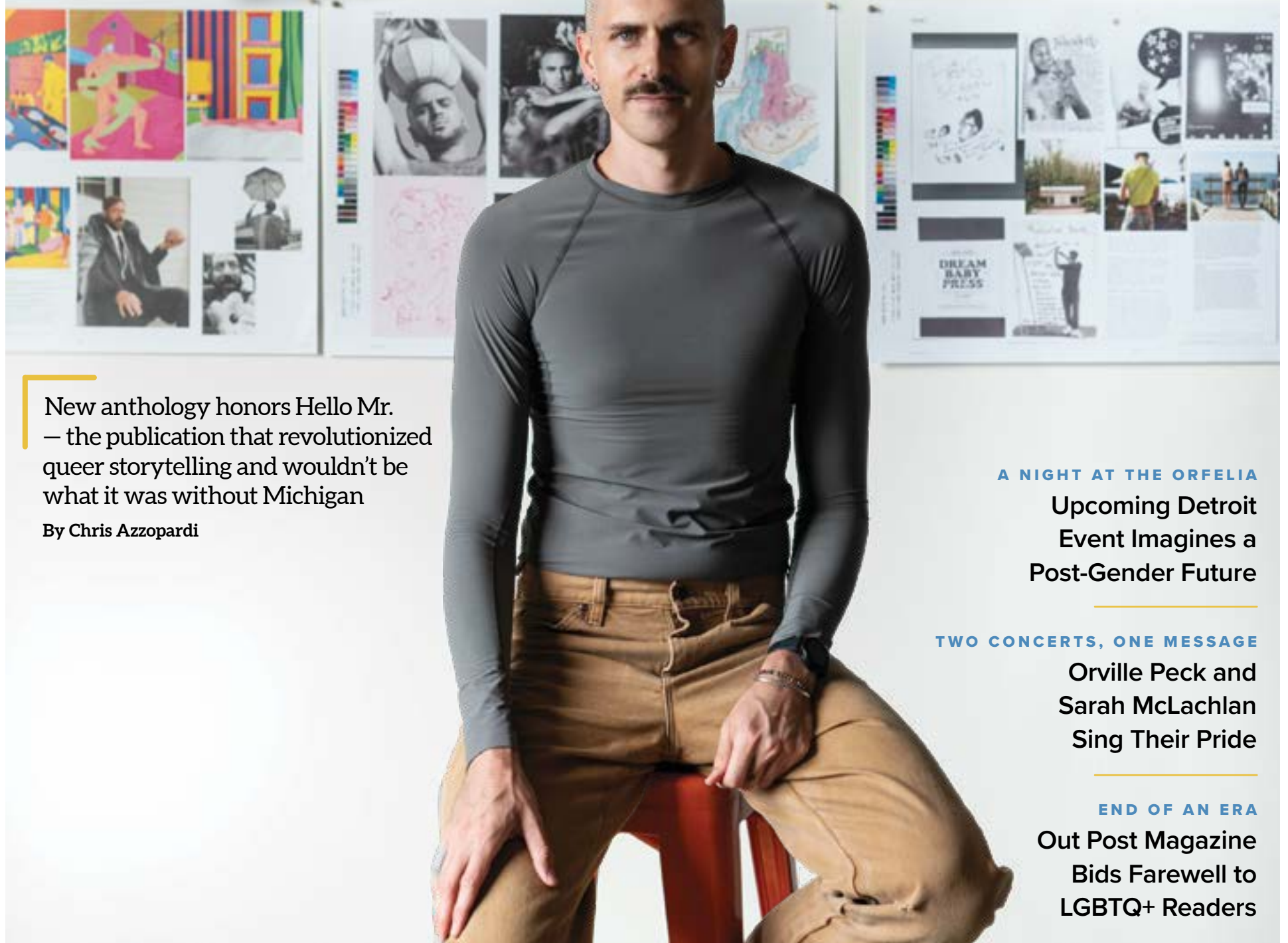


MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between the Lines™

PRINT AS RESISTANCE



New anthology honors Hello Mr. — the publication that revolutionized queer storytelling and wouldn't be what it was without Michigan

By Chris Azzopardi

A NIGHT AT THE ORFELIA

Upcoming Detroit Event Imagines a Post-Gender Future

TWO CONCERTS, ONE MESSAGE

Orville Peck and Sarah McLachlan Sing Their Pride

END OF AN ERA

Out Post Magazine Bids Farewell to LGBTQ+ Readers



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- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Pride 2024: Joy-Fueled Defiance in Detroit and Ferndale
- 7 When the Pride Stage Is Just a Stage: Orville Peck and Sarah McLachlan's Michigan Concerts Honor LGBTQ+ Identity and Community
- 8 Imagining What Queer Nightlife Will Look Like 30 Years in the Future: A Night at the Orfelia Event in Detroit Envisions a Post-Gender Era
- 10 Keith's World: Author Brad Gooch Discusses His New Biography of the Late Artist and Activist Keith Haring
- 12 Michigan Rep. John James Seems to Think Trans Kids Are a Bigger Threat Than Guns
- 13 The Scroll: LGBTQ+ Game Changers Honored at Tigers Pride Night
- 14 Print as Resistance: New Anthology Explores How Hello Mr. Revolutionized Queer Storytelling
- 16 End of an Era: Michigan's Out Post Magazine Bids Farewell to LGBTQ+ Readers
- 20 Summer Books That'll Have You Feeling a Sense of Pride
- 22 Immerse Yourself in Everything Samantha Irby with Ann Arbor District Library's Big Gay Read

Page 14



Ryan Fitzgibbon. Photo: Melissa Lukenbaugh

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

No pressure or anything, but just so you know, Pride Month has crossed the halfway point, and if you haven't started creating a Summer to Remember yet, your days are literally numbered. But hey, even if it's just a Summer You Don't Regret, you're doing great, bestie. Fill your upcoming weekend with some excellent local events, including a chance to meet the stars of "Bargain Block" at a neighborhood art fair, a queer honky-tonk, a sexy pool party, a Pride party focused on elder LGBTQ+ folks and nearly a dozen local community Pride festivals throughout Michigan.



Shea Hicks Whitfield, Evan Thomas and Keith Bynum, stars of HGTV's "Bargain Block." Photo: HGTV

Meet 'Bargain Block' Stars at a Detroit Arts Festival

Don't miss your chance to meet HGTV stars Keith Bynum and Evan Thomas, the Detroit-based married couple renovating local abandoned homes on the popular show "Bargain Block." Set for June 22, the 2nd Annual Nine Design + Homes Festival of the Arts, hosted by the Guild of Artists & Artisans, producers of the Ann Arbor Art Fair, will feature 30-plus jury-selected artists specializing in mediums including glass, painting, ceramics, jewelry, photography and mixed media. You'll also find live music, a mix of food vendors, kids activities and furniture rehabbing tricks with Bynum and Thomas, who will also join "Bargain Block" real estate guru Shea Hicks Whitfield for a Q&A.

June 22, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 21616 Grand River Ave., Detroit. Learn more at theguild.org/fair/nine-design-homes-festival-of-the-arts.



Go Y'all Out at a Queer-Inclusive Honky-Tonk

Did you know line dancing is back? Even if you're not so keen on dusting off the old boots and trying to remember the steps to "Achy Breaky Heart," the third annual Howdy Fest is still the perfect time to lean in to the yeehaw of it all. The event offers an affirming "y'allternative space" for people who don't always feel welcome in a typical honky-tonk environment. Activities include live music, carnival games, lasso performances, rodeo clowns and the much-loved centerpiece: a mechanical bull.

Howdy Saloon Detroit, which produces Howdy Fest, bills itself as "a mixed bag of queer and trans folks working together to create inclusive, intersectional and non-exclusionary honky-tonk events whose collective goal is to uplift the community, prioritize LGBTQIA+, BIPOC and differently-abled persons and to rope in others that share that same goal."

June 22-23, 12 p.m.-2 a.m., The Old Miami (3930 Cass Ave., Detroit). Reserve tickets at bit.ly/3z979rT.



Cool Off at a Pool Party

Laugh in the face of the brutal summer heat at a queer-inclusive Parasol Pool Party. Each event features DJs, drag performances, gogo dancers, drink specials and a few surprises. DJ Darryl, DJ Seryoza and drag performers Aphrodite and Anna Rexia are scheduled to appear, as well as gogo performers Dom Joyride, Presley, Alyssa and JaiJay. This year, organizers are preparing for three fun themed parties:

June 23: "Save a Horse" (queer country)

July 28: "TRL Rewind" ('90s and '00s throwback)

Aug. 25: "Mirror Mirror on the Ball" (Studio 54 red carpet)

Parties run 1-7 p.m. at a private residence in Detroit. Reserve tickets at SickeningEvents.com.

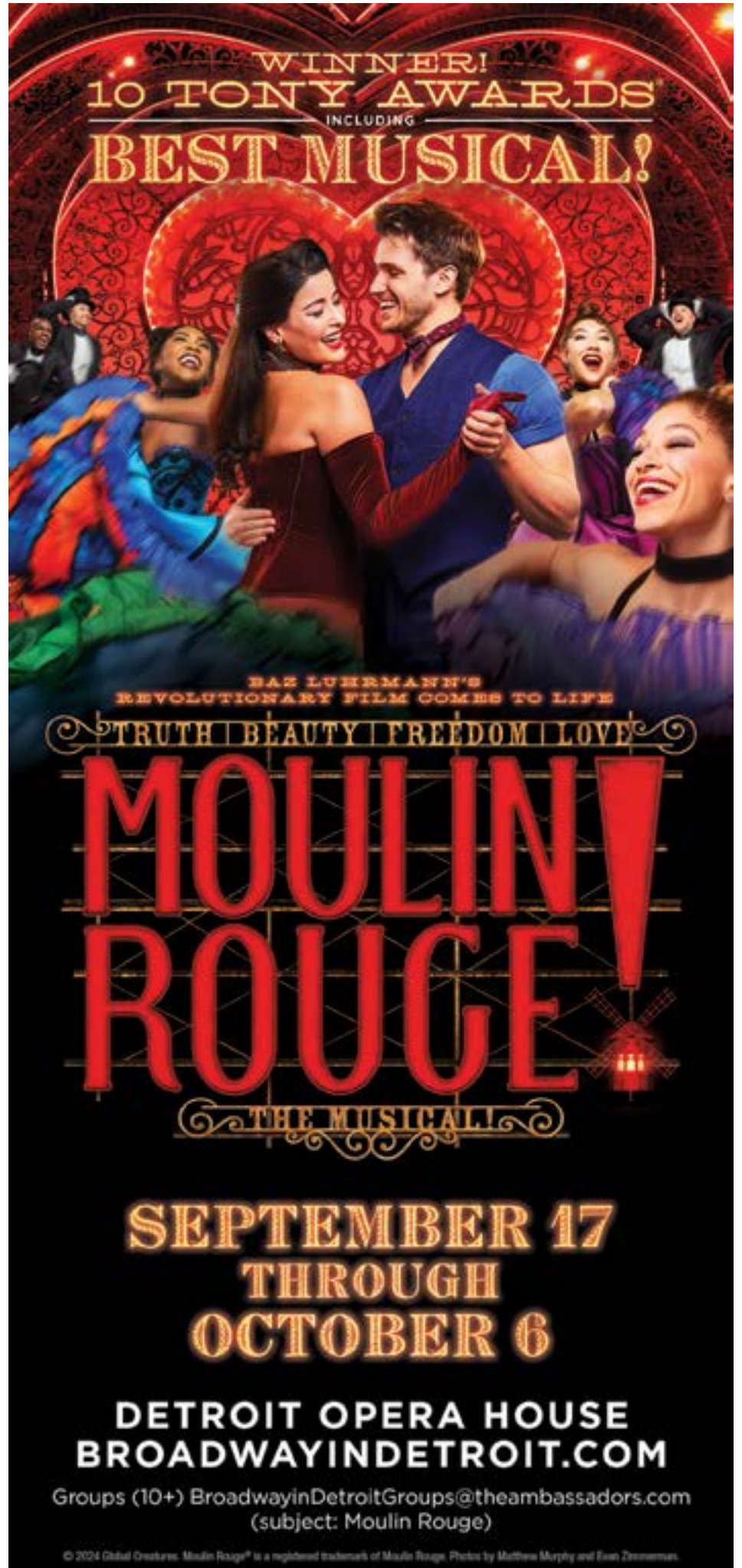


4

Attend a Pride Party for Older Adults

Detroit's Hannan Center will host a Pride event where older LGBTQ+ people are celebrated and centered all day long. Set for June 24 at the Ellen Kayrod Gallery, Hannah Pride 2024 will feature a strolling brunch and a tour of the gallery's Mighty Real / Queer Detroit exhibit showcasing artists 55 and older. Guests can also enjoy a tie dye art activity, live music and screenings of two classic queer films: "The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson" and "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert."

June 23, 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Ellen Kayrod Gallery (4750 Woodward Ave., Detroit). No tickets necessary.



5

Michigan Pride Events This Weekend

There's still plenty of time to celebrate Pride throughout the Great Lakes State. Support a local event or take a road trip!

- Center for the Arts, 3-10 p.m.
- Owosso. Curwood Castle Park, 1-5 p.m.
- Rochester. Rochester Municipal Park, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Saint Ignace. American Legion Park, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Wyandotte. Downtown Wyandotte, 12-11 p.m. New Pride event!

Saturday, June 22

- Bay City (Great Lakes Bay Pride). Wenonah Park, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Benton Harbor (Twin Cities PrideFest). Dwight P. Mitchell Park, 4-8 p.m.
- Grand Rapids. Calder Plaza, 12-10 p.m.
- Lansing. Old Town, 1-10 p.m.
- Lenawee. Tecumseh

Sunday, June 23

- Berkley. Downtown Berkley, 1-5 p.m.
- Kalamazoo Youth Pride. Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan., 12-5 p.m. New Pride event!

Find the full 2024 Pride in Michigan calendar at PrideSource.com.





Photos from
Motor City Pride
June 8-9, 2024



Streets were packed for two weekends of joy-fueled defiance during Motor City Pride and Ferndale Pride

**BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT
PHOTOS BY JAMIE FELDMAN**

Colorful throngs of 2024 Michigan Pridegoers filled the streets of Ferndale on June 1 and downtown Detroit June 8 and 9 to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community — both events were a joy-fueled act of defiance against ongoing political attacks across the country.

“It was a beautiful day all around,” Ferndale Pride event chair Julia Music told BTL. “We knew it would be busy when such a large crowd gathered for opening ceremonies, and it just grew from there. Wreckno and DJ Holographic did Michigan proud as headliners packing both stages. Motor City Drag Kings put together the highest level of title-holding performers on our stage in history, as well. Thank you to the community for volunteering and coming out to celebrate with us!” Music estimates around 30,000 people gathered within the cozy streets of Ferndale for the big event.

Dave Wait, chair for Motor City Pride, told BTL, “I am overjoyed to announce that [the 2024] festival

was the largest and most successful event in our history. It was a remarkable celebration for our LGBTQIA+ community, uniting people and providing an inclusive space for all. We were honored to have Senator Debbie Stabenow serve as our Grand Marshal in the largest parade we’ve ever had. This year’s festival featured over 250 entertainers and introduced a new Health Village, offering crucial access to inclusive healthcare resources. The sense of community and support was truly inspiring, and I am immensely proud of what our team of volunteers at Motor City Pride has achieved together.”

While final figures are still being tallied, Wait said at least 70,000 attendees enjoyed Motor City Pride this year.

Wait said that during the Motor City Pride, Sen. Stabenow received the loudest cheers of any entry when she was announced at the parade’s viewing area. Headliners included “Britain’s Got Talent” star Loren Allred and genderfluid pop singer Kyle Dion.

See **Pride 2024**, page 23

When the Pride Stage Is Just a Stage

Orville Peck and Sarah McLachlan's Michigan concerts honor LGBTQ+ identity and community



Sarah McLachlan and Orville Peck. Photos: Mirak Habbibiyehv and Andrew Potter

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

This year's Pride celebrations extended beyond the stages set up on Nine Mile in Ferndale and within Hart Plaza. Drawing substantial queer audiences, two venues hosted two prominent artists who celebrated Pride in their own ways: a rising gay performer in country music and a trailblazing figure for women in the industry.

Orville Peck, known for his unique blend of country and queer aesthetics, brought a subtle charm to his performance at Meadow Brook Amphitheatre on June 4. Songs from his two full-length albums, including his 2019 debut "Pony," as well as his latest duets EP, "Stampede: Vol. 1," filled out the setlist. The crowd was rapturous, going wild while he shed his sky-blue blazer midway through the set to reveal a muscle shirt, though his presentation throughout the show stayed more restrained than the campy cowboy persona he often embodies.

Despite lyrical nods to queer love and sex within his new cover "Cowboys Are Frequently Secretly Fond Of Each Other," the show maintained a cautious approach toward overt sexuality, a key element of Peck's artistic identity offstage. Just

days later, Peck could be seen posing naked astride a giant balloon bull for Paper Magazine, highlighting the typically tantalizing nature of his persona.

Instead, at Meadow Brook, Peck engaged the audience with a playfulness that felt far more modest than you might expect from a performer who, like Lil Nas X, is toying with sexuality in bold ways elsewhere. For instance, it felt out of character for him to select individuals in the audience, including a fan sporting a Shania Twain t-shirt, only to hand them a single red rose, a sweet gesture but, as an extension of his artistry, one that feels more in line with Michael Bublé than what we've come to know about Orville Peck.

Overall, his stage presence leaned towards romanticism rather than fully embracing the erotic cowboy fantasy that has garnered attention online. My first time seeing him live, I was missing his exaggerated theatricality. Navigating country music as an openly gay artist — and an honored one, at that, as he just took home the GLAAD Vito Russo Award last month — is a tricky thing and a big responsibility if you make it one, which, based on this show, Orville does. He proudly

acknowledged Pride Month in front of people who seemed to be there for a night out to experience some country music, not queer sexuality (a mixed-sex couple in front of me, who were up and moving the whole time, stood frozen during "Cowboys Are Frequently Secretly Fond Of Each Other," and then disappeared).

It can't be easy to play for an LGBTQ+ audience trained by him to expect his subversiveness while also courting those outside of the community whose embrace of him is instrumental in dismantling the status quo in country music. I realize Peck has no blueprint for what he's doing as a man bringing yeehaws and bedroom eyes to the genre — when's the last time an out queer country artist smeared dollops of whipped cream on their crotch? — so if I'm unsure of what to make of Peck as an artist at this early juncture in his career, maybe I'm not the only one. Maybe he's still figuring it out too.

A week and a half later, on June 13, I saw an artist who, over many decades since the 1980s, has well-defined her look and sound to be both enchanting and ethereal. As Sarah McLachlan stepped onto the stage at Michigan Lottery Amphitheatre at Freedom Hill,

it seemed as though her voice summoned the wind that evening, coaxing it to gently sway her dress in perfect harmony with the dreamlike realm she evoked for over two hours.

It was almost like we really were in the arms of an angel (also: an animal right now needs you), one who embraced her LGBTQ+ fans with a Pride Month declaration that had me recalling the time she candidly told me she was "pretty straight" during an interview in 2014, leaving room for her experience hanging with lots of women after a Boston gig. "Uhh, there was one bartender in particular who was really hot! And I'm not gonna say anything else, but yeah," she said to me at the time, laughing. McLachlan expanded on her thoughts about Pride to the unsurprisingly lesbian-heavy crowd (I won't assume that one woman I met is a lesbian, so all I'll say is she drove over three hours from Kent, Ohio to see McLachlan and sported a shirt with a big rainbow on it, so you can draw your own conclusions).

After acknowledging Pride Month, McLachlan said that "it should be every single month [that] we get to celebrate Pride." She added that she grew up "pretty isolated and alone and music was the one thing I had," mentioning that it "gave me a

sense of self-worth."

"Every single one of us is beautiful and unique and singular just as we are," she said. "I'm so happy for this month and all the celebrations, and I'm so happy to say happy Pride, everyone."

That moment of deep appreciation for her LGBTQ+ fans transitioned into "Elsewhere." The song is from McLachlan's 1993 album "Fumbling Toward Ecstasy," which she performed in full, from "Possession" through to the title track, for this anniversary tour, though you'd never know any time had passed by watching her perform it live: She sounded ageless, her voice still effortlessly gliding through the highest notes on "Fear" and, earlier in the show, bringing the same vocal magic she brought to hits like "Sweet Surrender" and "Building a Mystery" in the 1990s.

But it was "Elsewhere," a slow-burn of a song that, given McLachlan's lead-in, felt like it was reborn as a Pride anthem, particularly when she delivered these lines now, with anti-trans rhetoric and legislation rampant: "I believe this is heaven to no one else but me, and I'll defend it long as I can be," she sang. "Left here to linger in silence if I choose to, would you try to understand?"

Imagining What Queer Nightlife Will Look Like 30 Years in the Future

A Night at the Orfelia event in Detroit envisions a post-gender era

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

It's impossible to predict what any given guest will experience at A Night at the Orfelia. That's by design. The simplest description of the event is that it is an immersive, future-focused art installation that will transform Bert's Warehouse Theatre into the Orfelia, Detroit's hottest nightclub, in 2054. The (alternate) reality is so much more.

Organizers from the Queer Futures Collective have imagined and curated every aspect of the one-night-only event, set for June 29 from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., to trigger intended and unintended emotional responses, from calming spaces like a room filled with local wildflowers to the futuristic, pulsing lights and heavy, rhythmic sounds of a familiar-but-not-quite-familiar dance club setting. If there's a unifying theme to be found in the installation, it might be a constant reminder to examine a not-so-distant era free from societal expectations around concepts like gender — what life might look like in a “trans-techno future.”

Each artist participating in the installation will offer their own interpretation of this central theme: What if we could hold all-night raves among the ruins of the future abandoned Michigan salt mines? What if, by 2054, scientists have genetically engineered fungi that could decompose plastics while delivering a soothing melody? While we're at it — what if we've managed to truly shatter the binary?

Press materials for the event invite guests to do things like “grab an embroidered hanky to flag kinks not-yet-possible or fondle a genetically engineered slug designed for DIY hormone treatment.” Additionally, you are invited to “sip drinks made with food waste while cheering on your favorite wrestler in the ecosexual wormplay play-space.” The Orfelia, organizers promise, fosters a vision of a possible queer future to bring to life our most weird and wonderful desires.

Organizers Dylan Box and M

Kuznetsov, who both use they/them pronouns, have backgrounds in creative technology, including working together on a project for MIT called the Gender Generator, part of the university's Generative Unfoldings exhibition. Kuznetsov has produced two publications, a newsletter called The Finkedin Dispatch and a zine focused on exploring drag influences for adversarial attacks on facial recognition. Box frequently works on building community-driven creative spaces in Detroit, including work with the Mt. Elliott Makerspace and the Detroit Library's Hype Teen Center, as well as contributing to the opening of artist spaces The Untitled Bottega and the Riopelle Collective at Eastern Market.

Box and Kuznetsov sat down with BTL ahead of A Night at the Orfelia to talk about what inspired them to create the event and why they feel it's important to create truly unique experiences like this in the Midwest.

A Night at the Orfelia is challenging to explain, and I'm guessing that's on purpose. How do you tend to explain the concept to people completely unfamiliar with it?

M Kuznetsov: Overall, what people should expect is that we've brought together dozens of queer Midwestern artists to create specific installations to create a nightclub from the future. So what that means is there's a DJ lineup just like a regular nightclub, but it's just that the nightclub is from 2054 and we showcase these prototypes of possible futures we've asked the artists to create that answer the question, “What does your preferred 2054 look like?”

When you step through the doors at the Orfelia, you're in 2054. You're prototyping a possible future that asks, “What would it look like if our technology was centered on trans joy?” Whether that's seeing robot fights or just exploring imagined spaces in the venue. Theoretically, it's an art piece that serves to critique the

present day by turning our attention to what could be — a way to inspire agency, using existing references. We've called it a Meow Wolf of sorts, but one that is a little more damp — a little weirder — and one that asks you to go change your present to make that future possible, if that's the future you want.

Why are you calling the nightclub “Orfelia”?

M Kuznetsov: The Orfelia is an intentional naming decision that Dylan and I came to when we were thinking of how many towns have an Orpheum Theater as a community hub or central location for entertainment. We were thinking, “What if the Orpheum went through a gender transition? What would it look like in 30 years, if it was a little weird and goopy?” Orfelia summons this idea of “orifice,” as well. In our world, we often employ this shorthand to give it a not-quite-here vibe, where we just slightly misspell a word so that it looks just a little out of place, but you can still understand what it is. Orfelia is sort of what an Orpheum Theater looks like, reinvented for the future.

This project has been a year in the making. What has inspired you to keep going?

Dylan Box: We literally could not do this without community support to make it happen, and I hope that when anyone comes to this event, they feel connected to that community of support and are able to see a possible future working together with collective action to create this vision of utopia in our future. We've done a lot of work and a lot of reading about queer theory, which has been very inspiring.

We want people to have a good time and to experience a lot of queer joy in the present and to get their hands dirty building robots, and to dance and connect with the people around them who are also trying to



(Left to right) M Kuznetsov, Dylan Box and fiber artist Nick Szydlo. Courtesy photo

make this world a reality.

In a way, Night at the Orfelia seems a bit like an anti-Pride. It feels like the polar opposite of a more corporate-fueled event. What does that mean in terms of funding?

M Kuznetsov: Yes. We not only consider ourselves antithetical to corporate Pride, but in many ways, we are bootstrapping this project, Dylan and I, from our personal savings that we've earned from working in tech, because there's not a ton of arts funding available, let alone for projects in the Midwest. This project, by nature, shows the gaps of what's out there in terms of queer art support.

This is specifically a Detroit and a Midwestern project because queer people don't just live on the coasts and finding funding for kind of

weird, non-sanitized queer art is very, very difficult. That's why we've chosen to self-fund because we believe this is pretty much the only way we can make it happen because corporate Pride is not going to support sexualized or horny or non-capitalistic means of queer expression. In our world, we talk about how everyone has a 20-hour work week, and I don't think JPMorgan Chase is gonna fund that.

Will you be able to recoup your investment?

M Kuznetsov: We've spent a lot of time talking about this event as intentional, and ticket prices are also intentional. We will actually probably not break even on ticket prices alone because we've intentionally priced them very low so that they're accessible to all members of the

See *Orfelia*, page 19



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Keith's World

Author Brad Gooch discusses his new biography of the late artist and activist Keith Haring

BY TIM MURPHY

After working as a model in 1970s and '80s New York City, Brad Gooch became an author. He wrote poetry, novels and memoirs, including "Smash Cut," about his decade-long relationship with film producer Howard Brookner, who died of AIDS in 1989. He also wrote acclaimed biographies of literary legends Frank O'Hara and Flannery O'Connor.

His latest biography is "Radiant: The Life and Line of Keith Haring." It's a fat, juicy and extremely well-researched account of the brief but explosive life and career of the beloved pop artist, who died of AIDS-related complications in 1990 at age 31.

Below is a short version of a long interview that Gooch, 72, gave to *The Caftan Chronicles*, the *Substack* newsletter by longtime *POZ* contributing writer Tim Murphy.

What is a typical day like for you?

I have two kids — Walter, 9, and Glenn, 5. Today, I woke up at 6:40 a.m. listening to Walter play chess on this kids' app. My partner, Paul Raushenbush, is 59 and is a minister who is president and CEO of the Interfaith Alliance. We live in Chelsea [in Manhattan].

I make breakfast for the boys. Paul goes to the gym, and I take the boys to school a few blocks away and then go to my separate office nearby. Then I'll see my trainer. Then I'll go home, and we have dinner together. The boys and I will watch a short video, and then I put them to bed. I watch PBS Newshour and read, and then I sleep.

What is it like having kids rather late in life?

It's been great. I think 60 is a good age to start having children. I think I would've been a horrible parent in my 30s because I'd have wanted to go out all the time, network, travel or work on my career.

You grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania — just like Keith!

There were a lot of things about [writing about] Keith that came naturally to me. We were living in New York City at the same time. Both of us were born in the 1950s.

His parents didn't want him to be an artist, and my parents didn't want me to be a poet. Both our parents were Republicans. Keith's mother said to me, "Keith never said the words gay or AIDS to us," and I completely

understood that. I don't think I ever said the word gay to my parents, but when my lover, Howard Brookner, had AIDS, he'd come home with me in his wheelchair, and my parents accepted all of this, but we never said, "We are lovers, and one of us has AIDS."

After all this immersion into Keith's life and psyche, who do you think he was?

Keith had this innocent, almost naïve quality combined with this enormous energy. He was really on a mission. He was an unusual artist because he was so generous in terms of [promoting] other people's works.

He did a huge amount of public and community art that he didn't seek compensation for.

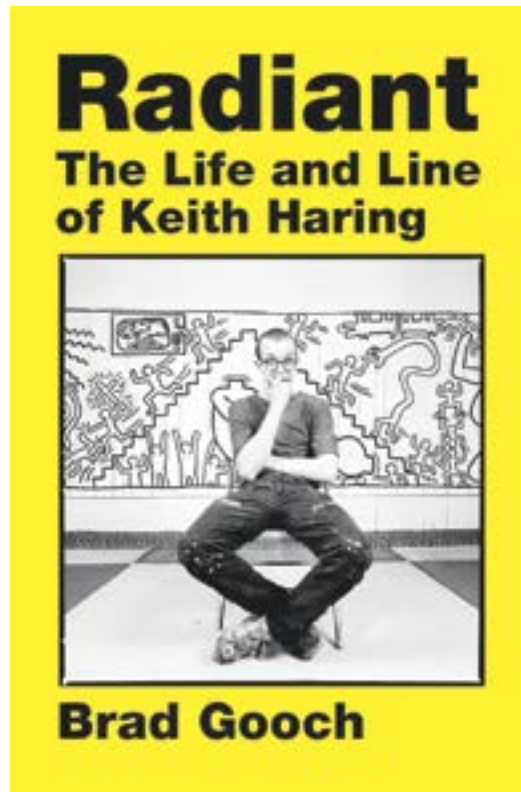
And he set up the Keith Haring Foundation at age 28 and said that half the funds would go to charities involving AIDS and children, and that's the case to this day. But there were other aspects to him that I think were mostly explained by immaturity.

For one thing, as your book makes clear, he was a real fame whore.

His whole celebrity thing was kind of extreme. I mean, if you have Andy Warhol criticizing you for wanting to have your picture taken so badly... [Laughs.] He had this gaga fanboy quality.

Your book vividly captures the frantic pace of Keith's work and his entire life, especially as he became aware that he likely didn't have long to live.

I had a far greater respect for him by the



time I was finishing the book. I think the way he faced death was amazing. Instead of melting away, he revved everything up and created some of the best work that he ever made. In the '90s, it seemed like he was going to fade away, but in so many ways, we're living in Keith's world now.

He's had a huge surge of popularity in the 21st century. You see his work everywhere.

The world caught up to him. So many of the things he was propelled by in his work are now

understandable. The idea of democratization, that art is for everybody. Not having this huge distinction between high and low art and the availability of every surface, activist messaging and the licensing of products that he was so criticized for at the time. All of this is our current world.

Your book really captures the mood arc of the '80s — from a decade that starts as the carryover of the hedonism of the '70s and then darkens and saddens because of AIDS.

It's true that it started with the infectious, liberating tone of the late '70s. Then you get this scary article in *The New York Times* in 1981 [about the first AIDS cases].

I remember someone telling me that year that he had it — whatever we called it — the gay virus, and I almost passed out.

You're HIV negative?

I didn't know that until 1987, when I took an actual test. [Even once the test came out in 1985], people weren't taking it because there was nothing you could do about positive results. Keith was healthy for a long time in the '80s, but he assumed he had the virus because of the life he'd led at the baths. But the epidemic didn't really start manifesting until the mid-'80s. Suddenly, it seemed like

every other person was either HIV positive or sick, and you were going to memorial services every night. That's a tremendously dark period that Keith dies at the end of.

What was modeling like?

There were great aspects to it. I was suddenly invited into all these cool places and rich people's houses and dinners where I sat next to [famed ballet dancer Rudolf] Nureyev, and he put his hand on my thigh. But I watched a lot of boy and girl models get destroyed by all that.

Also, gay photographers only wanted to work with straight models, so if they sensed that you were gay, they didn't want to use you.

Ew, that's gross. So how do you see your present self in the context of your past self?

The main things that define my present life are having this family and writing. I'm living my best life now, but I also have a kind of PTSD from having lived through AIDS and the loss of Howard. In the '90s, a numbness set in for me emotionally and sexually. I just went to Madonna's Celebration concert at Madison Square Garden, and there's a five-story-high image of both Keith Haring and Howard [when she sings "Live To Tell" as a memorial of her friends and others lost to AIDS].

Howard is wearing this striped shirt from Brooks Brothers. That's what I was focusing on. [Pauses.] One reason I'm glad to have this book about Keith out there is that it tells the story of AIDS at that moment, because I don't think young queer people know it. That period is still always with me. Through the 2000s, I'd wake up in the middle of the night with this fear of death. That didn't go away until I became a father.

Why do you think that is?

I guess now I have the feeling or the illusion that there's a future. In a *Rolling Stone* interview Keith did when he came out as a person with AIDS, he said, "Well, I don't have dreams of the future anymore." That really stuck with me. But somehow, now, with kids, I have this sense that they're going on into the future.

Tim Murphy is a contributing writer at POZ. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ+ wire service. Visit their websites for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.



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Michigan Rep. John James Seems to Think Trans Kids Are a Bigger Threat Than Guns

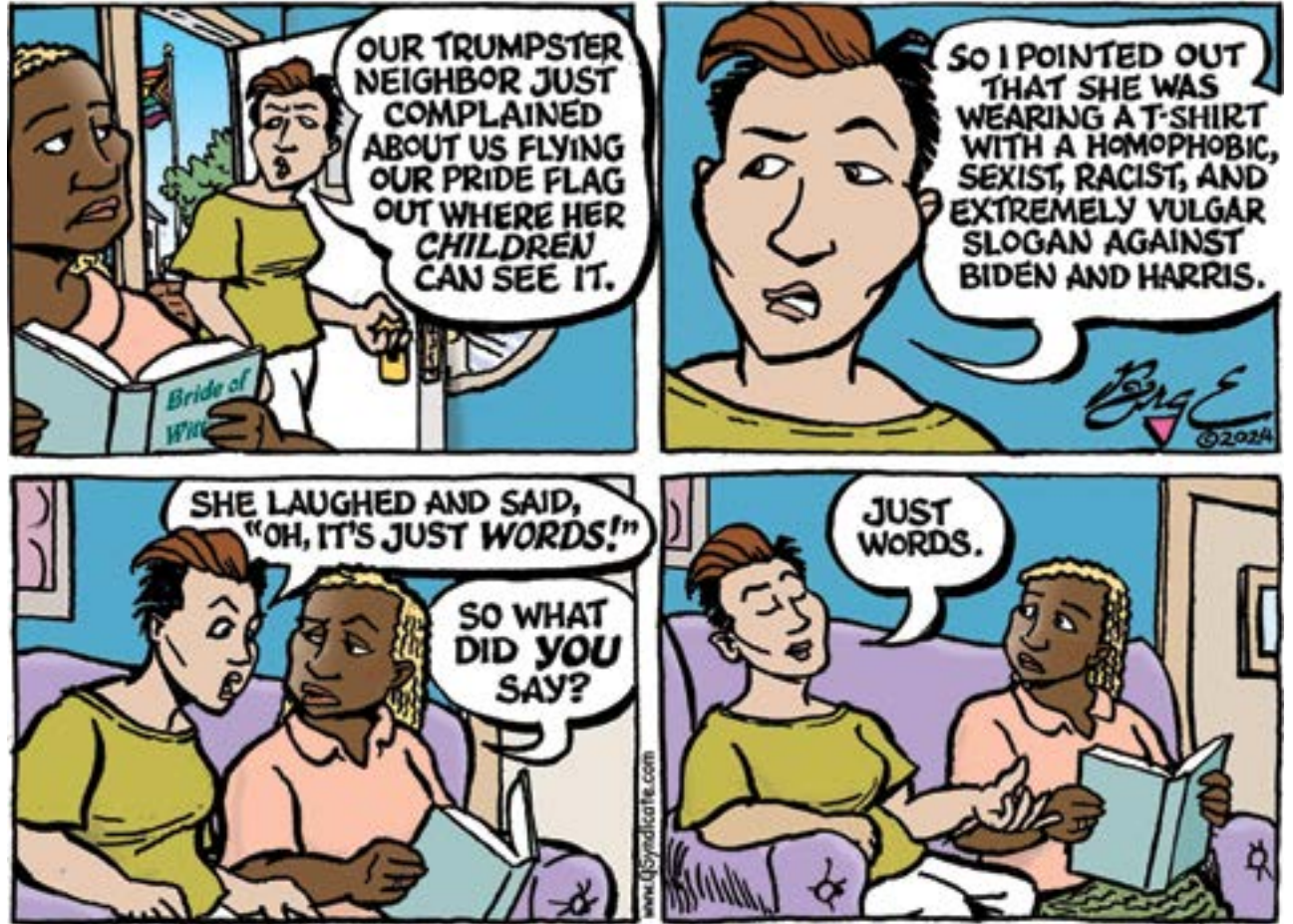
BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



On Saturday, June 15, there were three mass shootings in the Metro Detroit area, where I live. At a house party in Lathrup Village, a gathering in Detroit and at a splash pad in Rochester, where little kids were shot.

The mayor of Rochester said that he never thought it would happen there. To which I must ask: Why not? Why, at this point in U.S. history, would anyone be surprised by a mass shooting anywhere in this country? It happens everywhere. To think it can't happen in your backyard is delusional.

I watched a news interview with the Oakland County sheriff and standing behind him was John James, Republican U.S. Congressman for Michigan's 10th Congressional district. While the sheriff was talking, James looked absolutely clueless, his eyes darting around nervously. When reporters turned to James, he spoke as if he hadn't just had lots of time to think of a response. He said something to the effect that we have to stop mass shootings. And yet James has received endorsements from the National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America for his opposition to common sense gun safety legislation.



a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth."

In other words, the purpose of the bill is to keep transgender kids off of sports teams. You know, super important stuff to focus on while the world is falling apart around us.

James also proudly voted in favor of HR5, the Parents Bill of Rights Act, which is less about parental rights and more about conservative control in schools. It passed in the Republican-controlled U.S. House, but not in the U.S. Senate, which has a narrow Democratic majority.

According to CNN, HR5 would "require elementary and middle schools that receive federal funding to obtain parental consent before changing a minor child's gender markers, pronouns, or preferred name on any school form; or allowing a child to change the child's sex-based accommodations, including locker rooms or bathrooms."

The purpose of HR5 is simply to harm transgender and non-binary kids. We all know that it is simply not safe for all such kids to come out to their parents. School should be a safe place for all kids to learn. And yes, that means that sometimes school needs to be a safe haven away from parents who do not love and accept their children for who they are.

Backers of these so-called parental rights bills are really only interested in protecting the rights of conservative parents and pushing a conservative agenda.

"Republicans across the country, arguing that discussions around race, gender identity and sexuality are inappropriate for young children, have used the banner of 'parental rights' to push for a curtailment of such conversations in schools," CNN reports.

Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association, told CNN, "Parents and voters agree that elected leaders should be focused on getting students the individualized support they need, keeping guns out of schools, and addressing educator shortages."

Republicans claim to be all about "protecting kids" and yet have done nothing to actually protect kids. As Republicans see it, dangers facing kids are their transgender classmates, drag queens and learning about racism.

We know all too well, and are tragically reminded over and over again, that kids do, in fact, face very real dangers. Guns are a big one. And Republicans have absolutely no interest in the necessary reforms to make "being shot at a splash pad" a thing beyond the realm of imagination. Instead, Republicans claim that more guns are the answer and that the real problem is "mental health."

But Republicans are focused on getting transgender volleyball players out of schools rather than passing widely popular gun safety measures and actually funding mental health care.

James won his election to Congress in 2022 by less than one percentage point. It's time to end his congressional career.

And he's not the only vulnerable Republican in the U.S. running for reelection. Let's vote them out.

Republicans claim to be all about 'protecting kids' and yet have done nothing to actually protect kids. As Republicans see it, dangers facing kids are their transgender classmates, drag queens and learning about racism.

Not surprisingly, James is no friend to LGBTQ+ people. During his failed 2018 run for U.S. Senator, the Human Rights Campaign declared that "he has no place in the U.S. Senate" because of his alignment with Mike Pence's "extreme, anti-equality agenda."

In 2023, James voted in favor of the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act, which sought to make a student's participation in school athletics "based solely on

LGBTQ+ Game Changers Honored at Tigers Pride Night

Four local LGBTQ+ advocates were honored with the 2024 Game Changers Award by the Detroit Tigers, Detroit Red Wings and Comerica Park at Tigers Pride Night on June 11. The honorees include Emme Zanotti, Equality Michigan's director of advocacy and civic engagement; Jay Kaplan, ACLU Michigan staff attorney; Brandon Shamoun, a member of the Michigan LGBTQ+ Commission, and financial advisor Reid Beyerlein.

Zanotti told BTL, "I am beyond appreciative that the Tigers and Red Wings thought our work at Equality

Michigan is worthy of this recognition. We are certainly proud of all the progress we are making and all the outreach we've been doing. At the end of the day, though, while I might be the one putting all the calls to action out there, it's our community members that keep answering. I wish I had a Game Changer jersey for every LGBTQ+ Michigander. I hope we continue to recognize the power of our collective voice and that the result of that is more groups following the Tigers' and Red Wings' lead in making these traditional spaces more inclusive and inviting."

Kaplan said he is both humbled and grateful to be recognized for work on behalf of LGBTQ+ civil rights. "I recognize that this work takes a team effort, and I have been so lucky to work with incredible colleagues and mentors along the way," he said.



(Left to right) Brandon Shamoun, Jay Kaplan, Emme Zanotti and Reid Beyerlein. Photo: X/ @TigersCommunity



Michigan Ranked Among Most Welcoming States for LGBTQ+ Community

Michigan is officially one of the most welcoming states for the LGBTQ+ community, according to Out Leadership's latest index. This index ranks states based on how little discrimination LGBTQ+ people face. Metrics include the impact of government policies on LGBTQ+ residents and how those policies benefit concepts like inclusion while reducing the impacts of discrimination. Michigan scored 78.07, up from 73.20 in 2023, giving the state a "low-risk" designation. According to Out Leadership, Michigan excels in legal protections and positive political and religious attitudes, supporting LGBTQ+ rights in areas like birth certificates, foster care, public spaces and workplaces.



Photo: @ThatGayPhotographer

New Kitty Crowned at Annual Catfight

The fifth annual Catfight for the Crown, an amateur drag pageant and fundraiser for Ruth Ellis Center, took place June 14 at The Fillmore Detroit. Each year, contestants compete in a good-natured battle brimming with campy charm, baring their claws for a good cause and the chance to be

crowned Miss Kitty.

"One of the biggest pillars of the Ruth Ellis Center is community," said Ruth Ellis Center Director of Development Nazarina Mwakasege. "This year, we had 400 of our best and closest friends come together to celebrate a community born out of rejection and a lack of safe spaces to be authentic."

This year's event celebrates Ruth Ellis Center's 25th year in operation by honoring drag and ballroom cultures

— art forms that exemplify the beauty, resilience and vibrancy of LGBTQ+ expression. Center Executive Director Mark Erwin told BTL, "We owe this progress to unwavering support and solidarity in the community. Your presence, voices, and contributions continue to empower and sustain our mission."

2024 winners include Zoe (Miss Kitty) and Belladonna Marz (Miss Congeniality). Learn more on Instagram @catfightforthecrown.

Housing Options for Older LGBTQ+ Adults

The Homes Coalition invites community members to the LGBTQ+ Older Adults Summit on June 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hannan Center. Breakfast and lunch will be provided at the event, which is sponsored by MiGen, AARP Michigan and the Hannan Center. The community dialogue will focus on the results of a new study about housing and Southeast Michigan LGBTQ+ older adults. Learn more at homescoalition.org/summit.

Join a Queer Pickleball Team

Even if you are totally new to the world of pickleball, Stonewall Sports invites you to join its 2024 summer team. The queer-affirming, friendly sports club organizes teams of players of all skill levels for several sports, including billiards, bowling, cornhole, kickball, pickleball and volleyball. Pickleball registration is open through July 17 at bit.ly/4eqV55C.

Yvie Oddly Spills 'RuPaul' Tea in New Book

A new autobiography penned by Yvie Oddly, the self-proclaimed "oddest drag queen in history" and winner of "RuPaul's Drag Race" season 11, promises to reveal never-before-seen aspects of the show, including a few personally tense moments. "There are a few experiences I talk about in the book about how I guess it didn't line up to what I thought I was signing up for," Oddly recently told The Advocate. "All About Yvie: Into the Oddity" is out now.



Yvie Oddly. Photo: OddlyYvie.com

Print as Resistance

New anthology explores how Hello Mr. revolutionized queer storytelling — and why it wouldn't be what it was without Michigan



Ryan Fitzgibbon. Photo: Melissa Lukenbaugh

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Before the current media landscape offered more explicit depictions of queer life outside of physical spaces like LGBTQ+ bars, you had *Borders* and you had zines, DIY publications with more non-conventional formats and more indie spirit than traditional magazines. Inside, pages of people like you were interspersed among artfully designed spreads, sometimes on luxurious-feeling stock. Zines often provided a unique sense of community and belonging not easily found in everyday life, especially to marginalized communities. Through words, photos and illustrations, zines shared counter-

that was still coming to terms with my sexuality couldn't believe I was seeing Hello Mr. just below copies of *GQ* and *Men's Health* on the magazine racks at Barnes & Noble in the Michigan suburbs, especially with this descriptor right on the cover: "about men who date men." It was my first copy, but, after 10 issues published between 2013 and 2018 and nearly 65,000 Hello Mr. magazines that traveled around the world, it was almost founder and editor-in-chief Ryan Fitzgibbon's last. At the time, I didn't know then that Fitzgibbon was also connected to Michigan — and in ways that, it turns out, were very specific to his role at the magazine and also, now, his new book, "A Great Gay Book: Stories of Growth, Belonging & Other Queer Possibilities."

Seeing this gorgeous anthology now, which Fitzgibbon describes in his "Hello Again" prologue as a "mirror to conceive new possibilities," holds an added layer of significance when considering Fitzgibbon grew up in the desert of queer life in Midland. His first job was as a paperboy for the *Midland Daily News*. While attending H.H. Dow High School, his art teacher nurtured his interests in communication and graphic design and encouraged

You might say Fitzgibbon's subversion of queer norms feels rooted in something a little more Midwestern — after all, Michigan is definitely less glossy, more matte.

him to join the school newspaper. "I entered in that way — as a page designer — for the *Dow High Update* and that opened my eyes to the world of journalism and visual storytelling."

cultural ideas and thoughts, while also centering stories that affirmed our existence. Published from 1988 to 1991, *Homocore* was geared toward the punk youth of the gay underground in America. Later in the '90s, *Gutterfag* reached a similar queer audience.

Many years later, the part of me

him to join the school newspaper. "I entered in that way — as a page designer — for the *Dow High Update* and that opened my eyes to the world of journalism and visual storytelling."

See **Ryan Fitzgibbon**, page 18



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End of an Era: Michigan's Out Post Magazine Bids Farewell to LGBTQ+ Readers



34 years after his first DIY issue, Steve Culver publishes his last

BY JASON COLLINS

Out Post publisher Steve Culver bid farewell to Michigan's LGBTQ+ readers with a final June 2024 issue bearing the headline, "This first draft of history is finally put on the shelf." The cover features a selection of front pages from the publication's 625 issues.

Culver launched what would later become Out Post in January 1990, initially published under the name Ten Percent. For the next two years, Ten Percent published weekly newsprint issues, until a brief hiatus in 1995. Ten Percent then resumed as Out Post. "I had always wanted to resume publishing after my hiatus, so I came back

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with a little bit more experience under my belt. That's how Out Post started."

He adds: "I remember taking it to Kinko's. That was the start of it."

Culver told BTL that running his own publication came naturally to him given his journalism background, and what started as a 12-page newsletter grew into one of Michigan's longest-running LGBTQ+ publications, an accomplishment he reflects on proudly.

From the start, Out Post offered something for everyone and a broad range of topics. While Out Post originally covered Ann Arbor's LGBTQ+ community, it quickly expanded to cover LGBTQ+ events throughout Southeast Michigan. The community responded positively to the publication, as Culver carefully covered sensitive topics impacting LGBTQ+ people alongside more lighthearted local coverage. Each issue contained an extensive list of upcoming queer events and resources in Michigan, interviews with local and national figures, and pages of photos featuring community members at work and play. Culver's goal was to create a publication that appealed to a wide audience, even when he wasn't keen on what made it into the publication.

"Right until the end, I ran a horoscope column," he recalls. "The journalist in me hated wasting space on a horoscope, but I also knew that a lot of people enjoyed that."

Dave Garcia, a devoted reader of Out Post and friend of Culver who served as former Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center executive director for several years

until 2023, reflects on his experience reading the publication. "I was involved in LGBTQ+ politics for a long time and Out Post was always there," Garcia says. "Steve did his best to try to shed light on issues that were affecting the community."

In the early years, Culver had a team of freelancers and other people helping him, but for a long time, it was only Culver serving as reporter and photographer. Despite his homebody tendencies, Culver would often wait until 2 a.m. at some places to hand out copies of Out Post to bargoers. Back

then, he says, "We were still cutting and pasting and having a delivery driver from the printer come to my home. Whereas today, you just send a PDF file."

Garcia remembers reading these early issues. "You got to hand it to a guy that worked that hard across the entire region [Michigan] for 30-plus years. It's certainly a

recalls that when the Mpox virus broke out in 2022, Out Post was quick to inform the community and advocate for vaccine rollout.

Out Post also played a role in shining light on a scandal involving former Affirmations Executive Director Susan Erspamer, who resigned after a public custody battle with her ex-wife, where Erspamer's attorney used an anti-LGBTQ+ law as part of her claim against her spouse and after an audit report published by Out Post publicly revealed financial mismanagement at the organization.

Garcia says Out Post would talk about things "when the mainstream media [didn't]," including ongoing coverage of the importance of amending Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act from the very beginning days of the publication.

Looking ahead, Culver plans to donate the Out Post archives as well as photos and newsletters from his publishing career to local historical libraries. Since the announcement of Out Post ceasing publication has been made public, Culver says that "it's very heartwarming to see all the comments on social media."

Readers can still access Out Post's digital archived copies dating back to January 2010 on the Out Post Facebook page. The final June copy of the Out Post can be found at the usual distribution locations.

"I remember taking it to Kinko's. That was the start of it."

— Out Post founder Steve Culver

labor of love for him."

Garcia has fond memories about the difference Out Post made in Michigan's LGBTQ+ community. He specifically

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Quality Levels
Puzzle can be found on page 25

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◀ Ryan Fitzgibbon

Continued from page 14

Hooked on graphic design, Fitzgibbon enrolled at Grand Valley State University, earning his degree in fine arts. During his senior year, while coming out to a few select close people in his life in 2008, he also dedicated himself to a project that was personal to him: designing a book on the state of marriage equality. He says it was his “very dramatic coming out to my class and peers: ‘Look what I can do, but also here’s who I am.’”

It was a brave step for someone who remembers the feeling of browsing the magazine rack’s LGBTQ+ section, shelved underneath the “Men’s Interest” section, at the Barnes & Noble in the Midland Mall. “[The magazines] were censored and shielded from visibility, and I just remember being so terrified of that section, and obviously there were warning labels all over it,” he recalls.

Years later, when Fitzgibbon published his first issue of Hello Mr. in 2013, the evolution for queer visibility was apparent right there on those shelves. And now, through his own publication, Fitzgibbon was able to experience the shift firsthand. “Flash forward to Hello Mr. being distributed and available in Barnes & Nobles, a full-circle moment to have that on shelves, and ‘LGBT Interests’ had moved up the ranks and we were sitting very proudly next to the magazines that I mentioned.”

Emails and DMs poured in from queer readers like me excited to grab a copy of Hello Mr., none of which he took for granted. But a particularly special moment arrived when Fitzgibbon’s parents walked into that Barnes & Noble in Midland and sent a photo to him of them at the store grabbing their very own issue. For Fitzgibbon, it was all “pretty surreal.”

When Hello Mr. launched, many of the authors featured in the book hadn’t even been published yet. Poet Ocean Voung, for instance, was still years away from releasing his 2022 book “On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous.” “It was really a place for a lot of queer creatives to kind of sharpen their teeth and get some of their early work published,” Fitzgibbon says. “Yes, print was dying, but there was still this resurgence of indie magazines happening in 2012 to 2015 and beyond. I think there’s still niche beautiful publications coming out every year, but [I was at the] beginning of that wave of change of guards in the big publishing media companies and realizing, ‘Oh, we need to change how we’re doing things and maybe stop putting straight people on our covers promoting abdominals and expensive resort vacations.’ I intentionally tried to subvert that with just matte paper, for example. A tactile, more journal aesthetic that sits on a coffee table but that isn’t disposable and doesn’t only have this kind of glossy, glitzy West Coast and East Coast focus.”

You might say his subversion of queer norms feels rooted in something a little more Midwestern — after all, Michigan is definitely less glossy, more matte. Perhaps H. H. Dow and

Grand Valley had more to do with Hello Mr. than anyone ever thought, though Fitzgibbon himself has considered how “living in different places, but also knowing what it feels like to not have community growing up nearby” shaped the stories that ended up shaping our community. In 2020, he returned to the one that he was initially a part of, that couldn’t give him quite what he needed as a queer person. During the beginning of the pandemic, when he moved back to Michigan to live with his parents, who are now just outside of Midland, he had already begun moving on from Hello Mr. to, as he writes in the book, “focus on my own growth.”

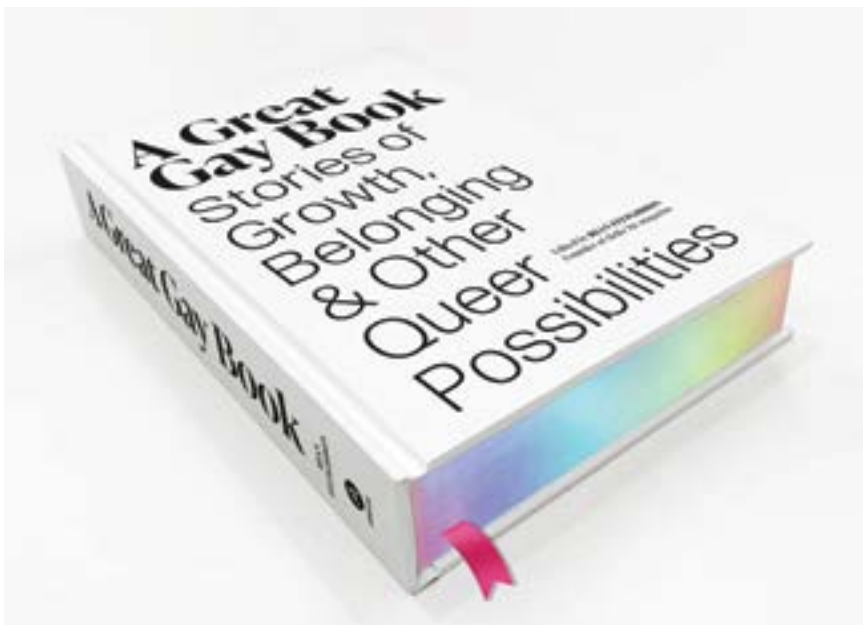
“I was proud of the role Hello Mr. played, and trusted that the impact of the 10 issues published would continue to be felt,” he adds, estimating that he had published about 600 pieces of content. (During our conversation, I tell him that I’ve held onto my one issue of Hello Mr., proudly among some of my favorite works in my office, whereas I’ve long retired all of my past issues of GQ.)

After living in places like San Francisco (his first place in South of Market was near where Up Your Alley, a leather and kink fest, is held), Chicago (his first Pride), Singapore (a “real accelerator” for him in witnessing a global community of queerness) and New York (where he struggled to keep Hello Mr. going), being back in Michigan for a little over a year, far from any leather or kink, felt “more disconnected and rural.” It hit him how away from home in many ways he truly felt. “Having that physical community in spaces,” he says, “was lacking.”

“There are a lot of reasons why Hello Mr. was made the way that it was and was in print, so it could be tangible, so it could be visible so that we could have intimate reading experiences,” he says.

“A Great Gay Book” represents a lot of change and growth beyond Fitzgibbon’s own. When it comes to the artists who initially contributed to Hello Mr. years ago, “there were people who had gotten divorced and we’d published them as a married couple. Unfortunately, a couple of people are now deceased. Personal growth. Career changes. [I was] honoring and trying to be really respectful of where people are at now and wanting to celebrate the legacy and move it into a conversation that can still inspire in the future.”

These aren’t the only changes that Fitzgibbon, who has spent the last four years living in Tulsa, faced — there is, of course, our often-frightening dilemma of being LGBTQ+ in 2024. “Censorship and legislation are threatening our livelihood and the livelihood of the most vulnerable Black, Brown and trans folks in our community,” he says. “Things that have this much volume and presence and have the distribution power of a publisher — it really was truly such a gift to be able to take a lot of a decade of my life and these stories that are all part of that journey of creating a queer magazine and packaging it in such a way that’s kind of hard to deny. I mean, it has such a weight to it that it really leaves no questions.”



Orfelia

Continued from page 8

community. We've had an advisory board tell us these tickets should be \$150-200 due to the scale of the event, but we know doing that would limit access to the event. Queer people are often lower income. We don't want people to be prevented from coming to our events.

What are a few stand-out experiences people won't want to miss?

Dyan Box: All of them! But specifically, one is that we are partnering with the Detroit Sound Conservancy to showcase some new expectations of technology. They'll have the Club Heaven sound system on display. One big one is the salt mines.

M Kuznetsov: Yes, the salt mines installation is a great example of what it means to have a place-based feature. The mines are underneath our feet and they've been around since the early 1900s, and we think that in 30 years, climate change will mean that in the Great Lakes, we don't really have snow anymore. They might go out of business because there's no market for road salt. These abandoned mines become a place for people to rave — the future of Midwest raving has really resonated with people. We made a short reel on Instagram that got half a million views.

We also have robot fights, a gender-affirming

clinic from the future, a worm wrestling pit, a gender circus, a reflection room with prairie flowers where you can think about the future, a build-a-cyborg, drag personas from the future, skin fusion fabrics...

Dylan Box: Oh, and performance pieces by local artists about gender and culture, including an Armenian artist. One important booth is kind of a mutual aid station — we are really committed to public health, so there are opportunities to get access to Narcan, fentanyl testing strips, Covid tests and masks and various other safety devices. We want this to be safe for the community.

We're taking our years of partying and event experience and trying to actually push the format of nightlife forward in Detroit, as well. We're partnering with 313 Care Collective, which is a local mutual aid collective, and also the Wayne County Health Department.

M Kuznetsov: We're really proud to have event monitors, a code of conduct and messaging around consent at our event. We have turned down venues due to their lack of accessibility, too. We're providing seating in the venue, for example. We want to not only imagine a future of nightlife but to provide the foundation at our event to imagine what nightlife can also look like in the present day.

Learn more about A Night at the Orfelia and purchase advance tickets at ra.co/events/1904761.



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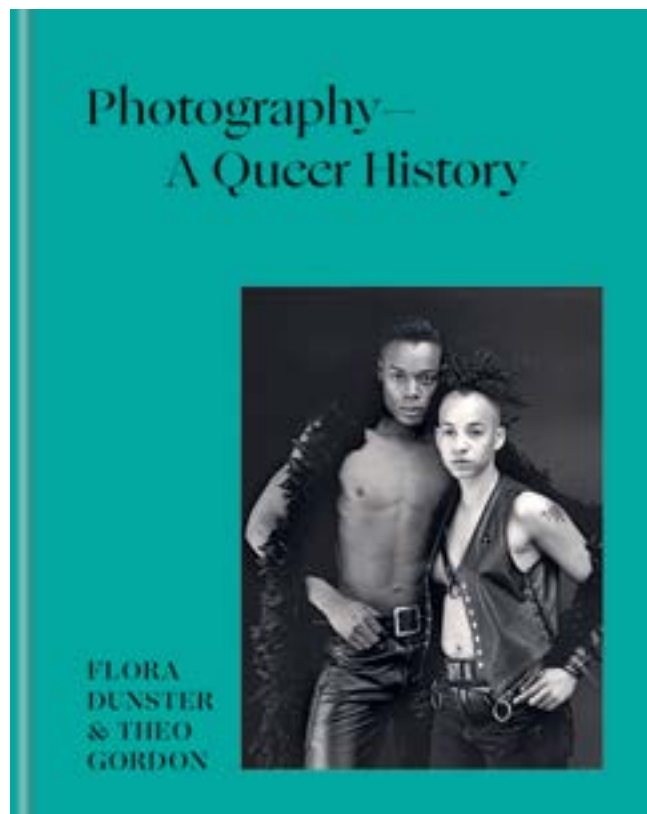
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Summer Books That'll Have You Feeling a Sense of Pride

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI
& SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Embrace the vibrant spectrum of LGBTQ+ experiences this Pride Month with our curated list of enlightening reads for readers of all ages. From stirring memoirs to groundbreaking fiction, these books celebrate diversity, resilience and the ongoing journey toward equity.

You'll find titles suitable for adults, children and teens, ensuring that everyone can find a voice that resonates with them. Whether you're seeking poignant narratives, empowering anthologies or insightful non-fiction, these compelling voices are sure to inspire, educate and entertain.



More Than Just a Pretty Book

'Photography — A Queer History,' edited by Flora Dunster and Theo Gordon

The role of photography in understanding queerness from various historical vantage

points is vividly detailed by co-authors Flora Dunster and Theo Gordon in a volume rife with striking images and evocative details on who was behind the lens. Photos dating as far back as 1891, when feminist photographer Alice Austen shot "The Darned Club" — two pairs of women are seen embracing, including Austen, on her lawn overlooking the New York Bay Narrows — is among this collection of less-popularized depictions of queer life. Through time, we see the role of fantasy in lesbian history via "The Knight's Move," shot in 1990 by Tessa Boffin, and how a self-portrait by Collier Schor, captured just a few years ago in 2021, illustrates trans sensibility. With the work of 84 artists, Dunster and Gordon help us understand how the history of our documented lives through photography has advanced fights against LGBTQ+ discrimination while awakening our collective sense of self.

'Gentle Chaos: Poems, Tales, and Magic,' Tyler Gaca

Tyler Gaca, aka Ghosthoney on TikTok, was a pandemic-era quarantine comfort to many, known for a range of vlog-style videos, from comedic sketches to late-night musings. Now closing in on 3 million TikTok followers, Gaca is the published author of "Gentle Chaos," which is on this list even though it came out in 2023 because it just may always be relevant given the state of the not-so-gentle chaos of the world. "I am still standing off stage in my own living room and gathering myself before I make a little joke, this time

for the audience that lives inside my phone," he writes in the book. Now, however, Gaca has an audience that loves a page flip and not just a finger tap, as his book adapts his TikTok stories into printed personal photographs and the written word, with vulnerable essays and poetry about growing up queer in Oklahoma.

Real Life

'Joan Baez: When You See My Mother, Ask Her to Dance,' Joan Baez

A companion book to Joan Baez's life-affirming documentary "I Am a Noise," a moving must-see that goes to the personal and professional depths of the pioneering folk singer and social activist's rich life, "When You See My Mother, Ask Her to Dance" presents an equally heartfelt experience through her never-before-published writing. In this collection of unguarded letters and poetry, Baez, who has dated both men and women, writes intimately about her romantic relationships and childhood memories. Much of her writing here was drafted between 1991 and 1997, after Baez was diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, and some are credited to her "inner authors."

'Countless Sleepless Nights: A Collection of Coming-Out Stories & Experiences,' edited by Carina Magger

Few things can remind you that you are, indeed, not alone on your self-discovery journey more than just knowing people around the world also feel the fear, pain and joy of taking the steps to be your authentic self. Editor Carina Magger interviewed 85 people from 16 countries over the course of eight months in 2022. The result is a collection of stories with a diaristic sensibility, like "Not Part of God's Plan," about a gay Mormon's experience in helping to change hearts and minds, even his own Republican father's, and, via the UK, "Mum, I'm in Love," about a lesbian woman's parents proudly celebrating her newfound romance.

'Cactus Country: A Boyhood Memoir,' Zoë Bossiere

"This will resonate with anyone who's longed for escape — from a hometown or their own body — but lacked an exit plan,"

wrote Publisher's Weekly about Brevity magazine editor Zoë Bossiere's reflections on growing up feeling like a boy in the Sonoran Desert. The boys and working-class men in Bossiere's orbit when they were an adolescent

gave them a startling example of what seemed to define manhood — sexism, racism, substance abuse and violence — and, like so many of us trying to fit in at that age, mirrored their dress and mannerisms. That was until high school, when they gave up being one of the guys and harnessed their feminine power.

The More You Know

'Pride Power: The Young Person's Guide to LGBTQ+,' Harriet Dyer

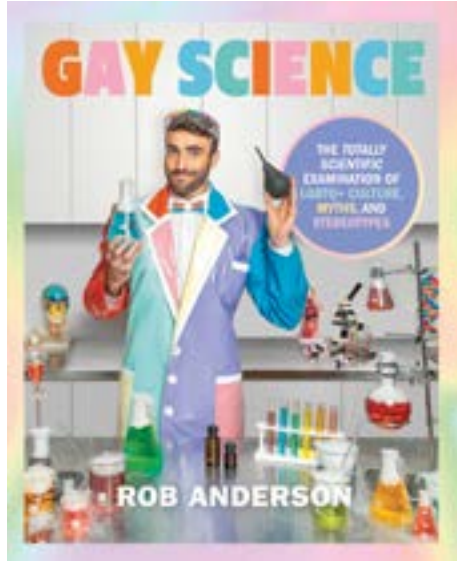
This adorable little guide to everything LGBTQ+ for ages 11 and up presents an accessible, easy-to-follow look that can help anyone understand their sexual orientation and identity. In addition to breaking down the meaning of the gay ABCs and how to better understand your gender, the book gives a brief look at significant historical markers in our fight for equality, including Stonewall, and includes recommendations on films, TV and video games that celebrate LGBTQ+ visibility and representation. With allies in mind, "Pride Power" also offers a full chapter on tips for young LGBTQ+ people interested in getting involved in queer activism and how our allies can help to create a more inclusive world.

'Hollywood Pride: A Celebration of LGBTQ+ Representation and Perseverance in Film,' Alonso Duralde

One word in pop culture that you'll keep hearing until we get exactly what we deserve — representation. There's more of it, and there's not enough of it, and now thanks to film critic Alonso Duralde, we have a comprehensive history book that charts, when it comes to seeing ourselves represented on screen, where we started and where we've yet



to go. Through an exploration of LGBTQ+ themes and characters dating back to 1894 with “Dickson Experimental Sound Film,” Duralde charts progress through eras like “Silent Comics in Drag,” from the early 19th century, all the way through to our modern-era “Icons,” like director Todd Haynes, trans directors Lana and Lilly Wachowski, and a major 20th-century turning point in queer film: “Brokeback Mountain.”



‘Gay Science: The Totally Scientific Examination of LGBTQ+ Culture, Myths, and Stereotypes,’ Rob Anderson

You won’t be squirming in your seat waiting for class to be dismissed as you read comedian and TikTok influencer Rob Anderson’s amusingly satirical guide to understanding gayness through something only anti-vaxxers might argue with: science. Though Anderson is upfront about how this book really is not completely rooted in actual scientific-based facts, if you’re queer, you’ll identify with this body of cheekily presented knowledge, divided into three branches and 29 fields of Gay Science (it is capped in the book, because “science”). I really did laugh at Anderson’s anecdote on why queers can hit snooze on their alarm all they want and still arrive at work at a reasonable time — because we can speed “past slow straight people” to “defy the laws of physics.” To make this present as a real textbook you might bring to Gay Science class, there’s even a gay glossary and some very iconic stock photography.

Fiction

‘The Safekeep,’ Yael van der Wouden

Yael van der Wouden’s debut novel has received rave reviews from The Guardian and The New York Times, and Kirkus Reviews

called it “nearly perfect.” Infatuation is at its mysterious core, as Isabel grows curious about her brother’s girlfriend Eva, who, while staying with Isabel, challenges her to shake up the monotony of her regimented life in the rural Dutch province of Overijssel. As the story unfolds, there’s more than meets the eye, some of which involves self-discovery and queer relationships during the 1960s, when those relationships rarely left the house.

‘Four Squares,’ Bobby Finger

With friendship at its heart, author Bobby Finger’s followup to “The Old Place” finds more tenderness within community-driven narratives. This time, the story is about Artie Anderson over the course of 30 years, beginning in 1992 in New York City during his 30th birthday, against the backdrop of the AIDS epidemic. Three decades later, as those closest to him move across the country and after sustaining an injury, Artie is faced with the new reality of aging, but finds a warm community of queer seniors at a local center who show him the true meaning of friendship.

‘The Guncle Abroad,’ Steven Rowley

One of contemporary literature’s favorite guncles has returned for more cute adventures with his beloved now-teenage niece and nephew, Maisie and Grant. This time, after Patrick O’Hara lovingly cared for them after they lost their mother, they’re heading overseas to Italy, where the waves of change are, for all of them, especially wavey: the kids’ father is getting remarried, much to their dismay; Patrick is coming to terms with his singlehood as he approaches 50 and, naturally, everything comes to a head at a rehearsal dinner that isn’t at all what anyone expected. And if Steve Rowley’s first book, simply titled “The Guncle,” is any indication, this sequel won’t be either. In fact, it may just be the wildly witty, tenderhearted balm this year calls for.

Children’s Books

‘Jacob’s Missing Book,’ Sarah and Ian Hoffman



Fighting through all the noise related to the relentless assault on LGBTQ-centered books in school and public libraries is a simple refrain: Kids want to see themselves and their families reflected in the media they consume. There’s nothing wrong with that sentiment, despite insistence from

the far right that loving and supporting

See **Summer Books**, page 24

Immerse Yourself in Everything Samantha Irby with Ann Arbor District Library's Big Gay Read

Annual month-long community book club set to kick off in July

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

You could think of Ann Arbor District Library's upcoming Big Gay Read as a community book club on steroids. Like a traditional book club, participants will read the same book (this year's pick is Samantha Irby's earnest book of essays, "We Are Never Meeting in Real Life"), followed by an opportunity for discussion. Unlike a traditional book club, the "discussion" portion of this book club will take place over the entire month of July, through immersive — and often hilarious — group experiences, a book reading and talk by the author and several other fun activities put together by the AADL team.

AADL staffer Jacob Gorski told BTL that the fourth annual Big Gay Read will have a celebratory vibe. "Samantha Irby's writing lends itself to this wonderful kind of energy that fits today's climate so perfectly," he says. "Yes, life is pretty hard, but at least we can have a good laugh."

Irby, a Chicago native who now lives with her wife in Kalamazoo, is known for her acerbic wit and her sometimes painfully honest (but always relatable) retellings of embarrassing and poignant moments in her life. "We Are Never Meeting in Real Life" takes a deep dive into Irby's pre-marital dating life as well as the childhood experiences that have shaped her into the delightfully awkward, powerfully compelling presence she is today. In addition to writing New York Times bestselling books like "We Are Never Meeting in Real Life" and "Wow, No Thank You," Irby has garnered praise for her work in television writing for shows like "Shrill" and the "Sex and the City" reboot "And Just Like That..."

Irby frequently writes about her judgmental cat Helen Keller, a detail Gorski says library staffers working on the Big Gay Read were quick to seize upon. "So, we're having a cat craft symposium," he says. "You'll be able to come to the library and crochet a coaster — that looks like a cat's butt." Having read every word of every single Samantha Irby

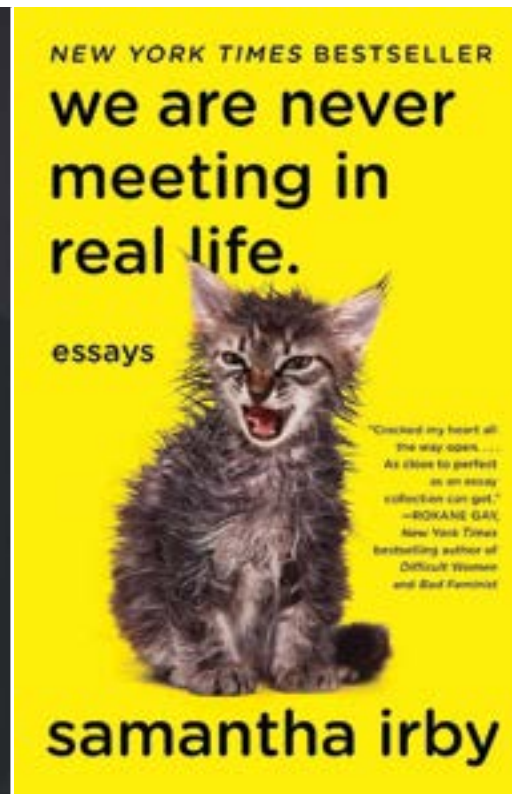


Samantha Irby. Courtesy photo

book, I can tell you that it's hard to imagine a craft that would better capture the Samantha Irby vibe. Bravo, AADL.

Ahead of a series of live events, the library will release a YouTube video titled "Recipe Share: Easy on the Tummy," a nod to Irby's openness about her struggles with chronic illness and Crohn's disease. Viewers can check out several recipes that might (or might not) help with their own digestive quirks. "In no way do we claim that we can cure your digestive issues but we do have some recipes that may or may not be easy on your tummy," the video description reads. The event will be pre-recorded and appear on the AADL website and YouTube on July 5 at 4 p.m.

Gorski says the book is readily available for checkout at all five AADL branches (Downtown, Malletts Creek, Pittsfield, Traverwood and Westgate) and as an ebook or audiobook, so grab your copy and plan to attend all of this year's Big Gay Read Events, outlined below and at aadl.org/thebiggayread:



The Big Gay Read Author Event: Samantha Irby

Sunday, July 7 • 6-7:30 p.m. • Downtown Library

Irby will visit AADL for a talk, Q&A and book signing on July 7. The library will offer books for sale and may provide a livestream (check aadl.org/thebiggayread for updates).

The Samantha Irby Experience: Zumba

Thursday, July 11 • 6:30-7:30 p.m. • Downtown Library

"Exercise can be fun, or, at least according to Samantha Irby, it doesn't have to be complete torture," writes AADL. "See for yourself as The Big Gay Read presents a one-off Zumba class at AADL. Dress accordingly, whatever that means to you!"

The Samantha Irby Experience: Cat Craft Symposium

Thursday, July 18 • 6-7:30 p.m.

• Downtown Library

Like Irby, the AADL staff loves cats. Or, as Irby writes, it's "something like love." In addition to the previously mentioned cat butt coaster craft, participants at the cat craft symposium can create no-sew catnip toys, wand toys and heat-pressed totes.

The Samantha Irby Experience: Bad Date Cabaret | A Comedic Evening of Crafting and Storytelling

Tuesday, July 23 • 6:30-7:30 p.m.

• Downtown Library

The Bad Date Cabaret will have you turning your bad dating experiences into artistic masterpieces that you can share with the class. Don't be shy — brave AADL staff will kick things off with their own bad dating stories and create art alongside participants.

The library invites guests to chat about their best-worst dates with their tablemates and, optionally, with the whole group. Not feeling the show-and-tell aspect? Simple commiseration is also completely acceptable.

The Samantha Irby Experience: Vegan Snack Taste Test

Friday, July 26 • 6:30-7:30 p.m.

• Downtown Library

"As Samantha Irby will have us know, there are still a lot of trash foods you can eat while trying to be vegan," writes AADL. Help crown the winner of the vegan snack taste test with a bracket-style competition focused on vegan junk food options.

This content is made possible through our partnership with the Ann Arbor District Library. Partnerships like these enable Pride Source to produce free, quality storytelling for the LGBTQ+ community.

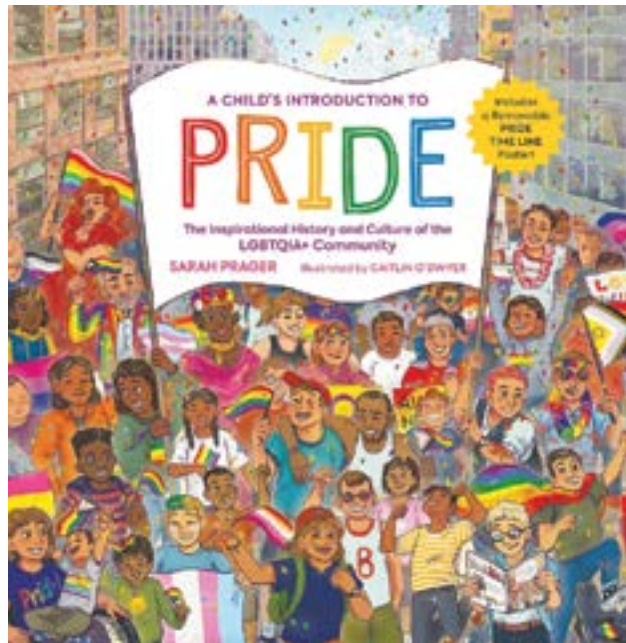


Photos from
Ferndale Pride
June 1, 2024



◀ **Summer Books**
Continued from page 21

LGBTQ+ community members is somehow problematic. “Jacob’s Missing Book” explores book banning and LGBTQ+ rights in a kid-



Presented for kids 8-12, this engaging LGBTQ+ history book celebrates love, hope, equality and progress through the lens of queer movements and the stories behind key figures like Harvey Milk and Marsha P. Johnson. Think of this volume as a supplement to history lessons in school that don’t often focus on the impact of queer people on everything from sports, music, literature, science and beyond. Bonus: a fun pull-out poster timeline dating from ancient times through recent events highlighting historical LGBTQ+ milestones.

‘My Guncle and Me,’ Jonathan Merritt

friendly format that encourages discussion in an affirming, straightforward way. There’s plenty of humor here, too, as well as gorgeous,

book about the special relationship between a nephew and his favorite “guncle” to life in this

Illustrator Joanna Carillo brings Merritt’s heartwarming

rich illustrations that bring a simple, yet poignant story to life.

colorful picture book for younger readers. Henry is having a hard time at school, until Guncle shows up with his puppy and a lesson about why Henry is special, why family is so important and how self-acceptance and feeling seen and loved are the keys to everything.

‘ABC-Deconstructing Gender,’ Ashley Molesso and Chess Needham

Embrace positivity and individuality with this bright picture book focused on people like Daryl, who is “so affectionate,” and Alex, who is “gentle with the family cat.” Sage and Kaylin are “super strong.” And so on. Molesso and Needham, who run the Ash + Chess stationery company, are an artistically blessed queer couple who have clearly poured themselves into creating a work intended to empower kids to embrace who they are and to love who they love with their whole hearts. Inside the book’s jacket is a fun ABC poster ready for display.

Young Adult Non-Fiction

‘Queer Eye: You Are Fabulous,’ Lauren Emily Whalen

Geared toward young adults, especially those who have trouble expressing their feelings to loved ones, this fill-in giftable book is like having the Fab Five beside you, encouraging you to embrace your individuality, compassion and creativity in a way only you can manage. As you fill in the prompts with a friend or significant other in mind, you’ll create a personalized gift brimming with encouragement and love — with plenty of full-color photos from the series to round out the fun.

‘Gender Rebels: 30 Trans, Nonbinary, and Gender Expansive Heroes Past and Present,’ Katherine Locke

While there are several solid LGBTQ+ history books on the market, few focus exclusively on the gender-nonconforming folks who have shaped that particular history. “Gender Rebels” dives in enthusiastically with rich storytelling about 30 trans, gender-expansive and nonbinary heroes representing cultures from throughout the world. Here, readers will learn about Callon of Epidaurus, the first intersex individual to

receive surgery, as well as actor Elliot Page and Tomoya Hosada, the first trans politician in Japan. Locke also includes accessible, deep information about trans topics, including the history of the word “transgender,” a reference guide and a glossary of terms.

‘Queerbook,’ various authors

Published by the It Gets Better queer youth support organization, “Queerbook” is a collection of essays, short stories, photography, poetry and artwork created by young queer adults from across the U.S. inspired by the theme, “What’s Your LGBTQ+ Utopia?” A book truly “for queer youth, by queer youth,” the volume was curated and edited by 10 LGBTQ+ student ambassadors selected by It Gets Better, which promises to direct 100% of proceeds back into its organization.

Breezy Reads

‘Wish You Weren’t Here,’ Erin Baldwin

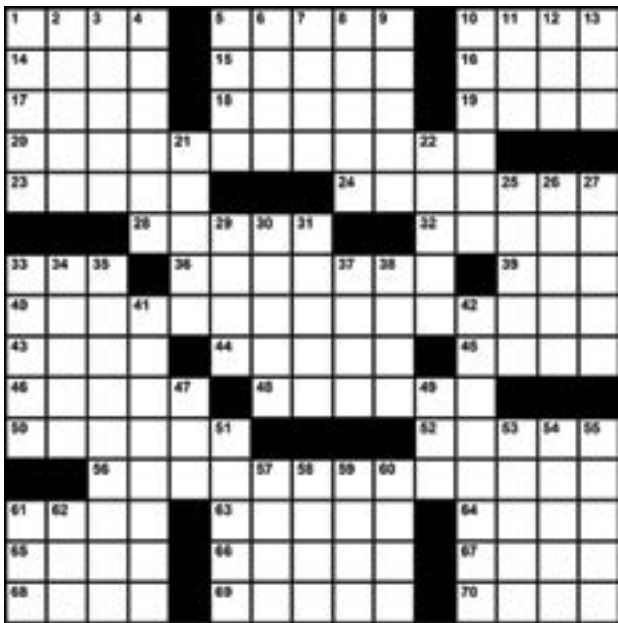
Summer camp is the perfect setting for this queer teen romance novel — a world away from regular life where the characters come alive against the backdrop of rustic cabins, campfire gatherings and the daily rhythm of camp life. Erin Baldwin’s debut novel creates a summer to remember for high schoolers Juliette and Priya who undergo transformations that surprise even them in this enemies-to-lovers romance. Publishers Weekly called “Wish You Weren’t Here” a “charming debut that gives way to electric romance.”

‘Gooseberry,’ Robin Gow



A middle-grade novel centered on a non-binary main character, “Gooseberry” is sure to charm readers with a tale about a sweet rescue dog. Poet and author Gow is best known for his acclaimed 2023 novel-in-verse “Dear Mothman,” which told the story of a young trans boy dealing with the death of his friend. “Gooseberry” is similarly tender, a thoughtfully spun story about found

family and the importance of hope and self-acceptance, all told through the lens of a nonbinary young person bravely marking their early independence.



- 39 Oink pen
- 40 More of the quote
- 43 Errol Flynn's "The Sun ____ Rises"
- 44 Trim and graceful
- 45 Mary topper
- 46 Sound of three men in a tub
- 48 Debra Messing, in "Garfield: The Movie"
- 50 Train like a Muscle Mary
- 52 Equal rights org.
- 56 End of the quote
- 61 Start of a Mozart opera title
- 63 "Over my dead body!"
- 64 Man or Lesbos
- 65 Stroke from Sheehan
- 66 Nuts
- 67 Some have electric organs
- 68 Get out of bed
- 69 Music of Ty Herndon, for short
- 70 Abuse orally

- parents
- 13 Sarah Jessica Parker's "city" activity
- 21 Where to see Tom, Dick, or Harry
- 22 Start of a legal conclusion
- 25 Younger daughter of Michelle
- 26 Chip company
- 27 Larry Kramer's "Just ____"
- 29 Chimp that was out in space
- 30 Name on a bomber
- 31 Less polite
- 33 Word used to stop seamen
- 34 Greeting for Dolly
- 35 Careless flaming queens?
- 37 His brother laid him in his grave
- 38 Leia's brother
- 41 National park in California
- 42 Bruce Jenner was a spokesperson for this cereal
- 47 Dupont Circle of D.C., e.g.
- 49 SSW's opposite
- 51 Jodie Foster's " ____ Room"
- 53 Cruising, maybe
- 54 "Oz" settings
- 55 Pink Triangle ____
- 57 TV actress Dietrich
- 58 Bizet opera title character
- 59 Get better
- 60 Suds in a gay bar
- 61 Nonrecreational mouth-to-mouth
- 62 Yes, to Yves

Down

- 1 " ____ having fun yet?"
- 2 Starbuck's order
- 3 Like the space around Uranus
- 4 Balls
- 5 Mosque leader
- 6 Made a "Clang, clang, clang" sound
- 7 Words in an analogy
- 8 What you do after you drop the soap
- 9 Bike in a Beach Boys song
- 10 Hard stuff in your mouth
- 11 Affirmative for Gomer
- 12 She had no heterosexual

Across

Quality Levels

- 1 Israeli author Oz
- 5 Like Oscar Wilde
- 10 Bette Davis feature of song
- 14 Whip the butts of
- 15 Michael of "The Village Voice"

- 16 "Party of Five" actress Campbell
- 17 Prefix with plasm
- 18 Playwright Chekhov
- 19 Top
- 20 Start of a quote from Mae West
- 23 Like cornstalks that bear
- 24 Slight paralysis
- 28 Gay rodeo target
- 32 "Riverfinger Women" writer Dykewomon
- 33 "So, it's YOU!"
- 36 Books of school photos



See p. 17 for answers



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