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PRIDE 2025: A GRASSROOTS AFFAIR

Organizers discuss challenges
amid political and economic shifts

NATHAN LANE'S NEW SITCOM

The acting icon talks edgy
'Mid-Century Modern'

Trans Joy Takes Center Stage

How a nonprofit, started in 2023 by three local trans
women, is more than just a party – it's a movement

By Layla McMurtrie

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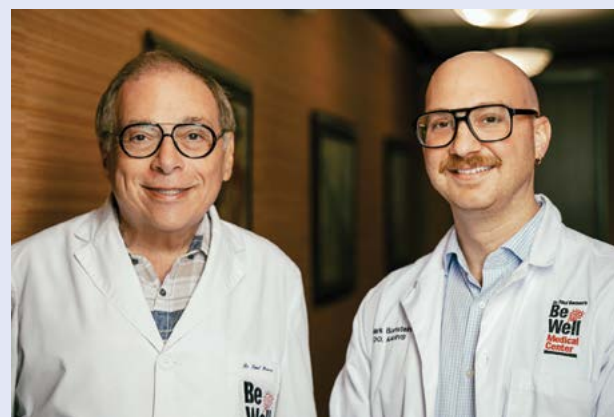
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(Left to right) Aidel Hawkins, Jay Philip and Swan Irvin.
Photo: Dolls Night

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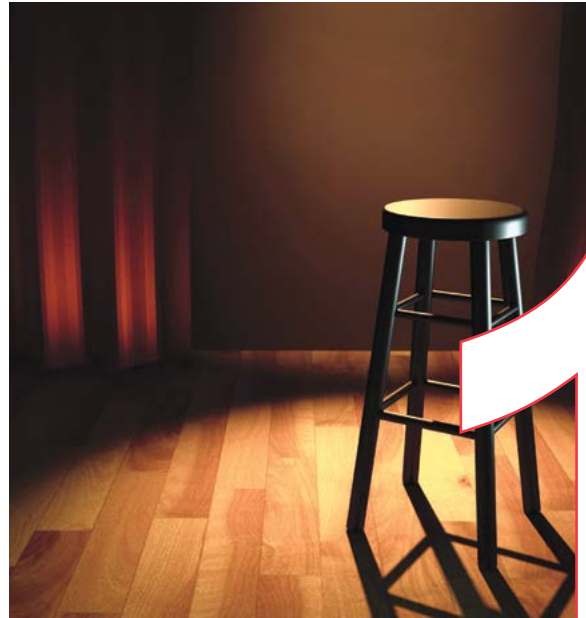
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5 **Queer** Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

Yup, it's technically a few weeks into spring — and the Michigan queer calendar is blooming with opportunity! From intimate music nights to hilariously sardonic readings or academic celebrations of resilience, here are some chances to find warmth and inspiration — or at least a reason to leave your house that isn't just "I ran out of oat milk again."



Marvel At Queer Musicians

Neighborhood Gays4Good creator Anna Parks tells BTL that she was inspired to start the new organization as a response to the challenging era in which we find ourselves. "Given all the recent hatred towards the LGBTQIA community, many of us are feeling restless and even hopeless... many want desperately to help but aren't sure where to start," she explains.

The group's debut event, Spotlight Sessions, will support Ozone House's Pride Zone for queer youth. Attendees can enjoy four LGBTQ+ musicians in a cozy venue while bidding on silent auction items including a gift card from trans tattoo artist Jake Munro, hand-crocheted goods from Girl Germs and "politically charged" cross-stitch art from a local creative.

April 5, 6-10 p.m., Dreamland Theater (26 North Washington St., Ypsilanti). Buy tickets at bit.ly/spotlightsessionsapril.

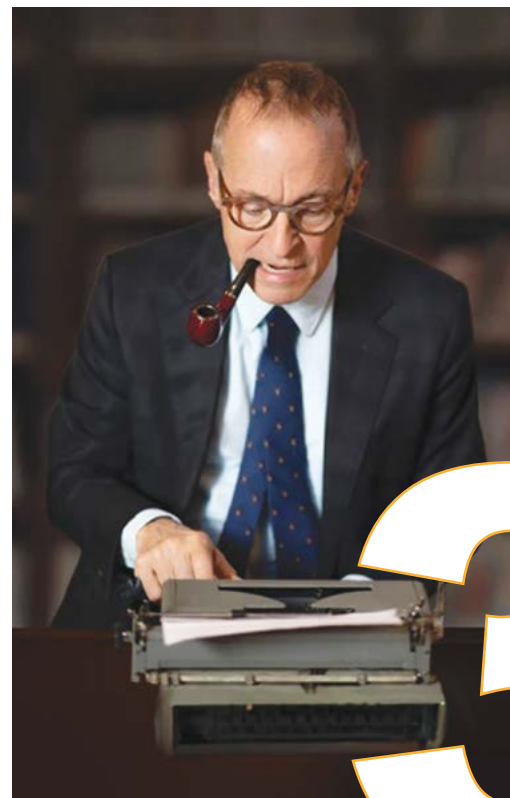


Create Crafty Cocktails

You could just order a drink — or you could learn to make one while supporting Ferndale Pride and also flexing your queer trivia knowledge. Syndicate Ferndale is hosting a Pride Cocktail Class, and it's serving more than just libations. Ticket-holders will craft three signature cocktails, get a barware set and even unlock the mysteries of "electric dust" (which we promise is legal and undoubtedly fabulous).

"We're shaking things up for a great cause!" Syndicate owner Dana Taucher tells BTL. "Our Pride Cocktail Class isn't just about crafting delicious drinks — it's about celebrating love, inclusivity and community." With 10% of proceeds benefiting Ferndale Pride, this night is a toast to flavor, chosen family and dangerously attractive rim techniques. Yeah, we said said rim, y'all.

April 14, 7-10 p.m., Syndicate Ferndale (140 Vester St., Ferndale). Reserve tickets at bit.ly/pridecocktailclass.



David Sedaris. Photo: Broadway in Detroit

Delight at David Sedaris

Writer and gay humorist David Sedaris was creating cringe-joyment (hilarity with a hefty side of vicarious embarrassment) long before TikTok made it — as the kids say — a thing. Sedaris, the master of deadpan absurdity and the rare art of making family dysfunction sound charming, returns to Detroit with his sharp wit and even sharper pen.

Whether you're a longtime fan or new to the author of "Me Talk Pretty One Day" and "Calypso," Sedaris delivers the kind of storytelling that makes you laugh, wince and question your own holiday traditions — often all in the same breath.

April 8, 7:30 p.m., Fisher Theatre (3011 W Grand Blvd., Detroit). Reserve tickets at bit.ly/davidsedaristickets.



Attend a Gender and Sexuality Conference

If you're a community college student, staff, faculty or just an LGBTQ+ person in desperate need of a full Saturday to bask in queer community, the annual Michigan Community College Gender & Sexuality Conference should absolutely be on your radar. Your gaydar, even.

This year's theme is Resilience, and the day features art-making workshops, a queer artist gallery and sessions led by students, staff and faculty statewide on topics like trans narratives in video games, queers in comics and LGBTQ+ campus leadership in tough times.

Conference Committee Member Josiah Jackson tells BTL, "[We hope that] students and community members alike can see they are not alone, that they have a thriving community and that resilience, while it may look different for everyone, is a needed component for any community to survive and thrive!"

The whole thing kicks off with a 10:15 a.m. panel keynote entitled "Beyond the Spotlight: Drag, Resilience, and Joy," so select your sequins and set your alarm!

April 12, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Washtenaw Community College (4800 E. Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor). Learn more at bit.ly/WCCconference.



Celebrate Small Sparkly Things

Nurturing queer joy has always been a radical act, but these days we're continually reminded it's a lifesaving necessity. Whether you're officially observing a birthday, marking a transition milestone ("It's the second anniversary of my first top surgery consult"), or just overjoyed that you remembered to water your plants — find a reason to celebrate.

Looking for inspiration? Start right now with International Asexuality Day (April 6) or National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (April 10).

Want to double the impact of your joy-seeking efforts? Pull that well-washed peanut butter jar out of your recycling, dig up some colorful paper, and write down a few lines about each happy memory or interaction as it happens. When you're having a bad day (or week or month or year), recollecting tiny victories like "didn't apologize for existing this morning" can bring back some glow to your tired rainbow heart.

Ongoing. More queer observance ideas can be found at bit.ly/queercelebrate.



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Scenes from Pistons Pride Night 2025. Courtesy photos

Pistons Pride Night Lights Up Detroit

Michigan's LGBTQ+ community shines at sold-out game

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

The Detroit Pistons' 2025 Pride Night electrified Little Caesars Arena with a vibrant fusion of community pride, inclusive celebration and high-energy basketball on March 28. The sold-out clash against the Cleveland

Cavaliers featured a Pride section filled with enthusiastic fans sporting their colorful Pistons Pride jerseys. The Pistons dominated with a thrilling 133-122 victory, continuing their remarkable turnaround season after enduring one of the worst records in franchise history last year.

Ahead of the game, PRISM Gay Men and Allies Chorus delivered a moving performance of the National Anthem that set the tone for captivated spectators. The renowned chorus, celebrated for building community through music, created a powerful moment of visibility to kick off the evening's

festivities.

The crowd erupted during halftime when the dynamic Pistons Dancers performed alongside DJ Nicole Myint (@djmyint) and local drag performers. DJ Myint posted to Instagram: "Last night's vibes were unreal! Wrapped up an incredible Pride Night halftime performance

for the @detroitpistons, and I'm beyond grateful for every opportunity to bring energy and music to the city I love. To the entire entertainment team and the Queens, you shined, and it was

See **Pistons**, page 20

Facing New Challenges, Michigan Leans into Grassroots Support for Pride 2025

Organizers from across the state on how they are responding to political and economic challenges

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

As Pride season approaches across Michigan, organizers are demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of mounting challenges. From funding concerns to political headwinds, Pride festivals throughout the state — from small rural celebrations to major urban events — are navigating a complex landscape while staying true to their core missions of celebration, community and visibility.

“We’re dealing with the real, daily impacts of these anti-LGBTQ+ efforts coming from Washington and Michigan’s conservative leadership,” explains Jazz McKinney, executive director of Grand Rapids Pride Center. “Whether it’s people worried about their rights, mental health concerns or just trying to feel safe in their own communities, that takes priority.”

This sentiment echoes across the state as Pride organizers balance practical planning with responding to a charged political climate. Facing reduced corporate support for DEI initiatives and intensifying backlash against transgender community members, festival planners acknowledge these realities while refusing to be deterred.

Julia Music, executive director of Ferndale Pride, strikes a defiant tone: “I don’t want the state of the world to take away from what people gain out of the day. People who come to visit Pride need to have the celebration and the feeling that they’re supposed to get from Pride, no matter what is happening in the world.”

Experiences with fundraising vary across the state. Dave Wait, executive director of Motor City Pride, reports more stability: “We’ve been pretty fortunate. I’ve been in touch with half of our sponsors and everybody is planning the same types of things



Sabin performs at Ferndale Pride 2024. Photo: James Feldman

as last year. Our two biggest sponsors have renewed.”

Wait even noted that “there’s actually been a couple of other new sponsors who have reached out.”

Other organizers face more difficulty. Abigail Rowe, executive director of Abigail’s Pride in Ortonville, notes, “A lot of people are worried about supporting Pride in that way and what it might mean for their business down the line.”

Lansing Pride Treasurer Brad Johnson shares a mixed experience: “Some of our longtime local sponsors have lowered their sponsorship levels, but I wouldn’t necessarily attribute that to the political climate — it’s tough out there for everyone.”

The much-publicized Corewell Health controversy highlighted these tensions earlier this year. After Corewell paused gender-affirming

care in response to a Trump executive order threatening federal funding cuts for providers offering such care to youth, Ferndale Pride refused their sponsorship. Corewell later reversed course on their care policy after pressure from employees and a petition created by Equality Michigan that was signed by dozens of LGBTQ-affirming organizations across Michigan.

Music explained Ferndale Pride’s stance: “The reinstatement of care was the number one thing for us... we only really will reject funds if the organization is doing something specifically to harm LGBT people,” she says.

Despite these challenges, there are bright spots. Johnson highlights that University of Michigan - Sparrow Health has increased their sponsorship each year, including a “big tier jump for 2025.”

Apart from sponsorships,

Pride fests require a great deal of manpower, and so far, organizers report an encouraging groundswell of community support. Wait says he’s noticing a sentiment among the community centered on, “We’ve got to take action. We need to participate more this year than any other years.”

Many festivals are seeing enthusiasm reflected in vendor applications. Music shares that Ferndale Pride received “about double the amount of submissions than we have space for,” while small individual donations are helping fill gaps left by some corporate sponsors.

What’s new for Pride 2025

Michigan’s Pride landscape is diverse and expansive, with dozens

of celebrations held annually from the Upper Peninsula to the state’s southern border, in rural communities, suburban towns and major cities. Each festival brings its own local flavor while sharing in the broader mission of visibility and celebration.

Pride organizers are expanding their events despite the challenges. Grand Rapids Pride Center is extending to a two-day festival for 2025, responding to growing attendance numbers. “With the extra day, we’ll be able to bring in more entertainment, offer more activities and create even more opportunities for people to engage with local 2-SLGBTQ+ artists, businesses and organizations,” McKinney explains.

Motor City Pride is enhancing

See **The State of Pride**, page 20

‘We’re Not Hiding’: How Dolls Night Detroit Prioritizes Joy and Safety

The local trans women who created a movement that looks like a party



Partygoers at an event hosted by Dolls Night, a movement with a mission. Photo: Joss Angel

BY LAYLA MCMURTRIE

There’s something magical — and, in this current political climate where queerness is being threatened — crucial about stepping into a Dolls Night Detroit event. A wave of acceptance and support wraps around you, coupled with a fierce, audacious energy and the thumping pulse of entrancing techno beats. It’s a space where safety, freedom and self-expression collide.

Founded in 2023 by three local trans women — Aidel Hawkins, Swan Irvin and Jay Philip — Dolls Night is more than just a party. It’s a movement with a mission to craft spaces that center trans women, nonbinary people, allies and the larger LGBTQ+ community in ways that are both empowering and protective.

“The term ‘doll’ historically and even now was mainly used for Black trans women, especially those who were often seen as hyper feminine,” Hawkins explains. “Now it’s a term that is more colloquially used amongst trans women and trans femmes, and many girls when referencing themselves or other trans girls use ‘doll’ to describe the trans girls in the community. We always refer to ourselves as the dolls, hence ‘Dolls Night!’”

She adds, “It was simple honestly, as Jay and I were kind of joking about what this could look like if we did start this event. Dolls Night was one of the first names to come up.”

Before Dolls Night, nights out for the co-founders often meant facing harassment and exclusion— even in queer spaces. They experienced things such as being called names, touched inappropriately, and made to feel like outsiders.

The trio knew something had to change.

“We wanted to take more control of the nightlife space and offer and create an environment

where trans and nonbinary people can be centered in a way that also maximizes our visibility and our security,” Hawkins says. “We come together and see hundreds of people who are just like us and from our community. That’s really beautiful.”

A core element of Dolls Night is the concept of “radical visibility.”

“Radical visibility is about taking up space and saying, ‘We want to be present,’” Hawkins says. “If I want to go to this bar, I want to go to this club; if I want to have this experience, then I should be able to do it and feel safe...A lot of it for me is about creating spaces where we’re public, we’re seen, but we’re also safe and supported.”

Irvin adds, “To me, radical visibility just means showing up 100% as yourself, without fear of judgment. That’s what we wanted, that’s what going out is supposed to feel like, being able to go ahead and put on whatever you want to have a fun time. Doll’s Night really emphasizes that.”

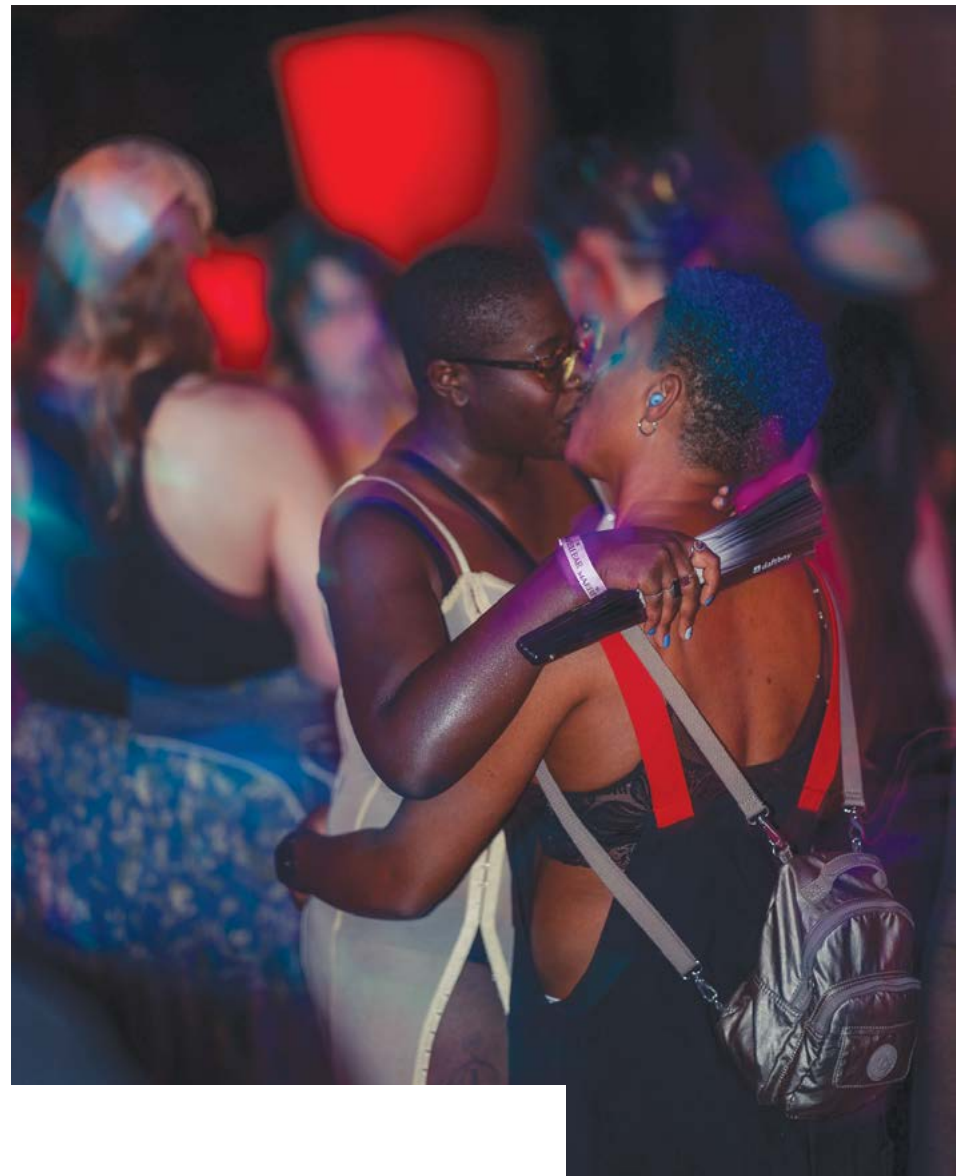
For Jalana Thomas, a local trans woman who has attended nearly every Dolls Night since its inception, the event has been more than just a party — it’s been a space to build lasting connections.

“It makes me feel safe. It makes me feel like I can have fun with no judgment,” she says. “I have many friends that I’ve met solely through Dolls Night. I have friends that I’d lost contact with and got heavily back into contact with because of Dolls Night. I just moved into my apartment and half of the people that helped me move in are people I know from Dolls Night. My boyfriend of nine months is someone I met through Dolls Night as well.”

More than just a venue for self-expression, Dolls Night actively nurtures trans and nonbinary artists by hiring local DJs and performers, offering them a platform to thrive while also providing paid opportunities.



Photos: Joss Angel and Jezebel



“We want to create real pathways for visibility — connecting artists with development resources, press kits, grants and the tools they need to support their artistic dreams,” Hawkins says.

Resident Dolls Night DJ Cherriel, a trans woman who’s been DJing since 2015, sees the event as filling a gap in Detroit’s queer scene.

“I used to throw events back in the day where I would book a lot of trans people, but the city was a little less interested in femme-centric spaces,” Cherriel says. “I think to see them carrying on this sort of legacy is really inspiring and beautiful for trans people.”

She adds, “We are really enmeshed in a very patriarchal and queerphobic society, and I think liberation is a non-linear process as we’re kind of seeing with rescinding of rights and things like that, so it kind of gives an infrastructural stability and free form creative expression space that can be really vital.”

Cherriel, who spins everything

from pop ballads to glitch pop, EDM and club classics, describes music as a powerful form of expression. “Music can be a form of catharsis, celebration and collective grief,” she says. “Music can be a form of mirroring and self-identification and co-identification and it can also be the destruction of systems that

we feel we are powerless over, so in order to reinstate some sort of agency as a collective body can be really empowering through sonic exploration.”

Hawkins adds, “The music really is cultural — something where we can let loose, we can have a release, we can dance, and we can hear music that feels like us.”

“This is our form of protesting. This is our form of building community, so come here and actually create community with us.”

— Swan Irvin, Dolls Night co-founder

When they were first getting started, finding a venue for Dolls Night wasn’t easy. Many spaces were hesitant, fearing the “target on their back” that might come with hosting such an inclusive event. But after finding a home at The High Dive in Hamtramck, Dolls Night now primarily takes place at Spot Lite in Detroit,

where they’ve been embraced by staff and patrons alike.

The event has evolved beyond a party, especially in the current political era where it serves as community care. Every event has a designated Community Care Liaison, whose role is to ensure safety and support for all attendees. Saylem Celeste, a trans advocate with a background in transformative justice, helps design safety protocols for the events to ensure a secure, affirming space.

“The role is really important in order for people to feel comfortable and be themselves, especially in a time where trans people are being targeted by individuals and institutions,” Celeste says. “It’s really important that we maintain community trust and that people are able to actually enjoy being with each other without having to be hyper vigilant.”

“Nightlife, it goes both ways,” they

See **Dolls Night**, page 17

An Open Letter to Gavin Newsom From a Former Trans Supporter Who Feels Betrayed

Have you turned your back on the trans people you once supported?



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Say, Gavin:

As I dug through my photo library on my phone the other day, I came across a photo from September of 2004. A friend of mine, Cecilia Chung, was being sworn in at San Francisco City Hall.

The photo itself is unremarkable. Frankly, we both look a little sweaty, and the flash isn't doing us a lot of favors.

At the time, you were the Mayor of San Francisco. Just a few months before this, you made some of your first big, national headlines by directing your clerk to start issuing marriage licenses for same-sex couples. I remember fondly hosting a couple who flew out from Texas to get married during that time.

I should note that they are still married today, even if they had to get a new license later on. They, like my partner and I, are in a lesbian marriage. Also, like my own marriage, one of the people in the relationship is a trans woman.

Oh, and a couple months after that photo, you signed a proclamation for the Transgender Day of Remembrance. That, of course, is far less important than all those marriage licenses, but has, nevertheless, been framed and on my wall for many years.

Of course, since that time, you have come up in the world, going from San Francisco's mayor, then to lieutenant governor of California, and finally to the 40th governor of California. There's even been talk, over the years, of

you making it all the way to the presidency.

Based on our previous times together and the work you were doing back in the day, I've voted for you, even voting against a recall attempt. Today, however, I find myself wondering if my trust was misplaced.

You recently started a podcast. In doing so, you described it as featuring discussions with "people I disagree with, as well as those I look up to." I'm concerned who we will see you disagreeing with, given the caliber of the people you have opted to look up to: Steve Bannon, Michael Savage and Charlie Kirk.

When you interviewed Kirk, you praised him some 125 times. You even waxed on about how your son wished he could be there to meet Kirk.

What grabbed me, obviously, was the discussion about trans rights. You spoke against your predecessor, Jerry Brown, who gave trans students equal access to sports in the state. You called it deeply unfair that a trans girl could share in sport with non-trans girls.

You also pushed back on the issue of trans prisoners, seeming to indicate that you feel that trans women should not be housed with other women in prisons. Perhaps you would prefer something more in line with Florida nowadays, where trans women are getting their heads shaved and being denied their medications? I would hope not, but honestly, now I'm not so sure.

Likewise, your discussion with Savage also went into anti-trans territory, claiming that it was

See *Gavin Newsom*, page 24



Members of Adodi Detroit at the group's 2024 holiday gathering. Photo: Chris INPAQ Sutton

Adodi Detroit Spring Retreat: A Celebration of Resilience and Brotherhood in the Face of Adversity

Detroit chapter leaders Chris Sutton and Wayne Moore on how thriving is a revolutionary act

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

In the heart of the renaissance city, a unique brotherhood is reclaiming its space. Adodi, an intergenerational organization supporting Black Same Gender Loving Men (BSGLM), is preparing for its spring retreat after a hiatus that stretched through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded in 1986 during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Adodi has long been a sanctuary for Black gay men seeking emotional support, community and healing. The organization's roots trace back to a critical moment in LGBTQ+ history, when activist Clifford Rawlins established a mutual support and educational space for Black gay men impacted by HIV/AIDS.

The Detroit chapter,

established in 2010, continues to provide a rare space where vulnerability and authentic connection transcend societal expectations. Drawing from Yoruba traditions, the name Adodi itself carries deep meaning — representing men who love other men and embody both male and female natures, revered as shamans, sages and leaders.

The upcoming spring retreat, scheduled for April 11-13, carries the powerful theme "The Audacity to Thrive: An Adodi Detroit Renaissance." Below is an edited interview with Chris Sutton and Wayne Moore, leaders of the Detroit chapter.

The retreat is titled "The Audacity to Thrive: An Adodi Detroit Renaissance." Can you unpack the meaning

behind this theme?

Wayne Moore: David Carter was mostly the architect of the theme. Detroit is the renaissance city — we're constantly reinventing ourselves. Since January 15th, there's been a palpable sense of unease in our community, with our current administration actively hostile to multiple groups. Thriving in spite of that is an audacious act.

We chose this theme because it speaks to resilience. It's about finding joy despite challenges, about community continuing to move forward even when external forces try to push us back. Detroit knows something about renewal, about rising again and again. For Black Same Gender Loving men, surviving

See *Adodi*, page 26

Michigan Couple Fights for Free Speech Rights After Anti-Trump, Pro-Trans Signs Spark Controversy

Citing property code, local authorities challenge vocal LGBTQ+ allies in Grosse Pointe Woods

BY KONSTANTINA BUHALIS

Facing potential legal penalties for exercising their First Amendment rights, Grosse Pointe Farms activists Chrisoula Pitses and Ian Seaman stand defiant as local authorities target their provocative lawn signs challenging transphobia and Trump rhetoric.

The couple's conflict with local authorities began in early March. According to Ian Seaman's account as told to BTL, on March 10, while standing with signs at a four-way stop, he encountered a Grosse Pointe Farms police officer who lives in Grosse Pointe Woods. After a brief exchange about drivers rolling through the stop sign, Seaman claims the officer became hostile, saying "Fuck you, I'll get Woods PD out here," before speeding off and giving him the middle finger. Later that day, police arrived and instructed Seaman to move his signs to private property, which he did.

After the encounter, the couple erected handwritten cardboard signs on their lawn — including one that posed a mocking question: "IS THE 'TRANS AGENDA' IN THE ROOM WITH US RIGHT NOW?" Soon, the situation escalated into a series of confrontations with local officials.

By March 11-12, the displays expanded to include signs about controversial religious figures. One sign juxtaposed Catholic clergy with drag performers, with text reading "One group playing dress up has definitely hurt children."

During this period, the couple had multiple interactions with police officers regarding sign placement, first on public easements, then on trees and finally on their private property and vehicle. Seaman told BTL that on March 12, three police officers came to their front door and allegedly used profanity while demanding they remove signs



City boundary sign (left), signs outside the Grosse Pointe Woods home of Chrisoula Pitses and Ian Seaman. Courtesy photos



stapled to trees on the easement. While Pitses identified herself as an attorney, the officers still refused to leave until the signs were removed.

On March 18, the couple received an official notice regarding their signs, which appeared to be backdated to their first interaction with authorities on March 10. The next day, March 19, Pitses and Seaman received an ordinance violation ticket from the Grosse Pointe Woods Department of Public Safety. Officials cited both the size of their lawn signs and their content as problematic, raising First Amendment questions since sign permits typically regulate only physical characteristics, not content.

Among their various displays was a sign challenging conservative hypocrisy by pointing out that "truck nuts" have faced minimal backlash despite their explicit nature, while discussions of transgender rights are deemed "inappropriate."

In a video recorded by Seaman, Grosse Pointe Police stated that the signs were inappropriate because their home is close to a school and families live nearby. They deemed the signs vulgar and demanded their removal.

According to Section 7.04 of the Grosse Pointe City Zoning Ordinance, yard signs must not exceed a combined 15 square feet and must be under 4 feet in height. The ordinance makes no explicit mention of content restrictions. Pitses and Seaman maintain their signs complied with the size requirements, though city officials indicated on their notice that residential signs are limited to 6 square feet.

When confronted about the signs, the couple moved them to their van. The city inspector, the couple reports, threatened to call law enforcement if the vehicle was transferred to the street. The couple expanded their protest by decorating the vehicle with orange lettering declaring "GPPD HATES FREE SPEECH" and "CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IS AMERICAN."

"It's American. It's part of our culture, every great advancement of freedoms has been fought for through civil disobedience, despite the power of the government being derived from the consent of the people," Seaman told BTL.

The battle over free expression — particularly around LGBTQ+ rights — has intensified across Michigan communities. Last year

in Hamtramck, the city council removed two Human Relations Commission members for flying a Pride flag on city property, despite Attorney General Dana Nessel joining protests against the ban.

This isn't Grosse Pointe's first sign controversy. In 2020, the GPPD asked attorney and current mayoral candidate Todd Perkins to remove his Black Lives Matter sign, and in 2004, the Michigan ACLU sued the city for an unconstitutional sign ordinance after Mary Adzgian received a notice for her John Kerry sign while neighbors' Bush signs remained.

"This demonstration has exposed double standards," Seaman said. "If there were a Venn diagram of people who support curtailing my right to speak freely and people who don't believe in any form of gun control, we would be looking at an individual circle."

The situation could be seen as a microcosm of the rift that has developed in the country over the last decade, with attempts to enforce a culture of silence and protest against the right. "I don't know that it will be transformational in terms of our legal landscape, as this is primarily an example of unelected bureaucrats using the courts to

harass normal citizens for having a contrarian opinion," Seaman said about the case that has now entered the court of public opinion.

A Facebook post about the lawn signs sparked community debate about fair application of the First Amendment. The comment section was filled with varying opinions including questioning others as to why they were offended by the content. It included direct quotes from President Trump and implied that Seaman wants an altercation. Some members supported the signs and found them essential to understanding the current administration. Seaman stated he wasn't trying to cause harm but hopes this will highlight the issue of silencing citizens.

Pitses and Seaman were to appear in court on March 27, but the date was adjourned. The city attorney requested that the adjournment be conditional upon Seaman complying with the citation, but Judge Theodore Metry denied this request — suggesting the court isn't automatically accepting the city's interpretation of its ordinance.

The pair will now appear in court at 9 a.m. April 9, following the city council meeting at 7 p.m. April 7.

No Room for Creeps: Every Day Is Trans Visibility Day



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I'm writing this column on International Transgender Day of Visibility. Michigan's own transgender activist Rachel Crandall Crocker founded TDoV in 2010. She wanted a day to celebrate the lives of transgender people as, unfortunately, news regarding transgender people is often focused on the negative: hate crimes, oppressive laws, negative portrayals of people just trying to live their lives.

Sadly, bad transgender news seems to have only increased since 2010, with much of the news today reflecting the Republican anti-trans agenda.

I have written many columns about anti-trans creeps. So, instead of focusing attention on the negative, I'm using this column to uplift some transgender people you should be listening to in honor of TDoV.

Let's start with Mercury Stardust, the Trans Handy Ma'am, who is, at the moment I am writing this, raising money for transgender care through her annual Stream-A-Thon for Trans Healthcare. She's the author of "Safe &

LGBTQ+ issues, look no further than Erin Reed. Her Erin in the Morning newsletter is a wealth of information on transgender legislation and life. She also maintains a map of every informed-consent hormone

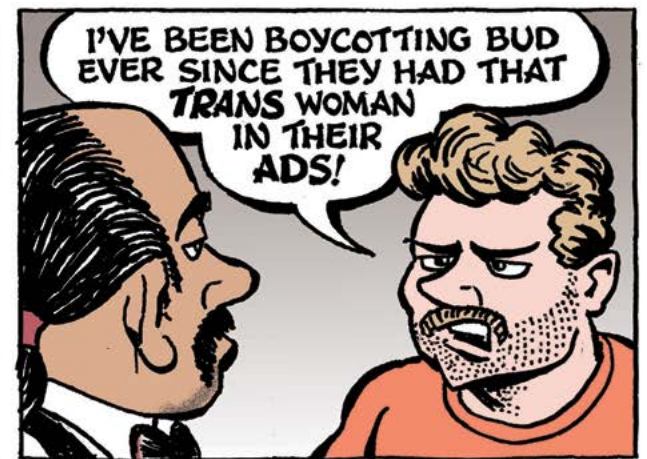
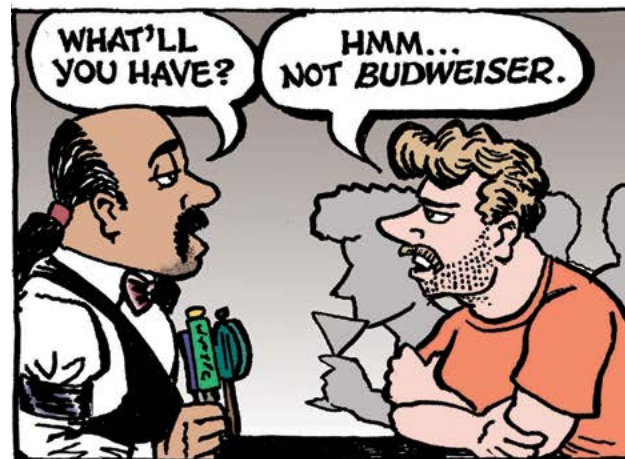
song "Bury Me In Rainbow Flags," which calls out "fucking liberal traitors" who claim to be allies but don't actually do a damn thing. Recently on Bluesky, Cordisco posted, "I am visible as transgender, and as an activist because we are all forced to, and because in our current setting I choose to lean into that to fight how I can, but at the end of the day I just wish I could be some girl like any other." I wish that for her, too. Follow her on Bluesky, Instagram and YouTube.

If you've watched "The L Word: Generation Q," then you've seen Leo Sheng (you also might have seen him in "The Matrix Resurrections," but I have not seen that or the original Matrix movie). Sheng is an actor and activist and his role as Micah on "The L Word" is a great example of why trans actors should be hired to play trans characters on TV and in movies. Sheng was adopted from China and raised by two moms in Michigan. He was pursuing a degree in social work at the University of Michigan when he got his first acting gig. Now he lives in Los Angeles. On TDoV he wrote on Threads, "If you're not gonna fight to protect us and our right to exist, then at the very least leave us the fck alone." Amen. Follow him on Instagram and Threads.

If you like to laugh as you fight for transgender rights, then you need to be following Chris McAllister, a "a transmas,

non-binary comedian on a mission." They blew up on Instagram after posting a video discussing comments they get on their videos from people saying "I can tell that you're still a woman" or "I can tell that you're still a man," which prompted allies to write comments like "I can tell that you're awesome" and "I can tell that you're kind." So McAllister decided to make #ICanTell a trans allyship movement, challenging people watching the video to "leave an #icantell comment on a trans friend's post today." In their online bio, McAllister says they believe comedy "has the power to break down barriers, dramatically change perspectives and open clammed up hearts." Follow them on Instagram.

Transgender athletes have been the focus of political posturing and outright hate lately, as Republicans claim that they must "save" women's sports from transgender women. Athlete CeCé Telfer, the first openly transgender woman to win a NCAA title, knows this all too well. She recently told CNN Sport, "I'm Black, I'm a woman, I'm transgender, and I'm an athlete. Each of my identities is a target, especially in America." Telfer is the author of "Make It Count: My Fight to Become the First Transgender Olympic Runner" and an outspoken advocate for transgender visibility and acceptance. Follow her on Instagram.



Instead of focusing attention on the negative, I'm using this column to uplift some transgender people you should be listening to in honor of International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Sound: A Renter-Friendly Guide to Home Repair" and gives repair and maintenance advice to her millions of followers on Instagram, TikTok and her Trans Handy Ma'am Hotline podcast. Her tagline is, "You're worth the time it takes to learn a new skill," and she will make you feel confident that you can repair drywall, unclog a drain or fix a broken door with her by your side.

If you're looking for excellent reporting on

therapy clinic for trans people. Follow her on Bluesky, Instagram and TikTok.

If you're into heavy metal and righteous anger, then you need to be following Alicia Cordisco, one of the best metal guitarists in the game. Her band Transgressive (which I am listening to as I write this) makes "politically charged thrash/death metal" that will make you want to take to the streets and punch a fascist in the face. I recommend the

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Drag Superhero Film Set for Michigan Premiere at the Capital City Film Festival

.....

“Maxxie LaWow: Drag Super-Shero,” the world’s first animated feature centered on a drag queen superhero, will make its Michigan premiere April 9 at the Capital City Film Festival.

Directed by Michigan native Anthony Hand, the film follows Simon, a shy barista who discovers a magical wig that transforms him into the fierce superhero Maxxie LaWow. As his glamorous alter ego, Simon must face off against the villainous Dyna Bolical, a drag queen scientist with a sinister plan.

Hand, who grew up in a small farming village in southeast Michigan, created the film after recognizing the lack of LGBTQ+ superheroes in mainstream media.

“I wanted to create a film that I wish I could’ve watched with my mom as a kid,” Hand said in a news release. “Something fun, affirming, and full of magic.”

The film features four original pop tracks performed by Grammy-nominated vocalist Angie Fisher and a choreographed aerial lip-sync battle.

“Maxxie LaWow” has won Best Animation at the San Francisco Independent Film Festival and multiple awards. Breaking Glass Pictures recently acquired the film for North American distribution.

Learn more about the film fest at capitalcityfilmfest.com.



Maxxie LaWow. Photo: Lost Wig Productions

Local LGBTQ+ and Ally Leaders Honored with Lifetime Achievement Service Award

.....

Two prominent Michigan LGBTQ+ leaders, Nicole Huddleston and Jeynce Poindexter, recently received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for their extensive volunteer service.

Huddleston, an LGBTQ+ ally serving as managing attorney at Detroit Justice Center and Southfield Board of Education member, has dedicated over 20 years to advocacy across multiple social justice causes. Last year alone, she helped raise \$10 million for Democratic initiatives.

Poindexter, vice president and co-executive director of Trans Sistas of Color Project and Ruth Ellis Center case manager, recently organized the Black Trans Circles Detroit event, bringing together dozens of Black trans women for leadership development.

Both leaders were recognized for their transformative impact on marginalized communities in Michigan and beyond by That Girl, a community empowerment organization, and the Biden administration prior to President Trump’s inauguration.



Baddie Brooks. Courtesy photo



Terry Ryan at his desk at the HIV/AIDS resource organization Wellness Networks in the 1980s. Courtesy photo

Remembering LGBTQ+ Advocates Cheryl Horn-Garcia and Terry Ryan

.....

The LGBTQ+ community recently lost two dedicated advocates with the passing of Cheryl Horn-Garcia, 67, and Terrance “Terry” Ryan, 80.

Horn-Garcia, who died March 10, was a longtime volunteer at Metropolitan Community Church - Detroit

alongside her wife of 35 years, Carmen Garcia. Following her victory over stage 4 lymphoma in 1990, she devoted herself to supporting others facing health challenges.

Ryan, who died March 17, led the Michigan AIDS Coalition as CEO and spent decades in HIV/AIDS prevention and support. He later served as an ordained minister through The Indiana Association of Spiritualists.

Memorial services for Horn-Garcia were held March 28 at Zion Lutheran Church in Ferndale. Celebrations of Ryan’s life are planned for the summer in Detroit and at Camp Chesterfield, Indiana. Read more about Horn-Garcia and Ryan at pridesource.com.

Guster Turns Concert into LGBTQ+ Protest

.....

In a powerful act of solidarity, indie rock band Guster transformed their Kennedy Center concerts into protests against Trump’s takeover at the end of March. They featured cast members from “Finn” — an LGBTQ+-themed musical blocked from performing at the Kennedy Center after Trump’s administration seized control. “We are your allies, we stand with the LGBTQ community, and we want you to sing with us,” vocalist Ryan Miller said from the stage, offering their platform as resistance against politically motivated censorship.

Transgender Pioneer Sandy Stone in New Doc

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Sandy Stone, the first transgender woman inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame, will be featured in “Girl Island,” a newly announced documentary due out this year sponsored by Women Make Movies. A graphic novel based on Stone’s groundbreaking 1987 essay “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” is also forthcoming. At 86, the former Jimi Hendrix sound engineer continues inspiring others through her motto: “Make Stuff — Take Risks — Don’t Die Wondering — Be Awesome!”

Baddie Brooks Named Miss Trans Michigan

.....

Musical performer Baddie Brooks has been crowned Miss Trans Michigan as part of the Trans USA Class of 2025. “It is an honor and a privilege to be selected,” Brooks tells BTL, adding, “as a Black transgender woman, I am deeply committed to serving my community and being the representation that I needed when I was growing up.” Brooks will join 57 other advocates in Washington, D.C. this November.

Working the Soil, Healing the Soul

How Pott Farms' unique approach to hemp cultivation is supporting LGBTQ+ youth — and how you can get involved

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

On a 20-acre farm in Willis, just a half-hour south of Ypsilanti, a unique partnership is helping queer youth find their footing through regenerative agriculture and hands-on experience with hemp cultivation.

Pott Farms, a low-profit limited liability company (L3C) cofounded by former lawyer and public policy researcher Robbin Pott, has developed a supportive job training program that partners with Ypsilanti's Ozone House youth shelter. The program provides meaningful employment opportunities for young adults who have experienced poverty, trauma and housing insecurity.

As an L3C, Pott Farms operates with a dual mission: to cultivate USDA-certified organic hemp using regenerative farming practices while creating healing opportunities for vulnerable populations. The farm was created by people who believe in the healing powers of cannabis and the importance of righting the wrongs caused by cannabis prohibition, with special attention to communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs.

"Our processes are grounded in our commitment to justice," explains Pott. "A major obstacle for young people to overcome poverty and trauma is a lack of supported economic opportunity, and Pott Farms is using restorative solutions to address this problem."

Brie Nikora, Pride Zone outreach coordinator with Ozone House, sees immense value in connecting young people with the farm. "Robbin's land and her work represents so much for young folks who are passionate about land and self-sustainability," they say. "Being able to connect our young people to a learning opportunity like that is incredible."

Nikora speaks highly of Pott's leadership and vision. "Robbin is a brilliant woman who does incredible work," they emphasize. "She's not only reconnecting queer young



(Above) Pott Farms intern Jeremy Muhammad. Photo: Robin Potts. (Right) Robin Potts. Courtesy photo



meals together using food harvested from the farm.

"The lunch break involves deciding what we want to cook and preparing it together," says Pott. "The cooking and eating together is actually on the

sustainability, Pott has developed multiple revenue streams, including the farm's USDA-certified organic hemp flower, CBD topicals, and living soil consulting services.

Now, she's launching a "Grow Your Own Cannabis" workshop series that begins in late April. The six-session course, offered on a sliding scale basis, will teach participants how to grow cannabis outdoors in living soil without special equipment or chemicals.

"The multifaceted nature of this program extends beyond career skills," Nikora reflects. "These young people are learning to care for the earth while engaging in a reciprocal relationship of caring for themselves. There's something incredibly healing about reconnecting with the land, especially for queer young people and young people of color who have been historically separated from these practices."

The workshop starts April 29 and runs monthly through September, with a registration deadline of April 28.

For young people like Muhammad, the impact of these initiatives goes far beyond employment.

"Working with Robbin feels grounding," he says. "When you're at the farm and talking with her, she gives you this gentle reminder that you can literally do anything you want, regardless of what people tell you to do. It's peaceful working there, and I don't feel anxious about anything."

It's precisely this blend of practical skills, healing opportunities and supportive community that makes Pott Farms' approach so valuable for vulnerable LGBTQ+ youth seeking not just housing stability, but a path forward.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Pott Farms. For more information about Pott Farms or to register for the upcoming "Grow Your Own Cannabis" workshop, visit pottfarms.com.

people to the land, but also Black and brown young people who have been historically separated from these practices. The work she's doing is truly transformative."

The farm offers eight-week paid internships where participants work 15-20 hours weekly, learning everything from hemp cultivation and beekeeping to composting and soil biology.

For Jeremy Muhammad, a 23-year-old transgender resident of Ozone House who has participated in multiple internship cycles at Pott Farms, the experience has been both educational and transformative.

"We've done so many interesting things at the farm," Muhammad explains. "Robbin taught me how compost soil looks compared to regular Michigan dirt. You can actually see the life in the soil versus regular dirt that just looks dead. My favorite activity was beekeeping, which I absolutely love because it helped me overcome my fear of bees."

Muhammad adds that the experience has benefited his mental health. "Working on the farm is a great way to feel grounded in your environment," he says. "I don't feel anxious there. It's almost like all that stress gets lifted in a way that makes it

easier to manage."

The program targets young adults overcoming poverty and trauma, including many young adults from the LGBTQ+ community, which faces disproportionate rates of homelessness nationwide. According to a 2020 study by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, LGBTQ+ youth have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

Nikora confirms that this statistic is reflected in Ozone House's demographics. "The main populations we serve are BIPOC youth and Two-Spirit LGBTQIA+ folks," they say.

More than just job training

What makes Pott Farms' program unique isn't just the agricultural skills participants gain, but the holistic approach to wellness and healing that underpins everything they do.

The program goes beyond typical job training. Interns work with living soil practices, learning regenerative techniques while also receiving life skills training, including nutrition education. The group even cooks

clock. There's also a lot of ongoing emotional support that happens naturally as we're doing the work."

For Muhammad, who studies global studies at Washtenaw Community College, working with Pott has been inspiring.

"Robbin has gone through so much in her life, and it gives me hope," Muhammad says. "She was a lawyer making good money, but decided to pursue farming instead because it's her passion. Seeing someone follow their passion without fearing the unknown is really inspiring, especially for someone like me who grew up facing certain challenges."

Until recently, the program was partially subsidized through federal job training programs, but that funding is at risk of being cut by the Trump administration, given Ozone House's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, creating challenges for the farm's mission.

"We're not structured as a typical nonprofit," explains Pott. "We don't go to foundations asking for grants. We fund our social mission through the services and products we provide."

To ensure the program's



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Nathan Lane and the ‘Mid-Century Modern’ Creators on Their Very Gay New Sitcom

‘This friendship is my love story’: The heart behind Hulu’s new ‘R-rated’ streamer

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

On Hulu’s new comedy series “Mid-Century Modern,” longtime screen and theater actor Nathan Lane brings a familiar effervescence to his swishy character. Like his iconic turn as Albert in “The Birdcage,” he embodies Bunny with the exuberant flair of a diva hitting the high note of a showstopping number — each step a flourish, every gesture a work of art.

But during a recent video call, when I asked Lane about his impromptu moves — sometimes a shuffle, sometimes a glide (and sometimes, of course, in a kimono) — he genuinely seemed surprised by the fact that he was moving at all. It’s as if Bunny simply takes over him without effort. “Was I?” he asks, grinning. In that moment of unguarded charm, it became undeniable just how much of Lane’s performance might be effortlessly natural rather than meticulously crafted.

This sense of authenticity permeates the show itself, particularly in its poignant exploration of gay loneliness and the concept of chosen family within the queer community. Bunny’s emotional epiphany in the pilot serves as a defining moment that anchors the entire series. After watching his closest friends Jerry (Matt Bomer) and Arthur (Nathan Lee Graham) navigate their relationship, Bunny confronts his own status as the “unluckiest in love” among them.

“I thought long and hard about it, and then right before you came here today, it became obvious to me,” Bunny tells them, teary-eyed. “I have found the love of my life. It’s you two. This friendship is my love story.” Then, in true multi-cam sitcom fashion, the punchline lands: “Yes, it’s sexless and annoying, but what long-lasting love story isn’t?”

In “Mid-Century Modern,” Lane’s Bunny is the blueprint for what aging gracefully as a gay man can look like — close friends and all. Opulence in Palm Springs in your



Matt Bomer, Nathan Lane, Nathan Lee Graham and Linda Lavin on the set of “Mid-Century Modern.” Photo: Hulu

60s? Absolutely. The show reminds you nothing’s off-limits.

Beyond ‘The Golden Girls’

The premise of “Mid-Century Modern” — three friends navigating life’s complexities, along with Bunny’s mother Sybil (played by the late Linda Lavin, who died in December, while the show was in production) — was initially pitched as a gay “Golden Girls.” When I spoke with Lane, it was clear he didn’t want to draw too many comparisons to the legendary sitcom — after all, the original is in a league of its own.

Still, camaraderie, humor and affection were at the heart of what

creators David Khan and Max Mutchnick, who brought “Will & Grace” to life 27 years ago, envisioned for Bunny, Jerry, Arthur and Sybil. As *Kohan* put it, Rose, Blanche, Sophia and Dorothy weren’t meant to be a “point of departure.”

“It was a shorthand,” he said. “The comparison was only as a way to say, it’s kind of like this, but it’s not this. It has those elements, that sense of camaraderie. Men of a certain age, a mother in the house. But that’s where the similarities ended, and it was not our intention to do that. It just sort of worked out that way.”

Some viewers aren’t just seeing a relationship between the two sitcoms — they’re seeing one between Bunny and Albert in “The Birdcage.” Lane told me they’re at least different enough to not be the

best of housemates. “I don’t think so,” he said about whether they could live together. “Albert’s too conservative for Bunny.” He added with a chuckle, “They might be kind, but I’m not sure they’d ask him to move in.”

While Bunny and Albert’s dynamic may be more unlikely, Lane acknowledged that “The Golden Girls” paved the way for pushing boundaries in primetime TV. And in today’s streaming era, there’s even more space to get edgy. Lane suggested that the “G-rated” trailer misrepresented the series’ raunchy bawdiness, knowing that the actual show, he said, is more like “an R-rated, outrageously gay multi-cam.”

From the very first scene, the show establishes how *Kohan* and

Mutchnick dive right in without hesitation. At their friend’s funeral, after Bunny feigns sobbing, Arthur delivers a zinger: “You don’t look sad. You just look like a reluctant bottom.”

“It was liberating,” said *Kohan* about the freedom to be edgier. “I mean, because on ‘Will & Grace’ you always said, ‘OK, here’s what we want to say. Now, how do we say it in a way that’s acceptable?’ And here we just say it.” Mutchnick added that the jokes now have the ability to “end up on TikTok, and hopefully open a door for a new generation of people that want to watch multi-cams.”

One suggestively hilarious scene features Bunny and his pal Carol

See **Mid-Century Modern**, page 22



Attendees find community at Dolls Night events. Photos: Joss Angel, Dan Fell and Viola



♦ Dolls Night

Continued from page 9

add. “It’s historically been a haven for trans communities to connect but also sometimes people come into the community to cause harm.”

Dolls Night prioritizes harm reduction, with the entire team trained in Narcan administration, CPR, safer use strategies, and de-escalation techniques.

“It’s a party series, but it’s also a trans health advocacy project,” Celeste says. “Part of that health advocacy includes joy and expression,”

At every event, Dolls Closet provides free clothing for attendees, while The Dolls Lyft Fund offers transportation support for queer youth in metro Detroit, helping them

get to medical appointments, job interviews, support organizations and select Dolls Night events.

Thomas knows firsthand how crucial transportation access is for LGBTQ+ people, as she has personally relied on the Lyft Fund — donations are accepted online, and those in need can apply for assistance — when necessary.

“I’m trans and I’m Black and I’m a woman; I don’t feel comfortable asking anybody to teach me how to drive,” Thomas says. “A lot of times people just don’t have that knowledge and it’s nice to know there’s people [connected with] Dolls Night aware of all of that and willing to help out.”

“I was without a car last year,” she adds. “I lost my car while I was homeless, and they were able to help me get around during that time.”

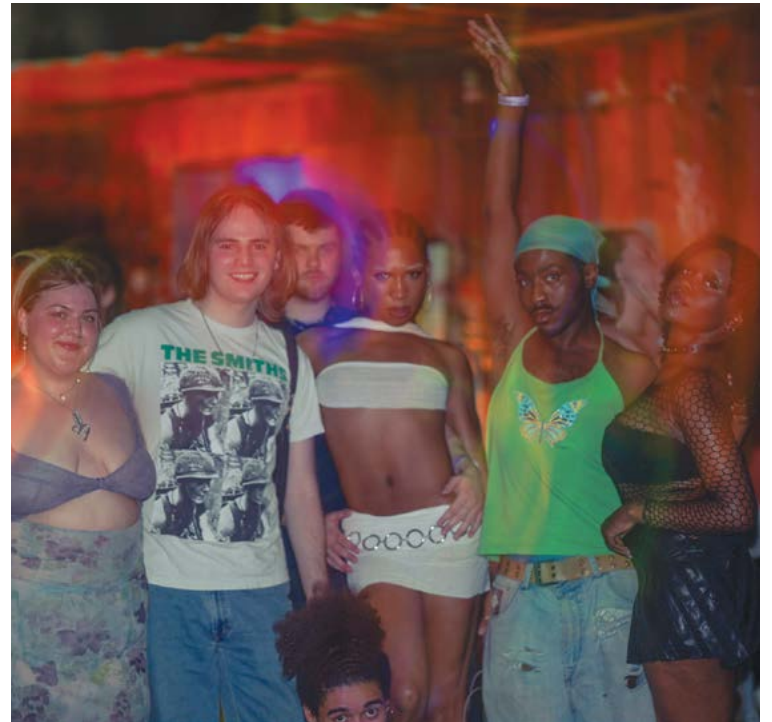
Looking ahead, the Dolls Night

team hopes to expand its funding and reach. “One thing that I see is a service program that better supports people who are on injectable hormones — giving them access to supplies, education, and harm reduction resources,” Hawkins says. “We just want to create more partnerships with organizations and businesses who support our mission, because when we leave this party, we need support in the same exact way.”

Alongside dreams of growing Dolls Night to a global scale, Irvin echoes a similar goal helping people access gender-affirming care, especially in a time when it’s under attack.

“This is our form of protesting,” Irvin says. “This is our form of building community, so come here and actually create community with us.”

“We’re not here to judge you,” she adds. “We’re here to party.”





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Luke Macfarlane: Hammering Home Authentic Representation

Hallmark's beloved gay pioneer on carpentry, plus the intersection of politics and design



Luke Macfarlane. Photo: Hallmark Channel

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

If you were to hear an off-hand reference to “wood,” where would your head go? If you’re Luke Macfarlane, it goes to what else but actual woodworking.

A trailblazer at the Hallmark Channel for over a decade, Macfarlane has helped transform perceptions of the network by demonstrating that its “strong brand can still hold all these different voices,” as he told me recently. That includes the voice of *Gay Man Working a Saw*, a role he’s not here to embody, but one rooted in his true family history and personal experience of carpentry. In the new Hallmark+ reality series “Home Is Where the Heart Is,” Macfarlane puts his own special touch on old homes, maintaining their historical charm but gently restoring them in contemporary ways.

“It’s a real passion,” he says. “It’s not pretend. It’s not make-believe. It’s not drag.”

Beyond carpentry, Macfarlane has spent the last 20 years supporting authentic storytelling through acting projects like his role in the gay-inclusive ABC family drama “*Brothers & Sisters*,” which premiered in 2006 and ran for five seasons, and films like Billy Eichner’s “*Bros*” and the popular Netflix Christmas comedy “*Single All the Way*.” Since starring in Hallmark’s “*The Memory Book*” in 2014, he’s been a fan favorite on the network, where he’s played both straight and gay romantic leads.

With “*Home Is Where the Heart Is*,” he’s already looking forward to shooting more episodes beyond the six debut episodes now airing. Though there aren’t out LGBTQ+ couples featured during this batch, he says, “That is something we would love for the show. I mean, LGBTQ+ people do own homes.”

I’ve seen words like “dirty” and “wet” used to describe your presence on this show. And naturally, there’s been a fair number of wood references that aren’t just referring to lumber. As a gay carpenter, have you come to expect these kinds of jokes?

It is a vocabulary that lends itself well [to that]. I was lucky enough to be on “*The Sherri Shepherd show*,” and I wanted to demonstrate building something for her, and I built her this little box and the kinds of joints, they were not dovetail joints, as people sometimes incorrectly identify. They were tongue-and-slot joints, and as soon as I said, “You need to fit your tongue into the slot,” it just was pandemonium. And Sherri picked it up like that and I was like, “Oh my god, this is my biggest nightmare.” It’s something about the vocabulary.

As a carpenter, you’re thinking of carpentry. Actual wood.

I really am. Look, I appreciate innuendo as much as anybody, but no, it’s just a different vocabulary. It totally is. Every profession has a vocabulary. Most of my woodworking friends would not squirm at “tongue and slot.”

For you, what’s the significance of being an out gay person on Hallmark?

Well, it’s really interesting because I think my first movie for Hallmark was over 10 years ago and it had this reputation that I never really totally agreed with. People were like, “Hallmark is white and heterosexual and Christian.” Hallmark is not that. And I am one piece of the evidence that we are not that and that Hallmark is a big tent.

There's room for our stories and those stories can still fit inside the brand of Hallmark, which has a really strong sense of identity, and I would say a stronger sense of identity than almost most network brands. You kind of know what you're going to get when you get a Hallmark movie and the amazing thing is you know what you're going to get when you watch a Hallmark movie, but you're also going to get gay and you're also going to get all the other colors too. So it is comforting to know that this strong brand can still hold all these different voices.

It's exciting for me to come to understand Hallmark in this way. Growing up as a gay kid, it felt like it wasn't a channel where I could find people who were like me.

Look, we all know that "Saturday Night Live" skit, and I could probably repeat the entire thing verbatim, so I know it very well, but I don't think it's actually accurate and bless 'em for continuing to grow with me. They hired me when I was an [out] gay actor. I was coming off of "Brothers & Sisters." There was no line about who I was. There was no pretending. There was no double-reverse reveal.

On my mind right now is what's happening in the U.S. politically and the importance of authentic representation. What do you feel you can offer to both this generation of young queer people and the broader public by, perhaps, reaching across the aisle through your work and by



Luke Macfarlane on "Home Is Where the Heart Is." Photo: Hallmark Channel

being a public figure?

It's hard to know how to even begin to answer that question, but I want to start by saying [that I reach people through] good design. I'm getting very emotional. For some reason, it's hard.

I'm sorry, Luke.

No, it's OK. So good design. Good design is about listening.

You don't come in with an idea about what's good and bad. Very few designers have that privilege of like, "I'm going to design you a house that looks exactly like what I think good designers do." Who are you? What do you value? What is important to you? Where do you come from? Where do you live? How do you live? And then we adapt and we make something for them that's special. And that

doesn't mean I erase myself in the process. We begin to have a conversation and I do feel like the conversation we're having in politics right now is, this is what's correct. This is what's right. This is what I'm going to impose upon you. And just to get maybe a little more political than anybody wants me to get, I'm fascinated by the idea that Donald Trump is taking over the Kennedy Center.

This just boggles my mind, but specifically I wanted to talk about the comment that he had about the facade of the Kennedy Center. The architect was working in the international style at a time and out front you have slender columns. So many designers at that point were trying to redefine this sort of Greek and Roman

See **Luke Macfarlane**, page 21

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◀ Pistons

Continued from page 6

absolutely beautiful. Detroit's sports community is truly something special — the love, the passion, the unity. Y'all make these moments unforgettable!"

Drag performer JahJah Shee (@jahjahshee) impressed the audience with her standout appearance during the halftime show. After sharing photos from the show, followers posted comments like: "The way I SCREAMED when you were on the big screen. Absolutely obsessed with you."

Marriage equality pioneers April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse received a standing ovation in the Pride section when they appeared on the jumbotron. The Michigan nurses made history as plaintiffs in the landmark 2015 Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide after they initially fought for adoption rights in their home state.

The night drew representatives from numerous LGBTQ+ organizations across Michigan, including MiGen, Equality Michigan and Affirmations, showcasing the Pistons' strong commitment to community

engagement beyond the court.

Pride Night has transformed significantly since its inception 11 years ago. What began as a simple game night has evolved into an immersive experience featuring networking opportunities, engaging performances and comprehensive all-inclusive packages. This year's Pride Party seating area offered unlimited concessions and commemorative jerseys that became the night's most sought-after souvenir.

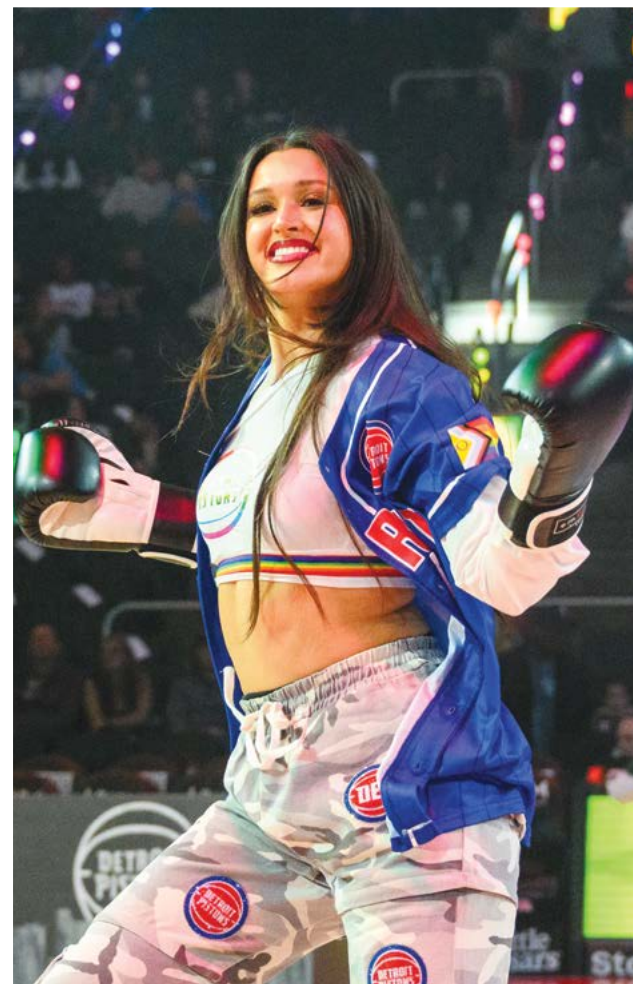
"The Detroit Pistons are proud to support the LGBTQ+ community through our annual Pride Night, reinforcing our commitment to an

inclusive environment for all," Melanie Harris, Detroit Pistons president of business operations, told BTL in a recent article. "We believe in using the power of basketball to unite and create a space where everyone is embraced for who they are."

The celebration continued long after the final buzzer, with many attendees heading to Soho in Ferndale for an energetic afterparty. The evening stood as a testament to the Pistons' unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion, creating a special atmosphere where sports and identity celebration came together.



Scenes from Pistons Pride Night 2025. Courtesy photos



◀ The State of Pride

Continued from page 7

Michigan's largest Pride fest with an expanded Pride history area to "educate folks and keep it front of mind that we've had struggles in the past." He emphasizes the importance of understanding history: "We believe that history is really important to understand sacrifices in the past and fighting for rights."

Ferndale Pride will feature "three stages plus aerial acrobatics" along with all-day "Reading with Royalty" storytimes for children, which will be sign language interpreted.

As most Pride celebrations across Michigan traditionally take place in June, with some extending into July and August, organizers recommend checking festival websites and social media for confirmed 2025 dates — many will be finalized in the coming weeks.

How you can help

Volunteer opportunities abound at Pride events throughout Michigan,

from helping with setup and logistics to assisting with programming. "Volunteers are a huge part of making Pride Fest happen," McKinney notes. To get involved with Grand Rapids Pride as a volunteer, register at grpride.org/pride-festival/pride-fest-volunteer-registration.

The need for volunteers remains critical across all events. Music notes, "It takes over a hundred volunteers to run Pride on the day of. We could use more volunteers than the number of people who sign up." Wait says popular volunteer roles include working the parade route and serving in the high-energy beverage area. To volunteer for Ferndale Pride, visit ferndalepride.com/get-involved and for Motor City Pride, go to motorcitypride.org.

Rowe reinforces the importance of volunteers. "We always have a need," she stresses. "Events like this aren't possible without volunteers, vendors and sponsors. We have a wonderful group running the show, but we can always use a helping hand." Volunteers and sponsors can sign up to help with Abigail's Pride at abigailspride.godaddysites.com.

Financial support remains crucial. As Johnson from Lansing Pride notes, "One of our biggest goals is keeping

Pride accessible for everyone, and part of that means ensuring there's no admission fee." This commitment to accessibility makes community and corporate donations all the more essential. To make a donation, visit lansingpride.org/donate.

For those looking to get involved in other fests, check the websites and social media pages of Pride organizations in your area, and keep an eye out for the upcoming Pride Source Pride Calendar. Most Pride festivals offer volunteer sign-up forms, donation portals and information about sponsorship opportunities online. Whether you can give your time, money or simply your presence, Michigan's Pride celebrations are counting on community support to thrive in 2025.

As political headwinds continue, McKinney's words capture the spirit driving these celebrations forward: "Our community is resilient. We've had incredible individual donors and local businesses step up in meaningful ways, showing that no matter what's happening politically, there are still people who believe in and want to support this work."



Motor City Pride 2024. Courtesy photo

nomenclature and Corinthian, Ionic columns.

So [Donald Trump] says, “I’m going to build these slender steel columns.” And I was fascinated listening to Trump talk about them as if they were incomplete. [He] was talking about them as if they had never bothered to wrap them in marble because he thought a building that has meaning needs to have marble columns out front. And again, this is just to further this idea that design is not about imposing your idea on somebody else. It’s about thinking about different ways of interacting with the world and hearing different people’s ideas of things.

I wanted to bounce back to 2006 and tell you that I have fond memories of watching every episode of “Brothers & Sisters” with my mother. Scotty and Kevin’s relationship really helped me see a future for myself as a gay man. How do you reflect on that show’s contributions to the conversation around visibility?

Gosh, it was such a different time. Proposition 8 was being debated

in California during the filming of that show, and marriage equality had not yet been fermented. And so it is amazing to think of it as a very different time. It was also a very different time in that I [was] less aware of the broader world. We didn’t have Instagram back then. I was not on social media. It

in that way. So I’m incredibly proud of that. But I will also say we were just going day by day, and we were telling the stories of the writers and the people I knew and [feeling] just blessed that it connected. The number of stories of young gay men watching with their mothers was pretty profound.

think or hope the legacy of that movie will be as time passes?

It just is really funny and I think it will always be funny. I mean, comedy is such an interesting thing. I feel comedy as an art form

people will return to. So I’m really proud of that movie.

And what about “Single All the Way”?

“Single All the Way” was fascinating. You never know when movies are going to connect with people so deeply. We filmed that in the height of Covid and I never imagined that movie would resonate with people so much. It was also a testament to new media and how, with Netflix, you put a movie out there that people in a moment all want to watch and bam, it happens so quickly.

It’s been a couple of years since “Notes of Autumn” came out in 2023, during which you played half of a gay couple. Will we see you return to Hallmark in another gay role?

I certainly hope so. It’s actually something that I’m really committed to now, sort of trying to work with Hallmark as not just an actor, but also as a producer. So I’ve been developing a script with a dear friend — actually, a dear friend that I met on my “Brothers & Sisters” days — to tell a Christmas LGBTQ+ story. So stay tuned. We’re in development, as I say, but it’s something I would very much like to do.

“ *Good design is about listening. You don’t come in with an idea about what’s good and bad... [You ask] ‘Who are you? What do you value? What is important to you? Where do you come from? Where do you live? How do you live?’ We adapt and we make something for them that’s special.* ”

was harder to see the impact you were having on people.

I remember years after the show finished, this kid called me... I shouldn’t call him a kid. He was getting his PhD and he was looking at queer representation in media and he wanted to talk to me for his thesis. And I was just baffled that it had reached people

I heard that a lot, because good art is the beginning of a conversation, like I was saying before, and what better way to begin a conversation than by seeing Sally Field love her gay son?

I still defend that “Bros” really deserved a bigger audience. What do you

is the most susceptible to time being unkind, but I don’t know what it is. I think that movie is going to be funny forever. I think Billy Eichner is brilliant and he brought so much of himself to that movie in such a fearless way. So I hope that it kind stays up there in the Judd Apatow collection of movies like “Bridesmaids” and “Train Wreck,” as movies that



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Coming Out to Mom
Puzzle can be found on page 25

(Richard Kind) at a bar called Fisty's. Together, they reminisce on Bunny's romantic chases, including one nicknamed "Prolapsed Pete." "I hate to think what time and gravity has done to that guy," Bunny quips.

"There was a lot that didn't make the cutting-room floor," Lane said about that scene, acknowledging that it was particularly difficult to get through filming some of the more explicit jokes without breaking character, especially those containing colorful language.

"One of the many gifts of this experience has been making Nathan Lane laugh and watching him enjoy getting new words on show night has just been totally thrilling," said Mutchnick. "We also brought Prolapsed Pete back at one point, and it was Nathan Lane that stopped it. He likes to say that it's the two of us that defang these episodes, and it really isn't. It's a group effort."

As for the trio of Lane, Bomer and Graham, Mutchnick said the friend group began with Lane in mind from the early stages of writing. Ryan Murphy pitched the idea to Lane while the actor was playing journalist Dominick Dunne in "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story," another Murphy production. "He was kind of our muse throughout the process," Mutchnick said.

For Bomer, 47, working with

Lane, 69, presented a special chance to work with a personal teenage hero. "I remember one of the first scenes I did in high school is from 'The Lisbon Traviata.' People were like, who is this kid? What is this 14-year-old doing right now? He's just been hugely formative to me, and he's so generous of spirit as an artist."

On set, Bomer said Lane "helped me find my voice as the character and set a beautiful tone for all of us on the set that was loving and fun and joyful, where we could laugh at ourselves and take risks in front of each other and fall on our face in front of each other and shine in front of each other. It was just the kind of gift you dream of. Sometimes it takes 30 years to get there, but then there you are, and it's not lost on me."

Political resonance in challenging times

Lane added that it's a "good time" for this kind of show, but joked, "I have no idea if Donald Trump will try to have it taken off the air along with MSNBC and CNN."

At one point during our interview, Lane spoke more directly about his concerns: "The gay community, immigrants, we're all going to have to fight for everything." The weight of current political realities hangs in his words. "It's hard to believe it's only been seven weeks, and it's already more destructive than I imagined,"

he continued, referencing the rapidly shifting landscape under the new Trump administration. Yet even facing uncertainty, Lane's optimism persists: "People are fighting back. Judges are stepping in, saying, 'This is illegal.' There's a glimmer of hope."

This raises the question — is "Mid-Century Modern" a political show? Kohan and Mutchnick are reluctant to draw explicit connections, even in this political climate, instead inviting viewers to interpret for themselves. Still, one episode, called "Love Thy Neighbor," tackles a timely occurrence: how to approach your neighbor when that individual is a Republican congressperson endorsing harmful anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

"We were encouraged to move away from politics," Mutchnick said. "People are going to come to the show to not think about politics. And then it really came down to a question of, how do we make this sort of inclusive? How do we make it so that there's not this unbridgeable gulf between these people, but that there's actually an understanding?"

Still, he added, "I hope that this show does what 'Will & Grace' did for the community." That landmark series helped normalize gay characters in American homes during the late 1990s and early 2000s, contributing to shifting attitudes about LGBTQ+ acceptance. "I hope that this show bolsters the LGBTQ+ community and takes care of them and makes them feel like they have a voice."

Lane's enduring impact

Though Lane has been an indelible part of the entertainment world for decades — and an inspiration to many gay men who were coming of age in the '80s and '90s — his legacy in LGBTQ+ representation traces back to one of his most iconic roles in the 1996 hit "The Birdcage." When our conversation inevitably turned to this pivotal film, which cemented Lane's place in cinema history, he acknowledged that "it was, in some ways, ahead of its time."

The film, a remake of the French classic "La Cage aux Folles," brought to life Albert, a character whose flamboyance and vulnerability transcended the stereotypes often relegated to queer characters at the time. Lane's portrayal of Albert, a campy yet deeply human figure, didn't just provide comic relief; it opened doors for more nuanced and joyful portrayals of LGBTQ+ people in mainstream cinema. Would we have "Mid-Century Modern" on one of the biggest streaming platforms without it?

"At the time, it was a great success," Lane recalled. "I think it was [director] Mike Nichols' most financially successful, and he wanted a commercial success, for sure. But it had a mixed reaction. But I would say it stood the test of time, and there's not a day that goes by that people don't bring it up to me and want to talk about it. Every day

somebody brings it up."

With the expertise of someone who's lived inside the story, Lane traces the film's lineage from the French "La Cage aux Folles" with actors Jean Poiret and Michel Serrault to finally becoming the screenplay that would introduce Albert — and Lane — to a wider audience.

Lane spoke with particular fondness about two pivotal scenes added for the film adaptation. "They're two of the most crucial scenes," he noted. The first: Albert's poignant moment on an oceanside bench, devastated at the thought of life without his partner. "It's about their love story," Lane explained simply. Lane described the second addition — where Albert appears in a conservative dark suit but can't help wearing bright pink socks — as "a beautiful scene." These moments, where vulnerability and authenticity peek through societal constraints, capture the heart of what made "The Birdcage" revolutionary.

"There was a lot of criticism from the gay press at the time. Now, of course, they write pieces about it, calling it groundbreaking." His laughter carries a hint of vindication: "Sometimes it's just about survival," he said, almost as if he is actually Bunny, settled into Palm Springs in a flowing kimono and maybe even some bright pink socks of his own, relishing the view. "If you hang around long enough, people start to think you're wonderful."



(Left) Matt Bomer, Nathan Lane and Nathan Lee Graham in "Mid-Century Modern." (Right) David Kahn with Max Mutchnick on the set of the Hulu series. Photos: Hulu



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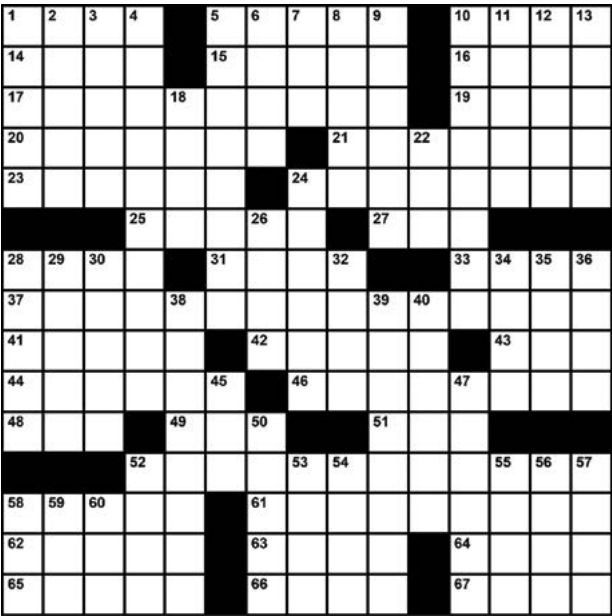
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Coming Out to Mom

Across

- 1 Hoofbeat of a stallion
- 5 Social stratum
- 10 Lovers' quarrel
- 14 Like a fruit ready to be eaten
- 15 FAQ part
- 16 Former ET anchor John

- 17 Start of Nathan Lane's comment about coming out to his mom
- 19 Words used in setting the tempo
- 20 Closest point for Uranus, e.g.
- 21 California mountains
- 23 Bewitch
- 24 More of the quote
- 25 Susan in "All My Children"
- 27 Queer in Quebec
- 28 Military station
- 31 Like a Peter Lorre film
- 33 Palm starch

- 37 More of the quote
- 41 Get smart
- 42 "So long!"
- 43 Cheer for Lorca
- 44 Dorothy or Auntie Em
- 46 Grew, as friendship
- 48 Earhart concern (abbr.)
- 49 Shakespearean prince
- 51 Elton John's title
- 52 End of the quote
- 58 Accuse of pedophilia, e.g.
- 61 Gambling cubes for a chicken?
- 62 Saw opening about being human
- 63 Etcher's fluid
- 64 Mireille of "The Killing"
- 65 Works of Lord Byron and such
- 66 Dietary, in ads
- 67 Result of getting rear-ended

Down

- 1 Type of paper used in Pride parade floats
- 2 Add some zip
- 3 Barber's "Antony and Cleopatra," e.g.
- 4 They go around
- 5 Supplying oral stimulation at a party
- 6 AIDS victim Arthur
- 7 Do the moguls
- 8 Like a nervous Nellie
- 9 Defeating by a small margin
- 10 South Beach dweller
- 11 Dish in a lab
- 12 Lake Nasser dam

- 13 "___ were the days ..."
- 18 Role for Bela
- 22 Sked info
- 24 Provided service for, at tables
- 26 Whispers sweet nothings
- 28 Bohemian dance
- 29 Tatum of "The Bad News Bears"
- 30 Hard to find
- 32 Former South Korean president
- 34 Ages and ages
- 35 Oz visitor Dorothy
- 36 Piggied out (on)
- 38 Hauling ass
- 39 Certain protective item in bed
- 40 Pirate's weapon
- 45 Part of NGLTF (abbr.)
- 47 Wore away
- 50 Trolley that goes "clang, clang, clang" perhaps
- 52 Crew tools
- 53 Centers of activity
- 54 Boob, to a Brit
- 55 Tarzan's transport
- 56 Subj. for John Nash
- 57 Chicken hawk's pad
- 58 Gas additive
- 59 Utterance at a gay rodeo
- 60 Shrek's shoe size, perhaps

See p. 21 for answers

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◀ Adodi

Continued from page 10

— no, thriving — is itself a revolutionary act.

How does the Detroit chapter continue to honor Adodi's foundational principles?

Chris Sutton: Our chapter was founded in 2010 with a clear mission. Detroit is predominantly a Black city, and I've always yearned for spaces where Black men could be truly and authentically vulnerable. We provide an opportunity to pull away from hypermasculinity and avoid being hypersexualized.

What makes us unique is our commitment to genuine connection. In many LGBTQ+ spaces, interactions are often superficial — focused on appearance, status or sexual potential. Adodi is different. We're about seeing each other's full humanity. Our local chapter is essentially a microcosm of our national organization's vision: creating a non-judgmental village where Brothers can be their full, authentic selves.

Could you explain the six principles of Adodi in your own words?

Sutton: Our principles are our heartbeat. We start every gathering by acknowledging six core principles: being spiritually guided, practicing honesty and openness, showing sensitivity to feelings, care-fronting, seeking resolution and embodying the Five A's — Acknowledge, Appreciate, Affirm, Accept and Ache'.

It's about creating a space of radical care. We provide room for people from all walks of life to be themselves, offering deep understanding and support. I've shared things at Adodi retreats that I've never shared anywhere else, receiving support in a way I never thought possible. These aren't just words — they're a lived practice of community healing.

What can people expect if they attend the gathering?

Moore: It's a transformative celebration of brotherhood, community, safety and

fun. We'll have workshops, talent sharing and meals, but what makes us unique is our approach. We provide a space where men — specifically Black gay men — can work through feelings, be vulnerable and supportive.

Imagine a gathering where emotional depth is the norm, not the exception. Where multiple generations of Black Same Gender Loving men come together not to compete, but to uplift each other. We create an environment of genuine intimacy

“I've shared things at Adodi retreats that I've never shared anywhere else, receiving support in a way I never thought possible. These aren't just words — they're a lived practice of community healing.”

— Chris Sutton, Adodi Detroit leader

that isn't about sexual tension, but about true human connection.

What would you tell someone hearing about Adodi for the first time?

Sutton: We're a cherished space where Black men can be emotionally and spiritually vulnerable without being hypersexualized or judged. In these challenging times, with ongoing collective trauma, Adodi offers a path to healing.

More than an organization, we're a brotherhood. We're a living testament to the power of community, of choosing care over competition, of finding strength in vulnerability.

The Adodi Spring Retreat will be held April 11-13. Registration is available at adodidetroit.org with limited spaces remaining. Those interested are encouraged to bring an open heart and a willingness to connect.

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