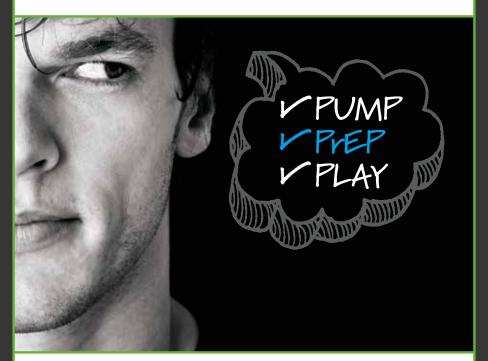
# autumnplay! Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Leather, and Queer Community Seasonal • Autumn 2016 Part 3 of 4 free copy enjoying ou ON THE GO? PinkPlayMags PDF from our website. Growing up queer, entering midlife, and discovering there's more to life than sex. Also Keith Cole, PWA Foundation, Too Attached, Puerto Vallarta, Fiction, Horoscope, Event Listings, and more







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## From the **Publisher**

ow that I am living my midlife years, I am the most joyful, the most secure, and the most confident in the understanding of myself and my journey in life, that I have ever been.

I feel at odds with our Editor-in-Chief whose letter that you will be reading in a couple of pages, in the sense that I don't subscribe to the notion that our community is centered around youth, and I don't see aging as challenging.

At a young age I resolved to the understanding that our life is an excursion, with a beginning and an end, and we need to live and enjoy each stage of it the way it is meant to be lived and enjoyed. Readers, if you are in your early stages of adulthood please enjoy the hell out of it, and I can only tell you from my own experience that it only gets better, and that age is wisdom, and wisdom is happiness.

So am I happy in my midlife? ABSOLUTELY. I worked hard to create the life that I want, and for me success in life has nothing to do with money. I have a tight close net of great friends, I work in a job I love with passion, and my relationship with my family has gotten closer and stronger (believe you me that didn't come easy, it took a lot of work). I also really enjoy volunteering and getting involved in community causes, which has incredibly enriched my life over the last decade.



Antoine marching with INSPIRE Awards at Toronto Pride Parade

Completely different than my early adulthood, my wild days as I call them, an occasional outing to a dance club these days is about it. Most of my time is spent with friends, board game nights, cultural outings, quiet dinners, and nature trips.

Rob Lowe said (yes that Rob Lowe), "I wouldn't go back on my old days. Although everybody needs to have their wild years, it's just a question of when, and I'd rather have had them early than be doing it as a midlife crisis type thing." I can't agree more.

Come December, I look forward to sharing with you the last edition of PinkPlayMags' 2016 look at the life stages of being human and LGBTQ. I also can't wait to share my thoughts on getting to be a senior and reaching our twilight years.

Before I sign off I am going to start teasing you a little because 2017 is a big year. First it is Canada's 150th, and it also is PinkPlayMags 10th ANNIVERSARY. Our team here can't be happier with the love you have given us over the years, and naturally the little wheels in our heads are already spinning with ideas to celebrate these occasions. Stay tuned.

Until next edition, enjoy your Autumn.

Antoine Elhashem publisher@pinkplaymags.com

# autumnplay!

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## From the **Editor**

ur features this issue continue with the cycle of life series, taking a look at what midlife has to offer. This can be a particularly daunting time within the queer community, which so often is based around youth, or trying to maintain the look at least. However, as within any segment of the population there's a diversified gamut of individuals who combine the scope of our community, and our writer's take a look at how we are facing up to the challenges of aging.

Megan Hutton continues her look at this progression, and chats with individuals who are happily finding themselves more comfortable as the years pass by. Brandon Dean gives us a great inspirational guide for looking at yourself, evaluating where you want to be in the future, and provides tips on how to get there. Finally, Kelly Wilk chatted with Trey Anthony about her latest production, How Black Mothers Say I Love You, which explores how queer and black cultures can both collide and connect.

Our "Hot Artist" spotlight looks at Indian siblings, "Too Attached", who have a new EP and are embarking on a national tour with Tegan and Sara. Our "Community Cornerstone" profile looks at the Toronto PWA Foundation, who hold the annual Toronto to Montreal Friends for Life Bike Rally Fundraiser. Cheryl Costello's "From The Heart" column looks at how to navigate the path to wisdom and spirituality as we age, and our "Looking Back" column is written by local Toronto fairy-about-town, Keith Cole, who dishes on how



he's survived being an artist for the past three decades.

This issue's travel article is on Puerto Vallarta, Mexico's gayest city, home to a growing Pride festival, and located within the state of Jalisco that recently legalized same-sex marriage. Find out why so many travellers continue to visit every year, while others decide to relocate permanently, and some just drop by to perform.

Caitlyn Holroyd has some amazing "Autumn in the City" events leading up to Halloween, and Julie Antoinette gives us her "Autumn Horoscopes". Once again, thanks to our designer Mychol Scully for making all our words look great in print.

Read previous issues in our "Life Series" on Youth and Young Adults in the archive section of our website www.pinkplaymags.com.

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



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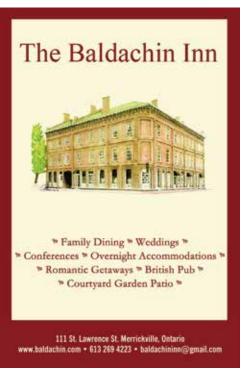




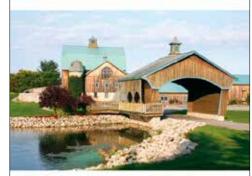
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# MIDLIFE, SAND FIGURING IT ALL QUT... MISYBE

By Megan Hutton

thought we had forever, there is the realization that the clock is ticking. This might have been a time in our lives when we now look back at some of our choices and ask ourselves, "What was I thinking?"

Move forward a few years to when our hormones settle down and we aren't thinking about sex all the time, and we can now evolve into a beautiful state of friend-love. This begins the midlife stage in our lives where we realize our connections often come from a deeper level, where our mental and spiritual attractions are just as important as our physical ones. If we are fortunate enough to

find all of this in one partner, that is a gift. If not, the wonderful aspect of this is that we never have to break up!

These deep bonds involve emotional intimacy that is often referred to as pseudo-romantic friendships, moving from liking to loving someone, without having all the baggage and expectations that can destroy relationships. These varied partnerships are more common today than in the past, when we were programmed to believe that intimacy could only be possible if it involved sex.

Moving into midlife we have experiences to look back on. It can be a time to evaluate some of our former decisions and choices. We can't change them because, that song has already been sung. Finding a partner who is compatible, with commonality, isn't easy, even in midlife. We are so inundated with societal expectations that focus on the physical, but as we age we all change. It's at this stage where we become aware that a strong spiritual connection will outlast the physical body we once thought so important.



## Sue & Leslie

I am fortunate to know several happy individuals who have successfully migrated into that midlife stage of their lives. Two of these are beautiful women who have found that special connection, and are happy together after thirty-two years. Sue Hartman grew up in Wyoming in the middle of the Wind River reserve where the Arapaho tribe resided. She was the only girl in the school not part of the Arapaho tribe. Along the way she immigrated to Canada and got two Masters degrees, and worked in management and administration for Ontario's Ministry of Health. She was active in early feminist politics in Toronto, including The Hassle Free Clinic, and Henry Morgentaler's (abortion) clinic. She was also instrumental in organizing the first women's housing co-op in Toronto.

Once married to a former Anglican priest, she had one son, before she met her life partner while standing in a line-up at OISE to hear Henry Morgentaler speak. They were both with other women at the time, but sometimes fate intervenes. Leslie Nanos grew up in Toronto as an only child. She has a wit and a sense of humor equal to few, and is one of the most brilliant women I know. Leslie laughs at being on the "Not So Amazon" ball team. "Sue was the jock, and pitched for her team." "I was the one who was in the field, and if the ball came near me, I just yelled, "yours!", she laughs.

I asked both of them what it is that has kept them together and genuinely still in love after all these years. "We are calm and chaotic", Leslie was quick to reply. "We balance one another out." They said they share some common interests, but also have separate ones. Sue is a gifted stained glass artist, while Leslie enjoys woodwork, and is a musician. My observation from my friendship with them is the incredible balance these two have with one another. Although they did legally marry, there is no sense of ownership or obligation.

Leslie worked as an administrator and was the Director of Finance in various government ministries in Ontario. She is very candid about her struggle with being bi-polar. As she puts it into context with her ever present humour, "Sue meditates, and I medicate."

The pair say they knew they were just meant to be together. When asked about their anniversary Sue says, "Our first date was in the line-up, I took Leslie home and she never left. We have unconditional love, loyalty, trust and respect for one another." That's something we could all aspire to, and if we ever find that connection we are truly blessed.

## Samantha

I also interviewed my friend Samantha Lauzon. I first met Samantha when I was looking to cast a transgender woman for my play. We met and I had an immediate affection for this woman who had lived through so much. Samantha is strong, beautiful and has an air of confidence with a very sensitive interior.

Her early life involved struggling with a single mother, foster homes and poverty. In spite of the chaos, Samantha had a close and loving relationship with her mom until she passed away a couple of years ago." My mom was very proud of me, and accepted my choice to live as a woman", she confides.



Samantha is very candid about her life, which is only part of her charm. It doesn't get much better than honesty and putting it all out there. There is no judging our truths. "I began to take hormones when I was thirteen, when I got my first ones from a prostitute in Hamilton", she explains.

Samantha said her drug use began early. It was a way to cope with her emotional pain, the sense that she didn't think she mattered, and her constant suicidal thoughts. The drug use landed her in jail a few times, and she was often homeless. Eventually she realized that the life she was living was going to destroy her, and she decided to change.

"Where we came from doesn't matter, it's how we came out of it", she says. Samantha lives in a condo now in Toronto with her two little dogs. One of them her constant companion for about fourteen years. She has a supportive family, a sister and two nieces who adore her. Her nieces have only known her as Samantha, and are close to, and proud of their aunt.

Our early experiences still have an emotional impact. If we don't feel loved or worthy as children, then that feeling can often still lurk in the back of our minds. It can be difficult to accept love and caring, because on the other side there can be rejection and mistrust.

Samantha, like many of us who are honest, still struggles with that. My choice of a coping mechanism today is alcohol. I still struggle with depression and thoughts of suicide, and it scares me that I could actually end my life", she confides.

We might be surrounded by friends and people who love us, but loneliness lives everywhere. Samantha's story is one of strength, and overcoming adversity that many might not have survived. Today, she has a successful career on Social Media and I am proud to call her my friend. You can see her in my upcoming play in the fall for GayPlayDay.

## **Antoine & Vincente**

Antoine Houdeville and Vicente Gannam are a gay couple who have been in a 19-year relationship. Although they arrived here with a common goal, they didn't meet until much later. They were both Brothers in a religious community with the Roman Catholic Church. Vicente said he heard about a community outside Toronto, and he wanted to be part of it. He moved here in 1987 from Brazil. Antoine arrived in Ontario, from France in 1978 to work in the religious community as well.

Eventually they both decided to leave their religious communities and live openly. They met in 1997. Vicente said he put a personal ad in "Extra" advertising for a partner who was interested in a long-term relationship, and it worked out well for both of them. They said their relationship has endured because they are genuinely in love, and are also always willing to forgive. They describe their communication as open and honest.

Vicente and Antoine also believe that the privacy and space they give one another has been a factor in the strength of their long term relationship. "We have vacations together, as well as apart."



"We don't have specific roles in our relationship, we just do what needs to be done." We wanted to share a monogamous life, and we are both clear that we maintained our individuality within that. Antoine has his own painting business, and Vincente has worked with the Ontario Government for over a decade. At the moment he is involved in implementing a mental health and wellness strategy for members who work in corrections.

I asked them what challenges they have found as a couple or personally in midlife. Antoine said one of his biggest challenges was leaving the religious community. "I'd been in the closet all my life. I had to unlearn everything I had been taught to believe. Being gay was a horrible secret and not something to be acted upon. Finding a way to reconcile my true feelings was difficult", he explains.

For Vicente, it is impermanence and reflecting on the next stage of life, which is aging. He has concerns that aging can be a loss of power, and reverting back to being dependent. I reminded him that I am 70 and have just finished a film, and have begun rehearsals for my next play. I also remember having those same thoughts in my midlife years.

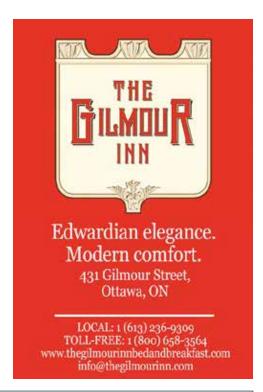
As we move forward to the next stage we realize that genuine connections are so important. Simplicity is key as we strive to stay in harmony with the paths we have chosen. This is the stage where we need to keep our hearts open and to honour our intuition. Hopefully we have moved beyond the importance of the physical, and more into the spiritual. In the end, if a soul connection finds you, you will certainly know it.

the early 1960's Megan spent five of her teenage years on her own. Through the solitude of those years she found life to be a great teacher. Today she is a Poet/Playwright/ Short Story writer, and published has numerous articles on relationships. She read from the Anthology



"Dykewords" at Toronto 's first "Word on the Street", and she's currently working on a poetry collection and a short film.

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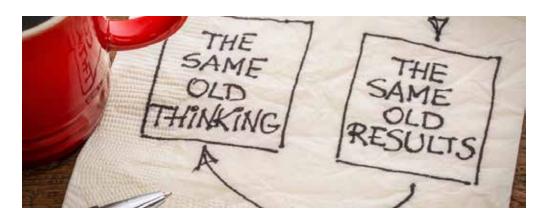
# The Next Chapter in Your Life Tips towards creating a plan to design the life you desire by Brandon Dean

People a certain age will remember John Lennon singing "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" — a line from Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy). People any age can heed Lennon's advice, or more accurately, his veiled warning.

For those approaching or already over 50, the 'third act' in the play of life often inspires reflection and contemplation. It's a time to take inventory of the "meaning," "purpose," and "fulfillment" in a life lived, and to make plans for the closing chapters (wishfully, decades) to come.

With 60 the new 40, in today's society of greater longevity and 'seniors' continuing to work past retirement, whether by desire or necessity, people frequently look beyond midlife for a new path — often expressed as a more meaningful life, or a greater sense of happiness.

Few people ever contemplate their life and think, "I wish I had spent more time working." Quite the opposite. In 2009, nurse Bonnie Ware (bonnieware.com) published a list of the deathbed regrets most commonly heard in palliative care. Number one on the list? "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me." The top five also include "I wish I didn't work so hard", and "I wish that I had let myself be happier."





A societal shift in recent years - if not started by, certainly fueled by a hoard of baby boomers loudly rejecting the concept of 'fading quietly into retirement' - are mid-lifers and seniors who are actively confronting and eliminating the possible threat of such regrets.

Inspired to see their 50s, 60s and 70s as not an era for retirement, but a time for revitalization, rebirth, and/or recommitment to life, many search out change with a desire to reinvent or redesign how they're living life. They set gaze on new horizons and adventures, seize new opportunities, and chart a new path — whether at work, home or play.

While some are working to avoid such regrets, others simply want more in life and are looking for the answers. For those who are planning to move into a quieter retirement, the experience can be an equally dramatic, traumatic and challenging life change: What do I do now? What do I want in my remaining time? And for some whose work dominated their life: Who am I, now that my career is in the past?

A noteworthy caveat is that it's not only people later in life doing this. More people in their 20s, 30s and 40s are taking stock earlier in life about the quality of their life, the real meaning of worklife balance, and how best to design a life that has meaning, purpose and fulfillment.

Meaning. Purpose. Fulfillment. A new path. Happier. Courage to live a life true to one's self. Each are common themes heard from people that want to create or navigate major life changes. They often rest alongside an equally common problem: many people that desire more in life, often have trouble defining or quantifying what "more" actually means. This creates a conundrum: how does one find or build something they can't define?

People frequently want change, but don't know where to start or how to create a plan to move forward. This can produce a feeling of being overwhelmed, making it difficult to determine the first steps. Your life is your own, and it's as unique and distinct as your mind and personality.

What do you want? Goals are simply dreams with a deadline attached.

Here are six self-defeating things (if applicable) you need to stop doing in order to create significant change in your life.

## COMPLAINING.

Stop it. It's 100% wasted energy; complaining changes nothing. It creates no action towards solution. It keeps you mired in negative thinking and the past. Take control, and channel that time and energy instead into thinking about 'futurefocused' ideas and solutions.

## BEATING UP YOUR SELF IMAGE.

Think about this: whom do you criticize in your life, more than yourself? When you do, does it make you a better person? Does it lead to the change you want? Inspire you to create change? Like complaining, it's 100% wasted energy that



changes nothing, but keeps you rooted in the past. Instead, make a list of things you have done well, your positive attributes, and things that you're good at doing, and make note of how those items can help you achieve goals and the life you want.

# WORRYING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK.

Your ego drives you to over-emphasize and incorrectly assess the amount of time other people actually spend thinking about the way you live and what you do. In reality, they're all busy focused on what they're doing, their own problems, and trying to find the same answers you are. What other people think of you is none of your business. Choose to live the life you want, the way you want to live it, and you'll soon discover the other pieces (and people truly important in your life) will fall into place around you.

## BEING AFRAID.

Insecurity and self-doubt will keep you exactly where you are. Muster the courage to seek out and ask for help and advice from friends, people you admire, colleagues, or independent professional advice.

## FEARING FAILURES.

Be bold. Take risks. Experiment. Fail fast. Then learn from mistakes. Try something different. Repeat this process until what you do works and you have what you want. Our insecurities overshadow our memories that to learn, one must

make mistakes, and sometimes fail completely. Embrace that you learn as much, if not more, about life and yourself from failing, as you do when achieving.

# WORRYING ABOUT

Worrying about how you'll do something, is your mind tricking you into a form of procrastination, that inevitably keeps you from identifying potential changes you could consider. Often, that little voice in our mind (it comes from within our subconscious and is called our Critical Factor) will takes a kernel of your desired idea and immediately begin to mentally mire it into a bog of worry, and self-doubt. The route to successful significant change often starts with an incomplete roadmap. Boldness comes from taking the first step or two and trusting they will help unfold the next steps of the action plan.

BE SPECIFIC, BE POSITIVE, BE REALISTIC, BE A VISIONARY,

REVISIT, REWRITE, REPLAY, REPEAT.

Brandon Dean is a certified hypnotherapist that specializes in Subconscious Success, and a professional Personal Success Coach who specializes in navigating significant life changes. For more information, visit www.RedChairHypnosis.com.









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here do wounds come from? Where exactly do we run into emotionally damaging implements of life? Most people agree we are the sum of our experiences, but not just any experiences. It is the first ones that form the most indelible marks - the marks of growing up. These deep wounds were the stumbling blocks that artistic producer, writer and director Trey Anthony navigated her way around, in her six-year journey to write and produce the stage production for How Black Mothers Say I Love You

The tale is an incredibly emotional and unflinching reflection of healing assumed abandonment, and a deep longing for maternal affection that is created when a parental figure has no choice but to leave. As a young child Anthony was left with her grandmother in England for six years, while her mother worked in Canada to secure a better life for her children.

In an interview, Anthony said she wanted to proceed with the writing by walking the precarious line of sensitivity, and "being as open as possible, but also being very mindful that it's not just your story



being told." However, Anthony is also adamant that, "if this is your truth then you should be able to tell it", and tell it she did through characters drawing from her childhood experiences.

We are all children when we form our first ideas about ourselves in relation to the world. Our religion, culture, ethnicity, and background combine to inform a perspective of the world that we take on as our own. I coined these types of things as difficult opportunities that shape us into the fine people we are today. However, we usually spend a substantial amount of our life hating them, and coming back to them over and over like a Rubik's Cube, until we finally develop some sort of peace.

PRODUCTION PHOTOS. Courtesy Trey Anthony

The scars of separation are beginning to heal, and as Anthony told me there is a luxury of being able to communicate love that estranged families do not have. "My mother thought that homosexuality was a very white thing," Anthony says. When asked about the inherent sacrifices that particularly a single mother of colour might have to make because of identity, Anthony replied, "The only one I could relate to about black motherhood was Phylicia Rashad on The Cosby Show, who had time to sit down with her kids and be funny and goofy, but that wasn't the reality of my life."



It's ironic that Rashad was dubbed "The Mother" of the African-American community at the 42nd NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Image Awards. Anthony's misconception of motherhood as a "baking cookies" function did not coincide with her black Caribbean mother of three, who had to "function from a place of survival." Her mother's practical accomplishments of providing a roof overhead, clothing, and food, were the love she provided. "Having these long drawn out

conversations were a luxury that we could not afford", she confided.

"I wore that wound inside and out. I wasn't chosen by the person who was supposed to choose me", she explains. During puberty it hit Anthony hardest, especially as a little black girl going to neighbours to get her hair done, when she was more just longing for her mother. "For three days I bled alone during my period. The loneliness and the devastation was staggering to me," she admits.

"Mothers leaving their children, raising queer children, sexuality, or religion are all things we usually don't talk about in polite company in the black community. People come out to see this in theatre because they want to have those conversations", she explains. Anthony has come to witness that her play is a healing place to voice pain for community. Anthony's grandmother is quoted by character Daphne when she says "I don't know if you learned this from the white people at work, but this (gayness) is not okay." This is also apparently the line that resonates most for queer people of colour in the audience, who had the same experience of another level of otherness you have to go through with family.

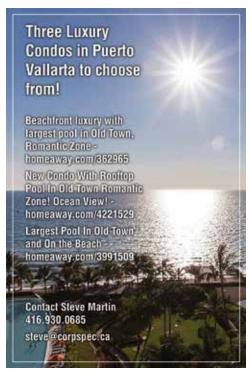
"As an adult I sought an authentic portrayal of myself. I didn't see a profession black actress until I was in my twenties, and I think that could have changed my life, particularly for queer girls," Anthony notes. So with her #200GIRLS initiative Anthony invited young women of colour from low–income families to attend the production, and to see "it's possible to have a career in the arts, to tell our stories, to see positive images, and to know that more is possible."

For those who missed the original run, Anthony noted that the show is returning to the Factory Theatre in Toronto, February 2017. www.factorytheatre.ca, www.treyanthonystudios.com

Kelly Wilk appeared in Beer and Butter Tarts Vol.1 by Stained Pages Press. She is an avid blogger on The High Flying Adventures of Captain Grief (www.captaingrief.com) and currently The Ginger Menace (www.pinkplaymags.com) and Brave. Creative.Me. (www.bravecreativeme.com).

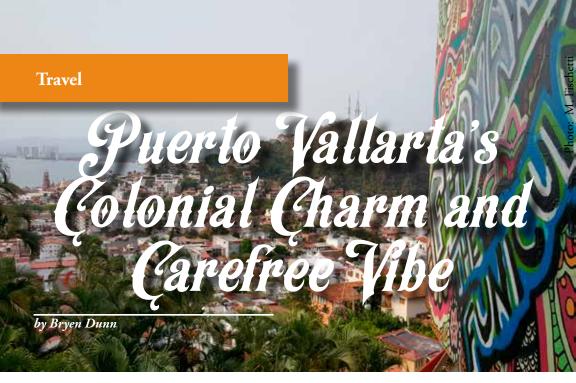












irst time visitors to Puerto Vallarta will be surprised at just how open and relaxed the old town is toward the LGBT community. It's more than just hanging a flag in the window to attract tourists; it's a mindset that people have that follows the old live-and-let-live idiom.

There are dozens of gay-owned businesses within the tiny downtown enclave of cobbled streets referred to a Zona Romantica. Everything from bars and nightclubs, to hotels and retail outlets. Many have been around for years, as far back as when Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were at the height of their careers. In fact, Casa Kimberley recently opened, transforming the former homes of these two celebrities into a luxury boutique hotel featuring nine suites, a spa, pool, open-air dining, a tequila bar, and the preserved Puente Del Amor (Love Bridge) that links the two properties.

Today, the city continues to thrive as a welcoming gay destination, and with the recent legalization of same-sex marriages in the state of Jalisco, the attraction for the LGBT community to visit and feel welcomed is only growing stronger. Puerto Vallarta was also the first city in Mexico to be granted Gay Travel Approved status by GayTravel.com, and a recent New York Times survey named it the #1 "off the beaten path" or "surprisingly gay friendly" travel destination in the world. As well, in May 2017, Puerto Vallarta will host its fifth annual Vallarta Pride festival coinciding with the U.S. Memorial Day long weekend.

Their Pride festival is one of the most interesting in the world, mixing in activities for all genders, with a variety of unique events. Although it's small in nature compared to larger cities, it makes up for size with its quaint quirkiness. Imagine lanky drag queens in stillettos running along the cobblestone streets competing in an obstacle course as part of Drag Derby, or rough and buff men straddling a mechanical bull to see who can stay up the longest. Speaking of staying up, the latest rage in town is a pill called Hunter, which apparently is the equivalent to Viagara. Giddy up!



It's also likely the only Pride where you'll see a drag queen with a live snake wrapped around her shoulders, a Donald Trump piñata hanging above the crowds, and revellers drinking 40oz bottles of beer openly on the streets. Mantamar is an adultsonly beach club and bar that is very gay-friendly, and plays host to a variety of Pride events, from the opening night beach fashion show, to the closing pool party. Girls have their own parties as well, organized in part by lesbian owners of the El Arrayan restaurant. Lazaro Cardenas Park is ground zero for the main festivities with a wide range of attractions, including live entertainment, an exhibitor fair, food and beverage court, and DJ's.

Of course, no Pride would be complete without a parade, and while this one is over in about 30 minutes, again its the spirit and enthusiasm of both the participants and spectatators that make it a sight to behold. Drag queens dance alongside elderly onlookers, while families sit side-by-side with same-sex couples, waiting for trinkets to be tossed into the crowd. Overall, in typical Mexican fashion, this parade is more about sass and sexiness, than the corporate marketing machine

that most North American and worldwide festivals have become.

Toronto resident Steve Martin is a huge fan of Puerto Vallarta, and recently made the city his second home. "My husband and I went to Puerto Vallarta in 2006 for our honeymoon and we fell in love with the place, especially after a local girl working at a coffee shop said good morning to us and then proceeded to ask us if we were the Canadian couple who were here on our honeymoon. Into our second year of vacationing there together, we started to think of planning for our eventual retirement, and of all the places we had travelled to together or separate, we decided that Puerto Vallarta was definitely the place for us. We bought our first place in 2008, and since then we have purchased three additional condos and sold one", he says.

The couple continue to love Puerto Vallarta even more than when they first went. "The Old Town and Romantic Zone, as our neighbourhood is called, is full of amazing restaurants and costing you a fraction of the cost of Toronto. The food is not only Mexican. We have many International chefs who have vacationed in Puerto Vallarta and decided to either remain, or return and open



up restaurants and make Puerto Vallarta their permanent home", he explained.

A few highly recommended dining options are the lesbian-owned El Arrayan, that offers a great alfresco dining experience of freshly prepared regional cuisine from different states in Mexico. The name of the restaurant implies that all the dishes on the menu are Intangible Cultural Heritage declared by UNESCO for Mexican Cuisine. Barcelona Tapas is owned by Chicago expat Chef William Carballo, and he delivers an authentic Spanish family-style dining experience to his guests. Not only is the food prepared and served with authenticity, the upper level dining terrace offers one of the better views of the ocean and surrounding area. Definitely a hidden gem in the city, as is Café Des Artistes. This multiroom indoor/outdoor restaurant is designed with elegance in mind. There's art at every turn, the servers are attentive yet unintrusive, and fresh seafood dishes are presented as works of art themselves.

Also worth visiting is Pulpito 116 Gastro Pub and Maia Restaurant, both located within the very charming, and very gay, Villa Mercedes Petit Hotel. Maia serves Mexican cuisine with a

revisionist take on traditional recipes, and offers a great assortment of local craft beers and wines, while Pulpito 116 offers a unique and innovative tapas menu, pizzas, salads, sangrias, and mixology inspired cocktails. The rooms range from standard efficiency units, to suites with private outdoor oceanview terraces. There's also some very interesting local artwork that adorn the walls throughout, that's worth taking a second look at.

The Blue Chairs Hotel was the original gayproperty that spearheaded the development for others to follow. Today, it's quite rundown and out of date, but still hosts a variety of drag shows and dance parties that are well attended. Next door is Sappire Ocean Club, that has oceanside dining, three boutique-like hotel rooms, and a tiny pool that both hotel and restaurant guests can enjoy. The best Happy Hour hands down can be found at Hotel Mecurio, where every Sunday between 4pm and 7pm, there's the promise of Beers, Boys, and Burgers. The tiny inside courtyard becomes jammed with locals and guests of the hotel, as speedo clad servers make the rounds serving 2-for-1 cocktails.

Speaking of cocktails, the Gay Vallarta Bar Hopping Tour will get you out and about to



about a half-dozen of the local watering holes, including Blondies, Diablos, Mr. Flamingo, and the male-only Wet Dreams. There's also a VIP dinner package offered. If drinking on the water is more your thing, be sure to check out either Diana's All Day Gay Cruise or the Wet and Wild Gay Cruise.

A short climb up into the hills above the Zona Romantica is the luxurious Villa Savana. This multi-level, multi-room accommodation option can be fully rented by groups, making it the ideal spot for private functions or wedding ceremonies. Further beyond the confines of Old Town, there's a whole other Puerto Vallarta, and it's this area where you'll find the larger chain hotels and all-inclusive properties. Marriott has their semiinclusive CasaMagna resort about a 20-minute drive from Zona Romantica, and is a great spot to stay for those seeking all the comforts of North America.

As well, another 20-minutes on across the bridge in Neuvo Vallarta, the Hard Rock Hotel is a great spot to spend a couple nights where you can party like a rock star. DI equipment and guitars can be borrowed from the front desk to be used in the guest rooms. Headphones are provided, so you

## More Info

Vallarta Tourism visitpuertovallarta.com **Gay Vallarta** www.gaypv.mx Vallarta Pride www.vallartapride.com Sayulita www.sayulita.com

Air Canada, Westjet, and Aeromexico offer frequent service from various Canadian destinations.

Note: Toronto drag sensation, Miss Conception, does her annual PVR performance stint at the Palm Cabaret and Bar from January 19th to April 1st. 2017. Stop in and do tequila shots with her!

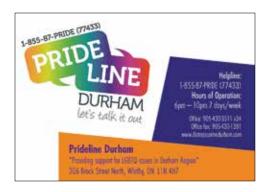
don't have to worry about others hearing you rocking out.

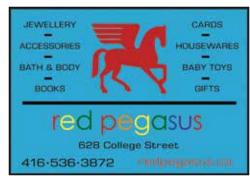
Finally, a great day trip is to head about an hour outside of Vallarta to visit the tiny surf and fishing town of Sayulito. Although tourism is quickly developing here, as can be noticed with the multitude of souvenir shops, it still provides for an old Mexican town experience once you veer off the main strip.

Overall, the experience found in and around Puerto Vallarta is quite unique, given its laissezfaire relaxed attitude, and openess and acceptance toward everyone. Salud!.

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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Our world remains in constant flux. Barriers are being broken down. Labels are becoming ever more meaningless. The music of Too Attached is a reflection of it all — a blending of genres, cultures, ideas and technology, feeding off the innate need for human connection.

It's ironic then that Too Attached's debut EP, Bronze, was made by siblings separated by nearly an entire continent. After building their individual artistic careers over the past decade, in 2014 Shamik and Vivek Shraya decided to seriously collaborate for the first time, even though one lived in Vancouver and the other in Toronto. They didn't have a set goal in mind, only to combine the best of what each was able to offer, and allowing the project to unfold at its own pace. The results are a sexy and stirring collection of five songs grounded in tough beats, samples and rhymes, all tied together by pop smarts and the mesmerizing sounds of the siblings' Indian heritage.

The opening track, "Snake," fittingly offers the temptation to enter Too Attached's highly sensual world, and once inside of it, the pleasures are too satisfying to resist. "Filthy" incorporates elements of Missy Elliott's "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)", and removes all inhibitions. "Unhappy," by contrast, brings reality back into the picture, but only briefly until release is found again in "Monsoon." The closing track, "Sincerely," provides the afterglow, and the assurance that this was not just a dream. Bronze is music for the modern world; composed from a bottomless well of influences, yet brimming with humanity.

Indeed, Vivek and Shamik had seemingly been building up to making Bronze since their childhood days of singing Hindu devotional songs together. That led to each of them pursuing individual musical interests, with Vivek releasing four solo albums between 2002 and 2009, while Shamik focused largely on beatboxing during that

## **Hot Artist**

## by Jason Schneider

time. Following that, the siblings ventured into other artistic areas, with the duo collaborating on a documentary about their mother, which eventually led to the creation of Too Attached.

"Since 2013, we found ourselves working together quite frequently. Shamik beatboxed on my Babyface tribute album that year, I sang on his Channeling India album in 2014, he scored my short film about our mom, and he produced a track on my Diwali/Christmas EP. I think working together repeatedly reignited our childhood closeness and I proposed the idea of us doing a whole project together", Vivek stated.

From there, the challenge was overcoming geographical distance between them, something they achieved through a steady online correspondence. Vivek explains, "As the producer of the EP. Shamik would often send me a short beat or sample via email. I would upload it and try to come up with a melody or hook, record on top of it and send it back. Based on what I had laid down, we would talk about where to take the song next. It was a very collaborative and unpredictable experience as both of us never knew what to expect when we would download what the other had sent."

As the songs took shape, Vivek found a lyrical theme in bridging the gap many of us face in maintaining interpersonal relationships in this technological age. While the online fantasy can be satisfying, ultimately it's touch that we all crave, and depending on one's mood, Bronze offers both.

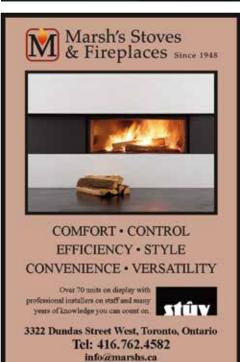
Too Attached are taking that message on tour in 2016, opening for Tegan and Sara, proving

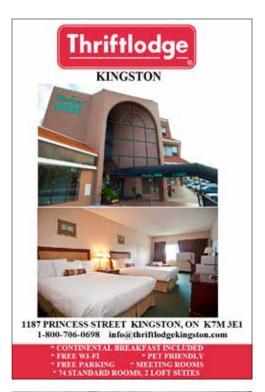
that what they put down together on record is even more compelling on stage. www.tooattached.com

Jason Schneider is the founder of Jason Schneider Media www.jasonschneidermedia.com

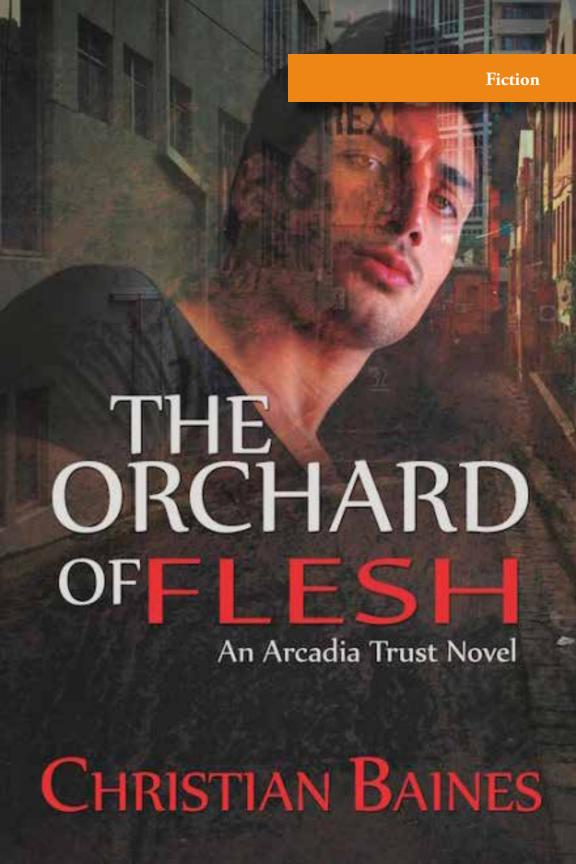












I wet my lips, unable to quell my faint arousal as the first drop of blood broke from the man's skin. The scent had been lingering on the air for the best part of an hour. No matter how careful the man's master had been, there was no containing that delicious aroma. The withdrawal of the first needle sent the sweet liquid dripping down its owner's pale flesh. It flowed into the shallow gullies of a former six-pack that had long been padded out by the comforts of a double-incomeno-kids lifestyle. I heard a faint whine from beneath the man's hood, to which his master lowered an attentive ear, wiping the rich nectar away with a handful of tissue paper. The scent of it, however, still clung to the air, tormenting me.

Ever since the bars and discos had emerged as prime feeding grounds, slowly replacing the smoking lounges, dog tracks, and speakeasies, I'd wondered at the sheer imagination of humans when it came to realising their physical and social perversions.

Nightclubs remain fascination. In Sydney, to thirty years now, my patronage around at any given time. The Fantasy, an aviary for emotionally fragile birds flowering to adulthood club scene, and Blaze, decided a life of slavery thing, provided it was to the gym, protein trance music.

Then there was Sulphur. BDSM or leather bars I'd seen them swing over Your imagination, vivid though I'm sure it is, can't even begin...

a particular my home for close I usually rotated three or four clubs present list included young, pretty, and of paradise, newly and discovering the for those who'd wasn't such a terrible spent in service supplements, and

Not that I consider to be anything novel. the decades between

this look and that. Moustache to baby face, back to beard, provided it accentuated the obligatory flannel. Skinny if you were submissive, muscles required if not. Rubber allowed, rubber allowed but not encouraged, rubber required, women welcome, women unwelcome, women preferred, Victorian overtures a bonus...I'd seen hideaways such as this in many cities over the years, the most entertaining and creative having dotted Berlin during the Weimar years.

Your imagination, vivid though I'm sure it is, can't even begin...

Sulphur also offered patrons a straightforward, unapologetically sexual antidote to the sometimes immature and bitchy tone set by the likes of Fantasy. I smiled at the notion of tonight's demonstration gracing that stage, then shook the thought away as the squeal of some disgusted young twink pierced my hearing. I had to wonder. If humans knew the true nature of the beings that walked among them, would they throw terms like "blood play" around quite so liberally?

In the unlikely event you're still unsure, yes. I am of that most fortunate of races that will never know the suffering of age. I sustain this immortality through the drinking of blood. You may refer to our kind as Blood Shades.

In polite society, we do not use the "v" word.

I'd positioned myself in the corner, dressed modestly by the standards of those around me. A short rubber tunic encased most of my torso, ending just a few inches above the belt. My pants were of the same substance and didn't leave an inch to breathe. A faint smile warmed my lips as I glanced around the room. My outfit may not have been standard wear for a man of over one hundred and fifty, but such things are made easier when the world takes you for a sprightly twenty-four.

That's how old I was when my Blood Shade nature usurped its human shell. This natural phenomenon, strictly inherited through one's family line, can lie dormant for generations. But when it takes hold...well, let's just say having one's blood vessels rewire themselves to the digestive system while still conscious is an experience one doesn't soon forget.

My Mannequin, Brett, stood at my side, cutting a handsome figure in the dim, fiery lights of Sulphur. I'd afforded him only a small pair of leather shorts, offset by what could generously be called a sleeveless shirt. A dozen light chains hung off a pair of thin leather shoulder pads, draping his otherwise naked chest and back. Another chain at the base connected them, serving as a seam. Flimsy, but smart-looking leather cuffs bound his hands behind him.

No doubt binding my Mannequin in leather while I sported rubber violated some unwritten dungeon code, but the majority of Sulphur's kinksters were far too polite to say as much, and

when Brett's survival regularly imbibing disapproval of some was the least of my

His shirt had been a reminded me of the one of our first meeting. adorned with chains. my version of the story it—our second him mortally wounded Drinking my blood had and premature end, and granting him some overcome almost any disease.

I had perfect control from the moment his eyes met mine.

depended upon the blood, my fetish fashion cop

sentimental choice. It he'd worn the night It too had been Then by chance and I'm sticking encounter had seen werewolf. spared Brett a painful healing his wounds of my ability to mundane injury or

Such powers of course, do not come free. Dependent on my blood for the rest of his natural life, Brett now belonged to me.

As a bead of sweat trickled down over his ear, Brett flicked his tongue over his lips, trying to keep them moist as he surveyed the room. I assumed this was his first visit to such a club. I too might have been nervous as a first timer, watching some burly gentleman withdraw carefully placed skewers from his victim's skin.

Another trail of delicious red seeped from a new wound.

I could stand it no more. I needed to feed, and so did my Mannequin. With a light tug on his chains, I took Brett upstairs where the party was in full swing. We found a spot leaning comfortably against an empty boot blacking station. I watched my Mannequin settle on a woman with long black hair, who'd draped herself over another patron. He was gasping for air. I shot Brett a knowing glance. Staring was just rude, and common rudeness, I could not abide.

"Wait here for me." I drifted through the club to a wide-eyed young man I'd spotted across the room. The boy wasn't dressed for Sulphur. He seemed instead to have stumbled in from Blaze after a drink or pill too many and had, no doubt, been slogged an extra cover charge for not adhering to code. But his gaze was one of wide-eyed longing, and the muscles beneath his tightly drawn T-shirt twitched in sympathy with another young man bound to a Saint Andrew's cross, enjoying the hot purple pleasures of an electrical prod.

I can't read minds, but I can read bodies. I know a human swimming in desire when I see one. Finding a position near the boy, I feigned interest in the same show. He looked up defensively, as though I'd intruded on some private performance.

I had perfect control from the moment his eyes met mine.

His name didn't matter. All that mattered was his pulse. Its gentle, constant vibration battered the cusp of his neck as he stared at me, his resistance swept away by curiosity and wonder. By lofty Blood Shade standards, I consider myself average, but in that moment, I was the most beautiful creature this human had ever seen. I slipped a gentle hand under the lip of his shirt, caressing the small of his back.

The older man's sub was still gasping, a ridiculous grin on his face as each new shock from the prod sparked its own moment of sensual glee.

I didn't need such gadgets. My very touch commanded a direct link to the nerve centre of my companion's brain. Before long, he too began flinching, sharing in the same sweet pain as his entertainment. Finding nervous links to his fragile mind, I enthralled him with harmless little shocks. The boy moaned, catching his breath between pulses, his human mind easily fooled into feeling precisely what it desired. He finally collapsed against me, his soft neck resting on my shoulder, his weight against my chest.

"Fuck, you're hot." His voice was a barely conscious whisper.

I kissed his cheek as he nuzzled my neck, and then I led the frightened animal away from the electric mayhem that had so captured his imagination. A collar would have suited him well, but I was prepared to work with what I had. The boy regarded Brett with curiosity and more than a little desire. Not that I could blame him.

Understand that Blood Shades are asexual beings. My fondness for men is a simple matter of taste. They're also simpler and easier to manipulate than women. I do, however, still appreciate the aesthetics of a good companion, just as I recognised Brett for the handsome man he was, endowed with an endearing vulnerability and firmly entrenched heterosexuality.

Our new friend raised a hand and touched one of Brett's chains, running his fingertips over the red letters I'd instructed Brett to scrawl on his chest to ward off any talent-scouting doms.

Owned by master.

Brett flinched uncomfortably at the boy's touch.

I shot out a hand and grabbed my prey, whose face contorted as I pinned him against me. "Learn to read, boy. He doesn't belong to you." Gently but firmly, I wrapped my arms around him, soothing and calm after the scolding. As he moaned in appreciation, I almost let him go. His desires were all too easy to read, and there was no fun in that. But both Brett and I were too hungry for games.

Brett flexed his shoulders, straightening his chains as he watched the young man nuzzle me. "Reylan?"

"Patience," I muttered, letting my prey dab my vest with his tongue. I could smell the elixir flowing inside him, hot and inviting.

"How...how long?"

Perhaps the sexual atmosphere of the club was clouding Brett's self-control. He shouldn't have been this hungry. Not after all the work we'd done, building up his endurance.

Christian Baines was born in Toowoomba, Australia. He has since lived in Brisbane, Sydney, and Toronto, and his dual passions for travel and mythology have sent him chasing some of the world's most feared monsters, including vampires in New Orleans, asuras in Bangkok, and theatre critics in New York. www.boldstrokesbooks.com





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PWA has been serving people in Toronto living with HIV/AIDS for 29 years. After the discovery of the HIV virus in 1983, AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) formed to address the major trends of the disease: to help prevent the spread of HIV and to care for those dying from AIDS-related illnesses. In 1986, in response to this emerging trend and frustrated by the public's focus on AIDS prevention and lack of services for people already infected, four gay men living with HIV/AIDS began meeting to discuss ways for people living with HIV to stay healthy and live with dignity. They formed a coalition with a mandate to provide practical, direct-support services to people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) using a peer-to-peer model. In 1987, PWA became an official AIDS Service Organization (ASO).

With the ongoing improvements in treatment options since the mid-1990s, the number of AIDS related deaths have drastically decreased, and the needs of people living with HIV became increasingly complex, necessitating expansion of services to PWA clients across Toronto and beyond.

Suzanne works directly with clients and is part of a team that ensures clients get the excellent level of care and attention that they know they can count on. She explains. "A typical day requires flexibility and responsiveness, because our clients' needs are as diverse as the services we provide. Just last week, while meeting with one of our agency partners, I was made aware of the sudden passing of a long-term volunteer who many of us had known for several years, and I knew their passing would have an impact on staff and clients who knew him. At the same time, a client excitedly approached me to share the news that they were returning to school. While this was going on

our Essentials Market food bank, one of our largest and most used programs, was open and the office was buzzing with serving the over 100 people who come to access the program."

She continues, "Working in a service environment where the needs of others take priority, can be incredibly challenging and rewarding at the same time. We work very hard at PWA at creating a welcoming and healing space so that people who come to us know that this is a space where they can be who they are, and feel connected. I'm incredibly proud of the work we do and the impact and contribution it has on the people we serve."

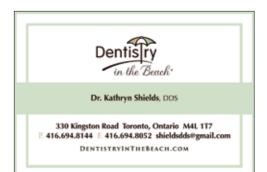
PWA is the largest practical support ASO in Canada. Last year PWA supplied 260,419 services to 7,766 individuals, including 40,575 significant and unique services to 2,541 PHAs.

PWA is a registered charitable organization and is primarily funded through various levels of government grants and individual donations. The Friends For Life Bike Rally is the signature and sustaining fundraising event, raising \$1-million annually and engages hundreds of participants and thousands of donors each year.

For more information about PWA, please visit www.pwatoronto.org

Mike **Twanley** is Philanthropy Director, Communications at Toronto People With AIDS Foundation.











by Caitlyn Holroyd

The transition from summer to fall is always a bittersweet time for me. Bitter because we have to say goodbye to warm weather and the longer days that come with it, but sweet because there's always a ton of fun things to do in and around Toronto in the Fall. For this edition of In The City, I've included a healthy dose of Halloween-themed festivals and parties for all you horror lovers, along with some other noteworthy events. Happy fall!



### **FOOD**

OktoberFEAST

October 14, 6 p.m. Airship37, 37 Parliament Street oktoberFEAST.ca TICKETS: \$25

Fill your belly with some of the best food and drink Ontario has to offer, and help out a worthy cause at OktoberFEAST. Inspired by the bounty of the fall harvest, this dining experience brings together local restaurants, craft brewers, wineries, and even food trucks to raise funds for cancer research and support services for patients and their families. Guests can also look forward to live musical performance, indoor and outdoor lounging areas, and a dance floor.

TIP: OktoberFEAST will also be offering VIP tickets for \$45 that include admission, line bypass, access to a VIP lounge, one drink ticket, and a special gift.

### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**Toronto After Dark Film Festival** 

October 13-21

Scotiabank Theatre, 259 Richmond Street West torontoafterdark.com

TICKETS: \$149 for all-access passes, \$13 for single tickets

Whether you're a horror movie fanatic or just enjoy getting spooked, you won't want to miss the Toronto After Dark Film Festival, Over 800 filmmakers from around the world submitted horror, sci-fi, action, and cult movies and shorts to be considered for this year's festival, which were then narrowed down to to the top 50. Beyond film, the nine-day festival also offers Q&A sessions with visiting filmmakers and



the popular Zombie Night, where attendees are invited to dress up as the undead.

TIP: Stick around after each screening for Pub After Dark, a nightly social event where fans get to chat and mingle with filmmakers.

### Horror-Rama

October 15-16 Hyatt Regency Hotel, 370 King Street West horrorramacanada.com TICKETS: \$25-30

Horror-Rama, Toronto's only all-horror convention and expo, returns for a third year with a jam-packed lineup of eerie exhibitors, putrid panels, queasy Q&As, and spooky surprises. Experience mystifying supernatural performances, venture inside the Incredible Cabinet of Curiosities and Human Oddities (if you dare), pose with life-sized props, and enjoy a soundtrack provided by DJ Johnny Revelation. TIP: Don't miss Joe Hart's Gate-Fest, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of The Gate! Memorabilia from this seminal Canadian classic will be on display, including the

# screen-used Minion mask prop. Canzine Toronto 2016

October 29, 1-7 p.m.

Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas Street West brokenpencil.com/canzine-toronto

Canzine is an annual festival of zine culture and independent arts bringing hundreds of comics and artist books to Toronto. Put on by Broken Pencil Magazine, the festival also gives artists the opportunity to pitch their book to a panel of judges, who will then explain why you have no hope in getting published, or why they want to see your manuscript in their inbox ASAP.

TIP: For the first time ever, Canzine will bring Broken Pencil to life onstage in a one-hour presentation of interviews, readings, live comic jam, and two-minute rant. Watch it all go down at 3:15 p.m.



# Standing Tall: The Curious History of Men in Heels

Runs through October 2017 Bata Shoe Museum, 327 Bloor Street West batashoemuseum.ca

TICKETS: \$14 for adults, \$8 for students, \$5 for children 5-17

Challenge your preconceived notions of who wears heels and why at Standing Tall: The Curious History of Men in Heels. This exhibition takes visitors through the history of men in heels, exploring the use and meanings behind heeled footwear in men's dress. From the heels worn by privileged rulers of the early 1600s, to 1930s cowboy boots,



Italian, Ferradini, 1972-1975. Worn by Elton John. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum. Photo credit: Image © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada (photo: Ron Wood)

and John Lennon's original 1960s Beatle boot, there's plenty to see and talk about.

TIP: Every Thursday evening from 5-8 p.m., Bata Shoe Museum offers Pay What You Can admission with a suggested donation of \$5.

### Cavalcade of Lights

November 26, 7 p.m.

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen Street West

Each November, Nathan Phillips Square ushers in the holiday season with the illumination of Toronto's official Christmas tree, live musical performances, a spectacular fireworks display, and a skating party on the outdoor rink. This year's Cavalcade of Lights promises to be truly special, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the event.

TIP: Before you take in the lights, enjoy hot chocolate. cheesecake, or chocolate peanut butter pizza at Cacao 70 (485 Queen Street West). The Montreal chain has become a welcome addition to the Queen West neighborhood since opening its doors back in April.



Master John Boots Canadian, designed & made by Master John, 1973. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum. Photo credit: Image © 2016 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada (photo: Ron Wood)

### **PARTIES**

### **Hush Hush**

October 15, 9 p.m.

Bloor/Gladstone Library, 1101 Bloor Street West tplfoundation.ca/hush-hush

TICKETS: \$125

Now in its fourth year, Hush Hush transforms Toronto Public Library's Bloor/Gladstone branch into an after-hours party unlike any you've ever attended. This year's theme is Heroes

vs. Villains, so channel your inner Batman, Wonder Woman, or Joker for a night of cocktails, eats, and live entertainment in support of Toronto Public Library. Funds raised will ensure that those who use the library will have more access to technology, learning opportunities, and cultural experiences.

TIP: In need of costume ideas? Be sure to check out Hush Hush's Pinterest board (www.pinterest.com/ hushhush2016) for inspiration.

### Stranger Things: '80s Halloween Party

October 29, 10 p.m.

Sneaky Dee's, 431 College Street facebook.com/TheSneakyDees TICKETS: \$10

Stranger Things was the breakout hit of the summer, so you can expect to see plenty of parties and costumes centred around the Netflix series this Halloween. Sneaky Dee's is getting in on the phenomenon with an '80s-themed Halloween party of their own, featuring the best music from the decade plus some Halloween-flavoured songs as well. Come dressed as your favourite '80s villain, hero, or heroine.

TIP: Fuel yourself before or after the party with a plate of Sneaky Dee's famous nachos. They're massive and perfect for sharing.

### The Nightmare Before Halloween October 29, 8 p.m.

The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen Street West gladstonehotel.com

TICKETS: \$30

Immerse yourself in the fantastical fairytale world of Tim Burton at the Gladstone's Nightmare Before Halloween party, where the hotel will be transformed into a desperately dark, freakishly fun, amazingly animated inside-out upsidedown wonderland. Dress up as your favourite Burton character for a chance to win the costume contest, snap a picture at the selfie station, and enjoy live entertainment from bands, DJs, and performers.

TIP: Malabar (14 McCaul Street) is a must for costume shopping. You'll find Mad Hatter bow ties, Edward Scissorhands wigs, and much more.

Caitlyn Holroyd is a news editor at the Torontobased sports app theScore and a contributor at SheDoesTheCi ty.com, where she compiles the hottest parties and events for the weekly Toronto Hit List. When she isn't writing, she enjoys travelling, attending concerts, and hanging out with her two cats. www. shedoesthecity.com/ caitlyn-holroyd



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### From The Heart

By Cheryl Costello

here is a place somewhere in the middle, that has few signposts to let you know you're there. What you may find though, is the ache inside that something is completely different and that the tides which once guided you through rough waters are changing direction to bring you some place new. The sights look the same, but there is something different about how the world appears this time.

Midlife isn't just a reference to age, but to the way we arrive at various points along our journey. It's where freedom and understanding that it's okay for us to use it comes into play. We learn how to do so early on, but it's this tug of war between, "who you think you are" and "you'll never be enough", which stops us from fully understanding that we're more empowered to use it than we could ever possibly know.

I've talked to so many people about their experiences as they near midlife or emerge fully into its richness. Rather than believe what textbooks and limited statistics try to have us believe, they showed me that there are some who are locked in their beliefs, but that it's our beliefs of midlife which gives us no room to have faith in a bigger existence. I realized that we arrive at midlife several times before our age converges on experience, culminating in new journeys and new life after the age of fifty. What if instead of fearing age we embraced the various "mid-life's" we have in between. Why wait to flower and enjoy the fruits of our experiences as they ripen?

It's also a time of transformation as we take what we once knew to be true and integrate the ways those once-solid truths have changed completely. It's a time of second chances and revisiting our world with a new set of eyes. We don't just find ourselves at these crossroads individually, but also as a community, with our continued pushes for equality. This is a spiritual path we must regard as sacred on the journey. Only when we make space for others at our table, do we understand all the voices that make up the next part of what's to come. Only when we hold that space open for everyone's voices to be heard, do we know where our journey is headed next, and in whose hands.

It's the shift from the early part of a journey in which we spend building, that allows us to sit back and evaluate what now. What do we want to do differently? Who do we need to make more space for? Who do we want to be now?

Each step we take now is not either for or against a movement, but a decision we have to make consciously because the way we take those steps, together or separately, have a great deal of influence on how resilient our community will be in the future. It requires compassion, kindness and a willingness to feel a little discomfort if it arises, to ensure that all members of our queer family feel heard. I understand well, that I have certain privileges which disqualify me from making comments about experiences other than my own, but the greatest gift that any form of midlife offers us, is the willingness to listen.



Pride 2016 left us with an awareness that now more than ever before we're at this crossroads between the beginnings of a movement for equality, and the realization of equity.

There was a great deal of controversy over the actions of Black Lives Matter at Pride Toronto, and whether or not you agree with them, the most important spiritual question we need to ask ourselves and others on this journey with us is, "What can we do for you right now? How can we make our spaces more open?" It's how we held one another up during the first raids, and continued mistreatment from a society that was all too keen on hiding it's LGBTTIQQ2SA citizens.

We see it in the world around us too, this ache of midlife that leaves us yearning for different times we have no name for, but that we have a vague memory of being easier than where we are today. People try to name and claim that ache and fill it with a variety of different things, and try to find meaning in many places. We try to relive that once brilliant time in the hope that it will help us change the part of the story we've already written. What we find though is that no amount of looking back can give us the momentum to move forward- only our determination to keep our eyes looking forward can do that.

Ultimately, the best we can do is make more room for love, and though there are so many ways to express it, the most impactful and powerful way is to pay attention and be willing to hear what's going on in our life and around us.

This next half of our community's movement for equality and equity are ours for the taking as we pass through this stage of midlife. Those next halves we move through each day are ours for the taking too, and it's up to us to keep love at the forefront. The world we want to see is not far out of reach, though it's going to take all of us to get there.

After going on many road trips I've learned that there's one incredible thing about finding your way on the journey, and it is that you're never lost when you have others with you. Now more than ever before, we must look to one another, we must listen to one another, and we must give to one another. That, is the most spiritual act.

Feel free to reach out to talk books, well-being, spirituality, gratitude and making the world a better place on Instagram @cherylalisoncostello or on Twitter feed @cherylacostello. Cheryl can be found online at www.helovinginstant. com and sharing beauty at www.capturingtheinfinite.com.







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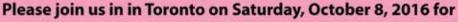
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# Autumn Horoscope

### Aries (March 21st - April 20th)

You must seek, find and address the root cause of limitation in your life. Other's beliefs have become internalized mental barriers that pollute your unconscious landscape and bleed into your waking life. These are not yours. Don't be a belief-thief. Don't wake up one day only to find yourself living someone else's dream. Oscar Wilde says, "Be yourself, everyone else is already taken."

### Taurus (April 21st - May 21st)

You may discover a pattern of deception from a friend you have long held in high regard. It's time to remove the rose-colored glasses. Someone has fallen from their pedestal. But perhaps you are responsible for putting them there in the first place? Isaac Newton says, "What goes up, must come down."

### Gemini (May 22nd - June 21st)

A lesson in clear communication presents itself by way of someone who has taken you for granted. Your ruling planet Mercury, "The Messenger", asks you to hone direct communication by clearly and bluntly stating what has gone wrong and what you require to make it right. Don't expect this person to read your mind. Sometimes nurturing a relationship requires assertiveness and respect for personal boundaries. Act now to avoid big problems later. The Preacher says, "Speak now, or forever hold your peace." Now TESTIFY!

### Cancer (June 22nd - July 22nd)

Just a few more cobwebs to clear from the corners and a few more items to purge from your closet, literally and figuratively. This energetic cleanse results in mental and emotional clarity. There are situations and emotions you no longer wish to carry. Forgiveness is key to healing your wounded heart. For-give is to give-forth, Splurge on the purge. Keep tissues handy.

### Leo (July 23rd - August 22nd)

Loving yourself is not selfish and martyrdom only leaves you feeling resentful. You are asked to lead by example, the primary way humans learn. Set an example of self-love by taking good care of yourself and by caring about how you feel. You learn also as you teach. Whitney Houston says, "Learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all."

### Virgo (August 23rd - September 23rd)

A hands-off approach to service is best. Although you feel the need to assist until the desired outcome is accomplished, not all of this is your task. Sometimes, over-extending enables freeloading. A wise man once said, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Once that horse is near the water, let go the reins.

### Libra (September 24th – October 23rd)

You're ready for the next step and the next step is ready for you. You're like a plant transplanting into a bigger pot to flourish and grow. Select your pot with care and intuition. The success of this next phase will depend on the promise of a safe place to land and lay roots for awhile. Oprah's advice, "Ask yourself, what is the next logical step?"

### Scorpio (October 24th - November 22nd)

It's becoming clear that by judging and misjudging others, you are truly persecuting them. This may not have affected you in the past, but as you mature, you notice that this attitude brings negative energy into your life in ways you never imagined. Give yourself the gift of an attitude adjustment. Look for the goodness and beauty in others and you will also find your own. Anne Frank says, "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."

# Sagittarius (November 23rd - December

Can you keep a secret? Some secrets are hard to keep. Others must be kept, no matter how innocent, at the risk of damaging a relationship. You are challenged with deciding which secrets to keep and which to confide. Only you know which and at what cost. I have two quotes for vour consideration: "While all deception requires secrecy, all secrecy is not meant to deceive." ~ Sissela Bok and, "Nothing makes us so lonely as our secrets." ~ Paul Tournier.

# Capricorn (December 22nd - January

Have you once again bitten off more than you can chew? Overwhelm has set in and there's a risk that a ball or two may be dropped. You need a plan of action broken down incrementally into realistic bitesize chunks and then processed systematically. A word of advice when addressing your stakeholders: Under-promise and over-deliver.

### Aquarius (January 20th – February 19th)

You're ladled with an interesting responsibility of action. A work situation is not as it appears and you are able to see this clearly. Your position requires you to act discreetly while keeping promises transparently. You know that rather than truth, what is actually needed is respect for the deeper, hidden issues. Take wisdom, subtlety and diplomacy. To whom much is given, much is required.

### Pisces (February 20th - March 20th)

Have you caught a touch of the 'disease to please' bug? Are you suffering the dreadful effects of self-compromise to achieve a sense of likeability? Be careful of setting a standard that is difficult to maintain long-term. Remember that others are responsible for their own happiness and you cannot be everyone's mother. John Lyndgate says, "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology a **Psychotherapy** graduate, Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of quidance from the collective astrological archetypes. As above, so below.







### **Looking Back**

his year, I'm celebrating 27 years as a working Canadian artist. My artistic career began in 1989 — the year I graduated with a Bachelors of Fine Arts Honours degree from York University. So many years ago.... Here we are now at 2016 and I am still at it.

I am suspicious of nostalgia. I think it is a trap to remember the "good ol' days" as the "good ol' days." Those days were great, but there was also much sadness, death, disease and mistrust. I never want to go back to the "good ol' days" when apparently life was much simpler. It wasn't.

I am happy to say that I actually have a career. One that ebbs and flows with highs and lows. When I hear a young artist worrying about their career I want to tell them two things:

#1. Get a career.

#2. Once you have a career then start to worry about it.

Many things have changed as a working artist, and much has not. Artist fees are still low. Art is still considered a luxury, an addition, simple entertainment, and not something really necessary. Theatre, dance, music and visual art classes are routinely cut in the education system as they are deemed too expensive or not practical. Artists push on. We always have. And will continue to do so.

The Internet has changed art and artists. This has probably been the largest shift in my artistic practice. Unlimited access. Access to knowledge, images, sounds, history and words. I believe the Internet has given power to the people. For me, in particular, the Internet questions the powers that be and completely undermines their omniscience, therefore leveling out power structures and



exposing truths. Plus, the music found online is great and so are the many, many images. I also adore the abundance of cat videos.

That said, nothing replaces seeing something live. Looking at work as jpegs or online videos just doesn't cut it. One must see and experience the work. Yes, it is impossible to see a play in Brisbane, Australia when you are in Toronto, Canada, so watching it online is a treat. But if you can, GET UP AND GO. See plays, concerts, gallery exhibitions, book readings, films and videos, performances, and more. Attend. Participate. Show up.

I feel that I am one of the lucky ones. I survived. Many did not. Many people I started out with are no longer working as artists. It was just too difficult. Some careers were halted by negativity or lack of response. Some faced severe financial hardships. Others just decided to explore other sides of themselves. Several have died.

For me, an artistic life is a compulsion. I am compelled to live this life. I cannot explain this drive, but it is real and it does exist inside me. I have no interest in dilettantes. I believe one has to be all in. Deeply. Feeling. It.

Keith Cole is currently pulling together a performance piece #HashTagGallerySlut beginning October 17th, 2016 at The AGO. Look for him on an upcoming episode of CBC's "Baroness Von Sketch." For more info about Keith Cole.... just ask around.



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