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From the **Publisher**

While my studies were in the production side of media, I started my career on the marketing side of things.

First in the advertising department of *Xtra*, then a 12-year stint as the head of *The Pink Pages Directory*, followed by two years as business and advertising manager at *fab*, before returning to “The Pink Pages Directory.”

Throughout this whole time I was watching and learning the production side of things. Upon my return to the *Directory*, I negotiated that I would also be allowed to produce a magazine, and that I would have full control of its direction and content. I was more than ecstatic to get the green light. I started getting editors, writers, and photographers all excited and on board, and pitching it to potential advertisers.

I had a lot of ideas to create with a different kind of magazine - a bright, happy, inclusive, diverse, and affirming magazine. We ran with a team around downtown, doing photo shoots, staying up into the night writing and editing, and then designing the look of it. Two editions were produced, one for the holiday season/winter called “Hologay!” and the other for summer called “Summerplay!”. I was incredibly thrilled and proud of how warmly they were both received by the community.

That was when I decided it was time to leave work in the community media, and start my own marketing and advertising agency. Two years into the business, the past publisher of *The Pink Pages*



Directory approached me to take over the business. Part of that acquisition were the files for the first incarnation of the *PinkPlayMags* brand, which included the two magazines I had already produced, and my conceptual notes for future issues. At that time I was feeling that I really wanted to get back into community media, so I decided to relaunch *PinkPlayMags*. The rest as they say is history.

I am indeed living one of my dreams with *PinkPlayMags*. I love being part of a collective. A magazine is a product of many minds and ideas. I get to work with writers who write about issues and people, things that matter for our community, about our history, issues and thoughts, along with the fun and always positive reading fare. I also get to work with amazing photographers who produce stunning covers, an Editor-in-Chief who pulls it all together, and an Art Director who makes it all look fantastic. Finally, a great Production Manager who makes sure everything gets done on time. I get to be a little part of all of that.

We are honoured to have earned the love and respect from our community over the years, and our current place in local queer publishing history as one of the longest-standing published magazines!

Thank you.

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher
publisher@pinkplaymags.com

winterplay!

Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Queer, and Two-Spirit
Community Seasonal from PinkPlayMags
Free • Winter 2022

Publisher/Creative Director: Antoine Elhashem
Editor-in-Chief: Bryen Dunn
Art Direction and Production: Mychol Scully

Contributors

Writers: Aaron Rothermund, Bryen Dunn, Michael Rowe, Sean Beaton, Sherry Sylvain, Mychol Scully, Julie Antoinette, Jeff Harrison



Cover 15th Anniversary: Looking Back
Concept Antoine Elhashem
Creative Direction Mychol Scully

With thanks and gratitude to everyone who graced our covers over 15 years of *PinkPlayMags*, and the talented photographers and illustrators who made our visions a reality.

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www.pinkplaymags.com
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From the Editor



Greetings and salutations!

Winter is upon us, which means huddling indoors for some, and frolicking outdoors for others. Once again, we set our sights upon a new year of resolutions and aspirations. For myself, I've decided to relinquish my duties of Editor-in-Chief here at PinkPlayMags, with this issue being my last. I'm proudly passing the pink lit torch onto Melissa MacMullin, who has been one of our Feature writers for the past few years. I can't wait to see what she brings forth in her new role!

This is also an issue where we celebrate the milestone of reaching our 15th anniversary, with a special *Looking Back* edition. We begin with a feature from Aaron Rothermund that looks at the history of queer publications that came before us. Those trailblazers who took a chance, and succeeded in paving the way for the multitude of both print and online entities that we have today. For our other features, we have compiled a list of community congrats and a fun pictorial of our past covers.

We also welcome back some of our past contributors, including **Michael Rowe** who has written a wonderful exclusive Fiction piece titled, *The Brilliant Darkness of December*.

Our *Hot Artist* profile is written by our new contributor, **Sean Beaton**, who chatted with **Troy Brooks**, a contemporary Canadian painter working within the realm of the pop surrealist art world. The *Community Cornerstone* column spotlights **Out On The Shelves**, an LGBTQ+ library centre based in Vancouver. For the *Travel* column, I look back at 12 years of discovering the world.

As well, we welcome back our former Editor-in-Chief, **Jeff Harrison**, who pens the *Looking Back* column that we brought back specifically for this issue. Be sure to check our quarterly *Horoscopes*, and our *In The City* event listings compiled by our Events Editor, **Sherry Sylvain**. The always inspiring *From The Heart* column is written by **Mychol Scully**, our Creative Director, who also designs this publication for us.

Finally, our annual online **Matrimony Supplement** provides tips on choosing the right attire, micro-weddings, personalizing your ceremony, and catering considerations.

Enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief
editor@pinkplaymags.com

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LGBTQ2S+ representation has come a long way, after near erasure by the mainstream media for decades.

During the Cold War, the federal government set forth a policy to identify and remove all LGBTQ2S+ people from military and government positions. The “LGBT Purge” started with violent arrests, public-shaming, and a complete disregard for the dignity of its subjects. The purge expanded to various individuals from marginalized communities, and even frightfully continued after homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969.

Queer artists had to change their names and code their work or risk the public attacking them for indecency. At this time, many queers felt it was necessary to assimilate into heteronormative culture in order to have access to high-powered jobs and elite services. Many queer writers started writing fan fiction or ‘zines because they could take ownership of their favourite characters and turn them into something that resembled their very real or desired

romantic and sexual experiences. It also allowed queer people to share their artwork and create a network with other like-minded people.

Decades later LGBTQ2S+ visibility had reached an all-time high with a record number of queers in power positions within the publishing industry. These ground-breaking storytellers were able to push through the rigid barriers to begin creating complex stories of authentic queer experiences. Let’s look back at some of Canada’s queer publications that spoke to our community, and often were a lifeline for many young queer kids.

In 1970, **Ian Young** started *Catalyst Press*, which was the first gay publishing company in Canada, and it produced queer works of fiction and poetry until 1980. Young was also a regular columnist at *The Body Politic Gay Liberation Journal* from 1975 – 1985, and for the adult gay magazine, *Torso* from 1991 – 2008. His crowning achievements may be his work as editor for the queer anthology *The Gay Muse* (1973), and the biography *The Male Homosexual in Literature* (1975).

Jearld Moldenhauer created *The Body Politic* which was one of the first gay magazines in Canada. The activism-based publication ran from 1971 – 1987.

This vital magazine gave a voice to the queer community and created a space for gay and lesbian people to exist on their own terms. Moldenhauer also opened and managed the *GLAD Day Bookshop*, and in 1973 he began the groundwork for the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*.

A brief time later, *The Body Politic* editorial members officially formed the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives*, which is known as the largest archive concerning LGBTQ2S+ people that is produced in or associated with Canada.

Then in a switch of names, *The Body Politic* editorial members chose to incorporate as *Pink Triangle Press* in 1975. Two years later, the police charged the magazine with publishing obscene materials in the article “*Men Loving Boys Loving Men*,” written by **Gerald Hannon**. By 1982, the police charged the magazine again for publishing obscene materials when they ran an article on fisting called “*Lust with a Very Proper Stranger*,” written by **Angus MacKenzie**. After international outcry, the magazine was acquitted on both accounts, and the stolen materials seized by the police in 1977 were eventually returned to the magazine in 1985.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, a collective came together to produce a local community newsletter called *Gazette* in 1983. The publication served the LGBTQ+ community in the Atlantic region. By 1995, the committee rebranded the magazine as *Wayves* and moved online as of 2012.

In 1984, *Pink Triangle Press* founded *Xtra!* This queer magazine expanded the original publishing mandate to include more members on the sexual and gender spectrums. The idea was to gather relevant cultural events and exciting lifestyle stories in one publication. By 1993 they launched their sister editions: *Xtra! West* (Vancouver) and *Capital Xtra!* (Ottawa). These magazines remained in print until 2015 and continue to publish stories online.

By 1994, *No Fear Publishing* launched *fab* which was a bi-weekly magazine primarily focused on the gay party scene, and eventually it expanded its themes and distribution across Canada. The magazine hosted regular articles by **Rolyn Chambers**, **Paul Bellini**, **Brad Fraser**, **Nina Arseneault**, and **Heroine Marks**. Famous for provocative cover photos and steamy inside picture galleries, it often featured

celebrities, local politicians, and international musicians. In 2008, *Pink Triangle Press* bought *fab*, but the publication was discontinued in 2013 due to downsizing efforts.

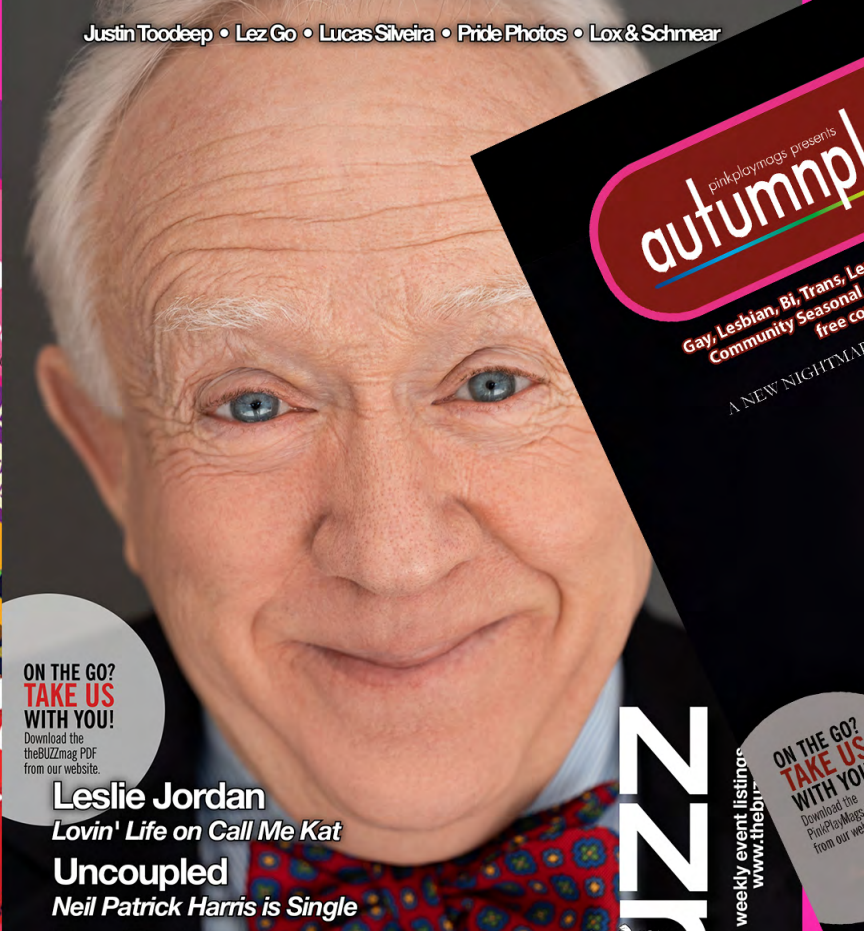
A women’s collective launched the monthly magazine *Siren* in 1995, and it ran until 2004. Readers may remember *Siren* for publishing articles advocating for just cases, including extending rights for trans people. Noted contributors to the magazine include **Billie Jo Newman**, **Debra Anderson**, and **Sheila Cavanagh**.

In 2007, *INspired Media* started publishing *PinkPlayMags*, that produces creative content by LGBTQ2S+ writers, with aspirational images by top-notch photographers. The collective of associates also produce *The Pink Pages Directory* linking us to community-based businesses. In 2014, *INspired Media* began producing *theBUZZ* that focuses on creative essays, intellectual articles, and curated events, such as off-the-beaten-path performances and frequently visited hot-spots.

GAYLETTER magazine began in 2008 as a weekly newsletter to spread the word on exciting community events for queer people. By 2014, they launched a printed magazine containing artist interviews, stunning videos, provocative photos, and exciting articles on post-gay life (whatever that means).

Phil Villeneuve (former editor of *fab* magazine, and former arts editor at *Xtra!*) and **Armand Digidoyo** (art director and event producer) teamed up to co-create *Yohomo* in 2016. The duo brought a fresh vibe to Toronto event coverage, proudly presenting diverse queer culture and shining the spotlight on local talent. They continue to bridge the gap between the non-traditional queer spaces and the always popular Church Street events. They are also quite active on social media providing creative blogs, *Spotify* playlists, radio shows, and photography galleries.

In 2017, the *Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives* officially recognized inequalities within the LGBTQ2S+ community including the collecting and protecting of stories by people of colour. Now rebranded as *The ArQuives*, they are following through on a five-year plan to build up the work of marginalized communities and preserve their stories.



The ArQuives is a fantastic resource to deep dive into the artwork of the LGBTQ2S+ community and all of the wonderful queer artists that led the way for us to infiltrate all media. You can get involved by volunteering or simply visit the building and look through the collections.

2021 brought us the publication *lstu*, a magazine dedicated to producing work by and for lesbian, bisexual, trans, and queer women to change the narrative around these people and produce positive role models for the next generation.

As the presence of the LGBTQ2S+ community continues to grow in mainstream media, we must continue to fight for truthful representation. Luckily, the next generation of storytellers are resolved in their self-worth and fluid with their identity, often choosing not to be placed in sexual categories or gender boxes. We are moving past telling traumatic

stories of coming out to a judgemental world and looking toward a world of detailed adventures.

As we reach critical success and are lifted to the next career platform, we must remember to hold our hands out to lift-up the next generation of queer storytellers, so that the future can represent all stories from people who are traditionally suppressed or ignored.

Aaron Rothermund is a freelance writer, theatre creator, and filmmaker. Aaron has worked on articles for *The Courier*, *Culture Days*, *theBUZZ*, and *PinkPlayMags*.



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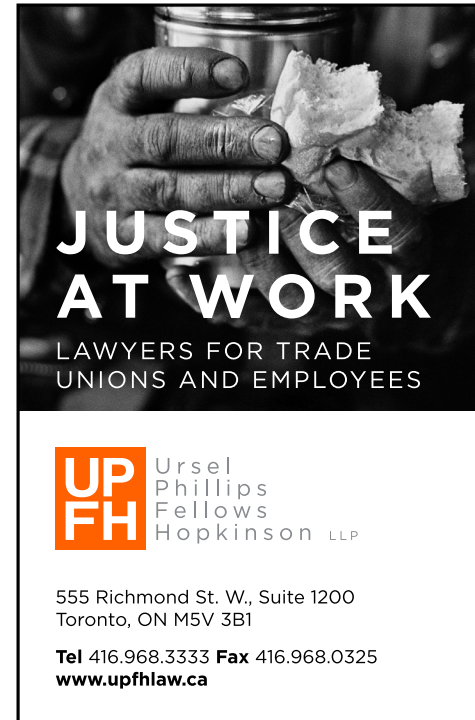
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The Little Magazine That Could

Looking Back at 15 Years of Our Community's PinkPlayMags

CONCEPT

To understand the content of [PinkPlayMags](#) we need to look at the concept. We set out from the get-go to create a very different, unique, and hadn't been done before queer magazine. It needed to be diverse, inclusive, and representative of our community. We wanted to feature intelligent writing framed with beautiful visuals, and we wanted every reader to feel there was something in it for them. We, the editorial team, agreed that we will touch on many topics, some serious and difficult, others fluffy and just for fun, but always positive, affirming, and hopeful. Each year we decided on a theme that would dictate our covers, main features, and inspire our travel, fiction (rarely included in any other mags these days), along with our regular columns.

EDITORIAL

The year 2012, the end of the world as per the Mayan calendar, featured a very ambitious theme (and cover photography) that journeyed into the future of our world in food supply, personal health, religion, and instead of doom and gloom of an ending world, we imagined a new beginning. In 2016, we took a look at the different stages of life, and how specifically they affect a queer person. The following year we

revisited our community history spanning the last six decades, and then imagined the future of our community in the wrap-up issue. Then, in 2019, we spent looking at queer contributions to cinema, with covers inspired by much loved movies, re-imagined with queer titles and characters.

THE COVERS

Over the years *PinkPlayMags* worked with a number of talented photographers and illustrators in our community and produced some of the most memorable covers in the history of queer publishing in Toronto. The covers featured many of our community's most beloved personalities, paired with creative storylines and themes. It is by design that the team invited the community to be part of the covers; the magazine was meant to be distinctively queer and very relatable to our local community. It is no small feat to produce a *PinkPlayMags* cover. They are usually planned months in advance, with an idea coming from the imagination of our publisher before being vetted and planned with the team. Sometimes the themes are simple, other times it is a beautiful illustration, or focused on a singular member of our community featured in theme. But it is the big ideas that involve several characters, filming on location,



a makeup crew, and sometimes extremely elaborate costumes, that we had such a blast producing.

Like the time we did an issue celebrating the burlesque community (*see above*). We photographed a cover and a photo essay at a luxury venue with a fabulous burlesque troupe, a drag artist, a dancer, and additional members of our community. This was the result of a 12-hour day.

Or the time we gathered a big number of community individuals and drag artists, got them all hot and bothered, and filmed at a bath house's locker room, including the whirlpool. You should see the steamy



inside cover, go run check it out under our archives section on our website, you will thank us later.

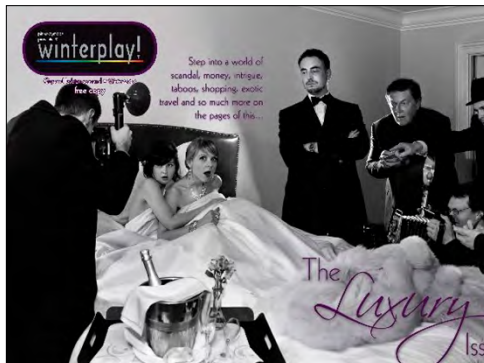
In one instance we put a drag artist and a bunch of lovely community people in leather and filmed at a REAL LIFE torture and fantasy chamber owned by a downtown Toronto dominatrix (we got gossip some famous stars had been clients of the venue). This was "the MONSTER issue" because it was a monster to shoot but we LOVED it.



Filming in black-and-white in the penthouse of the [Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel](#) and also in the lobby, and on a grand staircase for the cover and



photo essay in that issue was quite an adventure. It included several people playing various characters, a full wardrobe that needed to look like the Golden Age of cinema, and a makeup team.



There was that time when we worked with a Bollywood dance troupe and we filmed at an abandoned railway. We adore this colourful cover,

and everyone had such a good time that day. (See above.)

Another one of our favourite creations is when we worked with a talented comic book illustrator and photographer to produce a mixed media cover for our "The Geek Issue". The characters drawn on the cover is the actual team of *PinkPlayMags*. To the side you'll see the real life and beloved community staple



Sonia ID-ing our publisher at the door of a space bar reminiscent of "Fly."

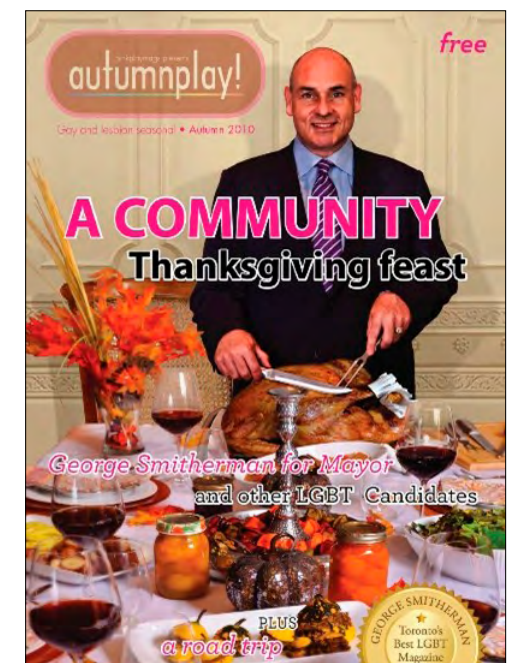
Another time we tried our hand at mixed media cover, is when we celebrated [WorldPride 2014](#). The energetic and happy team at Pride Toronto posed in an animated city to welcome the world. (See above.)

"A Community Thanksgiving feast" will always be a thanksgiving to remember, with **George Smitherman** (then running for Toronto Mayor) at the head of the table. Community members Michael and Keith generously invited our crew into their home for a feast prepared by **Chef Chris Schroer**. We truly had a wonderful time.

THE PHOTO ESSAY

Several editions over the years featured photo essays that were an extension of the cover and amplified the editorial theme of the issue.

These were big projects to develop, with a lot of details that needed to all be addressed before we got to the location. As mentioned before in the article,



What our audience has to say...

"PinkPlayMags is one of the most praised lifestyle magazines written from an LGBTQ perspective."

City of Toronto

"PinkPlayMags has become a staple in our community."

Queen's Park

"One of the most creative and original magazines in the history of our community"

Toronto's LGBTQ+ Village

"Small enough to fit in a purse, but big enough to show the world how great our LGBTQ community is."

A Reader

the cover and photo essay (titled "Burlesque: The Story of Cherie!) for The Burlesque Issue took a 12-hour day to film. We have many favourites in the photo essay department, but these would be our favourite three:

The Holden Affair: The black and white cinema noir story of Mr. and Mrs. Holden, the richest folks in town back in the early 20's and their "query" frolics with the help. This story was featured in The LUXURY Issue in 2010 and continued in part two in the Winter 2015 edition.

The Monster & The Master: This spooky story of the monster who loves the sweet pain of torture, appeared in The MONSTER Issue in 2010, and continued in autumn 2015 with "Monster: Love, Pain, and Blood."

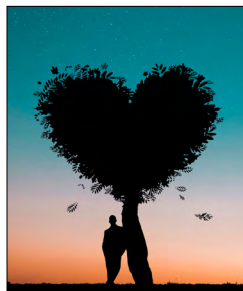
N.E.R.D.: Or Nerd's Emergency Recreational Dimension. This story of James, who struggled with being bullied at school, but at night with the help of his friend Sonia, escaped this world through a portal, where he served as bartender at a space alien cantina, was based on a concept by then editor-in-chief Jeff Harrison, with story and art by J. Bone. The story appeared in The GEEK Issue 2010, and later continued in spring 2015 edition with "N.E.R.D. Takes Flight" with creative direction this time by our publisher Antoine Elhashem and story and art by T.M. Royle. In the continuation we find our hero having an accident in the lab, and becoming a bully fighting super hero.

THE FUTURE

For 13 years, *PinkPlayMags* was published in glossy print. In the last two years we transitioned to an online downloadable edition, however the community spirit, content, and creative presentation remains the same. We look forward to continuing the journey with you for many years to come.

15 years, 15 themes, and we hope many more to come.

This Looking Back feature was curated and compiled by PinkPlayMags' Editorial Team.



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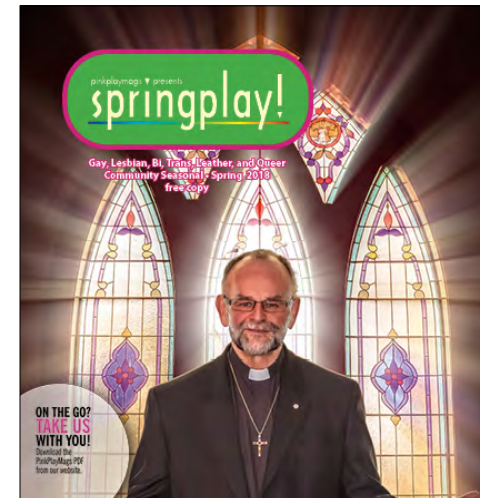


Indigenous 2-Spirit



Congratulations to PinkPlayMags on their 15th anniversary of service to our communities. You've played a very valuable role in connecting community to stories through great content, and bridging individuals to the services they need via great queer friendly businesses. Thank you. All the best for the next 15 years.

Reverend Brent Hawkes - ED Rainbow Faith and Freedom



PinkPlayMags has established itself as an important go-to magazine for all things queer. The wonderful folks the magazine profiles, its commitment to community, and their endless creativity, all add up to a very special and unique reading experience.

Keep up the great work! HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Deb Pearce - Advocate, Radio and Television Host, and Comic



Middle Eastern Nights wants to wish PinkPlayMags a very happy 15th year anniversary. Over the past 6 years PinkPlayMags has been a place where we have been able to promote our parties for the queer Middle Eastern community. A magazine that has given us a safe space to just be our best selves. We are forever grateful and looking forward to what the next 15 years will bring!

Kero Saleib - Founder of Middle Eastern Nights, Advocate, and Activist



Over the years PinkPlayMags has shown us what it's like to be a community by sharing incredible stories about LGBTQ2S+ people and life. Working with them a few times over the years I feel very grateful and want to say congratulations for being so incredible and keeping it strong. Many years ago, I was on a couple PinkPlayMags covers, for one of them I was with one of the original drag kings of Toronto, Deb Pearce, for a Christmas issue. We laughed so hard being husband and wife at Christmas time. I made a Turkey and had a little too much eggnog, and then fell off the couch (for the shoot, not for real). Working with Deb was a dream

Over the past 15 years, PinkPlayMags has spotlighted many of our community's talented, hard working, and passionate people. Whether it was on our covers or within our pages, community was who we loved and cared about. It is why our community has always had a special place in its heart for this magazine. In the next few pages our community friends join us in celebrating this milestone with some wonderful words and messages.

For me, I love the community writers, I feel these writers give voice to people and events uniquely community. The point of view as they interview other community members and occasionally stars or icons is unique to read and at times thought provoking on where we sit as individuals and as a community. The magazine understands the importance of people and their day-to-day lives from all sides and that is a unique presence in a time when

everything is 24 seconds long and then forgotten. The magazine isn't perfect, but neither is our community—different personalities create different opinions and outcomes. That makes for a good magazine—difference, in the writing, and difference in its focus and opinions, who we all are and think we are.

Patricia Wilson - Writer, Musician, and Bartender (Black Eagle, Toronto)

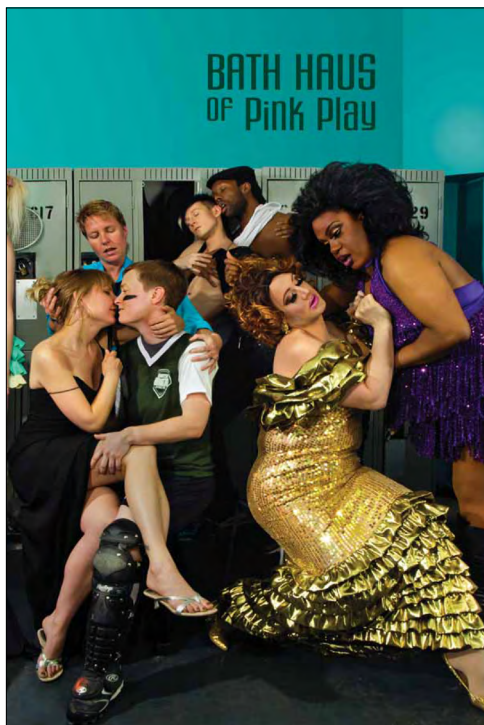


because she/they are so funny, professional and a true “original” icon in the community. I also was part of a bathhouse cover, and one time I did make up for a cover (at that time I was very new but was so blessed to have the opportunity). Thank you for all the incredible memories PinkPlayMags and to Antoine Elhassem and an incredible team for working your buns off for all these years. Happy 15th Anniversary and cheers to many more.

Miss Conception aka Kevin Levesque
- Drag Performer

I’ve had the distinct pleasure of working with Antoine Elhassem and his talented team at PinkPlayMags for many years. They do exceptional work especially in featuring the work of talented writers, photographer and designers in our community. Plus promoting 2SLGBTQI owned and operated businesses and allied businesses. It is important for us to champion and celebrate all our heroes especially the ones who promote community resiliency. Congratulations to PinkPlayMags on their milestone anniversary. Here’s to the next 15 years ahead!

Kristyn Wong-Tam
- Canadian Politician, MPP Toronto Centre



This Looking Back feature was curated and compiled by PinkPlayMags' Editorial Team.



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Looking Back at Where I've Been

By Bryen Dunn

Travel is a most wonderful thing. We get to leave our daily routines behind and take off on a new and exciting adventure.

Whether that be by plane, train, vehicle, boat, or even bicycle, the journey is always part of the travel experience. Some prefer the more relaxed beach resort vacation, while others opt for the more active holiday experience. Whichever you choose, let it be something that makes that coveted time away from work the most memorable and pleasurable.

Upon researching to write this piece that's reflective of the Looking Back theme celebrating the 15th anniversary of *PinkPlayMags*, I came to realize that I've been writing this travel column since *winterplay!* 2010. That's 12 years to the date of this *winterplay!* issue. I took it upon myself to go back through each issue to see all the places and topics that I had written about over the years, and there were many!

I've included a snapshot review of my past articles below, with the full articles all available to read within our [Archives](#).

My first travel piece was titled *When Exotic Meets Erotic* where I covered several different experiences to be found, from sleeping inside **Quebec City's Ice Hotel**, to the warm pampering of a **Haramara Holistic Retreat**. This truly shows the gamut of travel options that can fulfill most any desire.

In 2011, I got to interview several comedians to find out about their travel experiences when touring, I covered Pride celebrations across Canada both big and small, traced the steps of our queer past, and looked at the burgeoning *Queerlesque* scene in North America. 2012 was predicted as the year the world would end (again). That didn't stop us from travelling. I covered green tourism in the USA, took the train to a spa in Ontario, highlighted global spirituality treks, and chatted with community members about their best travel experiences.

In 2013, I wrote about cycle tourism, camping and cottaging, discovering **Niagara Falls**, and shuffling off to **Buffalo** just across the border to see how that city is reinventing itself. In 2014, I brought readers an update on **Montreal's** gay happenings, as well as **Kingston's** gay scene, along with the fairy-tale destination of **Niagara-on-the-Lake**. For the winter issue, we did a special **Toronto WorldPride** edition.

This would also be Jeff Harrison's last issue as Editor-in-Chief after seven years at the helm, before passing the reins to me the following year.

The Spring 2015 issue was the first in my new role, and one of my favourite years writing the travel column. I began with my wonderful journeys to **Israel**, and also covered both **Saskatoon** and **Warkworth** (Ontario), each a pleasant surprise as to how queer friendly these smaller destinations were. One of the more interesting pieces I wrote was titled, *Vampires, Witches, and Psychics*, covering **New Orleans, Salem, and Cassadaga**, each unique in their own mystical ways.

2016 found me discovering our local area offerings in a piece titled, *The 6 and The 905*, as well as **Philadelphia's Pride and Politics**, **Puerto Vallarta's** gay mecca, and the wonderful region of **Galicia, Spain**. In 2017, it was all about Canada, spotlighting **Ottawa, Winnipeg, Halifax**, and an interesting look at the future of train travel across the country. In 2018 I went to **Detroit**, the birthplace of *Motown*, to discover how that city is now one of the fastest growing after years of decline. I also attended the inaugural **Caribbean Pride** festivities, and bounced between both **Memphis** and **Nashville**, two of the greatest cities for music. This was also the year we began publishing our annual Autumn Travel Supplement, with the first being a list of *Top 5 Gay-Friendly Travel Destinations*.

In 2019, I visited both **Croatia** and **Slovenia**, two underrated countries that I highly recommend visiting. It was also the year **New York City** hosted *WorldPride*, one of the largest to date. I also did a driving trip through **South Florida** that included much of The Keys, including **Key West**. The supplement spotlighted *Tips To Stay Fit While Travelling*, among other things.

In the new decade of the 20s I began with a comparison of Ontario's two theatre towns, **Stratford** and **Shaw (Niagara-on-the-Lake)**. The world then took a travel pause as we navigated an unprecedented pandemic. That still didn't completely halt travel however, instead it brought the focus to travelling local, with pieces on both **Ontario** and **Toronto**. Appropriately, the supplement was titled, *Travelling During a Pandemic*.

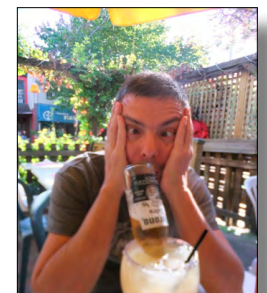


2021 was more of the same, with long distance travel highly discouraged. I remained focused on local and began with a piece titled *The Future of Travel*. I also covered what Kingston has to offer, and what winter adventures can be found right here in Ontario. The supplement covered *Food & Beverage, Travel Tips*, and more. Finally, in 2022 we continued onward with more local experiences, as well as a focus on health and wellness, as we began recovery out of the pandemic. I looked at Ontario's spa and wellness retreats, beach towns across the province, and a supplement that included *Travel Trends, Women's Retreats*, and *Travelling Solo*.

As we close out the year and my term as Editor-in-Chief, I realized that this special 15th anniversary *Looking Back* piece is written exactly seven years to the issue since I took over from Jeff. I will now be passing the torch to our new Editor-in-Chief **Melliss MacMullin**. *Seven Year Itch or Lucky Seven?*

I'll be continuing to write this Travel column going forward and look forward to bringing you more exciting stories to read. So, stay tuned to see where I'm off to next. In the meantime, I encourage you to get out and explore the world and last but not least I wish safe and exciting travels to all!

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.

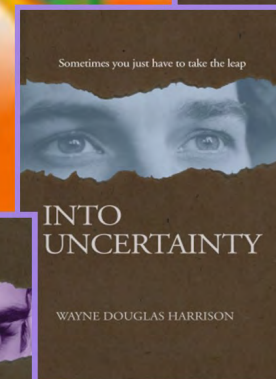
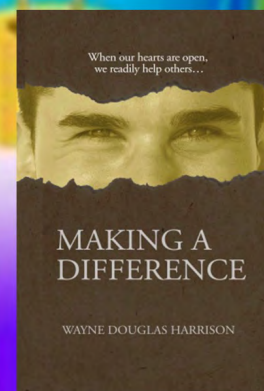
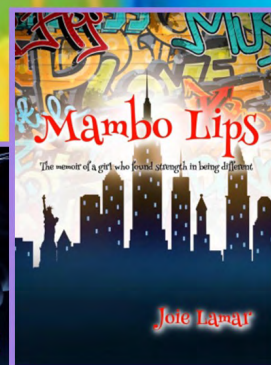
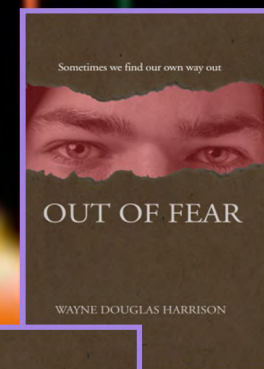
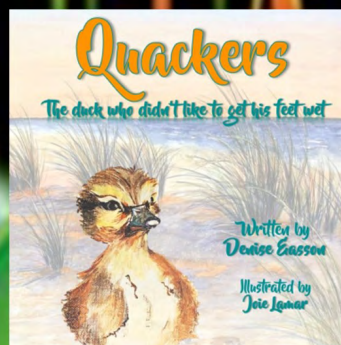


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Exclusive to PinkPlayMags for this Looking Back issue.

The Brilliant Darkness of December

In the summer of 1969, we returned to Canada from two back-to-back diplomatic postings of my father's, in Beirut and Havana respectively.

I was seven years old, and I'd never seen snow.

That summer, on a black and white television at the Savoy Hotel in Ottawa, I watched Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walk on the moon.

To my eyes, this new country I'd been told was "home" was already not scarce of miracles.

That autumn, the leaves on the trees lining the street of our new house exploded into brilliant sourball colours I'd never seen in Lebanon or Cuba—scarlet, orange, vibrant yellow. I was as drunk with colour as a child could be.

One morning in early December, I woke to a curious pearl-grey light on my bedroom floor. The world outside my window was miraculously bleached white with heavily falling snow.

My breath caught in my throat. I'd never seen anything so beautiful in my life. I wanted to swim in it.

A few weeks later, the Christmas lights went up and the spell was cast. They were pink, green, red, blue, yellow, and orange. These were colours that would have been



incongruous in any other context but Christmas.

My mother baked cookies and frosted them with almond flavoured frosting in the same colours as the lights.

At night, the reflection of those lights on the Ottawa snow lit our street like something out of a fairy tale.

In those perfect weeks before that first Christmas, as the snow fell, there was no doubt in my mind about the reality of letters to Santa Claus, or reindeer, or cookies that disappeared on Christmas Eve, or the Baby Jesus, or any number of other miracles. We celebrated a secular Christmas, but also an ecumenical one, in a way.

I slept as deeply as the boy in Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales," and my dreams were just as sweet.

All the Christmases of my childhood—in Ottawa, then later in Switzerland, then back in Ottawa—were special in their own

way, but none were as perfect as the one in 1969. And I always looked for the lights.

As a teenager those lights welcomed me home from boarding school. They lit the snow like jewels outside the windows of the car as I drove home from Christmas shopping with my girlfriend. Christmas became for falling in love.

Later, as an older queer teenager, girlfriends were replaced by unrequited crushes on boys, but Christmas was still for falling in love.

I grew up. I moved away from home.

But every December, somewhere, the lights took me home, to the beauty of dreams that always seemed more accessible in darkest December than at any other time in the year.

I grew older. My parents grew old. As adults do, we spent Christmases apart. I had my own life, with my own husband, and my own family-of-the-heart, including wonderful godchildren through whose eyes I was able to relive that seasonal magic a bit.

But there were always phone calls on Christmas Day to my parents. It seemed natural, and it was always a tiny little bit like time travel.

My mother, who loved Christmas like no one I've ever known, died in 2000. My father, who found new love with a wonderful woman named Sarah in the years he lost my mother, died in 2017. Dad never cared about Christmas, but Sarah did, so in a way, that circle of holiday lights remained unbroken.

Today I am far closer to the age my parents were when I lost them than any of the years of my childhood, youth, or young adulthood.

For the past twenty-odd years, we've spent Christmases in Palm Springs with my best friend Ron and his family. Ron is as close to me as a brother, and he loves Christmas like I do—like his own mother always did, as mine did.

People ask me if I don't miss snow when I'm in California. Wryly, I tell them that we all miss snow in this dangerously warming world.

But they really mean, "Don't you miss Christmas?"

I tell them no. And here's why:

Because at night in the desert, in winter, the darkness is brilliant. For some reason, it carries light better than anywhere else on earth.

And every Christmas Eve, I can see those jewel-tone lights glittering, almost for miles.

And for a moment, despite my receding hairline, my softening body, or my failing eyesight, I'm a child again—the Americans have just landed on the moon, my first snow is falling like a thousand angels wings all around our house in Ottawa, and the lights are like something out of a dream.

Time is a wheel.

And as long as I can still feel the child's heart leap in my adult's body in that moment, there's only ever been one Christmas.

And it's now.

Michael Rowe is a novelist, essayist, and former journalist. He lives in Toronto and welcomes readers at www.michaelrowe.com



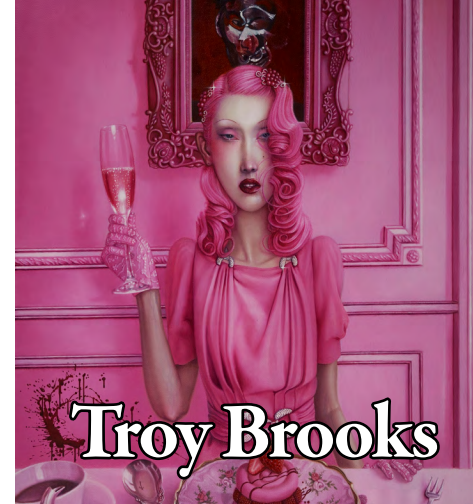
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Troy Brooks

Troy Brooks is a contemporary Canadian painter who over the past decade has made his mark on the pop surrealist art world.

With no formal art education, he's garnered international attention for his exhibitions in Paris, New York, San Francisco, London, Australia, Germany, Toronto, and Los Angeles. Some of his illustrations were actually included in the very first issue of *Pink Play Mags*, so it seemed appropriate to laud his success in our 'Looking Back' issue.

One look at the work of Troy Brooks and you're instantly pulled into a fully realized world of tragic beauty and smart detail. The scenarios he creates juxtapose brutality and refinement, and always with a twist to remind the audience that there's more to be found.

Inspired by film noir of the early *MGM/Warner Brothers* era, he captures in one frame what appears to be the aftermath of a harrowing scene, complete with plot, character development, and soft lighting any Hollywood starlet would kill for.

His works are unconventionally autobiographical, painting self-assured women trapped in a world not made for them, all dealing with this reality in a different way—malice, self-destruction, numbness, and violence.

by Sean Beaton

Hot Artist

"I've been drawing pictures of women since I was two years old. Now, after years of reflecting, I understand my reasons. This was my form of transgenderism before that notion was even in my consciousness. This is how it has played itself out. Painting women in situations of power while also experiencing a kind of implosion was how I coped," said Brooks. "Without realizing it, I guess I was working through a lot of old resentment and anger with all the boys in school who had beaten the shit out of me."

Before fully embracing his artistic instincts, he would mimic the pieces he saw in the galleries, and reluctantly sought out editorial illustration work thinking it was "the only feasible way to get paid making art".

"It wasn't until I was well into my 30s that it started to feel like a shirt that didn't fit anymore. The problem was that I didn't see any art that even remotely resembled my women. I felt like a hopeless outsider to the fine art industry. Then one day I was at a friend's loft on King Street West (in Toronto) and he had enormous prints of artists like **Lori Earley** and **Ray Caesar**, and instantly I realized I was already part of a movement. It just hadn't reached Canada," Brooks expressed. "I dove headfirst into my women, and it was like a thousand iron filings all collecting themselves perfectly onto the head of a magnet. Everything shifted into place, and I started getting an intense thrust of momentum almost immediately."

To see more of Troy Brooks's work, visit his [website](http://www.troybrooks.com). To view the two-story recreation of his 2014 painting "TOWER", head over to 412 Church St. - an edict of queerness over Toronto's conventional landscape.

Sean Ban Beaton is a music creator, performer, and sound editor in Toronto.



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Created and operated by volunteers, **Out On The Shelves** is a non-profit, community library located in Vancouver.

They are committed to anti-oppressive social justice work, and supporting 2SLGBTQ+ writers, artists, and publishers producing creative work in Canada.

In its various iterations, and at various previous locations, the library has been serving the 2SLGBTQ+ communities of Vancouver since the early 1980s, committed to making queer books accessible, and celebrating queer stories.

Located on the second floor of the student union building of the West Point Grey campus of the University of British Columbia, the space is filled with various fiction and non-fiction books, DVDs, picture books, and a selection of middle grade and young adult books, most in a selection of languages including English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese.

Recognizing that 2SLGBTQ+ people exist in multiple communities and identities, this library service seeks to advance an anti-racist, feminist, decolonizing, body-positive, and anti-ableist space. To this end, the library is staffed with volunteers who can help with everything from finding an item on a specific topic, to accessing an item which might be out of reach for someone with physical challenges.

Library cards are free for anyone; all that is required is to attend the library in person, and fill out a form, providing a name (chosen or given) with contact details such as an email address or phone number. Borrowing policies allow one to check out books and DVDs for an initial three weeks period, renewed for a maximum of three times. The exceptions to this policy are for reference materials and oversize art books, which may not be checked out. Items can be returned at any time directly to the library or to their drop box on the property.

There are no overdue fees for materials returned late, however items that are over three weeks overdue are considered lost, and the library reserves the right to charge a fine to replace the items if not returned in the same condition they were borrowed. To replace a lost or damaged item, a fee of the retail price of the item will apply. Borrowers may be offered the option to replace lost or damaged items with a copy of the same title in good condition.

In 2016-2017, the *Out On The Shelves Oral History Project* took place, headed by **David Gill**, a librarian. The purpose of the Project was, and continues to be, to help patrons and new volunteers understand the history of the library, in its current form, as well as its transitions in the past.

Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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WINTER IN THE CITY

by Sherry Sylvain

Ross Petty Productions presents Peter's Final Flight

through January 7, 2023

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

A new musical version of PETER PAN featuring Canada's finest musical theatre performers, with Ross Petty returning as Captain Hook.

Tip: This show is perfect for kids of all ages, in an historic and breath-taking venue.

Choir Boy

Through December 31, 2022

Bluma Appel Theatre, 27 Front St. E., Toronto, ON

From the Academy Award-winning screenwriter of Moonlight comes the Broadway hit coming-of-age play of a young gay man learning to accept his identity.

Tip: This musical features a score of rapturous a cappella gospel hymns.



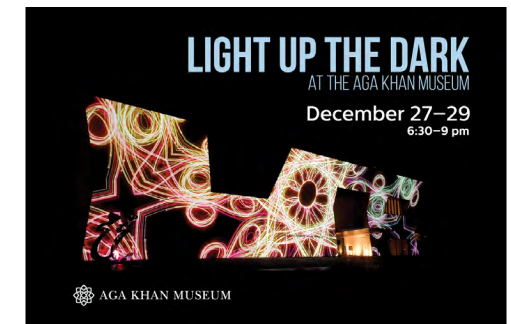
Light Up the Dark

December 27 to 29; 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr., Toronto

Watch the stunning exterior of the Aga Khan Museum come to life with mesmerizing light projections created by students at OCAD University.

Tip: Dress in warm layers to enjoy the outdoor event, then enjoy bites and warm drinks indoors for pop-up performances.



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King & Queens

December 29, 2022; 8:00 p.m.

The Rec Room, 100 City Centre Dr., Mississauga

A one night only, exclusive, special guest DRAGanza with some of the best drag king and queens from across the province, featuring host TroyBoy Parks.

Tip: Prepare to tip the performers who will be impersonating some of your favourite musical celebrities, and their top hits.

ROM After Dark: NYE

December 31, 2022; 8:00 p.m.

The Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto

Ticket includes delicious food stations, a complimentary drink ticket, and a spectacular evening of live music, roaming interactive performances, and complimentary coat check.

Tip: Wear some comfy shoes so that you can enjoy access to the entire museum and its exhibits.

Pitbull – NYE

December 31, 2022; 8:00 p.m.

The Phoenix Concert Theatre, 410 Sherbourne St., Toronto

DJ / Producer Hector Fonseca plays an epic four hour set that will leave you a sweaty dancing mess, with Toronto legend Mark Falco kicking off the night. Go-Go dancing studs, stunning drag queens, world class light and sound production, and so much more.

Tip: Hydrate, hydrate, then hydrate some more, and (un) dress to impress as you dance in the new year.

HEY GIRL HEY: New Queer's Eve

December 31, 2022; 10:00 p.m.

The Baby G, 1608 Dundas St. W., Toronto

Midnight Countdown Floorshow; drag king Manny Dingo; pole dancer Wrong Note Rusty; DJ Orange Pekoe featuring female and non-binary artists; champagne at the bar.

Tip: Hit the bank for a stack of U.S. singles to tip the performers.



Fall On Your Knees

January 20 to February 4, 2023

Bluma Appel Theatre, 27 Front St. E., Toronto, ON

Based on the sweeping novel that chronicles three generations of Cape Breton Island's Piper family. The story moves from the battlefields of the First World War to the emerging jazz scene in Harlem, NY.

Tip: Pick up and read a copy of the book, published in 1996, by acclaimed queer Canadian writer Ann-Marie MacDonald.



The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring - In Concert

January 27, 28, 29, 2023

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St. E., Toronto

The 250 musicians on stage from the FILMharmonic Orchestra and the Amadeus Choir will transport you to the heart of Middle-earth in the quest of the Fellowship of the Ring.

Tip: Wear minimal jewellery, and beware of Orcs.

Maple Blues Awards

January 30, 2023; 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Canada's blues music all-star concert and annual awards event features performances by some of the hottest blues musicians from across the country and an after-party with the musicians.

Tip: Have a light, early dinner which will sustain you through the evening, while still allowing you to move to the rhythms of exceptional blues.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

February 3 and 4, 2023

TO Live, 1 Front St. E., Toronto

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a modern dance company based in New York City. Founded in 1958 by choreographer and dancer Alvin Ailey, it is made up of 32 dancers.

Tip: A couple of tickets to this event might be just the holiday gift to knock the socks off your favourite hooper.



Cabaret Noir

February 9, 10, 11, 2023

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto

The cast uses movement, dialogue, and music to reconstruct emblematic scenes from popular culture in a work that is both a celebration and resistance of concepts of "Blackness".

Tip: These artists play with clichés, folklore, and prejudices to illustrate that each of us defines our own identity.

Music at the Movies

February 10, 2023; 8:00 p.m.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

The FILMharmonic Orchestra will perform iconic film music as well as popular classical repertoire.

Tip: Brush up on your film trivia so you can not only name those tunes, but impress with great quotes from famous films.

Rhapsody and the Blues

February 11, 2023; 5:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Rhapsody in Blue is the focal point in this special gala concert of big band jazz by composers such as Oscar Peterson, Nat King Cole, Tommy Dorsey, and more.

Tip: Allow for crush hour traffic when planning your travel to this very early evening show.

Classic Albums Live - The Beatles: Let It Be

February 16, 2023; 8:00 p.m.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

Classic Albums Live and its roster of world-class musicians performs The Beatles' 'Let It Be,' exactly as you remember hearing it, note for note, cut for cut.

Tip: Practice controlling your urge to sing along with the band.

TSO Return to Massey Hall

February 17, 2023; 7:30 p.m.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

Almost exactly 100 years after its very first concert, the TSO returns to its original home to perform a piece from that same program, Tchaikovsky's passionate Fifth Symphony.

Tip: Allow some extra time to enjoy the sights of the refurbished historic venue, paying special attention to the exceptional stained-glass windows that had been hidden for decades.

Rock of Ages

February 23 through May 20, 2023

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

One of Broadway's longest running hit musicals features chart-topping hits from some of the greatest bands of the 1980s.

Tip: Pull out your best neon wardrobe, and as much high-hold hairspray as you can lay your hands on.

Sex Dalmatian

March 3 to 11, 2023

Citadel + Compagnie, 304 Parliament St., Toronto

Follow the adventures of a canine business-mogul, her too-eager assistant, Amalia, and her psychosexually charged arch nemesis Mr. Meeks.

Tip: Keep your wits about you as the title role is played by a rotating cast of performers.

Fairview

March 4 through 26, 2023

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto

The Frasier household is preparing for Grandma's birthday party, but not everything is as it seems. While Beverly holds on to her sanity by a thread, her sister can't be bothered to help, her brother is MIA, and her husband doesn't seem to listen.

Tip: Be prepared for surprises as the party guests become more than unexpected.

Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro: Och & Oy! A Considered Cabaret

March 4, 2023; 8:00 p.m.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro both transport audiences to other worlds through their stories. Now, they're joining forces in SONG.

Tip: Brush up on your accents, or prepare to be lost in translation.


Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



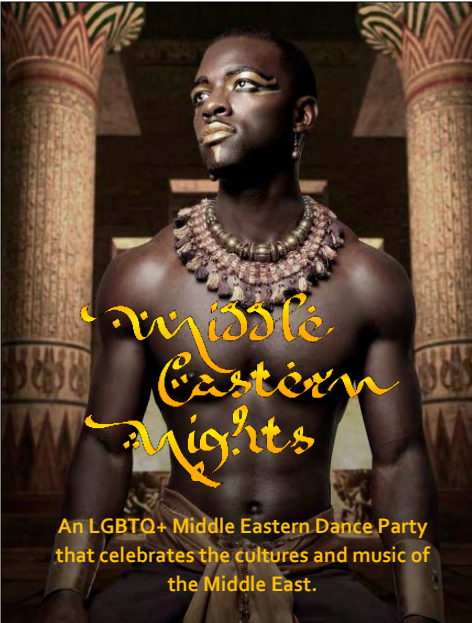
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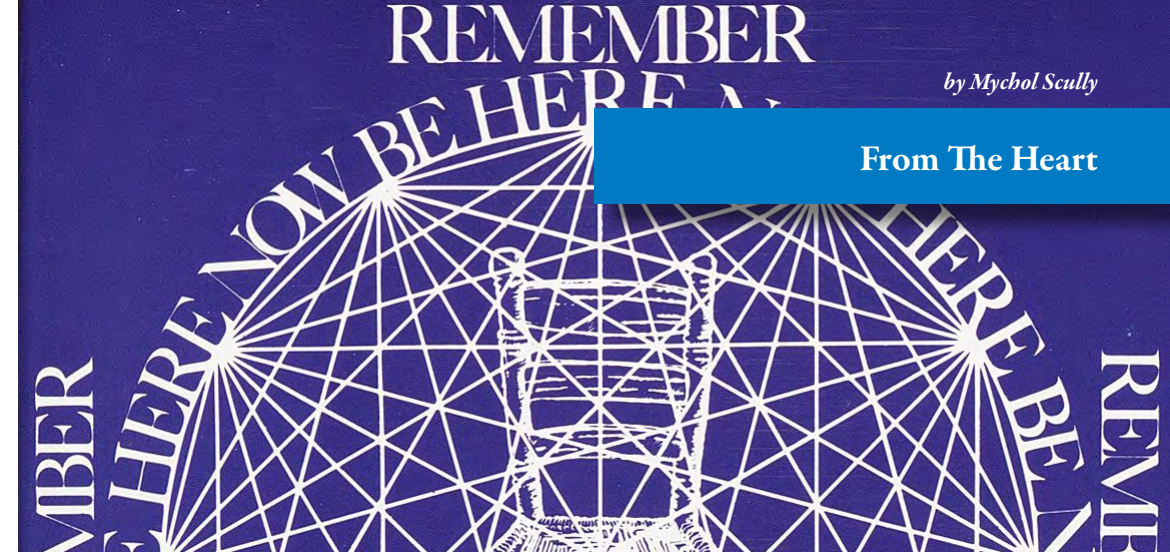
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Looking back has never been my strong suit. On the rare occasions when I do take a moment to remember the past, the review is usually littered with second guessing, some regret, and a general distaste for the experience.

It's not that my past is such a train wreck that I am compelled to avoid it. Rather, I have cultivated in myself over many years a committed focus on the present moment. Almost fifty years ago, I acquired a copy of *Be Here Now* (published by the Lama Foundation, 1971), an exposition on spirituality, yoga, and meditation written by **Ram Dass** (born Richard Alpert), the American yogi and spiritual teacher.

This book was a seminal influence on a teenager immersed in mysticism and the occult, seeking to understand a world that seemed to categorically reject him and every aspect of his life.

Over the intervening five decades, I have incrementally made this approach to mindfulness a central tenet of my life experience. By focusing on the present moment, minimizing the amount of time and energy I spend on remembering the past

and projecting the future, I have found a version of contemplative peace that most of us rarely engage.

I'm not suggesting that I have somehow become a "perfected being." Far from it. I suffer, as most do, with self-doubts, insecurities and feelings of inadequacy. However, I can say with certainty that embracing Ram Dass' messaging has made such challenges infrequent and easily dismissed.

Now, my bouts of "looking back" are usually triggered by conversations with my eldest son, who retains an abiding interest in his own past experiences and often queries me about my memories of shared events from his childhood. When prompted, I can usually dredge up some semblance of recall, although I'm usually unable to provide the level of detail or rationale he's seeking. I'm sure my lack of interest in my own past is quite frustrating for him.

Now that I'm halfway through my seventh decade of this life, I am even more convinced that "Be Here Now" is where I truly want to be.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media publications **PinkPlayMags**, **theBUZZ**, **The Local Biz Magazine**, and **The Pink Pages Directory**. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing any time at mychol@mychol.com.



Winter Horoscopes

DECEMBER 2022 to FEBRUARY 2023

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

You know that thing you love to do and that thing is effortless for you. Your creativity soars to higher levels this season. Take advantage of this influx of inspirational and imaginative energy to kick your passion up a notch and expand your expertise - just in time for the holidays. The planets and Universe are behind you.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

You've been meaning to get in touch with an old friend but have been hesitantly putting it off. This person is currently inspired by some brave moves you've made in the past and would like to check in for some inspiration as they navigate through a difficult phase. Your example gives them strength. Consider reaching out. It will remind you of your value.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

Whether or not you have a pet, you've been considering the benefits of having a non-ego-based living being around. Pets show us unconditional love and just want to be loved back. This is the root of what your heart truly seeks. Let animals and nature guide the way.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

You've finally caught the attention of that certain someone you've been flirting with. It's been years but you find yourself inextricably attracted and have no idea what to do about it. The feeling is as vibrant and euphoria-inducing as ever. Face it, you still got it. Your task is to figure out what to do with it.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

Something in your life needs shaking up. Routine and scheduling are wonderful stabilizers but can sometimes lead to a lackluster feeling of being stuck in a rut. Start small. Maybe branch out and try a new dish to start. Your tastebuds will thank you and you may uncover a whole new sensory experience that will give you a much-needed taste of life outside your box.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

Something you've been seeking spiritual guidance about is being resolved in the form of answered prayer. All that is being asked is that you surrender to your Higher Power and let go, knowing that your seeds of positive intention are landing in fertile soil. You've done your part. Now you must let the Universe handle the outcome.

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Your entire point of reference has changed on a subject that was historically very important to you. This has opened your mind to a new perspective and has triggered a series of questions in other areas of your life as well. You may be feeling slightly destabilized by this as your former points of reference are no longer. Have no fear, every paradigm shift has led through this same process of expansion and awakening.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

A stranger helps you in a time of need. This person shows up with just the right skills, demeanor, resources and above all, the right words to help you out of a dark place. Sometimes angels show up in human form to quickly pop into our lives when needed and then quietly disappear. Let's hope this mysterious stranger's work has accomplished what was intended.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

You were recently in a vulnerable state and felt very alone for a brief period. During that time, a friend paid a visit with get-well materials in hand to help you feel better which put you quickly on the mend. You wonder what you did to deserve such goodness? A friend in need is a friend indeed!

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Historically, your financial decisions were made based on a projected bottom line and steps to secure the greatest dollar amount. However, a new premise for these types of decisions enters your sphere. This new premise is based on the greater collective good. The projected costs of not considering the greater good come into play and far outweigh the benefit of a healthy bottom line. Congratulations, you are becoming a citizen of the Universe, not just Wall Street. You now understand with more clarity what is priceless and what is costly.

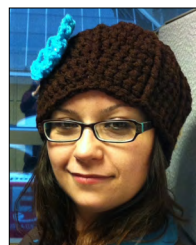
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

Harsh words spoken to you long ago took root in your heart and have caused years of heaviness, guilt and sorrow. You hadn't realized this until a recent triggering event illuminated this for you. Though painful, as triggers often are, they are more importantly signposts of what your heart is ready to heal. Your only job is to witness, validate and love that suffering part of yourself. Your heart will do the rest.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

An injustice committed against you years ago is now finding its balance. You heard a bit of news through the grapevine and secretly put the puzzle pieces together. You've done the healthy work of forgiveness and letting go for your own sanity and this was your only responsibility. The Universe has done the rest. Remember, Karma never loses an address.

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes.



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Looking Back

The 15th Anniversary of *PinkPlayMags*! That summer day on the patio of Zelda's where Antoine and I first discussed creating a locally-voiced periodical seems like both a century ago and only yesterday.

What began as a flashy, glossy advertising brochure created as a biannual supplement for big sister publication *The Pink Pages Directory*, has become so much more over the years and has carved out a place of distinction in the hearts of our community.

I'm so proud to see "Community Cornerstone", "Hot Artist" and the "Fiction" columns remain at the core of the magazine. This city has such inspiring queer local talent and businesses that strive to serve and support our neighbourhood and beyond. It's always exciting to see them given the spotlight they so richly deserve. Stories are how we build close relationships. It's how we share our strengths, heal our wounds, and impart wisdom.

My time working as the Editor-in-Chief holds some very heartfelt memories. One that is indelibly carved in my mind remains the premiere *Geek Issue*. Coming out of the closet a second time, admitting to my world at large that I was a geek, a nerd, and a gamer was something virtually unheard of at the time. Yet, now more than ever, it's something that seems awesomely common.

I was gifted the opportunity to bring that very personal saga to life with close friend and DC comic artist, **J. Bone**, via a fun, yet poignant, graphic novella on bullying. As someone who was bullied most of my young life, having that issue resonate strongly with readers was very empowering. Shared

experiences bring us closer together, and that is what *PinkPlayMags* has always been about.

Walking down Church Street these days, it may feel like the Gaybourhood has lost some of its lustre, but through the faded make-up it's amazing to see how things continue to grow, change and thrive. Everywhere you look our stories are being told by us with every nuance of the people who hold a letter of our Alphabet Soup dear. In that mesmerizing whirl of rainbow expression *INSPIRED Media Inc.* has remained at the forefront, not only with the *Directory* and this magazine, but the *INSPIRE Awards* and baby sister publication *theBUZZ* are going stronger than ever!

As the confetti cannons burst and the champagne flutes clink, one thing that will always stick with me and remains at the soul of *PinkPlayMags*, is the credo Antoine and I agreed on right from the very beginning: there is enough negativity and bad news in the world. We will not shy away from the serious issues, but we will always publish with the voice of the positive, the empathetic, the supportive, and the kind.

In today's world it's more important than ever that we look for the light in the things that bring us happiness. Community is at the core of that, and I will always believe that *PinkPlayMags* will remain an integral part of that.

Happy 15th Anniversary *PinkPlayMags* – I'm looking forward to celebrating you at 25!

Jeff Harrison was the former Editor-in-Chief of *PinkPlayMags* (2007 - 2014) and now flies his creative nerd colours anywhere vampires and dragons flirt with boardgames and table-top role-playing. You can follow him on Twitter @JHarrisonWriter



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