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VOL 2708 • FEBRUARY 21, 2019 • ISSUE 1099

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ConVocation Conference's Raffle to Benefit Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

LGBTQ and Pagan

ConVocation, an annual event that brings together people from a wide variety of mystical paths and faiths for knowledge sharing, networking and having fun, will take place this year from Feb. 21 to 24 at the DoubleTree Hilton in Dearborn. A Metro Detroit mainstay since 1995, the convention attracts roughly 600 attendees each year and that includes Youth Program Coordinator Ian Unger, who works at the Affirmations LGBTQ community center. Unger learned about ConVocation in 2011 when he was living in Wisconsin and has been involved every year since.

"I kind of just ended up going on a whim," Unger said. "Somebody that was presenting said I might enjoy it, so I went, and I did."

Since then, Unger's involvement has grown from attendee to presenter, and he's talked about a variety of topics. One presentation was even for teens on the intersection of LGBTQ identities and other identities, such as religious minorities.

"Youth dealing with pagan identities as well as LGBTQ identities are having to face both those things, and coming out about them," Unger said, adding that he knows this from personal experience.

"Coming out as a pagan to my family was harder than coming out as a trans man," Unger said. "People seemed to be more accepting of [that] ... than that I was no longer a Christian. They seemed more worried about my soul and salvation on that basis than who I was as a person."

Unger added that isn't alone in this experience. He said that because many people in the LGBTQ community don't find acceptance among traditional religious faiths, they often find pagan spaces more welcoming. At ConVocation, he added, a significant number of presenters, teachers and staff are LGBTQ.

There's another rainbow connection that Unger is excited about this year, too: Affirmations' youth programming will be the beneficiary of the proceeds from the event's raffle. Each year a different nonprofit is chosen, and because of Unger's service to the pagan community and the work he's done for ConVocation, Affirmations was a perfect match. Affirmations Development Coordinator Kyle Taylor will be on hand to sell raffle tickets during the convention.

But the raffle is just one aspect about ConVocation Unger wants to highlight.

"My favorite thing is that I learn something completely new every year," he said. "Every time I go, as long as I go to at least one class, I will learn something that I haven't ever heard about

before. There's always brand-new presenters, different teachers, people who come from all walks of life to just share their knowledge with everyone else. And it's very much knowledge-sharing because all the presenters I've ever seen are willing to learn from the people that are coming to hear from them, too."

Unger added that he and his wife like to attend different presentations and share notes later.

What to Expect

For those new to the convention, there's a first-timers gathering before the opening ritual.

"That's very important to go to if it's your first time because you get the feel of what the Con is like because they want everyone to feel included," Unger said.

This year, attendees will find more than 100 classes and rituals presented by local instructors, internationally renowned guest speakers and authors. With workshop titles like *The Myth of Gender*, *Magick = Healing*, *Pagan Chanting*, *Polytheism and Tribal Societies* and *Spirit Companions 101*, there are opportunities to immerse oneself in any number of traditions.

Not only that, in the evening, attendees can look forward to drumming circles, karaoke on Friday and, on Saturday, a masquerade ball.

Along with workshops, ConVocation

offers an art show and more than 35 tables of merchandise. Teens are welcome, as well as kids, provided they are accompanied by an adult. Twelve-step recovery meetings are held each day also.

Dispelling Misconceptions

While Unger isn't trying to sell anyone on non-mainstream traditions, he would like to clear up some misunderstandings about the pagan community in general.

"Everyone within the community I've ever interacted with has been super kind," Unger said. "And it's really contrary to the stereotypes that ... we're somehow innately evil because we don't believe in the same thing as someone else."

"I think a lot of people get really hung up on the fact that, if you're believing in multiple different gods, or if you're believing in Earth-based religion, that you're somehow evil, or dark or not following a good path," he continued. "But really, all the pagan beliefs that I've ever interacted with focus on being a good person, doing good things for other people and trying to be the best representation of humanity you can be."

ConVocation runs Feb. 21 through 24 at the DoubleTree Hilton located at 5801 Southfield Freeway in Dearborn. convocation.org/home.



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State of the State: Gov. Whitmer Calls for an Amendment to ELCRA

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer last Tuesday delivered her first State of the State speech that called for an amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to provide protections to LGBTQ Michiganders.

“Now Michigan government is on the right side of history because no one should get fired because of who they are or who they love,” said Whitmer, for which she received a standing ovation inside the Capitol where she spoke to a joint session of the Republican-led state House and Senate.

During her nearly hour-long speech, Whitmer pointed to the executive directive she signed in January banning state government workplaces from discriminating against employees based on sexual orientation and gender identity without religious exemptions.



“This will help me build and attract a talented, top-notch workforce in state government,” she said. “That’s precisely why the business community has pushed to extend these rights to the private sector as well. If we want Michigan to be a home for opportunity, it should be opportunity for all in all workplaces. We need to expand Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for the LGBTQ community.”

Whitmer laid out her priorities for next year and beyond, calling the state of Michigan a “challenging place to get ahead, raise a family and run a business.”

Yet, Whitmer said she wants to build a stronger Michigan by putting aside partisanship to get the job done for the people she serves.

“A government that doesn’t work today can’t get the job done for tomorrow. And that ends now,” said Whitmer, who addressed other issues during her speech like roads and education “crises,” government transparency, water, workforce development and health care, to name a few.

Equality Michigan, the only statewide advocacy organization representing Michigan’s LGBT community, praised Whitmer.

“We are proud to stand alongside the governor as she does everything in her power to protect Michigan’s LGBT community from discrimination,” said Erin Knott, interim executive director for EQMI.

The organization is working to build bipartisan support around pro-LGBTQ legislation, and is working in coalition with business leaders across the state to expand ELCRA, which Knott said has been “languishing for years” because of a “logjam in Lansing” that needs to be broken.

“A supermajority of Americans, including people in Michigan, have affirmed the basic idea that employees should be judged on hard work and performance, not irrelevant personal

characteristics,” Knott said. “The time has come to modernize Michigan’s policies to make it clear that discrimination against LGBT people will not be tolerated. We are calling on the legislature to take meaningful action.”

Reaction was also positive from Lonnie Scott, executive director of Progress Michigan. He said, “Gov. Whitmer showed real leadership tonight by addressing some of the biggest problems facing our state. From fixing the damn roads and aiming to improve education for children and adults to fighting for freedom for the LGBTQ community and pushing the legislature to enact FOIA reform, we were pleased with what we heard tonight.”

“We’ve had nearly a decade of total Republican control that bent to the whims of corporate interests, rather than the will of the people and tonight was the starting gun signaling that those days are over. We finally have an advocate for public education, Michigan’s diverse communities, and for transparency and ethics in state government in the governor’s office. We look forward to the days ahead and working to build a more progressive Michigan.”

Whitmer, the 49th governor in the state of Michigan, did not lay out an exact plan during her speech. Details are expected when Whitmer gives a budget address scheduled for March 5.



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Remembering Ruth Ellis

A View Through the Lens of 2 Longtime Friends

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The year was 1978 and Jaye Spiro was teaching self-defense classes at senior citizen centers around Detroit. At one such complex, whose name she no longer recalls, Spiro met a feisty senior citizen named Ruth Ellis.

“She was 78 or 79 and I was maybe 30,” Spiro recalled. “Ruth loved to participate in whatever activities they had going on, especially the physical stuff.”

The class Spiro was teaching was ongoing at the center, and after one particular session Ellis approached Spiro.

“She said, ‘Would you like to come over sometime for dinner?’ And I said, ‘Sure.’”

At that dinner, in Ruth’s apartment, Spiro noticed certain pictures placed around that started to give her the vibe that Ellis was gay.

“Even though I had never met a lesbian much beyond my age, 30ish or whatever, I began to sense that Ruth was,” Spiro said.

So, while it was a risky thing to do less than a decade post-Stonewall, Spiro outed herself to Ruth, and Ruth, who would later admit she

had never previously met a white lesbian, did the same in return.

“She started telling me about Babe, her partner who had died, and how a lot of her friends from the old days were dead and gone,” Spiro said. “She was very sad that the community she was very centrally involved with were gone. She was living in a senior center and people were dead and she was lonely.”

At that point, Ruth had already lived a long life. Born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1899, she started working early as a nursemaid to white infants, making a mere \$3 a week. When her brother Charles, who had recently relocated to Detroit, told her she could make double if she moved, Ruth boarded the train. Her first job, taking care of a small child in Highland Park, paid her a whopping \$7 a week.

In Springfield, Ellis had learned to set type and run a press from a neighbor and on days off from her nursemaid job, she looked for work in the printing field. It didn’t take long to find work, and before long Ellis was employed at Waterfield & Heath where she would stay for nearly a decade. She quit only after her brother Henry, a doctor, died and left her enough

money to start her own printing company, which she ran out of the home she shared with her partner Cecilene “Babe” Franklin.

Starting in the 1940s, Ruth and Franklin opened up their home to other LGBTQ folk. Those they hosted were often young and with limited access to safe spaces where they could express their true identities. On the weekends, the Ellis/Franklin home became the party spot, too, but it was more than that. Ellis often took in strays, young gays and lesbians who had been kicked out of their homes and had nowhere else to stay. Through the years, Ellis even helped put a few of them through college.

However, after many years of making a difference in Detroit’s LGBTQ community, Ellis and Franklin were forced out of their home in the name of urban revitalization in the ‘70s. Though they remained a couple, Franklin took an apartment in Southfield, and Ruth moved into the senior citizen building downtown. In her retirement, she found new interests. She enjoyed photography, took up bowling and loved to travel. When Franklin died in 1975, and by the time Spiro came along, Ellis’ friends from the old days were few and she had lost

most of her connections to her LGBTQ identity.

Building New Connections

“I told her there were a lot of gay people around who would probably love to meet her,” Spiro said. “So, I started inviting her to activities. Ruth was very outgoing and people just fell in love with her immediately. She was our elder. We knew we had to have elders, but because things had been so closeted before the ‘70s we didn’t know who they were. So she was widely embraced.”

In 1979, Ellis overheard Spiro and friends talking about the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. Ellis, ever inquisitive, wanted to know more about it.

“I was like, ‘Ruth, I don’t think you’re going to want to go there,’” Spiro said. “I explained that sometimes women there were naked, that they went topless.”

But Ellis was no prude.

“She was like, ‘Sign me up,’” Spiro said. “And she wanted to go and she went. And she loved it.”

After making new connections, Ellis began

to be well-known again in Metro Detroit's fledgling lesbian community.

"They made her the queen of every event she went to," Spiro said. "She loved to dance. People really enjoyed having her at parties and activities and she was very generous and giving."

Ellis, said Spiro, was a unifier and excelled at bringing people together.

"She really wanted to bring the African-American and white gays and lesbians together," Spiro said. "And in some ways, she was in a position to do it because we all honored her so much because she was our foremother."

After meeting her one night at the Detroit Women's Coffeehouse, Dr. Kofi Adoma became one of several African-American lesbians who befriended Ellis and began taking her to events in the black gay community.

"People just gravitated to her and I don't think it was just her age," Adoma said. "I think it was her personality and how intelligent she was and how alert and aware she was. Her mind was really sharp."

Like Spiro, at the time they first encountered each other, Adoma had never met a lesbian of such advanced age before.

"I was so excited to meet her and know that there was someone like her present in our community," Adoma said.

Throughout all of the '80s and much of the '90s, Ellis once again became a fixture in her community and as she aged it seemed her presence was becoming more sacred. In 1998, the James Baldwin – Pat Parker Society began an annual Ruth Ellis Day celebration that continues to this day.

"We had a gathering and we asked people to bring food," Adoma said. "We came together and had the potluck and Ruth spoke and she told us the history. ... After that day I guess people decided we should do it every year. And Ruth was delighted."

Ellis, who would turn 100 in 1999, was the subject of a documentary to be premiered in Detroit on her birthday as part of the annual

Hotter Than July – Detroit Black Gay Pride celebration. She would go on to travel and promote that film, "Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100" and make more than 100 appearances across the country to tell her story.

But, as celebrated as she was, eventually Ellis was forced to slow down. Her health began to fail in the last few months of her life, and going to and from the hospital became a regular trend. Her final public appearance was in September of 2000, when she cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the first Ruth Ellis Center Drop-In Center, having lent her name to the agency developed to help homeless LGBTQ youth. Just weeks later, on Oct. 4, Ruth died peacefully in her sleep.

"I think she was done," Spiro said. "By the time she left us I think she was done and she felt very good about what she had accomplished in her life."

Indeed, Ruth left behind a legacy that endures.

"She was just such a role model for me and others, other women especially, in that she had such endurance," Adoma said. "She was ready to go out in the wilderness and she wasn't afraid. She was quite courageous."

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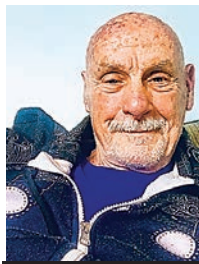
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Black Gay Detroit Friends (Pt. 3)

Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

I had my picture taken a year ago with actress Lily Tomlin, who was in Detroit — her native city — as speaker for an LGBTQ fundraiser. I was wearing a blue-patterned hoodie I had designed for ArtWear Detroit. And the juxtaposition of my design wear and Ms. Tomlin's vivid popularity was good PR. (For both of us I like to think.)

I took the opportunity of the photoshoot moment because of a kinship we share. Both are Cass Tech High School grads. Lily, in the performing arts curriculum, and I in commercial arts.

Among Detroit artists there are many CT grads, including Alvin Loving (a classmate of mine), Gilda Snowden — who, sadly, unexpectedly, died five years ago. Gilda was the well-known painter and College of Creative Studies teacher/mentor to hundreds of students in her tenure at CCS.

And perhaps the most famous Detroit African-American artist, with a national and international reputation: LeRoy Foster. He graduated from Class Tech in 1943. Known today, as “The Michaelangelo of Detroit Artists,” I met LeRoy when I was 19 in 1955 and sadly by chance during the last years of his life in 1992.

In the '50s, LeRoy Foster's studio was located in an upper flat on Woodward Avenue in Midtown Detroit. His studio was a few blocks from the famed Paradise Theater that brought top black musicians, bands and singers to Detroit. My friend Jack Jacobs who was a longtime friend of Foster's, invited me to attend LeRoy's 30th birthday studio party.

“His birthday's May 8th. Yours is the 12th. How every appropriate,” winked Jack.

When I was introduced to Foster I told him our birthdays were just four days apart Foster — who was openly gay at a time when so few dared to admit to being homosexual — quipped, “That's understandable kid. Taurus is the sure sign of two-spirited artists.” We spent several minutes chatting “knowingly” about CT teachers, and my gay, song-and-dance homeroom teacher for three years, Lawrence Timothy Ray.

As I recall, Leroy's birthday celebration was filled with a diverse group of artists, musicians, and two very hefty twin sisters who sang along with an LP recording of Ella Fitzgerald songs. Attending also were two CT recent grads and straight friends of mine who went on to make names for themselves as gifted artists: Carol Wald and Alvin Loving.

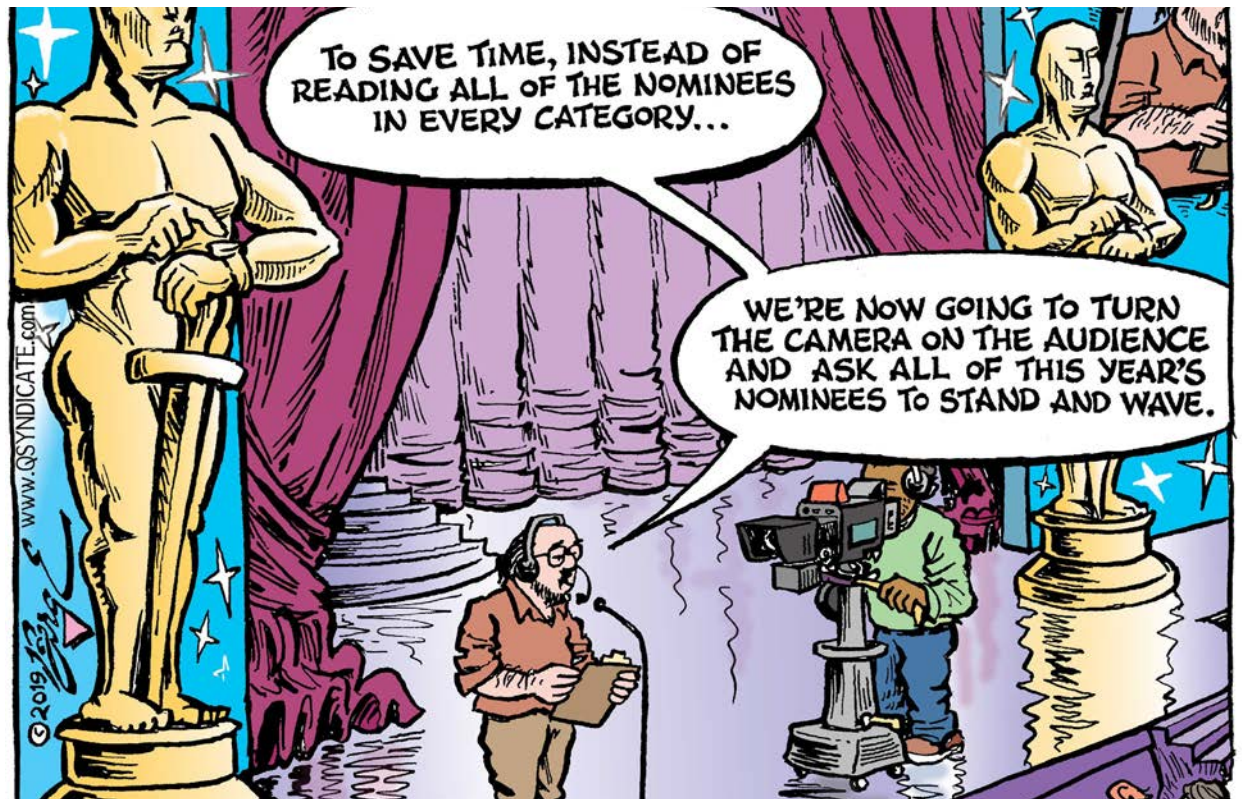
LeRoy was very outgoing and physically in superb shape. He looked not unlike his famous painting — and perhaps masterpiece — of Frederick Douglass. (One of his more recent versions of the heroic Black Civil War contender is now on permanent display in the Detroit Frederick Douglass Public Library.)

Accolades for LeRoy Foster are many. Born in Detroit in 1925, he began drawing at age five.

“I was nice up until I was 12,” he once remarked to the press. “Then all hell broke loose. I was possessed by demons, and one way to exorcise those demons was to paint.”

In 1939, at age 14, he won first prize at an exhibition sponsored by the Pen and Palette Club, a training and studio space for black artists sponsored by the Detroit Urban League. He was then its youngest member. He later studied at the Society of Arts and Crafts (now the College of Creative Studies) with famed painter

See **Parting Glances**, continued on p. 9



BY TIM RETZLOFF

As I rework my dissertation into a book manuscript — cutting sections here, smoothing out passages there, tugging at paragraphs like taffy over there, finding the through line — I have been sneaking out and doing some last-minute oral history interviews. Even though many people have told me to stop, that I need to get the book done.

I can't quite help it.

I am ever conscious of gaps that remain in the history I'm writing of queer Metro Detroit, vital parts of the larger narrative that mustn't be given short shrift, stories that I don't want to leave out. In the midst of the process, I've also been thinking of individuals that I still long to find and learn from, even after conducting years of research and interviewing well more than a 100 people.

Locating people has sometimes been tricky. I've been hindered by the mask that society has forced LGBTQ people to wear, the proverbial familiar faces, hidden lives of the closet. Before and even after Stonewall, people often used pseudonyms. For years, I had two names for the founder of ONE in Detroit, Chuck Thompson and Chet Sampson, and only found him, still living in Los Angeles in 2004 at age 83, when I identified Chet Sampson as his real name.

A different Chuck Thompson, the one who took over Cruise magazine from Tony Rome, was also using a pseudonym. So was Tony Rome. As were Ann Carll Reid, Ray West, James Coleman, Eve Elloree, Russ Knight, Phil Greene and Susan Williamson. Finding female impersonators, whose stage names typically shielded their true identities, has presented its own challenges. As I discussed here several months ago, it took

me 17 years to find Jerri Daye.

Other people may have changed their names, or had names too common to track down or lost touch with friends or moved away. So, for the “hive” of readers of *Between The Lines*, I present this roster of people I would love to find. I realize some may now be deceased, but others surely are not. I welcome any information that readers might offer to help in this quest.

Priscilla Dean

A prominent female impersonator in the black drag scene of the early 1950s and hostess at Uncle Tom's Plantation.

Big Red

A red-haired white bartender and/or bouncer at the Palais in the 1950s who has been mentioned by many patrons of the iconic lesbian bar.

Gary Doliver

A onetime Milford resident who, as a white 24-year-old, witnessed the apprehension of Billy Highstand by police one night in July 1957 and sought to intervene when Highstand resisted arrest.

Robert Swetman

A white female impersonator from Mississippi who performed as Bobbi Johns at the Diplomat in the early 1960s.

Buddy

A black autoworker at Chrysler's Eldon Gear and Axle plant referred to as “she” in the late 1960s and remembered for wearing go-go boots and heavy perfume.

See **Headline**, continued on p. 9

Sunny King

A white, lesbian early member of the Detroit Gay Liberation Front in 1970 and first editor of the *Gay Liberator*.

Terry Gardner

A black lesbian who castigated the Detroit GLF for its alleged racism and sexism before quitting the group in 1971.

Kwame Keita

Who may have also gone by Bill Hill, a member of the Third World Caucus of the Detroit GLF who left the GLF for ignoring issues of race.

Mike Fylstra

A white *Gay Liberator* writer arrested for accosting and soliciting in 1971 who challenged the charge in court.

Ann Lewis

Who with Ken Dudley founded the organization Detroit Black Gays in response to a series of anti-gay slayings of African-American gay bar customers in 1973.

Herbert “Bo” Taylor

Who lived at 885 Covington in Palmer Park and who was first president in 1976 of the Association of Suburban People and one of the few African-Americans involved in the organization.

James Stevens

Also called Buttons LaWalker, a black performer at Menjo's, Bookie's and other gay clubs in the mid-1970s, who won the Miss Gay Detroit title in 1977.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 8

Sarkis Sarkisian.

Following this, Foster spent time studying in Europe, at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris, and the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London. He painted portraits of prominent figures including that of singer and civil rights activist Paul Robeson. A good and close friend and patron of Foster was LGBTQ activist Ruth Ellis. (She lived to be 101, and she owned a portrait of herself done by Foster that stayed in her home until her passing.)

Comments Wikipedia: “He came to be known around the city as an artist with a mastery of human anatomy, an excellent portrait painter, and perhaps most widely acknowledged, a public muralist with a commitment to African-American history and culture.”

In February 2014 *Hour Magazine* did an excellent, full-length, in-depth article on LeRoy Foster. (“Bigger than Life,” can be accessed online

Lowery J. Parker and V. Williams

They were officers of Fronrunner, a gay black uplift organization begun in 1977 to host formal dances as fundraisers for the gay community.

Michael Ray

The bearded white gay editor of *Metra* magazine in the early 1980s.

Jone Lynch

Who wrote for *Metra* magazine in the early 1980s and who was one of a small number of lesbians involved in the Association of Suburban People.

A pair of unidentified African-American men in their 20s

They identified as “Two Gay Libbers,” who posed for photographer Dave Jordano in 1973.

I would relish discovering the whereabouts of even a few of these elusive folks of yesteryear. Their role in Metro Detroit LGBTQ life and activism deserves to be remembered.

And yes, I do need to get my book done.

Dr. Tim Retzloff teaches history and LGBTQ studies at Michigan State University. He is at work on his first book, “Metro Gay,” about lesbian and gay life and politics in Metro Detroit from 1945 to 1985. This column is reprinted from his blog Queer Remembering, available online at queer-remembering.blog.

for reading and I'm pleased to be quoted in the article.)

LeRoy Foster died on March 23, 1993. He was 67. I chanced to meet him two years before. He was paying a telephone bill in Downtown Detroit. I was surprised to learn he still remembered me after so many, many years. We chatted briefly. Hugged each other. Parted for the last time. He was noticeably heavier and walked with a cane.

His death was due to kidney failure and was pronounced so at Detroit's long-gone-now Grace Hospital (where legendary Harry Houdini died). At the time of his death, Foster was blind and had lost the use of his legs.

The legendary Detroit Black Michelangelo artist and Black Civil Rights activist is remembered today by his many paintings — several owned by the Charles Wright Museum and others displayed frequently by the Detroit Institute of Arts. There is also a LeRoy Foster signature — his loving farewell touch, as is were — at the Scarab Club where he is highly honored as masterful painter, two-spirited power and proud Detroit gay artist of national and international reputation.

Creep Of The Week

Randy Garber

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Oh, hey, did you hear that in Kansas lawmakers are trying to establish the LGBTQ community as a religion? Or, more specifically, they're trying to argue that LGBTQ people are actually secular humanists so that Kansas doesn't have to recognize marriage equality anymore; also that gay people aren't black, I think.

I mean, the legislation includes the claims that “There are no ex-blacks but there are thousands of ex-gays” and “skin tone is genetic and sexual orientation is faith-based.”

The bill also proclaims that all marriages of same-sex couples are “parody marriages,” that sexual orientation is “a mythology” that “a person can come out of an invisible closet and be baptized gay,” and that LGBTQ people have “a daily code by which members may guide their daily lives” and that they worship the rainbow flag.

It's truly some of the most bizarre legislation that I have ever read. It would almost be funny if, you know, LGBTQ people weren't actual humans. Clearly, Kansas Rep. Randy Garber, the legislation's lead sponsor, doesn't think LGBTQ people are human at all. But don't worry, he loves you.

“I don't believe myself to be a bigot,” Garber told *The Wichita Eagle*. “I'm Christian and I love people. I believe you should love everybody, but I believe you should also take a stand on what you believe, lovingly.”

Ah, yes. The bill is so very loving. I especially feel loved by the part that claims marriage equality is “the greatest sham since the inception of American jurisprudence.” Oh, and the part where LGBTQ people are lumped into the same category as bestiality is also nice.

Why does Garber oppose marriage equality so hard?

“Their marriage probably doesn't affect me — their union or whatever you want to call it. But in my opinion, they're trying to force their beliefs on society,” Garber told *The Wichita Eagle*.

Says the man who has put his name on a bill that essentially forces all LGBTQ people to be part of a specific religion. But nice of him to point out that two women or two men marrying has nothing to do with him and thus that there is no reason to try to enshrine this anti-LGBTQ lunacy into law.

What's interesting is that Kansas has Laura Kelly, a Democrat, as Governor right now and also has Rep. Susan Ruiz,

the first openly lesbian politician elected in Kansas. The previous governor, Sam Brownback, was a Republican who really hated gays and also tried to grind the state into dust through austerity economics. So, it seems likely that this unhinged bill is in direct response to some more progressive winds a-blowin' across the Kansas plains.

“I am very disappointed,” Rep. Ruiz told *The Wichita Eagle*. “I see who the co-sponsors are and I sit with a couple of them in committee and I'm certainly going to talk to them about that and say, ‘Hey, I don't know if you know about it or not, but I'm not a myth ... Am I a unicorn?’”

As she should. I would very much like to see how those conversations go. I strongly suspect that she's NOT a unicorn, nor are other LGBTQ Kansans. Equality Kansas Director Tom Witt called the legislation the “most vile, hateful and disrespectful” he's ever seen.

“Every year, we see bills that restrict, remove and limit the rights of LGBT Kansans, but never have we seen this level of extremist vitriol laid out in legislative language. These bills combined are 18 pages of insults and name-calling,” Witt told *The Wichita Eagle*.

Witt also said, “Fred Phelps would be proud.” Phelps, of course, was the leader of the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church. He and his followers picketed funerals of gay men with signs that read “God hates fags,” among other similar acts. The church continues the cherished Phelps family tradition of protesting the “fag lifestyle of soul-damning, nation-destroying filth.”

I'm old enough to remember when anti-LGBT Christians cared to differentiate themselves from the Westboro folks. Sure, they wanted to amend the Constitution to hurt LGBTQ people, but out of love, not out of hate. They'd never picket a funeral, for goodness' sake. Though they would deny survivor benefits to the long-term partner of the deceased. They would never celebrate the death of an American soldier as just punishment for a “Fag Nation.” But they also wouldn't want gays in their military. They would never put a GIF of Matthew Shepard surrounded by flames on their websites, though they'd always wonder — sometimes quietly, sometimes not — if Shepard didn't bring it all on himself.

In actuality, the only difference between Westboro and non-Westboro anti-LGBTQ folks was that the latter used nicer language. Garber's legislation helps expose that distinction as meaningless.

Exploring Pete Buttigieg's Path to the White House

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

Pete Buttigieg would make history if he becomes the first openly gay Democratic presidential nominee – and his path to the nomination may depend on whether the LGBT community supports him in his pursuit.

The mayor of South Bend, Indiana, last week declared he has created an exploratory committee, which is considered the first step in a presidential run, emphasizing a “fresh start” for the nation and touting the rejuvenation of his city as mayor in his announcement.

Robby Mook, who's gay and served as campaign manager for Hillary Clinton in 2016, weighed in on Buttigieg's potential run in an email to the Blade.

“The key will be to stand out from the crowd and be able to drive your own message,” Mook said. “He certainly has a unique story to tell and this contest is wide open. There is no front runner.”

Chris Massicotte, a gay political consultant for the D.C.-based DSPolitical, said LGBT

support would be key in getting Buttigieg's campaign off the ground.

“With the expected number of declared candidates to number in the dozens I think what the mayor needs to do is to first acknowledge that he has a natural national base in the LGBT community and quickly solicit low dollar contributions from our community,” Massicotte said.

Those donations, Massicotte said, would be essential in ensuring Buttigieg has a place on the debate stage among other Democrats in the primary process.

“Criteria for qualifying for the primary debates starting this summer is going to go beyond polling, and will also measure the number of grassroots donors a candidate has,” Massicotte said. “If Mayor Buttigieg can realize his grassroots fundraising potential he will get on the debate stage. Once he does that, he will stand out and shine as the youngest person on the stage with one of the most impressive resumes beyond just elected office. With this kind of field, it is anyone's game.”

Even with LGBT support, political experts say this will be an uphill fight in a crowded field of Democrats who have greater name recognition than Buttigieg.

Buttigieg has a built a resume that includes being mayor of South Bend, Indiana, military service in Afghanistan and a 2017 run to become chair of the Democratic National Committee, but he's competing against Democrats who are U.S. senators — and possibly a former vice president and the 2016 Democratic nominee.

Daniel Pinello, a gay political scientist at the City University of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, was blunt in his assessment of Buttigieg's chances in the 2020 race.

“Since World War II, no presidential nominee of either major party has had the political credentials of just being the mayor of a city of 100,000 people,” Pinello said. “Rather, the overwhelming majority of modern Democratic and Republican nominees have been either a vice president, a United States senator or a governor.”

Pinello added former President Eisenhower was “a very unusual exception” to this rule because he had name recognition from World War II as is President Trump, although he was recognized “in large measure due to his unique business and media history creating substantial national name recognition, too.”

“In contrast, how many American voters today would recognize Pete Buttigieg's name let alone know how to pronounce it?” Pinello said. “So his current chances of securing the Democratic nomination are absolutely non-existent.”

Instead of pursuing the White House, Pinello concluded Buttigieg “would be far better advised to run for governor of Indiana first.”

Also questioning Buttigieg's decision to run for president was Rufus Gifford, who unsuccessfully ran to represent Massachusetts' 3rd congressional district in 2018 and raised money for the Democratic National Committee and former President Obama's presidential campaigns.

“I don't know what his email list looks like,”

Gifford said. “I would imagine it's probably pretty decent, but certainly doesn't measure up to the Warrens and the Bernies and the Kamalas of the world just because of the work they've done historically, so he's going to have to pound the pavement.”

Gifford, who said he hasn't yet endorsed a candidate for 2020, added the LGBT community would be a “logical audience for him at the outset” and Buttigieg should work that circuit hard from a fundraising standpoint.

“I will say this, though, the LGBT community sees real allies in this field, so it's not like he's running 20 years ago when there would have been one candidate who's head and shoulders above the field on LGBT issues,” Gifford said. “The fact that he is, of course, openly gay matters, and the community will respond to that, but it's hard when you have real champions of LGBT equality in the field already.”

Gifford said Buttigieg has a “tough road” ahead and the key going forward is “hard work, diligence and message.”

“I think his message does resonate very much, very, very much, but the question is does it resonate enough to help put him over the top against candidates who have equally compelling messages,” Gifford said. “I think that's his big challenge considering he's obviously at a massive institutional disadvantage because of just who he is, because he does not have a national profile.”

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.



Pete Buttigieg. Photo courtesy of Washington Blade.

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Tia Wheeler (left) and Jenny Larson were married at Ferndale Pride's 2018 festival.

The Rust Belt Market to Host LGBTQ Weddings During Ferndale Pride

BY BTL STAFF

LGBTQ couples will have the opportunity to get married during Ferndale Pride on June 1 at The Rust Belt Market, Ferndale's premier wedding venue.

"Ferndale Pride embodies the essence of this community. It's a fun, expressive, safe and inclusive event that promotes love and support of one another, and that is exactly why we decided to reach out to Julia and offer a full donation of our event space," said Tiffany Best, co-owner of The Rust Belt Market.

"Providing a centrally located, beautiful room with stylistic options and ease of planning at very little cost felt right because that's what Ferndale is about. As with all ceremonies we've hosted, we are humbled to be an important part of so many lives and lasting memories. What The Rust Belt team has created and works hard at every day is interesting and inspiring but most importantly, it's about relationships. Our marketplace, our bar, our event space. The connections we form with one another and the community is the heart of our company. If anyone has felt sidelined, forgotten, or has been made to feel less than, we see you, we welcome you, and hope you can join the festivities."

Included during the big day are flowers, desserts, a cash bar, a corsage or boutonniere and an officiant who will meet with LGBTQ couples in advance to plan their one-hour ceremony.

"Eclectic and artsy, The Rust Belt is the perfect backdrop for a wedding in Ferndale," said Julia Music, chair of Ferndale Pride.

"Partnering with The Rust Belt Market allows us to guarantee that weather doesn't prohibit anyone's special day and having a cash bar available makes the space more celebratory than the main stage. The Bests, who own the space, and their events manager, Christiana Cosio, enthusiastically approached us with the idea early into planning. It feels good to have businesses in this city that give back to our community with open arms."

The Rust Belt Market is located at 22801 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale. For more information, visit rustbeltmarket.com. Go online to gaybe.am/ap to reserve your wedding.

5 Mistakes Brides Make Choosing a Dress

Planning a wedding is often a long process, with many decisions to make along the way. And according to The Wedding Shoppe in Berkley, finding the perfect wedding dress is one of the most important decisions for a bride on her special day and can often seem intimidating. The Wedding Shoppe aims to make a bride's dress shopping as smooth as possible. Here are five mistakes brides make when choosing a dress and how to avoid them.

Too Many People

While we always encourage our brides to bring friends and family with them to dress appointments, it can often become a little overwhelming if there's too many people. With so many different opinions, it can be hard for brides to focus on finding their perfect dress. Everyone has different ideas on a number, but we've found that five people or fewer is generally a good group. We also recommend bringing people you care about and that you know will give you their honest, reliable opinions.

Feeling Pressured

Choosing the right wedding dress is already such a big decision – don't let anyone pressure you into choosing one right away. If your friends, family or even stylist are pressuring you toward a dress you don't immediately love, it's okay to give yourself more time to think about it. Try on more dresses to see if you find the perfect fit, even if you're still unsure on a

few different styles. Is there one specific dress you keep coming back to or that grabs your attention? While everyone is likely to give you their own opinions, remember it's your wedding dress and you shouldn't feel pressured to choose one so quickly.



Following Trends

Fashion trends are always changing, some even multiple times per year. The same is true for wedding dresses with styles such as bows, capes and dramatic sleeves making a comeback for 2019. While it may seem tempting to choose a wedding dress that's on-trend, don't let that be your deciding factor when choosing your gown. There are so many classic, timeless options that have survived through the decades and will continue to be on-trend. Don't let the pressure of fashion trends entice you to choose a dress you don't completely love.

Going Over Budget

One of the most important aspects of choosing a wedding dress is also knowing your budget. Many brides make the mistake of trying on dresses that are far outside their budget and end up falling in love with something they can't necessarily afford. This will only leave you disappointed when you have to put it back on the rack. Be sure to give your stylist your set budget so they can pull dresses that fall within your means. You also don't want to let a steep discount affect your dress choice – you may just end up with a dress you don't totally love only because of its price tag.

Forgetting Accessories

While many brides choose their accessories after finding their perfect dress, you may have a few on hand already such as a family heirloom or a veil passed down from your mother. Don't forget to bring these items to your dress appointments with you. You may find a beautiful wedding dress, and you'll want to know how it pairs with your accessories. However, don't let this be a deciding factor when trying on gowns. You always have the option to find new accessories that fit your dress beautifully on your big day.

The Wedding Shoppe is located at 2186 Coolidge Highway in Berkley. Call 248-541-1988 or visit theweddingshoppe.net for more information. Or, visit The Wedding Shoppe on Facebook facebook.com/theweddingshoppemi

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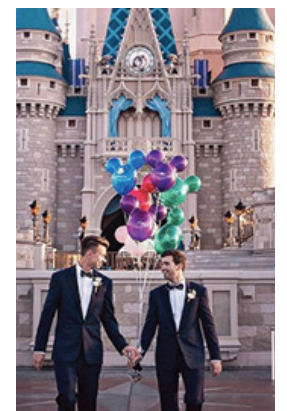
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Disney Promotes Same-Sex Wedding and Honeymoon Program on Instagram

In an effort to promote its Fairy Tale Weddings and Honeymoons program, Disney's official Instagram page shared a post this week featuring two men getting married at Orlando's Walt Disney World resort. The vacation package includes a special ceremony with Disney characters, photos in front of Cinderella's castle and a honeymoon in the company theme parks.

Similar images of same-sex couples are also prominently featured on Disney's official wedding . In 2007, the company opened Cinderella's Castle to same-sex weddings.



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Karen Williams, Peter Smith, Sandra Valls and Mimi Gonzalez. Photos courtesy of the artists. Peter Smith photo by Mindy Tucker.

Michigan LGBTQ Comedy Fest Back for 23rd Year

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Since 1995 the Michigan LGBTQ Comedy Fest has brought some of the best names in LGBTQ entertainment to Detroit. This 23-year tradition remains unbroken in 2019 with four comedians – Karen Williams, Peter Smith, Sandra Valls and Mimi Gonzalez – slated to perform on Saturday, March 2, at the Courtyard Detroit-Dearborn at 8 p.m. The proceeds from the evening's event serve to benefit the local LGBTQ community, too, as they will fund this year's 2019 Motor City Pride.

In advance of the show, BTL caught up with each comedian to get a feel for their comedic style, comedic beginnings and any plans specific to the Detroit show.

Karen Williams

When did you start doing stand-up comedy?

I was living in the bay area in 1980, I moved there from Los Angeles and, oh gosh, I have to even remember now. I've been doing comedy for 35 years (laughs). So, it was more or less with some friends and we were at the Hyatt hotel in Oakland, hanging out. A mutual friend walks by and was telling us about his show that he was doing at a little club in Oakland out by the airport and I said, "Oh, I do comedy too." My friends were like, "What?" Anyway, I ended up doing six minutes in this guy's act and went around with him to the local clubs in the Oakland area and debuted in the LGBT world at the San Francisco Pride somewhere around '83.

Were you always out in your career?

No, in the first couple of years when I was out with the young guy, I was doing the black comedy scene around Oakland and I was a party girl so people knew. That's why doing that San Francisco Pride was so important because Marga Gomez said to me, "Well, you know it's going to be in the newspapers," and

"Well I think one of the most valuable things that I've really learned through this whole experience is that lesbians, in particular, have a culture. We have a culture and I think that, as time goes on, there's some kind of denial about the importance of having space for lesbians."

- Karen

it was my way of coming out that way through the actual pride circuit.

In one of your bits you have a piece about lesbians always wearing a backpack. I just wanted to let you know that I was wearing a backpack right before I did this interview.

(Laughs) Well I think one of the most valuable things that I've really learned through this whole experience is that lesbians, in particular, have a culture. We have a culture and I think that, as time goes on, there's some kind of denial about the importance of having space for lesbians and the fact that we have a culture. And I think that it's very, very important to me to acknowledge that and it continues to be important for me to acknowledge that along the spectrum of the evolution of the LGBTQ movement, you know? Lesbian comedy didn't exist before people like Marga Gomez and Kate Clinton and Lea DeLaria and I learned a lot about humor and healing from a comic

Linda Moakes who was on the circuit at that time.

Speaking of humor and healing, you also founded the HaHa Institute dedicated to both those causes. Why do you take that approach to comedy?

Some of it comes out of being a longtime Buddhist. I've been a Buddhist for 46 years and in that spiritual practice joy and compassion and courage are seen as [connected]. For people lacking in compassion, you manifest courage and to even be compassionate takes courage and that, for me, is where that wellspring of joy comes from. It's when we are compassionate, when we are courageous because it's that interconnectedness that we're striving for.

Do you have any specific content for the Detroit show?

No, I really don't. I haven't gotten there yet and I have so much to do before there, but I'm absolutely sure I will feel comfortable in Detroit. It's one of my favorite places to be and I know that I'm going to be seeing some friends there. I love performing with Sandra Valls and Mimi Gonzalez — Mimi is my road dog — so it's going to be a fun night for all of us and I know we'll have a great show

Peter Smith

You not only have done stand-up in your career but have done improv with groups like Upright Citizens Brigade. What performance style introduced you to the comedy scene?

The Second City in Chicago had a pre-teen, I don't even know, it was basically babysitting, but they had a youth program and I knew about that and I knew about all the comedians that came out of there and I loved all of them. So, I went to that when I was 11 and I took comedy classes there. It was

"In terms of my identity I don't have a gender so that automatically puts me in a position of other to watch most things that include a binary. If you're other you're kind of already put in the observer position. It gives you literal perspective, it's good."

- Peter

always something I wanted to do.

Improv requires you to be quick on your feet and bounce back from almost any situation, do you think that set you up well for stand-up comedy?

I think I learned more from doing theater and plays just because when something terrible happens and you're not expecting it and you have to go on with the show, you have to problem solve while not letting anyone know that you're doing that. The stakes are higher when you have like a full hour left and the girl playing Alice in Wonderland has a bloody nose and she can't come on stage for 20 minutes.

It's amazing how actors can do that. I once saw a production of "The Wizard of Oz" where the curtain ripped and blocked a really important door in the set, but they were able to get through it somehow.

Oh god! That's like my favorite thing.

Have you ever performed in Detroit before?

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I think I've driven through but never spent time as a human being with a functioning brain. You know, I was born in Chicago and we moved to Montana and the Midwest and the Great Plains that's my home and that's very much the core of my heart and I would say I identify as a Midwesterner before I identify with any queer identity.

Does identity help out in generating material when you're approaching a stand-up set?

In terms of my identity, I don't have a gender so that automatically puts me in a position of other to watch most things that include a binary. If you're other you're kind of already put in the observer position. It gives you literal perspective, it's good.

Do you find you can approach comedy differently in the Midwest than in other parts of the country?

Oh, for sure! When I'm Chicago I can make jokes about hot dogs and meat products and beer, but I always am excited to do those kinds of jokes that don't work in New York.

What's your approach in New York?

In New York, everyone has come to the show via the same streets, basically, and we all had to deal with the same frustrations before a show begins so everyone's kind of coming in with the same level of needing to laugh a little bit. It's this level of tension that New York has that can be cut with a joke, whereas in the Midwest it's trickier to know where people are coming from and there are a lot more energies coming in. The thing I'm most excited for the Detroit show is being able to make jokes about my Midwestern experience that I can't talk about New York and I'm excited to be more myself in the middle of America.

Sandra Valls

In one of your bits you talk about how it would've been helpful to you as a kid to have had a "Sesame Street" song about lesbians you might find in your neighborhood. Me too!

(Laughs) It would have helped me out a lot if there were shows representing us!

In that same bit you talk about a lesbian starter

kit being handed out. What would you put in your kit?

Well firstly "The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love." I love that movie. It has as the star Laurel Holloman. It's such a beautiful innocent love story about these two girls who just love each other. I would put that and a total safe-sex manual because things aren't out there and people don't talk about all the things out there and the things you can avoid and shouldn't be doing. And then, of course, I would emphasize that it doesn't matter even in our community what you label yourself. It's OK to just be yourself and be more fluid.

I think I'd add all that and maybe some combat boots and flannel for good measure.

I would add a "How to Survive in the Wilderness" [guide] because sooner or later you're going to be camping (laughs). And someone like me I'm like, "What?" And how

"I don't have special material planned, no. I just think that it's important to remind people that love always wins no matter what and that there is strength in numbers. And it's so important to keep it together and have each other's back."

- Sandra

to use a pStyle correctly, because I don't know. That is a major must-have for every music festival you are in. My friend Mimi Gonzalez, who I do Lezbarados with, is a pro.

When did you get your start in comedy?

I've always been a funny kid and in high school, I got the funniest [superlative] and I mean I went to school for musical theater and I had bands. I was the lead singer in a band since I was 15 and had my own eight-piece horn band in Boston, the whole works. But a girlfriend of mine in Boston said, 'You're so funny, I want to give you these adult education classes for stand-up comedy.' We had been having issues in our relationship and, long story short, we broke up but I still went to the comedy class to make friends. And it actually healed me and I got a whole career out of it!

Do you have any specific material planned for

See **Comedy Fest**, continued on p. 17

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Wholeness: The Journey of the Lansing Salus Center

BY JONATHAN W. THURSTON

In downtown Lansing, at the corner of Washington Square and Kalamazoo Street, right across from Reutter Park, the Salus Center stands tall. The LGBTQ-centered organization is a resource and community center and it's "the first one in Lansing," according to its founder and owner Phiwa Langeni. Since it opened in the fall of 2017, wholeness and well-being have been its goals for everyone who stops by.

"Salus is the Latin word for wholeness and well-being," Langeni said, adding that the Center offers a variety of different programs and events centered around that theme, like yoga and game nights, along with educational opportunities and training for LGBTQ-supportive organizations. Included in their mission, Langeni said that they especially "want to help shape different narratives around religious experience and expression, especially around LGBTQ folks."

A Needed Space

Langeni said that they hadn't lived in Lansing for 15 years before returning in 2016, but when they did return, they saw a clear gap in LGBTQ-centered spaces. That manifested itself in many ways like, "not

knowing where to find a doctor to manage care or even to try to find any community," Langeni said.

"There weren't any obvious places," they said. "A big part of our success is partnering with people and organizations that have been here all along. A big part is pointing people to those resources."

So, in 2017, they put together a plan to create the Salus Center that exists today. However, like with many starting ventures, the road wasn't without its bumps.

"Like most new businesses, especially nonprofits," they said, "financial barriers are always on my mind. Getting donors to help support us is constant work."

Those barriers can sometimes take time away from Langeni's programmatic concerns, but they said that at the end of the day, cultivating community is a main priority.

"[Like] making sure we are inviting people, to truly welcome people, to let them know they can participate in their fullness without commodifying their identity," Langeni said.

And amid the current political climate, the center is making efforts to be especially mindful of the differences of people's experiences when they come in.

"There are people out here enacting so-called jokes at the expense of people who are LGBTQ," Langeni said. "Meanwhile, people are literally dying, and people are making

these comments around our erasure. I'm glad there is a space that people can come, but it's frustrating seeing how rhetoric is tossed around, even by public figures. That's really hard."

But as hard as Langeni is working to make Salus a safe space, they said that the ultimate goal is to make it an unnecessary one.

"A part of me wants to work out of ever having to need the Salus Center. I don't want to have to keep teaching people how to act so that people, regardless of their identities, can survive and thrive," they said.

Before that ultimate goal, however, Langeni has a lot of work cut out for them. But what makes it worth it, Langeni said, is the impact on people.

"Some days, the work can be very grueling. Then, I'll have encounters with these beautiful people. This is such a beautiful community," Langeni said. "The ways in which people are showing up for and with each other is just a miracle — literally in life-saving ways. There are people still here just because of the community that has cultivated here. I've been graced to be in their presence and be able to journey with them. I feel entirely gifted to be able to work with such amazing people in this community, allies and LGBTQ folk alike."

To find out more about Lansing's Salus Center, go online to saluscenter.org.

Sen. Moss on Senate Vote to Overturn Executive Order, Lower Transparency and Accountability in DEQ

BY BTL STAFF

LANSING — Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield) released the following statement last week after the Michigan Senate voted along party lines to approve House Concurrent Resolution 1 without amendment. The resolution overturns Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's Executive Order 2019-02, which would restructure the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality into the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy and increase transparency and accountability within it.

"Under the last administration, the Department of Environmental Quality was Lansing's most inappropriately named department because they did little to actually protect environmental quality," Moss said. "We must change the culture within and mission of

the department, and I support Gov. Whitmer's order to do so.

"Decades of failed Republican leadership and events like a water crisis in Flint, an oil drilling permit in Southfield, and PFAS contamination throughout the state, all prove that the DEQ is in sore need of restructuring to restore environmental justice for our residents," he continued. "But today, Republicans continued their support of these reckless practices by pushing HCR 1 forward."

Moss added that Michigan needs a government that "works for the people."

"And the people are in desperate need of safe, clean drinking water," Moss said. "I will continue to stand with the residents of Michigan who need this basic human right to survive."

► Comdey Fest

Continued from p. 15

the upcoming Detroit show?

I don't have special material planned, no. I just think that it's important to remind people that love always wins no matter what and that there is strength in numbers. And it's so important to keep it together and have each other's back. I think that's something that I would hit on more, especially in today's climate and reinforce and validate that there's still good people in the world.

Mimi Gonzalez

Were you always drawn to humor? What made you want to be a comedian?

I was the class clown, the kid in trouble. I went to St. Francis Cabrini in Allen Park, that's where I'm from. And don't think that because it was a religious organization that they were free of violence, so I had to learn to laugh at the madness of Catholic school. And when my mother and stepfather pulled me unceremoniously out of St. Francis Cabrini and Allen Park to move three hours north and go to a public school and ride a bus an hour and a half before that school started out in rural Michigan, I didn't think it was

“I really do like to talk to people and I can find something to talk about with almost anybody. I do believe that we are all somehow connected to each other as a human family and I think it really comes from not minding myself so much. Now, that's what took a lot of years to get to and probably comedy helped me get to that.”

- Mimi

so funny! However, I still maintained my coping mechanism of comedy and managed to become the class clown after a year-and-a-half in being in that graduating class in Chippewa Hills High School in Remus, Michigan.

Did that drastic change in location impact some of what you saw as funny?

No, it more developed my sense of capacity to talk to anybody about almost anything. I never met any of my grandparents and was raised for a long time by my mother as a single parent and she told me I'm like my grandmother who never met a stranger. And that is a really beautiful spin (laughs) on the old big mouth. I really do like to talk to people and I can find something to talk about with almost anybody. And I do believe that we are all somehow connected to each other as a human family and I think it really comes from not minding myself so much. Now, that's what took a lot of years to get to and probably comedy helped me get to that.

Do you think your stand-up has gotten better now that you're at that place of self-acceptance and sureness?

Yeah. I think one of the tricks of comedy is if I'm having a good time, the audience is having a good time. When a comic is nervous or unsure, the audience is nervous or unsure. Everybody came to laugh and the audience really is there to say yes to you and for you, as the comic, as the entertainer, to say yes to them. And so that starts with how much “yes” are you giving to yourself.

Are you excited to be doing a show in your home state?

Absolutely. I'll talk to my people and as a national queer comic everybody's my people but my favorite people are my home fries and that's the Motor City and people from the land of the hand. You know what Michigan does? We high-five the nation.

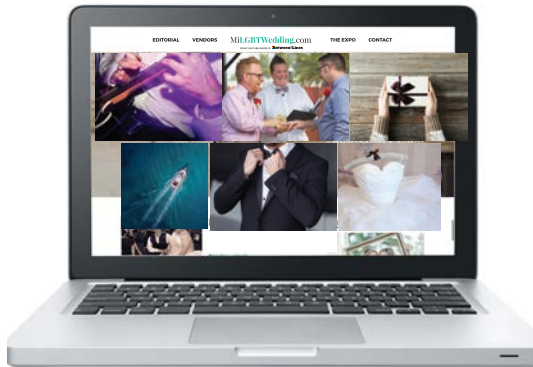
Incidentally, Sandra Valls is performing a Comedy Fest too, and when I interviewed her I asked what she'd put in her lesbian starter kit and she answered the pStyle. She said that you're a pro at it.

Good answer! Did she tell you that I sell them? So, the pStyle is the next step in female liberation and I can thank a woman named Krista Eickmann, who of course I call dykeman, for bringing it to the country. She is the woman who brought pStyle to this country and she is a distributor of Diva Cups. I asked and she allowed me to be a distributor and I sell them from the stage and the pStyle, it's not just a pStyle, it's a lifestyle. Stand with me if you want to pee. The pStyle, I love it. And you know what? Anybody who buys a pStyle, I'll autograph it at the show (laughs).

Go online to pridesource.com to see full-length interviews with each of the upcoming performers. To find out more about the show go online to <http://motorcitypride.org/comedyfest18/>. Tickets start at \$30.

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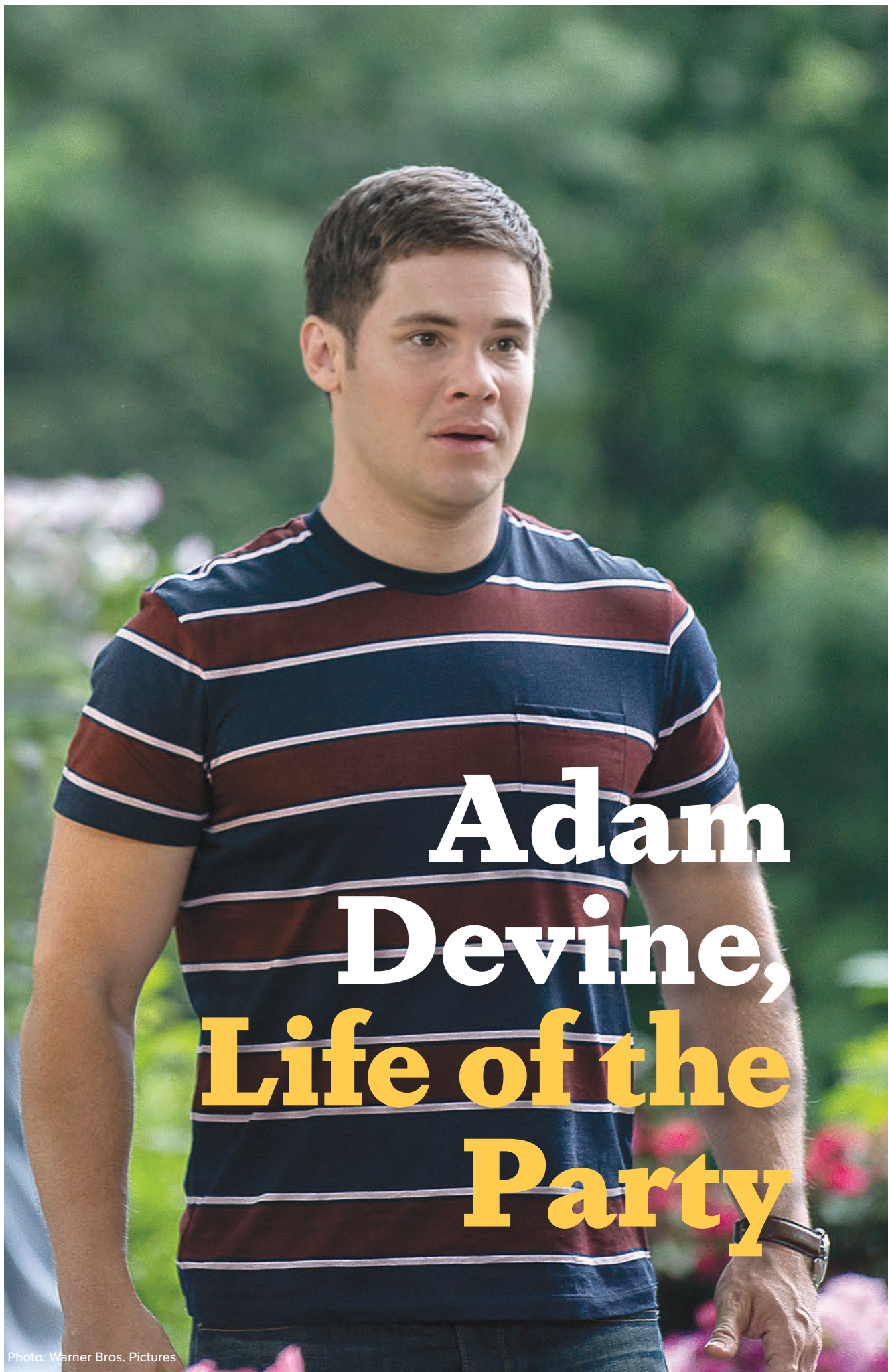


Photo: Warner Bros. Pictures

Adam Devine, Life of the Party

'Isn't It Romantic' Star on His Thirsty Gay Fans, What Straights Can Learn From Gays and Being a 'Bear Cub'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Even now, Adam Devine just wants to dance with some bodies. So, as Josh in "Isn't it Romantic," the comedian known for flexing his funny-guy chops in Comedy Central's "Workaholics" (which he also co-wrote) and ABC's "Modern Family," keeps the love strong with "Pitch Perfect" co-star Rebel Wilson in their new self-aware anti-rom-com. With assists from a satirical gay sidekick (Brandon Scott Jones of NBC's "The Good Place") and Whitney Houston and Madonna musical numbers, the film also stars, of course, Liam Hemsworth as the man of everyone's dreams – though, in this case, the unconscious literal one that Wilson's Natalie falls into.

During a recent call, Devine spoke about his bear-cub identity, tactfully tackling LGBTQ storylines and the popularity of his penis on gay blogs.

Charming rom-com, Adam, but where's the movie where you end up with the gay sidekick?

(Laughs) Maybe that's the sequel.

That's the movie Hollywood needs to make next.

Yeah, you might be right.

In your version of that movie, what guy would play the sidekick you fall for?

I mean, Liam. If I'm a gay dude, I want the hunk. I'm goin' hunky!

You get to do a Whitney and Madonna musical number in the movie. Do you know enough gay men to know that these women are gay icons?

I do, yeah. I've got a good handful of gay friends and they keep me abreast of what's hot in the gay culture: Whitney, Britney Spears also. We should've done a Britney Spears tribute.

What was your earliest exposure to the LGBTQ community?

I guess my cousin came out as gay and I was much younger than him and that was the first time that I knew anyone who was gay. He came out to the family and then we all knew, and then you'd see him at holidays and stuff and it was cool. You're like, "Oh, I love my cousin, he's the man, he's a great guy." It normalized the whole thing.

Do you hear from LGBTQ fans on Twitter?

Yeah, I do sometimes. I've been told that I'm a bear cub,

so I'm not a full-on bear. I think I'm too tiny, so I'm a bear cub is what my gay buddies tell me.

You don't seem to have enough body hair to be a bear cub.

Well, I'm not afraid to 'scape. I manscape. And I think that's important. I don't want puffy t-shirts, that's the issue. That's the reason I do it.

You don't want hair lumps.

Yeah, I don't want weird puffs around my nipples from my hair, so I gotta maintain.

Your role in "Game Over, Man!," particularly your full-frontal scene: What did that do for your gay following?

(Laughs) I noticed some fan blogs, and I'm like, "Oh, cool, a fan blog, they're spreading the word," and then I'm just like, "Oh, it's very gay and it's just every naked photo I've ever taken."

So by fan blog you mean GayTube.com?

Yeah, basically. I'm not sure if that's the one, but yes.

If you go to an Adam Devine story on an LGBTQ website, you'll likely find some guys in the comments crushing on you. One gay commenter noted your role on "Modern Family" and that your brand of adorable is one he finds sexy.

I love it.

How often does that interest from gay men translate to real life? Do guys hit on you?

No, I don't think so. I mean, I have a girlfriend. I think it's known that I don't go that way. But, admittedly, gay guys don't care – they swing for the fence. I think straight guys need to learn something from the gay community. They're so afraid!

Is the first gay thing you did in your professional life an episode of "The Minor Accomplishments of Jackie Woodman" called "Dykes Like Us" or does your pro gay history go back even further?

(Laughs) I guess that is the first thing!

Tell me about that experience.

You know, I don't even remember – I had such a small part on that show. (Creator) Laura (Kightlinger) cast me in it and she was just really cool and great. We ended up casting her as a MILF who uses me for sex on "Workaholics" and it turns out I can't handle it. It's too much. I can't handle everything she's giving me.

Regarding your role in "Pitch Perfect," Rebel once told me: "I think most of the Treblemakers, the boy band, are gay. What about that scene where there's, like, nine dudes in a hot tub ... naked? That's totally gay." Can we explore this? Is it gay for dudes who love a cappella to be in a hot tub together?

If they are fucking each other it is. But just to sit in a hot tub, that could go any which way!

How does kissing Rebel compare to kissing Zac Efron?

Weirdly, same amount of lip gloss. (Laughs)

Cherry?

Vanilla! Boysenberry! With Rebel it lasts a little longer; with Zac it was one brother kissing another brother, so it wasn't a sensual kiss in any way.

In an episode of "Workaholics" called "Gayborhood" you and your buddies inadvertently end up in Palm Springs for a Pride party that you don't know is a gay Pride party and you guys pretend to be "throwaway gay." Did that episode get you invited to more gay parties?

(Laughs) With "Workaholics" we really prided ourselves on tackling issues but not really tackling the issues. And we really wanted to make ourselves the butt of every joke. I remember that day this casting director was coming to set and he wanted to meet me. It just so happened to line up on that episode that he was gonna come to set. Everybody was so worried and my manager was worried and they're like, "We wanna cancel. We wanna do it another day. We don't want him to get the wrong impression of you as an actor," and I'm like, "It's a funny episode and we're the butt of every joke here. We're the idiots." And then he came on set and he was like, "This is the funniest episode of television I've ever seen."

The episode was also well-received by critics. Did that surprise you?

It honestly didn't because gay guys are cool as hell and they get it and they understand what's funny and what's offensive. I think you can't be offended by everything and you have to have a sense of humor about things. I wasn't surprised that the gay community has a sense of humor. It meant that we're doing something right and that people understand what we're trying to do, and that we're not just out to be shock comedians, or we're not crude for crude's sake. It all comes from a good

See **Adam Devine**, continued on p. 21

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9 Albums to Hear This Year



BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

There's something for every color of the rainbow included in this year's music-release roster. The list is long, but here's a taste: debuts from "Pitch Perfect" star Ben Platt and hair-toss kween Lizzo, songwriter showcases from Patty Griffin and Lana Del Rey, gay icons (Madonna, Melissa Etheridge), emerging gay icons (Ariana Grande, Carly Rae Jepsen), and much more. Look for this diverse pack in the coming months:

Ben Platt, 'Sing to Me Instead' (March 29)

You know Ben Platt as a "Pitch Perfect" acca-nerd – he played Benji Applebaum, the acapella-obsessed outcast crazy for magic – and as the eponymous lead in Broadway's "Dear Evan Hansen." But the magic of his first solo album, where he'll peel back the layers of the gay man under the wizard's cape, is purely Ben Platt being Ben Platt. Already, he's captured the greatest love of all – the saving grace of self-love – on "Bad Habit," a tender, aching piano number with gorgeous vocal riffs on gorgeous vocal riffs. Surely Platt has a few more tricks up his sleeve.

Madonna (TBA)

Will Madonna reel it in? Drain the pool of zeitgeist, hotshot producers she's been known

to enlist for recent projects? Ditch trends? Blaze trails? Much remains to be seen (and heard), but because women are ardently reclaiming their rightful power – and because Madonna is Madonna – she's bound to come down hard on the patriarchy on her 14th studio album. Suitably, she had a session with an all-female Portuguese orchestra for the release, which she told Women's Wear Daily was being made "in between rose mist spray and serums." So just maybe this one'll be sweet and fresh and like a Sephora after all.

Carly Rae Jepsen (TBA)

In October 2018, Carly Rae Jepsen announced her pop career's next chapter by Instagramming a snap of a (her?) cat nipping at a Twizzler she held in one hand, a droopy slice of pizza dangling from her other. Full pizza at her feet, the pic – hilarious, empowering – captured the buoyant breakup anthem that would follow, "Party For One," a bop that makes a strong argument for singlehood and self-pleasure. "E*MO*TION*" was fire. The best pop album of 2015. Maybe not a Hot-N-Ready, but whatever Jepsen delivers, piece by piece, we'll eat it right up.

Patty Griffin, 'Patty Griffin' (March 8)

A first-ever self-titled album after nearly 25 years in the music business has to mean something. For Patty Griffin, one of the best character songwriters this world has to offer (just ask gay power-songwriter Justin Tranter, who stans PG), it means deep, pensive dives into her own life. Battling cancer, as Griffin did, will tend to beget self-reflection, and so her 10th studio album, "Patty Griffin," traces her steps, from memories with her late mom to growing up in Maine, when she thought "maybe who I am wasn't right." "Luminous Places" – a could-be swan song – is otherworldly, casting a mystic dreaminess amid a delicate dance of strings, guitar and pillowy piano; it's as if the song was composed in the clouds, then fell from the sky and floated to us on a single moon-lit snowflake.



Ariana Grande, 'Thank U, Next' (Out now)

Ariana Grande moves on fast – from donut controversy, from exes, from albums. "Sweetener" descended upon us just half a year ago, in August 2018, but Grande had more to say, dammit, and so she's gone and said it with an army of 12 bad-bitch-and-beyond songs conceived for this new project led by the power-asserting "thank u, next" and the "My Favorite Things"-sampled "7 rings," a piercing, winking satire of millennial entitlement. A confessional chronicling a trying year in the spotlight, it's her best, boldest album yet.



Melissa Etheridge, 'The Medicine Show' (March 29)

As always, LGBTQ activist and lesbian rock legend Melissa Etheridge has the antidote for our precarious times – songs about them. Her 15th

Hear Me Out

studio release called "The Medicine Show" reunites Etheridge with producer John Shanks – the album was largely recorded live in studio – and explores universal themes of renewal, reconciliation, reckoning, compassion and healing. Songs include "Shaking," about national anxiety; "Here Comes the Pain," personalizing the opioid crisis; the hopeful and unifying "Human Chain"; and rock anthem "Love Will Live." The survivors of the Parkland school shootings inspired the album's closing song, "Last Hello," while "Wild and Lonely" and "Faded By Design" take another, different look at Etheridge's past.

Dido, 'Still on My Mind' (March 8)

Dido seems to not mind being forgotten, only to be remembered every four to six years, when she floats back to earth like the mystic fairy she is, reminding us that her dainty voice may be that of an actual pixie. Her first album since 2013's "Girl Who Got Away," "Still on My Mind" was recorded with her brother, Rollo, at home, on a couch. It's that chill living room sound both you and your mom can agree on; the real thrill, though, is hearing the English performer infuse electro and hip-hop life into her delicate sofa songs. A remix album can't be far off.

Lana Del Rey, 'Norman Fucking Rockwell' (March 29)

Lana Del Rey's persona is the subject of much debate and confusion: how much is truly authentic, and how much is the record label's doing to produce a pop icon for These Sad, Dark Times. Del Rey seems to have leaned into the conversation, and she's responded accordingly – and very, very personally – with her forthcoming album's maximalist-titled first single, called "hope is a dangerous thing for a woman to have – but I have it." Produced and co-written with Taylor Swift and Lorde producer Jack Antonoff, the song is a songwriter's song, hauntingly simple, intimate. Her authenticity is her defiance.

See **Hear Me Out**, continued on p. 20





Adam Devine and Rebel Wilson in "Isn't It Romantic." Photo: Warner Bros. Pictures

► Adam Devine

Continued from p. 17

place... and I think the shock was that it came from us. Like, people on the outside looking in, you probably wouldn't think that we'd be the guys to deliver that sort of message. But hey, turns out we are!

For that episode, how was it determined that you look more like a bottom?

Oh, I think in the writers' room that's what happened. (Laughs) I don't know how or why. I think my ass is kind of on and poppin', so that must've been it.

In general, how conscious are you of finding the balance between what can pass as gay humor and what can be perceived as offensive to the LGBTQ community?

We all have gay friends, and if you think maybe they could take this the wrong way – we don't want to alienate anyone or make anyone feel like they're not in on the joke – then you just check in with your gay buds

► Hear Me Out

Continued from p. 21

Lizzo, 'CUZ I LOVE YOU' (April 19)

On "Juice," rapper-singer-flutist and "America's Next Bop Star" Lizzo does not, will not, even let that mirror, mirror on the wall chime in on the fairest one of all. Because, honey, she is. And you are. And we all are. There for you and all the blighted characters in "Blockers" and "A Bad Moms Christmas" and "I Feel Pretty," the Detroit-born, Minneapolis-raised performer's breakthrough single, "Good as Hell," similarly empowered you to write your own damn fairy tale and parade that princess crown around and let it shine. All signs for this one, Lizzo's much-anticipated major-label debut, point to more hair-toss, "you go geeeerl" swagger.

and say, like, "Hey, what do you think of this? Is this funny or is this weird?" People aren't afraid to tell you the truth if you're upfront and honest with them.

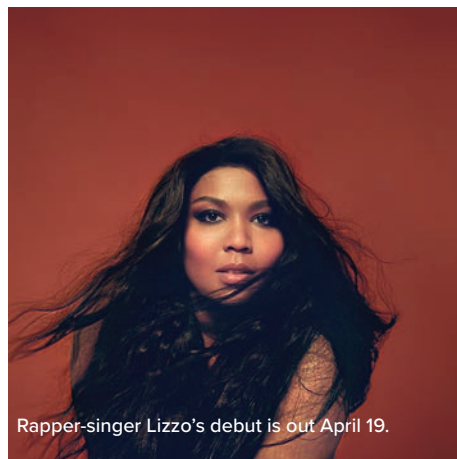
Jumping back to "Isn't It Romantic," I'm glad to see the movie is inclusive and there's a fun gay sidekick, but I'm gonna hold you to this rom-com where you and Liam are romantic leads.

(Laughs) I've got the idea for the spinoff!

You can credit me, but also you don't have to because after "Love, Simon" I just want our community to have more rom-coms with lead characters who happen to be gay.

I'm with you. Where it's not something that is kept in the closet or that anyone's ashamed about. It's just loud and proud. I like that idea.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.



Rapper-singer Lizzo's debut is out April 19.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service. Reach him @chrisazzopardi.

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Happenings



Michael Buble at Little Caesars Arena March 1

Canadian singer, songwriter, producer and actor Michael Buble is making his way to Detroit's Little Caesars Arena. The multiple Grammy and American Music Award-winning artist's visit coincides with his 2019 tour in promotion of his latest "Love" album. LCA advises attendees that this performance begins with no opener and Buble will take the stage at approximately 8 p.m. Find more information about ticketing at ticketmaster.com.

OUTINGS

Saturday, February 23

LGBT Community Chat 11 a.m. Saturday LGBT Chat is an ongoing social discussion group meets every week to discuss issues LGBT people face. Every Saturday. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 W 9 mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

The House on Poe Street at The Detroit Repertory Theatre 3 p.m. Gothic ghosts encounter modern monstrosities when twin sisters inherit the house where Poe is reputed to have composed "The Raven." Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347. DetRepTh@aol.com. detroitreptheatre.com.

Erotic Poetry and Music Festival at Tangent Gallery 8 p.m. Come join us for an eclectic celebration of the erotic arts all in one evening! Featuring poetry, art, music, burlesque and more! Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277.

Sunday, February 24

Men's Swing/Latin/Ballroom Lessons 4 p.m. Same Sex Men's Touch Dance lessons, Casual Attire This is touch dancing where you hold your partner close. Singles, couples, Beginners or Seasoned dancers. Jordan Mac Studio 444 W. Maple Suite E Troy, MI, 444 W. Maple Suite E, Troy. 248-288-7624. xanaduspa@me.com. meetup.com/Shell-We-Dance.

Monday, February 25

LGBT Game Night 7 p.m. LGBT Game Night is an opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee and socialize with other LGBT individuals. Java Hut, 165 W Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Tuesday, February 26

Strand with Trans Support Groups – Ann Arbor – Washtenaw 6:30 p.m. One of several groups around Metro Detroit. Parent Support Group Facilitator – Yma Johnson, ymaj1968@gmail.com or 734-780-4092. Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. standwithtrans.org.

Wednesday, February 27

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings and potlucks are held throughout the year. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Rainbow League Bowling! 7 p.m. This is a fun bowling league and provides a great opportunity for anybody to become acquainted with bowling. Lodge Lanes, 46255 S. I-94 Service Drive, Belleville. 734-697-9178. info@a2bowling.com. lodgelanes.com. rainbowbowlingleague.com.

Thursday, February 28

Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting 7 p.m. Professional and personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. lawrencemoebbs@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Jazz & Soul Singer Sky Covington & Club Crescendo Live Every Thursday Night at Northern Lights Lounge 9 p.m. Jimi Blues on Keys, Alex Brooks on Drums, Greg Cook on Bass and Special Guest. No cover. Northern Light Lounge 660 W. Baltimore Detroit. 313-873-1739. northernlightslounge.com. 248-445-1277. northernlightslounge.com.

Saturday, March 2

Michigan LGBTQ Comedy Fest 8 p.m.

The 23rd annual Comedy Fest features Sandra Valls, Peter Smith, Karen Williams Alive! and Mimi Gonzalez in one huge show. Buy your tickets online for \$30 or at the door for \$35. Dearborn Ford Community & Performing Arts, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 313-943-2350. dearbornfordcenter.com. comedyfest.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Flint Symphony Orchestra Presents 'Beethoven's No. 5 Destiny Symphony' February 23, 8 a.m. Enriquer Diemecke, conductor; Anthony Elliott, cello; Cheyanne Coss, voice; Beethoven, Barber, Bloch. Cheyanne Coss appears courtesy of St. Cecilia Society, host of the William C. Byrd Young Artist Competition. Pre-concert talks at 6:30. Flint Institute of Music, 1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-238-1350. thefim.org. thefso.org.

Candy Chemistry February 23, 11 a.m. Experiment with candy to learn science concepts. For age 5 and up. Capital Area District Libraries – Dansville Branch, 1379 East Mason St., Dansville. 517-623-6511. smiley@cadl.org. cadl.org.

Cabaret 313 Presents Carole J. Bufford February 23, 6:30 p.m. With music made famous by Janis Joplin, Dusty Springfield, Tina Turner, Carole King and more, Carole J. Bufford returns for her third performance with Cabaret 313 – You Don't Own Me. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-833-7900. cabaret313.org.

Black History Family Festival at the Tangent Gallery February 24, 5 p.m. Black History Family Festival at the Tangent Gallery, come join us! Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277.

Co-Occurring Eating Disorders and Addiction: Implications for Recovery February 26, 7:30 p.m. Tiffany Schultz, LLMSW; Dawn Farm Outpatient Therapist, will explore the ways in which substance use disorders and eating disorders intersect and how those intersections impact the course of treatment and recovery for the individual. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

DANGEROUS DAYS: A Performance Tribute to Sinead O'Connor February 28, 7:30 p.m. Detroit Theatre Collective hosts a Benefit Tribute to iconic Irish singer-songwriter Sinead O'Connor (Shuhada Davitt). Detroit artists pay homage to her in this evening of celebration. Donations accepted, 20% of proceeds will go the Ruth Gaelic League Irish American Club, 2068 Michigan Ave., Detroit. 313-964-8700. encountertheatre@gmail.com. gaelicleagueofdetroit.org.

90th Annual Spring Dance Concert at The Bonstelle March 1, 7:30 p.m. Celebrate our 90th Anniversary of Dance at Wayne with this thrilling weekend at the Bonstelle Theatre. Join us as we highlight national and international dance from top-performing artists. Bonstelle Theatre, 3424 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2960. theatreanddanceatwayne.com/springdanceconcert/.

Stagecrafter's Second Stage Presents 'Sondheim on Sondheim' March 1, 8 p.m. Part musical revue, part documentary, "Sondheim on Sondheim" gives us an intimate portrait of famed songwriter Stephen Sondheim in his own words and music. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

Midwest RAD Fest March 6, The 10th Anniversary Midwest RAD Fest is a juried contemporary dance festival which will feature over 200 professional dance artists from all over the world. All events are open to the public. The Epic Center, 359 S. Kalamazoo Mall, Kalamazoo, MI. 269-342-4354. rachel@wellspringdance.org. midwestradfest.org.

Art A Thon for Ron Zakrin March 8, 8 p.m. Detroit artists are drawn together to help a fellow artist on his road to recovery. Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Ave., Detroit. 248-445-1277.

Franck, Fireflies and Fortissimos March 10, 2 p.m. Fortissimos thread together the playful spirit of fireflies and Mozart's "Symphony No. 35" along with Franck's remarkable "Symphony in D minor." First United Methodist Church, 42501 N.

Territorial Road, Plymouth. 734-453-5280. michtix.com/events/franck-fireflies-and-fortissimos.

Black History Month Concert Series—Curtis Taylor March 10, 2 p.m. Grammy Award-winning trumpeter Curtis Taylor has played at the Kennedy Center and NPR's Jazzset—now he's here to entertain us at CADL Downtown Lansing! Capital Area District Libraries – Downtown Lansing Branch, 401 South Capitol Ave., Lansing. 517-367-6350. cadl.org.

David Adjaye March 18, 8 a.m. Sir David Adjaye is recognized as one of the leading architects of his generation. A British-based architect of Ghanaian descent, Adjaye garnered international acclaim for his globally-inspired designs, for his innovative use of materials. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Peter Sellars March 21, 5 p.m. MacArthur Genius Fellow Peter Sellars is an American theater director, noted for his unique contemporary stagings of classical and contemporary operas and plays. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397

Cabaret 313 Presents "11 O'clock Numbers" March 23, 6:30 p.m. This brand new musical revue, when originally launched at Feinstein's/54 Below in New York City earlier this year, played to a sold-out audience and received a standing ovation, and now it's coming to Cabaret 313. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. 313-237-SING. cabaret313.org.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Presents 'Ravel's Bolero' March 23, 7:30 p.m. FSO March Classical Concert featuring Enrique Diemecke, conductor; and Baron Fenwick, pianist. Come and enjoy Ravel, Ginastera, Berlioz, Saint-Saens and Gershwin. The Whiting Auditorium, 1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-237-7333. thewhiting.com. tickets.thewhiting.com.

57th Ann Arbor Film Festival March 26, 5 p.m. The Ann Arbor Film Festival is the oldest avant-garde and experimental film festival in North America. The six-day festival presents 40 programs with more than 180 films from over 20 countries of all lengths and. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Grief and Loss in Addiction and Recovery March 26, 7:30 p.m. Jerry Fouchey, MA, CADC, will explain theories of grief and grief recovery,

describe losses experience throughout the addiction and recovery processes, and ways to cope with grief and loss. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

THEATER

Angels in America – Parts I and II February 8. In this two-part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. His boyfriend, Louis, struggling to cope with the disease and his own fears, abandons him. More information about this Hillberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. theatreanddance.wayne.edu.

Angels in America: Part One – Millennium Approaches February 23, 2 p.m. In Part I of this two part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. Hillberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. wsushows.com.

Williamston Theatre Presents 'To Quiet the Quiet' February 23, 3 p.m. Having suffered great loss and heartbreak in her life, Kathy, now middle-aged and alone, is a woman on the edge. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW. info@williamstontheatre.org. williamstontheatre.org.

'The How and the Why' by Sarah Treem Michigan Premiere February 23, 8 p.m. Two female evolutionary biologists share a bold, contrarian approach to their male-dominated field, but the younger scholar challenges the older woman's work with a radical new theory—one that could change society's basic understanding. Theatre NOVA, 410 W Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com.

Reap the Grove by Caity-Shea Violette February 23, 8 p.m. An estranged family reunites for their mother's final days. "Reap The Grove" is a poignant and darkly funny exploration of partnership, transgenerational trauma and the anticipated grief of death with dignity. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. 313-967-0599. info@matrixtheatre.org. matrixtheatre.org.

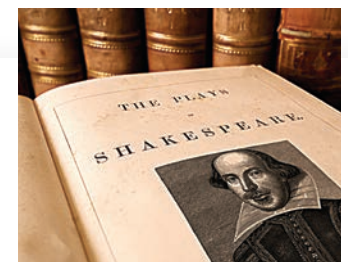
A2CT Presents: The Play's The Thing February 23, 8 p.m. A2CT presents a weekend of new works at the A2CT Studio Theater All performances are free. More info at a2ct.org/shows. A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. 734-971-2228.

Fisher Theatre Presents 'The Lightning Thief' February 26, 7:30 p.m. The Greek gods are real, and they're ruining Percy Jackson's life. As a son of Poseidon, Percy has newly discovered powers he can't control, monsters on his trail and

Editor's Pick

Theatre NOVA's Michigan Playwrights Festival Begins March 6

Lasting through March 10, the Michigan Playwrights Festival is put on by Theatre NOVA, a professional theater company that focuses on brand-new plays. The festival, now in its fourth year, will present five new plays by Michigan authors. Tickets are \$10 and the event will be held at Theatre NOVA at 410 W. Huron in Ann Arbor. Find out more information about the festival by going online to theatreNOVA.org or by calling 734-635-8450.



Editor's Pick

LGBTQ Abilities Meeting at Lansing's Salus Center

The Salus Center is Lansing's LGBTQ community center. On Thursday, Feb. 28 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. attendees are welcome to attend an "advocacy meeting for LGBTQ people who are differently abled," write event organizers. The Center is located at 408 S. Washington Square in Lansing. Find out more on the Center's Facebook page.



is on an epic quest. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

Wharton Center Presents 'Miss Saigon' March 12, 7:30 p.m. Experience the acclaimed new production of the legendary musical Miss Saigon, from the creators of "Les Misérables." Wharton Center, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Landing. 517-353-1982. wharton@msu.edu. whartoncenter.com.

A2CT Presents 'Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike' March 14, 7:30 p.m. In this Tony Award-winning play, Vanya and Sonia, middle-aged siblings sharing a house in Bucks County, have their routines interrupted by their movie star sister, Masha, when she descends on them with her new boy. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. smdt.umich.edu. a2ct.org.

Detroit Public Theatre Presents 'Girlfriend' March 21, 8 p.m. Romance unfolds in a new musical around the tender love songs of Matthew Sweet's landmark album, "Girlfriend." Two teenage boys – one a social outcast, the other a quintessential jock. Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5162. dso.org.

Williamston Theatre Presents 'The Gin Game' March 21, 8 p.m. Winner of the 1978 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Weller Martin is playing solitaire on the porch of a seedy nursing home. Enter Fonsia Dorsey, a prim, self-righteous woman. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW. info@williamstontheatre.org. williamstontheatre.org.

Stagecrafters Presents 'Boeing Boeing' March 22, 8 p.m. Meet Bernard, a Parisian bachelor whose well-ordered life spins

out of control when his three stewardess fiancées unexpectedly land in the same city at the same time. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

Theatre and Dance at Wayne Presents 'Venus' March 22, 8 p.m. Traveling from her home in southern Africa for what she hoped would be a better life, Saartjie Baartman became an unfortunate star on the 19th Century London freak show circuit. Studio Theatre at the Hilberly, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. theatreanddanceatwayne.com.

Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents 'Aubrey' March 28, 8:30 p.m. Aubrey Gagnier, a heroin addict, haunted by her role in her lover's overdose death, seeks out the grave digger and coffin maker. They become each other's best hope to live. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347

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THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

Trivia with Terry
Thursday, February 21st
and every Thursday
8:00 p.m.

Heads Over Heels
Drag Variety Show
Thursday February 21st
9:30 p.m.

Turn it \aut
Dance Party
dj Edward Alan
Saturday February 23rd
10:00 p.m.

Tea Dance
DJ Mysta Mark
Sunday, February 24th
4-8 p.m.

Karaoke
KJ Geoff
Tuesday, February 26th
10 p.m.

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Composed by **Bryce Dessner**
Libretto by **Korde Arrington Tuttle**
Featuring words by **Essex Hemphill** and **Patti Smith**
Directed by **Kaneza Schaal**
Featuring **Roomful of Teeth**
in cooperation with **The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation**

Photographer and visual artist Robert Mapplethorpe died in 1989 at the age of 42, and 30 years later we still cannot turn away from the compelling emotional complexity of his influential body of work. Composed by the Grammy-winning Bryce Dessner of The National and featuring texts from poet Essex Hemphill and Mapplethorpe's longtime muse Patti Smith, *Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)* explores the eroticism of and inspiration for Mapplethorpe's images. The vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth gives voice to these words as enormous projections of Mapplethorpe's iconic photographs — approved for use in such a setting for the very first time — move across the stage.

This work may contain a frank discussion of sexuality and will include images depicting sexuality and nudity.

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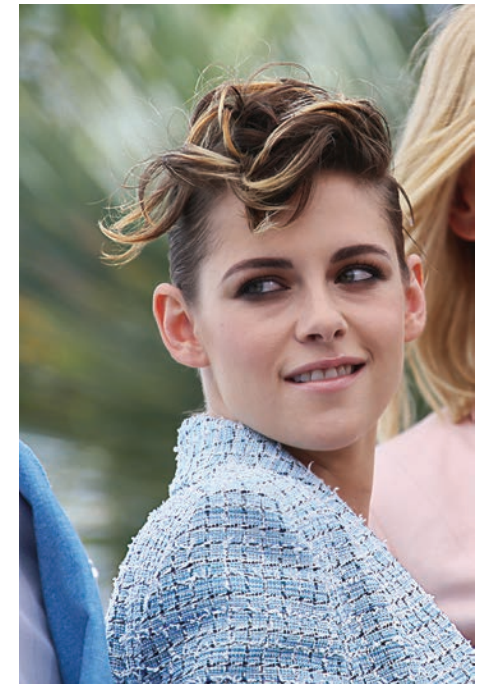
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

It's the 'Happiest Season' for lesbians into Kristen Stewart

We realize it's only February, but suddenly we're dreaming of a Christmas yet to come, one in which the comedy with the current working title "Happiest Season" will bring visions of sugarplummy Sapphic romance to multiplexes across this great lesbian-starved land. TriStar picked up the worldwide rights to the holiday-themed project from the writing team of Clea DuVall (who will also direct) and Mary Holland. Meanwhile Kristen Stewart has signed on to star and Mackenzie Davis ("Tully") is in negotiations to co-star. The story involves a young woman planning to propose to her girlfriend at her family's annual holiday party, only to discover that her partner has not yet come out to her conservative family. We detect a bit of "Birdcage"-ian farce in this premise, and we're fine with that. One problem: now we've got Andy Williams' "It's the Most Wonderful Time of The Year" in our head. Probably for the rest of the week.



Kristen Stewart. Photo: Denis Makarenko

Kornick and producer Zackary Drucker. The film, still in early days with no director or star attached, is primed for a talented young trans actress to show up and run with the material, much like what's happening on FX with the groundbreaking series "Pose." We can't wait to see Candy walk on the wild side again.

Sia's making a movie called 'Music'

This one will have you swinging from the chandelier: acclaimed recording artist Sia is going to take off her wig to direct a movie, currently titled "Music." We admit it's a somewhat generic sounding name for a film, but that's where the basic stuff ends. Popular children's book author Dallas Clayton ("Lily the Unicorn") is writing the screenplay based on a story developed by Sia, and it centers on a sober drug dealer and their relationship with a younger sister who has autism. The cast, so far, includes Kate Hudson as the older sister, "Hamilton" star Leslie Odom, Jr., Tig Notaro, and veteran Sia video star Maddie Ziegler as Hudson's young sibling. Sia is also working on music for "Music" - because it's a musical, after all.

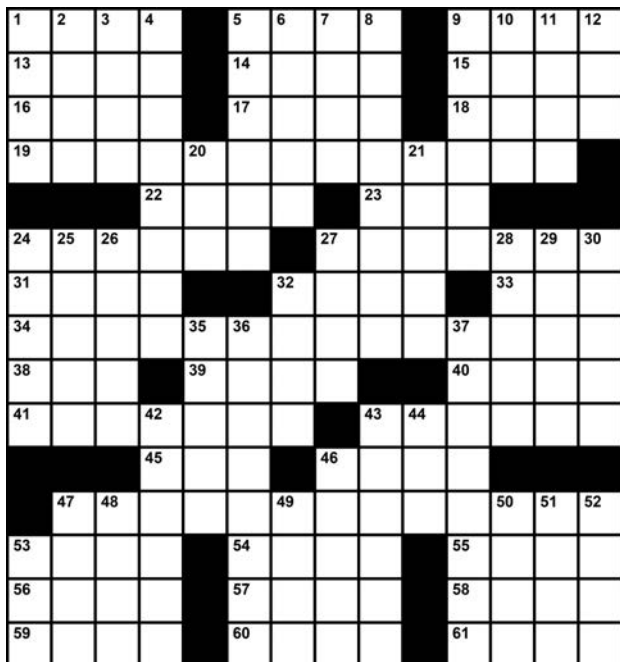
The Halston documentary called 'Halston' is finally here

When a person in history continues to fascinate the public years after that person's death, it's almost inevitable that various biopics will try to get up and running. And for legendary fashion designer Halston there's already been one documentary and now a TV series in development. Stepping in to plant its own flag, though, is "Halston," the latest doc from filmmaker Frederic Tcheng ("Dior and I," "Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel"). Its somewhat unusual formal approach involves a scripted framework featuring fashion blogger-turned-actress Tavi Gevinson ("Enough Said") and a tapestry of archival footage of iconic personalities in the designer's orbit. That means people like Liza Minnelli, Marisa Berenson ("Barry Lyndon"), Joel Schumacher, model Pat Cleveland, and Elsa Peretti will be swirling about in scenes from Studio 54 and other only-in-the-1970s glamour enclaves. When it's released later this spring, dress yourself up, spritz on some of that Z-14 cologne they still sell at the drugstore, and glide into the theater like you own the place.

Warhol superstar Candy Darling returns to life

She died of lymphoma at age 29, but Candy Darling packed a lot of living into those few decades. She was a transgender icon and muse to Andy Warhol, appearing in his films "Flesh" and "Women in Revolt." She popped up in "Klute" with Jane Fonda, and in the legendarily odd queer indie "Some of My Best Friends Are..." And if you've heard Lou Reed's song "Take a Walk on The Wild Side," an entire verse is about Candy's sexual exploits. Now, 45 years later, she'll be remembered in biopic form thanks to "Transparent" writer Stephanie

Romeo San Vicente does own the place.



- 32 Menial worker
 33 City in central Israel
 34 End of the quote
 38 Hot temper
 39 The bottom line
 40 "Bus Stop" playwright
 41 New edition of "Maurice," e.g.
 43 Trojan, but not a condom
 45 Dusk, to Dickinson
 46 Shake it
 47 Bisexual character on "Riverdale"
 53 It might poke you in prison
 54 Brought forth fruit
 55 Island of Barrie's land
 56 In the pink
 57 Big name in oil
 58 Acne, in slang
 59 Queen's "subjects"
 60 Targets of a masher?
 61 Boy with a bow
- 20 "Xanadu" band, for short
 21 Classic toothpaste brand
 24 Position in Bernstein's orchestra
 25 Very queer
 26 What hibernating bears do
 27 Back-to-school mo.
 28 "De-Lovely" star Kevin
 29 Vowel sound in "gay"
 30 Rims
 32 Furtive "Over here!"
 35 More like slick winter roads
 36 Cher's ex as a kid?
 37 Bigger than queen
 42 TV Superman George
 43 Where bowlers roll their balls
 44 Fair-hiring letters
 46 Genesis patriarch
 47 Conceptual artist Gaye
 48 To the ___ (how to play a pirate)
 49 Cross-dresser in a Kinks song
 50 Dusk in Dijon
 51 "I'm ___ your tricks!"
 52 Kind of marketing
 53 Singing syllable

Down

- 1 His brother laid him in his grave
 2 Polo of "The Fosters"
 3 Porter's regretful miss
 4 WNBA defense, ironically
 5 Goes on a shopping spree, e.g.
 6 Anklebone
 7 Lickety-split
 8 Patty Sheehan stepped in it
 9 Early commercial computer
 10 Zipped
 11 Hoffman play about AIDS
 12 Cocks and bulls

The Voice of Authority QPuzzle

Across

- 1 "Chloe" director Egoyan
 5 Bash for just men
 9 Nevada neighbor
 13 Sappho's B
 14 Texas town, with "El"
 15 Distinctive Streisand feature
 16 "DWTS" cohost Andrews
- 17 Airline to Ben Gurion
 18 2001 biopic about Murdoch
 19 Start of a quote by 47-Across
 22 Ford contemporary
 23 Where they rub you the right way
 24 The whole shebang
 27 Show some restraint?
 31 Dance with grass over the bush

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In Memory of a Great Man and An Era of Kindness

John D. Dingell, a Michigan Democrat who served in the U.S. House from 1955 to 2015, was the longest-serving member of Congress in American history. He dictated these reflections to his wife, Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.), at their home in Dearborn, on Feb. 7, 2019, the day he died:

“ **My personal and political character was formed in a different era that was kinder, if not necessarily gentler.** We observed modicums of respect even as we fought, often bitterly and savagely, over issues that were literally life and death to a degree that — fortunately — we see much less of today.

... As I prepare to leave this all behind, I now leave you in control of the greatest nation of mankind and pray God gives you the wisdom to understand the responsibility you hold in your hands. May God bless you all, and may God bless America. ”



A message from Dr. Benson

Kindness and Patient Care at the Top of Our Priorities

John Dingell's last words struck a chord in me about what a different era it was in 1978 when I started practicing medicine. My time and responsibilities were centered around patient care. Today, it is over-consuming with PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS, REFERRALS, OUT OF NETWORKS, PRESCRIPTION RESTRICTIONS, APPEALS, DENIALS, REJECTIONS, NO-SHOWING APPOINTMENTS, GOVERNMENT MANDATES, AND STAFFING — these are but a few.



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Dr. Benson is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University providing training to our next generation of physicians.

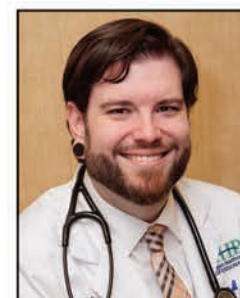
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