice. Tongue firmly in cheek, he lays out what he has learned and makes some important points about what is to become *Mr Know-It-All*'s dominant theme, aging can be done disgracefully gracefully.

Then, for approximately the first half of *Mr Know-It-All*, Waters chronicles the upward failure of his film career. *Polyester*, *Hairspray*, *Cry-Baby*, *Serial Mom*, *Pecker*, *Cecil*

B Demented and *A Dirty Shame*, all get a chapter. Waters isn't interested in making a case for a reassessment of his oeuvre, he is explaining, in as close to an autobiography of his creativity as we will probably ever get, his motivations, drive and learning process. Moving into the mainstream was a fraught, frightening and fabulous process, and Waters' battles with censorship and good taste are recounted with glee.

Without seemingly trying to, he makes a very good case for each of the films and makes one eager to revisit. I always wondered why *A Dirty Shame*, which is so hilarious and lascivious an idea and which boasts a performance by Tracey Ullman that should be legendary (Waters agrees on the latter), just never managed to lift off. Waters lays it all out and I hope that right now some horny film geek is working on restoring and remastering a director's cut.





And of course these chapters are full of star-studded gossip. Divine, Kathleen Turner, Tab Hunter, Patricia Hearst, Traci Lords, Johnny Depp, Ricki Lake (or was it Christina Ricci? The story is so hilarious that the specific starlet doesn't matter) losing her virginity, Joe Dallesandro, Mink Stole and Joey Heatherton (Joey Heatherton!) are only a sampling of the names and anecdotes. The stories are less scandalous and more Waters' bemused musings on the peccadilloes of the people he not only worked with, but considers friends and family. It is an extraordinary cast of characters and irresistible reading, *Hollywood Babylon III* but with heart.

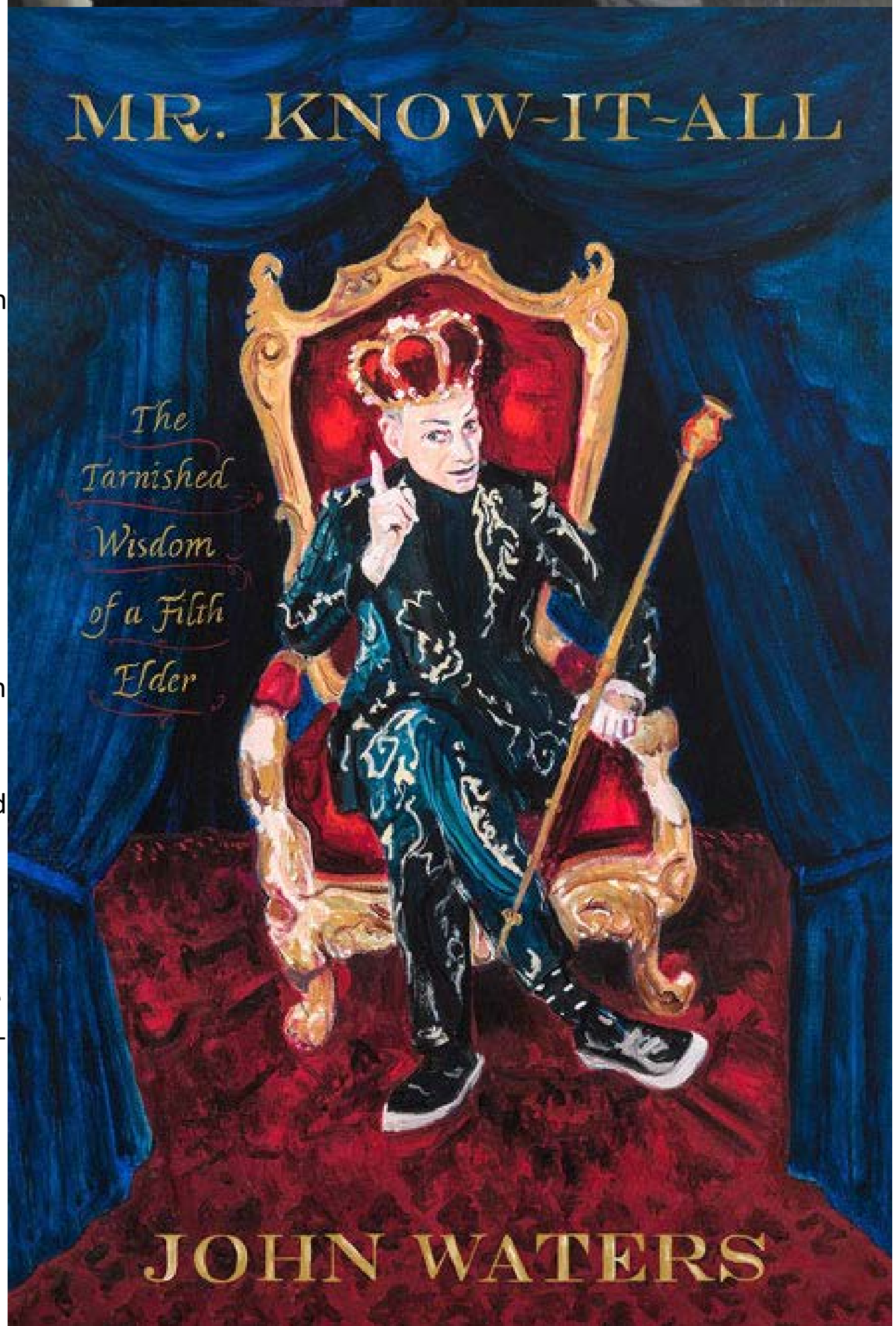
The second half of *Mr Know-It-All* is a collection of essays and it is more hit and miss. Fortunately more hits than misses. "I Got Rhythm," illustrated with the photo of Waters with Justin Bieber from their notorious talk show introduction, charts Waters' love affair with pop music. His films always contained obscure but delicious songs that should have been hits, and his analysis, musical and sexual, of their appeal is autobiography with a beat. I was continually torn between continuing to read and putting the book down temporarily to google an artist that I suddenly needed to know and hear.

When Waters ventures into fictional satire, like the first half of [Carsick](#), it is the only time we see him working. "Gristle," despite an almost redeeming boffo punchline, goes on too long for its slender roast of trendy restaurants and foodies. "Gay & Happy" makes pertinent political points that made me want to cheer but also wanders into fanciful digressions that left me cold. And "Run-On Andy" is a clever

idea rendered unreadable by an adherence to the Warholian style Waters is mocking. But then I was not artsy sophisticated enough to finish reading A either.

More than balancing those missteps are a tourist guide to his beloved Provincetown, an analysis of sex clubs and their future potential, monkeys who create art, adopting a doll, the fantastic and frightening foibles of Waters' fanatical fans, tips on public speaking, and a concluding chapter that muses on transcending and embracing death in all its gory morbidity. We learn snippets about Waters that raise more questions than answers - he is not a fan of anal sex though fascinated by any act considered deviant, and refers a few times to a mysterious and long suffering partner - but then even a respectable elder has to maintain some mystery.

Woven throughout, or sometimes just popping out, are little nuggets of brilliance or trashy asides. Chris Isaak and Waters compare Madonna and Dolly Parton, there is a stunningly evocative description of a nostalgic acid trip (though the planning for it is more hilarious), a lot of well-deserved sympathy for the assistants who work for Waters, a touching tribute to Divine, and a smattering of sartorial advice. Mr Waters is considerably more than respectable, and Mr Know-It-All is delightfully "filthy."



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The Lavender Scare:

inspires pride for Pride



In my lifetime we have gone from a Pride Day protest to a Pride Week festival to a Pride Month celebration and marketing tool. We pay lip service to the past, to times when it was more difficult, punishable, to be gay. When openly gay was virtually unheard of. And we pat ourselves on the back for living in a part of the world that if not exactly gay-positive, is gay-friendly. And then I watched The Lavender Scare and one particular scene resonated terrifyingly.

In the 1950s, the US government organized a purge of gay and lesbian, LGBTQ was not yet an umbrella, employees. The ostensible reason was, despite there not being a single example on record, that gay people were, tying into the communist menace mania, susceptible to blackmail. The underlying reason was the blanket assumption that same-sex sex was immoral. Over 5,000 government employees were fired for being gay or just for being suspected of being gay.

The Lavender Scare features stills and footage of the politicians voting the purge into law. It is a sea of white, elderly, bitter-looking men. It is, if it were in colour, eerily similar to the current lawmakers we see questioning Dr Christie Blasey Ford, defending Trump, and rising in trained seal ovations for Ford. The same rabid fear of losing their privilege, the same perverse blood lust in their eyes. The past is not safely in the past.

The facts and history that The Lavender Scare presents is horrifying in itself, but it is the interviews with the survivors of the purge that are extraordinary. Joan Cassidy, whose stellar career in the navy

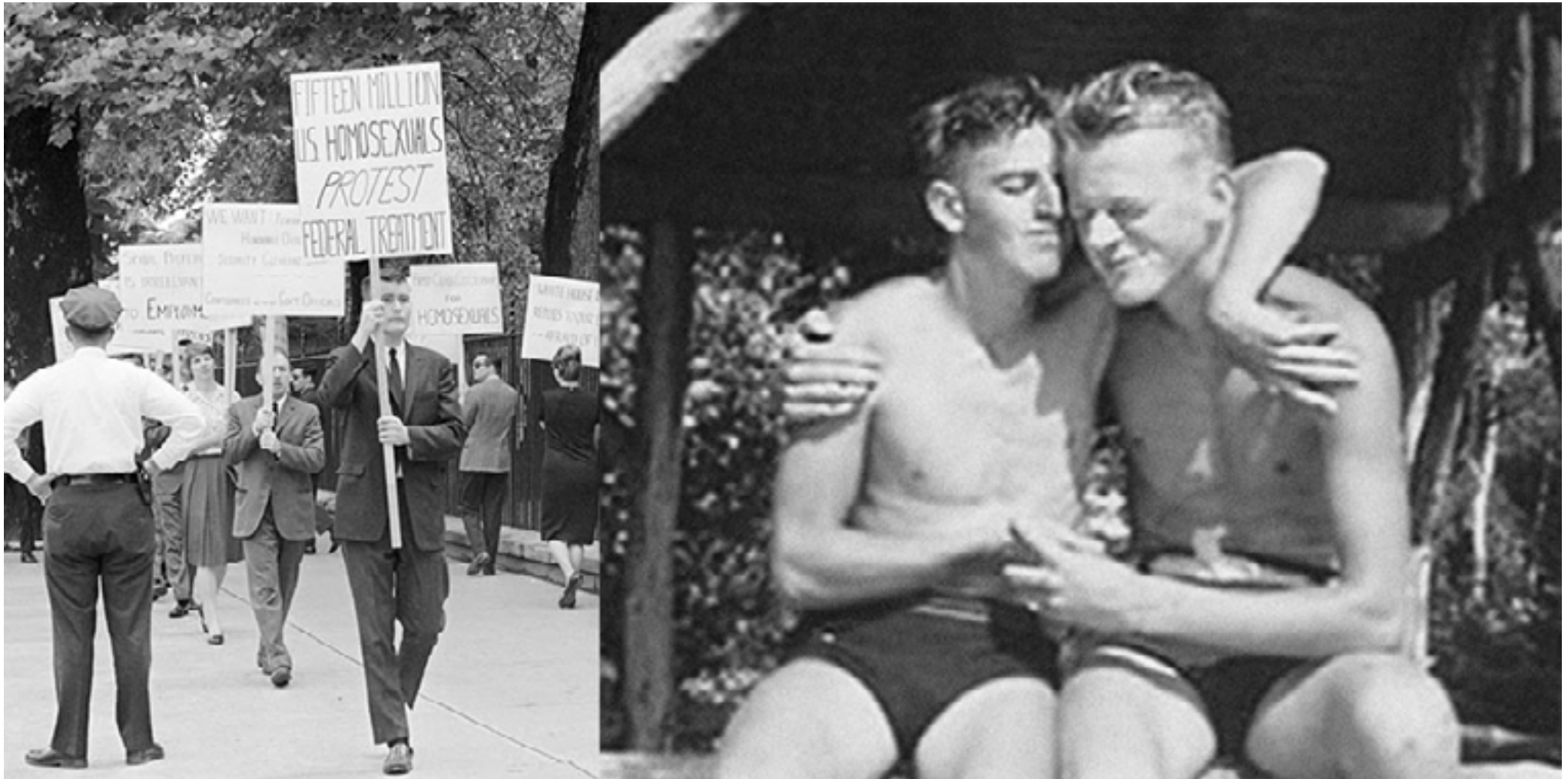


was derailed, is close to tears; Carl Rizzi, a defiant drag queen, kept his job at the post office only by intervention from his supervisor and sheer gay gutsiness. Others fared worse, the family of Drew Ference is interviewed and the demise of a truly beloved and beautiful man is heartbreaking. Ference's oblique letters home are read movingly by TR Knight, and Cynthia Nixon, accompanied by film noir animation worthy of Saul Bass, recreates the horror of an interview by the FBI endured by Madeleine Tress.

These people were not supplied with legal representation or able to offer a defense. They were just fired because investigations had uncovered that they might be gay. Or they had consorted with people who might be gay. Or an anonymous informant had labelled them gay. Until the astronomer Dr Franklin E Kameny was fired. And refused to go quietly and without fighting back. The young Kameny's many letters to many branches of government and to his family, are read stirringly by David Hyde Pierce. And Kameny himself is interviewed. He is a delightful curmudgeon. And a true hero. The world, and NASA, lost a brilliant man but gay rights gained a champion.



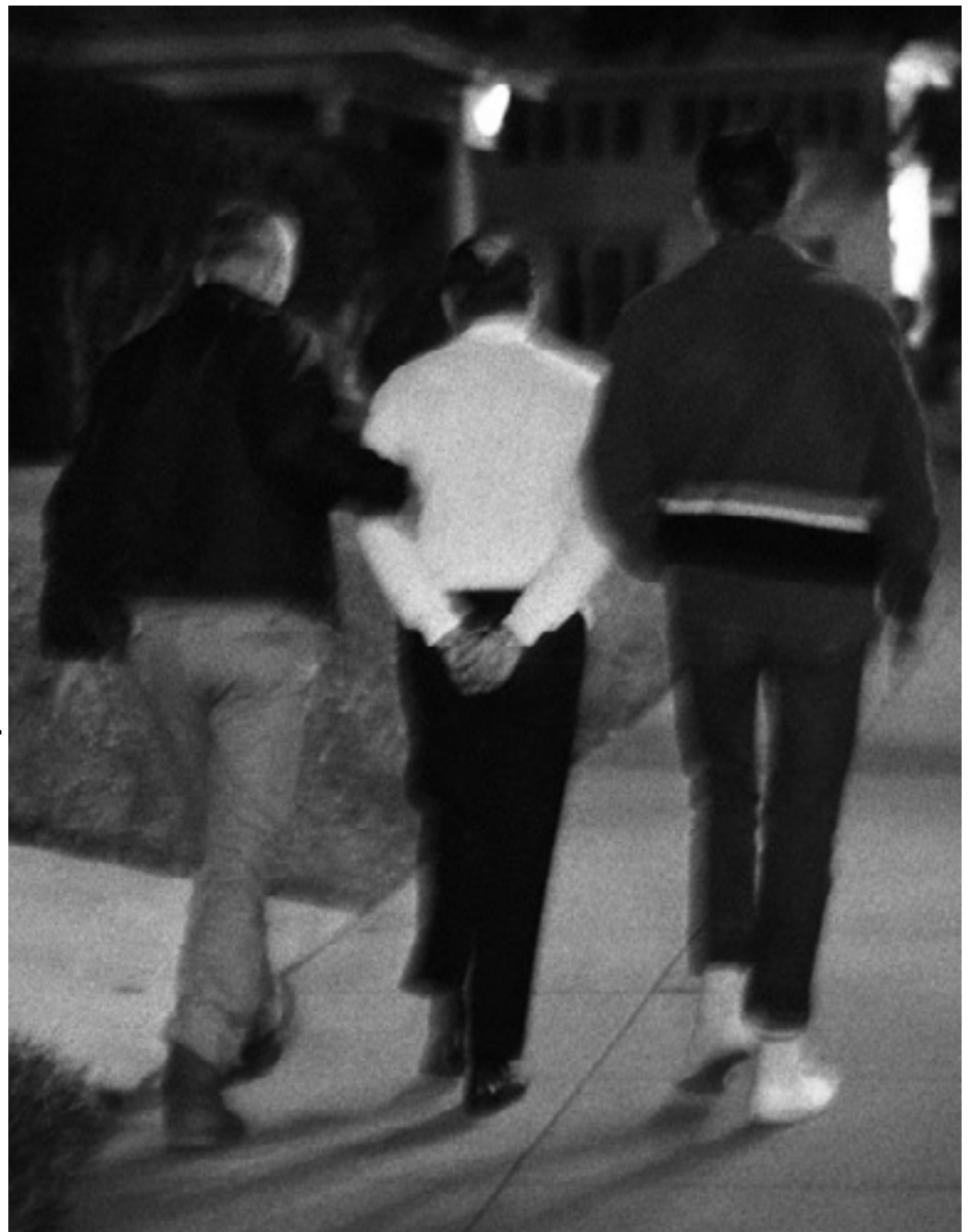
Kameny, who at first spurned the then nascent Mattachine Society because they were “too apologetic,” helped reframe gay from a moral issue to a civil rights issue. We owe him a lot. There is a hilarious, heartbreaking scene discussing the dress code for the very first picket line for gay rights that, again we haven’t learned from history, echoes the Pride debacles that urge hiding away the drag queens, the leather folk and the TNTMEN. I’m embarrassed to admit that Kameny was new to me other than as a vague one among a conceptual many forefathers. He is now a role model.



Narrated by Glenn Close’s dulcet tones, *The Lavender Scare* places gay history and US history into context, and then gives it faces that are unforgettable. Director Josh Howard seamlessly weaves together propaganda films (an excerpt from the camp classic but sadly real *Boys Beware*), documentary footage, still photographs, newspaper clippings, government forms, and the priceless interviews, to build to a devastating and cathartic climax. The Canadian government has finally apologized for similar, but in that Canadian way, less histrionic, actions in our past. Our recent past. The US laws forbidding homosexuals from receiving security clearances were not repealed until Bill Clinton signed an executive order in 1995.

1995.

The Stonewall riots were inspired by a police raid. The Bathhouse Riots were inspired by a police raid. But the first organized homosexual rights protests, a picket line composed of a handful of very brave people, were inspired in part by the government purge. By the insidious actions of politicians, religious leaders and so-called moral guardians. Those are still around and we have to be prepared to stand up to the stealthy as well as the blatant. To be a Frank Kameny. To remember that Pride is still a march and not just a parade. *The Lavender Scare* is inspiring.



The *Lavender Scare* screens on Tues, June 18 on PBS. [pbs.org](https://www.pbs.org), thelavenderscare.com

DREW ROWSOME



Skin of the Teeth:

gay tricking down the rabbit hole

I'm not sure you can seduce someone you've already fucked



By now we've all seen so many tense interrogation scenes in police procedures, that upending the form and giving it a healthy further dose of homoeroticism sounds like fun. As the *The Skin of the Teeth* promo material claims, like a "David Lynch directed episode of *Law & Order: SVU*." In many ways - striking visuals, haunting images, dreamlike imagery - that is an accurate assessment. But *The Skin of the Teeth* also suffers from that Lynchian lack of resolution and an excess of ambiguity.

The Skin of the Teeth starts strongly with a man, Donal Brophy, arriving home to his stylish loft. As ominous electronic music hums in the low end of the background, he showers, shaves and prepares dinner, including lingering shots of chopping meat to be dropped in a sizzling pan. It turns out the dinner is for a date and Pascal Arquimedes, younger and of a lower social class, arrives carrying a bottle of cheap wine. They have apparently had sex before but of the anonymous variety and Arquimedes has gaps in his memory of the encounter.



The two flirt awkwardly, Brophy determinedly mysterious, Arquimedes very nervous. There is a wonderful scene where Arquimedes looks through a telescope that is trained on an apartment across

the street. There a handsome blond man (who we never see) is seducing his trick of the evening. Apparently Brophy and the blond get their kicks watching each other's action. Arquimedes is into it and he and Brophy dance, and for a moment The Skin of the Teeth appears to be steaming up voyeuristically, a gay Rear Window.



But Arquimedes has searched Brophy's medicine cabinet, asks about drug use, and finds some pills in a box in the bedroom. He takes a pill and begins to zone out. The dance gets frenzied and ends in disaster. We next see Arquimedes in a holding cell, seated at a metal table. Then things get weird.

Going with the flow of The Skin of the Teeth offers some pleasures - Tom Rizzuto's boxer short-clad cop, Chuja Seo flossing her teeth enigmatically, David Cruz as the hot con who knows the ropes but won't share more than a cigarette and lots of lingering glances - but just as many inexplicable symbols and metaphors. It is impossible not to parse for meaning and wonder how it will all resolve. After all, police procedurals always do.

Writer/director Matthew Wollin is more interested in the dreamlike, or drug-induced, atmosphere than a plot or explanations. The ending does go for a Twilight Zone-esque finale but it is a reach and so ambiguous that it doesn't really satisfy. There is lots of room for interpretation and The Skin of the Teeth does evoke themes of class warfare, systematic racism, sexual roles, drug abuse, misogyny and the horrors of fox hunting, but mostly it just offers puzzles and elusive images.

Fortunately Arquimedes is very expressive and watchable. And his performance, as are the rest, is grounded in a reality that makes sense to the actors making it all the more mysterious for the viewer. Post-McArthur the opening sequence makes the skin crawl more than intended and in a fentanyl world, popping unknown pills seems unwise, but if one loosens one's need for reality or jump scares, The Skin of the Teeth is an intriguing exercise in Kafka-esque gayness. The Skin of the Teeth seduces but your desire for dating or tricking may be fucked.

The Skin of the Teeth opens theatrically in New York on Fri, May 10. skinoftheteeth.com



WOODY'S ANNUAL PRIDE WEEK KICKOFF

SUNDAY JUNE 16TH

6 pm

GEORGIE GIRL, CARLOTTA CARLISLE, JEZEBEL BARDOT, KITTEN KABOODLE, AND MICHELLE ROSS

9 pm

GEORGIE GIRL, NICOLETTE BROWN, HEROINE, WILMA CHECKLEAR, AND RYAN BOA

11 pm

SOFONDA COX, DEVINE DARLIN, JADA HUDSON, JUICE BOXX VITALITY BLACK, TASH RIOT DJ BLUE PETER

MONDAY JUNE 17TH

11 pm

TOP SHELF NEW SCHOOL
4 OF TORONTO'S BIGGEST STARS WELCOME
4 OF TORONTO'S HOTTEST NEW ACTS

STARRING DEVINE DARLIN, GEORGIE GIRL, HEAVENLEE HYTES AND SOFONDA COX
WELCOMING
DEX TER, MISS JADE, MALLIKA AND VIRGO QUEEN

TUESDAY JUNE 18TH

10 pm

WOODY'S TUESDAY AT TEN
OPEN STAGE CABARET CELEBRATES IT'S FIRST PRIDE

HOSTED BY BABY BEL BEL
STARRING JADA HUDSON, HELENA POISON BEARDRA, AURORA MATRIX AND YOVSKA PLUS OPEN STAGE GUEST ENTERTAINERS WITH DJ CHRIS STEINBACH

WEDNESDAY JUNE 19TH

10 pm

HUMP NIGHT HONEYS PRIDE EDITION
CARLOTTA CARLISLE & KATINKA KATURE WELCOME PRIYANKA AND FANTASIA ROYALE

12 am

SQUIRT MENS ASS CONTEST AND SHOW HOSTED BY HEROINE AND BIRTHDAY BABY JADA HUDSON WITH MONA MOORE, CRYSTAL QUEER, AND TAY BOBO DJ MARK FALCO





Southern Pride:

towards a universal pride. And Pride.



"I don't know if I should start drinking now. Or now."

Toronto Pride is a well-established, monolithic machine that is full of cracks and fissures over issues of corporate takeover, infighting among groups representing different factions of the LGBTetc umbrella, and systematic racism. After close to 40 years, it is an event that, year after year, teeters on the edge of implosion but always happens. It is an institution.



Southern Pride takes place in the small southern towns of Biloxi and Hattiesburg, Mississippi where Pride is not an institution. Where an official Pride Day had never taken place. Both towns boast a gay

bar that also functions as a community centre. And both have a charismatic and scrappy lesbian as an owner/promoter. The two owners, independently, decide that, following the divisive and dangerous election of Trump, a show of solidarity by creating a Gay Pride Day is an important step.



Initially Southern Pride sets up a very southern ambling narrative exploring the life of the bars and their importance to the community. Organizing a Pride requires logistics and finances and the struggle to find both would have made for a intriguing and compelling documentary. Especially as the owners, Lynn Koval of Biloxi's Just Us Lounge and Shawn Perryon Sr of Hattiesburg's Club Xclusive, are quirky and entertaining characters. Koval is all bluster and determination, while Perryon exudes a deadpan cool from behind large sunglasses.



There is one crucial difference: Just Us Lounge's clientele is predominantly white, Club Xclusive's is predominantly black. Koval and her staff get most of the attention and director Malcolm Ingram, via the clever insertion of footage and interviews about the devastation of hurricane Katrina on Biloxi and the Just Us Lounge, builds considerable suspense about just how Biloxi's first Pride will fare. It is telling that homophobia is only talked about or implied but never really seen. The trans bartender and the fabulously tatty drag queens are more than defiant enough to stand up to rednecks.

Perryon is more ambitious and political. The Club Xclusive event is billed as an "Unapologetic Black Gay Pride" and the poster features a fist more prominently than any rainbows. The two events intertwine and conflict in subtle ways that Southern Pride presents without comment. Koval tries to raise funds by selling crayfish at Biloxi's Black Spring Break beach party. Perryon talks obliquely about her past troubles with the law. The only non-white seen in the Just Us Lounge is a thong-clad boy who is fetishized during an Easter drag act. Both Koval and Perryon recount their struggles to stay afloat and profitable, they are on parallel tracks in two very different worlds. And when they meet a surge of hope fills every dynamic frame.



The narrative climaxes with Biloxi's first Gay Pride and it as cathartic and sweet as one could want it to be. Even the appearance by a RuPaul's Drag Race alumni Gia Gunn is upstaged by Perryon working the scene promoting her event. The footage of the Unapologetic Black Gay Pride is considerably different and Southern Pride turns into a devastating and powerful mediation on race and inequality. There are minorities within the minorities and support and solidarity does not necessarily flow both ways. Southern Pride is not just about gay pride or black pride, it aims to instill universal pride.

It is also fascinating to see two lesbians dominate the narrative. There is a gay man who ran a bar but it went under and is now an evangelist church. His appearance is brief. Both bars are run by and mainly patronized by women and trans folk. As are both Pride events. It may not have been intentional, but Southern Pride is a timely reminder that gay men and the bared torsos that dominate coverage and the imagery of Prides, don't necessarily reflect who is doing the work that makes Pride, and pride, happen.

Southern Pride will be available on Tues, June 11 on iTunes, Amazon, Vudu, Google Play, Fandango Now, Direct TV, Dish Network, and local cable providers



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drewrowsome.blogspot.ca.



Sean Leber - Founder, MGT Creative Director.



Raymond Helkio - is an author, director and award-winning filmmaker. He cofounded TheReadingSalon.ca



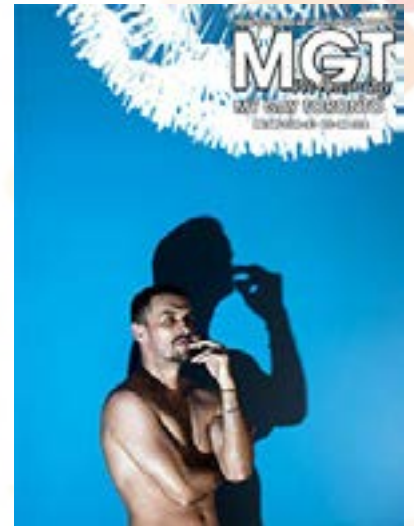
Paul Bellini was a writer for The Kids in the Hall and a producer for This Hour Has 22 Minutes, and columnist at Fab Magazine...



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