

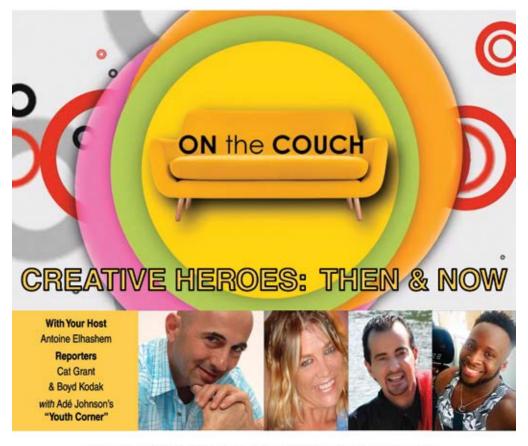
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### From the **Publisher**



I have a long history and immense respect and love for our cover and main story hero for this issue, Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam. I was first introduced to Wong-Tam as an advertiser in the Real Estate section of The Pink Pages Directory a couple of decades ago when I was working for the ex-publisher of the directory. Then later I got to know her as a business owner on Church Street (Timothy's Coffee), and eventually as one of the founders of the Church Wellesley Village BIA. Lastly, we remain friends in her current capacity as as many of us here in the city know her as a City Councillor, and a champion of community. Now, I will let you find out more about her and many other heroes in our LGBTQ community as you browse this edition

Welcome to our continuation of this year's theme, "Community Heroes: Then & Now."

This is also our Pride issue, and I am very excited about this year. We hear that Pride Toronto has a lot of great things going on this year, like a geographically longer street closure that goes all the way to Dundas Street, more events, more community grass roots events, and many fantastic performances and diverse entertainment offerings.

Speaking of Pride, we are very excited this year to have INspired Media partner with Pride Toronto, Ontario Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and Berkeley Events, with the support of Toronto Region Board of Trade, to present an all-day business and consumers event and trade show, "Pride in Business". Readers who might be business professionals, own or operate a business, or thinking of launching a new venture will find many opportunities to learn, network, and grow their connections. For others who might just be looking to find more about businesses and services catering to our LGBTO community, this is a great opportunity to do so. Find more information and details and how to register or get a table in the market place at www.prideinbusiness.LGBT

With that I wish you a Happy Pride and a Happy Summer, with much love; thank you for continuing to be our loyal readers!

> Antoine Elhashem Publisher publisher@pinkplaymags.com

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### From the **Editor**

Hot time, summer in the city! In this special Pride summer issue of PinkPlayMags, we continue our look at **Community Heroes: Then & Now**, with stories on individuals who have done great work here within our city and beyond.

Our cover feature this issue is on Toronto Ward 27 Councillor, **Kristyn Wong-Tam**, a strong advocate for community and business issues, the arts, and human rights. Her riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale is one of the largest and most diverse areas of the city, including the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood. She chats with writer Jerry Schaefer on her family immigrating to Toronto, the process of coming out within the Asian community, the initial rejection and then acceptance from her family, her unrequited love of Toronto, and of course politics.

Our other two main features are with individuals as equally compelling and inspiring. Paul Bellini caught up with long time activist and artist, AA Bronson, to chat about how his work with the 1960s art collective, General Idea, broke down barriers and is still as important today as it was then. Bronson has recently released two pictorial type books that offer a great retrospective of these past works of art. Additionally, our very own Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain, had the opportunity to interview well-known leather community member, Jack Pearce. He's not only a multititle holder from winning competitions around the world, he's a strong supporter of several community organizations, and continues his work in the leather community by way of organizing events behind the scenes.

Our travel feature is on **Caribbean Pride**, where we take a look at events on different islands that showcase everything from huge parties, to community politics. Our



Fiction excerpt is "The Sparsholdt Affair", the new novel by established author, **Alan Hollinghurst**, who also gives us some insight into the inspiration behind writing this wonderful work of historical gay fiction.

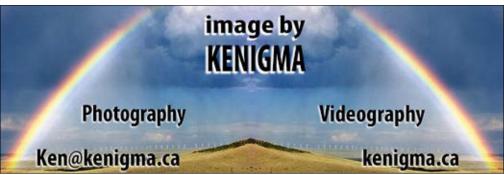
Our Hot Artist feature is written by Raymand Helkio who caught up with musician/ artist Alaska B to discuss their new album, touring, and mixing in the right amount of political awareness with their work. With this month being all things Pride, our Community Cornerstone spotlight is on the Gladstone Hotel, one of the most queer -friendly venues in Toronto's west end, with plenty of gay-themed events happening throughout the month of June. Writer Kelly Wilk caught up with visionary Christina Zeidler to find out more about this cultural hub and hotel. Finally, Ben McQuire (aka Sylvia) reflects back on The Fabulous Freaks, a legendary Toronto drag troupe, and the loss of his two dear friends, Felicia and Amanda.

As always, we have Horoscopes by Julie Antoinette, From The Heart by Mychol Scully, and Event Listings by Sherry Sylvain. As well, we have included our annual special supplement **Pride Guide** that will give you all you need to know to navigate yourself around the city to the hottest events happening.

Stay cool, and enjoy the read!

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









s a city councillor, Kristyn Wong-Tam represents Ward 27 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale). "It's a fascinating place to be," she says. "I would call it the heart of Toronto and the face of the city."

According to her, the ward has "fourteen distinct neighbourhoods, two universities, half a dozen hospitals, five of the busiest subway stations in the city, some of the poorest postal codes in the country, as well as some of the wealthiest postal codes in the country, and a beautiful, expansive ravine that connects from the top of the ward right down to the bottom of the ward through the watershed and the Don River."

Wong-Tam, a business owner and real estate professional, has lived in the area most of her life, but like many Torontonians, she wasn't born in Canada. Her family immigrated from Hong Kong in 1975.

"I was four years old when I landed...and everything I knew as a child had disappeared. My school had disappeared, my friends had disappeared, and my grandmother and grandfather had also disappeared when we came to Toronto."

Her parents settled in Cabbagetown where Wong-Tam attended Sprucecourt Public School. She remembers rambling through the streets of the Regent Park social housing complex as a child.

"I was labelled as a little, sporty tomboy... which you can get away with for a good stretch





of time, but at age 16 I came out of the closet and my mom and dad got very upset.... I told them I wanted to just live under my own truth. I wanted to be my authentic self. And they really had a hard time accepting that, at first."

In fact, they kicked her out. As a teen, Wong-Tam moved from rooming house to rooming house, to shared apartments, and finally to her own apartment, but being Chinese and queer made fitting in doubly hard.

"As a racial minority, I don't get to wash my ethnicity off my face. Just by way of seeing who I am physically, you'll know I'm not Caucasian. And also, I think, in some ways, as a sexual minority, if I don't come out of the closet, you may not necessarily know. So, you can stay protected for a longer period of time, with the exception that I performed my gender somewhat differently. So, my gender presentation is more masculine in appearance."

But looking back, Wong-Tam describes her younger self like this: "So, there's this young, awkward little gay person named Kristyn who was traipsing up and down Church Street, and finding love in community when I couldn't find it with my own family."

Rejected by her parents, she was welcomed by the Village. "I found friendship with people sitting on the steps of the old Second Cup, of which we probably all have a lot of fond memories. I ate a lot of French fries at Toby's burger joint with a lot of lesbian and gay youth...and we spent some time partying in the old clubs, like Chaps and Colby's and Chez Moi and Katrina's."

As an adult, Wong-Tam continues to love the neighbourhood and its unique culture.

"You never know when a drag show in the Church & Wellesley Village will spill out onto the street, right? I've seen it. I've seen it multiple times," she says. "Somebody's performing in a window, they step out of the window, and all of the sudden they're in the middle of the road. It won't happen anywhere else in the city, but it will happen on Church Street and we love it."

The Village is also where her political awakening took place. "My first political speech was at the 519 Community Centre. I met some lifelong friends, including LGBT youth, at that period of time, who were all kicked out of their houses, who did not have family and community supports, and certainly were struggling with school."

She also remembers many from that time who suffered from depression or addiction, or died because of HIV and AIDS. "People have lost their lives prematurely because of who they are and who they've chosen to love. Institutions have failed the community at times, but we've never given up on them. We've dug in and we fought harder and we made it work for us."

One way Wong-Tam fought was by running for office. In 2010, voters elected her in a close race to represent Ward 27, and re-elected



her in 2014 by a much wider margin. Along with advocating on behalf of the Chinese and LGBTQ communities, she has worked to improve conditions at the city's homeless shelters and to regulate predatory payday lenders. The councillor is also willing to address more controversial issues.

Wong-Tam points to several conversations now taking place about what constitutes responsible community policing, and how more cultural sensitivity can help the police accommodate the LGBTQ community.

As a city councillor, she also pushes hard for progress. In 2013, she brought business groups and community organizations together to create Open Streets, Toronto's largest, free, recreational program. Twice a year, 9 kilometres of roadway connecting 14 neighbourhoods are closed to traffic, making them free for families and friends to walk. The goal is to promote physical activity and encourage people to

explore the city in ways that are fun and healthy, and it's proven to be a popular program.

This year, free recreational activities, including a variety of folk dancing, will be available on stretches of Bloor Street, Yonge Street, and Danforth Avenue on Sunday August 19, and Sunday September 16.

In addition to physical fitness, Wong-Tam is also passionate about the arts. Once the owner of a coffee shop in the Village, she now operates a fine art gallery on Queen Street West. "Toronto is a very rich place for the art lover," she says. "The AGO has really increased the profile of their shows and they now have these, sort of, mega-blockbuster art programs, which I think is fantastic and I love the Gardiner Museum!"

Together with the visual, contemporary arts, Wong-Tam believes local ceramic - glass-, and fabric-based arts prove the city is punching above its weight.

"You really can't talk about Toronto's cultural scene anymore without talking about TIFF, Luminato, or Nuit Blanche." And in her opinion, the city has earned a more prominent place on the world stage, so she's been working with others to establish the Toronto Biennial of Art, an international exhibition.

"We've got the money, we've got the venues, we've got the talent, and people want to be here." Wong-Tam hopes our first biennial in 2019 will be an event where artists and gallery owners from many countries can exchange knowledge and culture, and have a real, elevated civic dialogue about how to make the world a better and more beautiful place.

Of course, tourists coming to see the biennial will get much more than art. "Definitely, people are going to want to check out Allan Gardens, a beautiful, undervalued horticultural space. There's a very rich history there, including some very rich gay history because Oscar Wilde lectured in the gardens at one point in time when he was in Toronto."

"And anybody wanting to really get to know our ward, and know the fabric of our city? I would say check out the ravines. They are spectacular, natural features of the city. They're beautiful! You'll get to see fox, you will see deer in the city, and if you're lucky, you'll catch the owls, if they're out. But they're right there, a twenty-minute walk from Yonge and Bloor, and you can catch it all."

In the meantime, her focus is on meeting the needs of her constituents, especially those who feel like outsiders in the community. "I hope that, you know, the barriers that stop them from being an active member, hopefully that they can overcome them and know that we are here for them, as well. And for that, I want to be able to pay it forward. I want to thank Toronto, Canada, and the Village for giving me every opportunity that I've had today. I want to make sure that those who are coming to Canada and finding their way through this big city, and coming into the Village, that someone

who could be fleeing persecution in another country or perhaps a kid is coming out of the closet and leaving rural Ontario to come to urban Toronto; I want them to know that they're loved and that we're here and that they belong here."

"When I think back to Kristyn," she recalls, again, "back in the 1970s, not speaking English, being a newcomer, you know, things were difficult for me. And now that I'm more established I want to make sure the newcomers ... know that there is a community that loves them the way that I found a community that loved me."

As for her family, Wong-Tam did eventually reconcile with them. "I'm very fortunate that my parents have come around. They have evolved in their thinking about what is a gay person, what does it mean to have an out lesbian daughter, and to their great credit, not only have they come around to embrace me for who I am and my sexuality, they've come to embrace my wife, and both my parents walked me down the aisle in 2016 when I got married at the 519 Community Centre."

Finally, Wong-Tam is grateful that her family settled in Toronto. "I see myself as a Canadian now, very proud and strong. Even if I was to go and visit Hong Kong, which was my birthplace, it now feels very foreign. Canada is home and Toronto is love. It's been very clear to me that I would not be so loving and supportive of this city, and this country, if I didn't feel that its arms were wrapped around me first."

Jerry Schaefer is a Toronto actor and writer whose work has appeared on CBC radio and television.









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# AA **BRONSON**

by Paul Bellini

When I first came to Toronto in 1978, I quickly immersed myself in the art school scene. Students from Ontario College of Arts (OCA), Ryerson, and York University were busy starting rock bands and artist collectives all along Queen Street West. But the one thing in the art world that loomed largest was General Idea. Consisting of three gay men with a profound vision, they were just so effin' cool, with their pink poodles and Hitler milk moustaches. We couldn't wait to see what they would do next.

The group enjoyed 25 years of productivity until two of its members, Felix Partz and Jorge Zotal, died of AIDS, leaving the group's work and legacy in the capable hands of surviving member AA Bronson. Bronson, who currently lives in Berlin, has just released a book called Ziggurat: General Idea 1968-1994, consisting of a lengthy interview conducted by art curator Hans Ulrich Obrist.

I reached out to AA via e-mail to ask about General Idea's legacy, and about his current work.

Paul Bellini: I always thought that General Idea was very witty. Am I wrong in thinking that comedy or satire figured into the Collective's aesthetic?

AA Bronson: At General Idea we were always very focused on ambiguity. We were very influenced by a book called "Seven Types of Ambiguity", and I think this is the key to General Idea's work. Ambiguity is the foundation of satire and humour, and so our work is often talked about as comedy. But we didn't intend our work to be funny or critical, in the normal sense. Our goal was to jam conflicting meanings into a single work, creating a kind of confusion, to create discussion and

dialogue. In the early 70s, ambiguity was not allowed in 'serious' contemporary art (although it was part of literary criticism), even though Pop Art was beginning to muddle those distinctions. So there were many people who didn't take us seriously at the time. Similarly it was verboten to discuss sexuality (especially gay sexuality), and the idea of a group was considered ridiculous.

PB: Your career with General Idea lasted 26 years, and you've been solo for the last 24 years, almost perfectly dissecting your career. How are the two halves different? How are they similar?

**AA:** The exhibition Catch Me if You Can: AA Bronson + General Idea is up now at Esther Schipper Gallery in Berlin. Work from the last fifty years is displayed on a timeline, and it is surprising how consistent the work seems to be. The curator has focused on themes of revealing and hiding, especially self-portraits in mirrors. The earliest self-portrait is from 1968, and the most recent is from last month. Themes of sexuality and identity keep repeating and there is a visual continuity that none of us expected. The bodies change from youthful to now rather aged, but the use of our own bodies as primary material continues today. My self-portrait, "The Flasher", a collaboration with Matthias Herrmann, features me at 71 doing exactly that, flashing in the sex paths of the Grunewald Forest in Berlin.

**PB:** How did the collective come up with the name General Idea?

**AA:** We had already been living together for a year when the name appeared. We proposed a work titled 'General Idea' for a group exhibition at A Space, which was really their first show, in 1970, and also our first work in a 'real' gallery. The gallery misunderstood and thought that was the title of the group. And that is how the name was born. We always liked the corporate anonymity of the name, so far away from the image of the artist as a macho individual genius that dominated the imagination of the day. So we went with it.

**PB:** Did losing both your colleagues in a single year haunt you in any way?

AA: Jorge and Felix and I lived and worked together for 25 years. They both died at home,



within a few months of each other. So of course I was devastated. It was five years before I could really begin making art again, and even then I had to start with what I had: the fact of their deaths. Twenty-four years later, I still think of them almost every day. They are still present when I make decisions. They support me in times of difficulty.

**PB:** Would you ever consider shaving your beard? Do you consider it part of your 'branding'?

AA: The concept of branding came along well after General Idea began, but we were always conscious of image, and played with it. The name "AA Bronson" is not my own, and the identity of AA Bronson is a constructed one. I didn't grow the beard until the late 90s, and it allowed me to process my grief in private. I can't imagine under what conditions I would shave it off. My husband ,Mark Krayenhoff van de Leur, and I grew our beards together, not long after first meeting, without discussion, and I don't expect to ever take it off.

PB: Do you ever miss Toronto? More specifically, do you ever miss Toronto in the 70s?

**AA:** I am embarrassed to say that I do not. I was very proud of Toronto in the 70s, when it first evolved into an epicenter of alternative culture: Rochdale College, Theatre Passe Muraille, Coach House Press, Body Politic, the Canadian Whole Earth Almanac, the Festival of Underground

Bronson was in Toronto recently for the launch of a new retrospective book: Ziggurat: General Idea 1968-1994.

Using the image of the Mesopotamian ziggurat, which appeared in the groups earliest works, the publication unravels the twenty-five year history of the artists' group. Illustrated in colour and b/w, the book provides an overview of their prodigious output of paintings, performances, installations, photographs, publications, and especially their non-stop flow of low-cost editions. The book is conceived by AA Bronson. Available at www.printedmatter.org

As well, he recently released, AA Bronson: After General Idea

AA Bronson has adapted the group's iconic "AIDS" works into book form, like a wallpaper sample book, pointing to the fact that the AIDS crisis is far from over. "After General Idea", contains fifty "ready to tear and distribute" posters that are bound and printed with spot colours on blue back poster paper. Limited edition of 40 copies, plus 20 Artist's proofs, and 5 Hors Commerce. Each book is signed and numbered. Available at www.threestarbooks.com

Theatre, the early days of A Space... and of course the very enlightened folks at City Hall, with their emphasis on community, public transit, and downtown living. When I ride the Toronto transit now, I am reminded that basically no improvements have been made in the downtown area since that time, despite the fact that the population has ballooned. No protections for local communities have been put in place. I do love how intensely multi-cultural Toronto is, now even more than before. And in general I am proud of all that Canada stands for. But it is time that we cleaned up our relationship to indigenous peoples. And time to initiate new solutions to the transit mess that is Toronto. I could go on!

**PB:** As artists, the collective enjoyed a lot of visibility and recognition. Did the three of you ever feel like rock stars? Did any of you behave like rock stars?

AA: In fact, we never thought of ourselves as a collective. We thought of ourselves as a group, exactly like a rock band, in fact. Through the 70s and early eighties we thought of Toronto as our home base, but we loved to travel from exhibition to exhibition throughout Europe, and like a band we organized 'gigs' in Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. Perhaps it was because we thought of ourselves as a travelling troupe that in fact so many exhibitions materialized. And maybe it helped that we weren't really taken seriously at home. Our first international group show was in Berlin in 1973, and our first museum show was at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1979. And although I keep one foot in Toronto, now I live in Berlin, where many creative people maintain a home in order to move easily about in Europe: stylists, photographers, artists, musicians, and DJs. That lifestyle and that community suits me.

**PB:** Is it still possible to be innovative as an artist, or has social media supplanted that desire in people?

**AA:** The world needs lots of innovation right now, if the world is to survive. In my opinion, it is the indigenous peoples who can help us find the way.

**PB:** Do you worry for the direction in which the world is going?

AA: Yes, I wonder how much longer the world can continue to support human life.

**PB:** Do you feel you have made a significant enough impact?

AA: No, but I haven't finished yet.

Paul Bellini is an awardwinning television comedy writer (Kids in the Hall, This Hour Has 22 Minutes). He also teaches comedy writing at George Brown College in Toronto.









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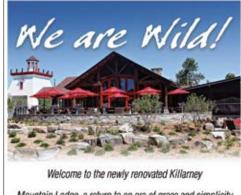
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Who is Jack Pearce? Recently, I had a lovely, long chat with Jack to see if I could ascertain the answer, or answers, to that question. Well, the answer depends on who you ask. Father, friend, human resources professional, leather man, award winning bootblack, community activist, charitable fundraiser; Jack is all these things, and more.

He was born and raised in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to a family with a long and distinguished history within law enforcement. His family has been involved in police services for several generations and his mother was a lawyer. He grew up, as he describes it, an average guy. Jack was active in sports and had good grades throughout school. At 19, he married and was living the status quo hetero-normative lifestyle, from which he now has two wonderful grandchildren. However in the late 1980's, he was

involved in a terrible motorcycle accident, that left him in a coma for several days, as well as incurring a significant injury to his elbow. This incident caused him to reevaluate his life, and he realized it's far too short not to be true to one's authentic self. As a result, he and his wife divorced, he came out as a gay man, and soon after became part of the leather scene.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the leather community, there are various aspects within that realm, which may include, Domination/submission, bondage, sadomasochism, and various forms of leather fetish, including bootblacking. The foremost part of bootblacking involves the maintenance and care of leather, from boots through chaps and any other form of leather wear or accessory. Due to Jack's history within police services he was well versed in the art of "the boot shine", which along with his own boot fetish, left him well prepared to develop into an excellent bootblack.

As a result of Jack's interest, experience, and developing ability as a bootblack, he was honoured to become Bootblack Toronto 2008. He then went on to compete and bring home the International Community Bootblack 2008 title. In this capacity, he became Toronto's first international Leather titleholder, and eventually became the first Canadian to serve on the board of directors of an international leather competition – International LeatherSir/International Leatherboy and International Community Bootblack.

Part of Jack's legacy as BBT 2008/ ICBB 2008 is that he helped change the perception that most bootblacks are submissive, as Jack identifies both as a bootblack and as a Dominant leather man, noting that being a bootblack is only one part of any person's kink identity. Jack was also the first bootblack titleholder in history to create and wear a title mantle (sash, stole) that now has become the norm. The role of bootblack has evolved since then, and continues to evolve, including Jack's commitment in ensuring that leather competition panels, which were traditionally judged only by leather men and women, are now filled with all types of kink individuals, including his fellow bootblacks.

Along with these accolades, Jack was the creator, producer and coordinator for several local titles and contests, including Toronto Puppy, Mr. Spearhead Bootblack and Mr. Spearhead

Leather, among others. He was also the driving force behind the revival of the Mr. Leatherman Toronto, Ms. Leather Toronto, and Mr. Rubber Toronto titles. Further, Jack served as the contest coordinator for the Bootblack Toronto, North America Bootblack, and International Community Bootblack competitions. This, in addition to producing the annual Spearhead Run in 2008 and was one of the original creators/organizers of the Toronto Leather Pride March.

As if all that wasn't enough, Jack founded and served as the first president of the Heart of the Flag Federation Inc. (HOTF) and executive producer of the very successful Toronto Leather Pride week, and the Toronto Bound weekend. And, just to top it all off, he has sat on the boards of many community organizations and committees, and helped raise incalculable funds for various charities, including the AIDS Committee of Toronto, Toronto People with AIDS Foundation, the International Leather Archives and Museum, Casey House, Fife House Foundation, Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives, and The 519 Community Centre.

Jack is a tremendously active and enviable member of the Toronto LGBTQ+ community, and more specifically the Toronto Leather community. He has been honoured with six titleholder Impact Awards, the Brotherhood Award at IML, the Pantheon of Leather Canadian Award, the John Stephen Bassett Leather Pride Award, the Pantheon of Leather Community Choice Award, the Spearhead Brotherhood Award, Leather Leadership Conference Leader in Action Award, and the HOTFF Inc. Award for Life Time Achievement. Jack is also the first Canadian to receive the Pantheon of Leather - Man of the Year Award in its international 25-year history.

Jack commented that he has found producing events to be great fun, as he's actually far more comfortable working behind the scenes. He feels it's important to recognize and respect the many volunteers who in essence run our community, as the community could not function without them. Looking back on his 30 years of community involvement, he felt after travelling close to 47 out of the 52 weeks during his international title year, along with his long tenure within the community, that it was time to step back and let the next generation take their rightful place in the spotlight.

Currently, he's proud to serve his community as the executive producer of Bootblack Toronto,



helping within the community when needed, and enjoying a much slower pace with his partner and their beagle, Tess. He still enjoys attending and emceeing events, judging contests, attending fundraisers, and presenting workshops and demonstrations, both locally and abroad. He remains a member of Spearhead Toronto, Delta International, and Rochester Rams and Mama's Leather Family; having been pinned twice as "Mama's Canadian Black-Jack" and as "Mama's Godfather".

Aside from all the good things, Jack and I briefly discussed his reaction to the notorious case of Toronto's LGBTO community serial killer, and how he felt this would, could, or should, affect the Leather community. In short, Jack believes that, whether there is an active serial killer or not, individuals from every community should maintain caution, diligence and vigilance when arranging unfamiliar "play dates". He hopes the long term result of this horrific tragedy will be continued heightened awareness, and that people do not allow themselves to become complacent over time.

After our chat, I understand a bit more about who Jack Pearce is (that's Master if you're nasty), and became better educated on the Leather community in general, and his involvement therein.

**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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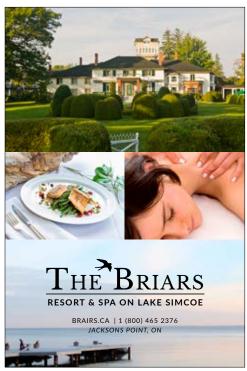
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hile we often take Pride celebrations as a given here in North America, there are many places around the world where such celebrations are frowned upon, and even forbidden. However, there are some unlikely places who are in their initial stages of welcoming LGBT solidarity efforts.

Caribbean Pride Week is back for a second year, returning to the luxurious *CHIC Punta Cana* from September 15 to 22, 2018. The event is presented by *Blue Diamond Resorts*, with a vision to create a safe, fun and welcoming experience for members of the LGBTQ community, both locally

and globally. The first year connected travellers from far and wide, and the entertainment options were as extravagant as the resort itself, with stilt walkers, pyrotechnic performances, and a Queen cover band. Once again, guests can vibe to the beat of music spun by Miami's DJ Citizen Jane and New York City's DJ Johnny Dynell. Toronto's own drag darling Miss Conception, is also returning to dazzle the crowds, with more entertainment to be announced.

CHIC Punta Cana opened in the fall of 2014 as an all-inclusive adults-only resort in the Dominican Republic. This swanky, boutique resort boasts 323 luxurious suites, each with either a view of the ocean or tropical gardens. All rooms feature stylish décor, luxurious amenities, rain showers, 24-hour room service, complimentary mini-bar, unlimited in-room long distance calling to North America and most of Europe, as well as USB recharge stations and Bluetooth speakers. There's also a luxury spa



BARBADOSPRIDEZO15 GMAIL.COM

with a wide range of rejuvenating treatments, a state-of-the-art health and fitness complex, and six restaurants on the property, ranging from the exotic flavours of Morocco and Peru, to a classic steakhouse. There's free Wi-Fi throughout the resort as well, to keep you connected.

Guests who upgrade to Diamond Club receive exclusive access to a ritzy lounge featuring premium drinks, a dedicated butler service, an exclusive beach area, and much more. For those who want the ultimate opulent experience, there's the CHIC Mansion, a two-floor, 3,505 square foot private home with six luxurious guestrooms, with a full kitchen, living room, dining room, seven bathrooms, private pool and Jacuzzi, private patio with Bose sound system, fire pit, barbeque, wine cellar, pool table, lounge with fully stocked premium bar, and security system. Say what!

Toronto's Proud FM radio station ran a contest for a giveaway for one lucky listener and a guest to attend Caribbean Pride, and the winner was Aaron Crastro. Despite his one-week stay being shortened to a couple of days due to a hurricane, he still had nothing but rave reviews. "The gay positivity of the



event and hotel itself was not something I'd ever seen at a resort property before. The Pride flags and banners everywhere were so welcoming. Miss Conception was so fun as a host, as were the Go Go boys throughout the night, and the fireworks were amazing and surreal over the dance floor by the beach. I would definitely go again and highly recommend it to anyone."

Christine Jamieson, Corporate Director of Marketing for Caribbean Pride and Blue Diamond Resorts, shared, "Last year we marketed to US markets (New York, Orlando, Chicago), with additional activations at NY Pride, Chicago Pride, Toronto Pride, and Cabana Pool Bar in Toronto. In addition, a Local Day Pass was created and promoted to the local market." Given that the resort is open to regular guests as well, she also mentioned that the event exceeded their attendance goal by 10%"in terms of those there specifically for Caribbean Pride." Visit Caribbean Pride.com to book your 2018 reservations.

While this may seem like the ultimate Caribbean party destination, there are a couple other islands that are making inroads by way of less corporation,





and more controversy. Toronto's **Maurice Tomlinson**, who was born in Jamaica, provides the inspiration and motivation behind two smaller Pride themed events. "I lived and studied in both Jamaica and Barbados, and I frequently return to visit family and friends in both islands, and they are two of my favourite places to vacation, especially when it gets cold in my adopted country," he says.

Montego Bay Pride has grown from a one day event to a full week of activities, with attendance numbers growing from 150 persons in 2015 to over 850 in 2017. Last year, Jamaica's first-ever LGBTQ film festival was added, and it will be expanded this year. A social justice project was also added so that Pride goers could give back to the community, and help tear down some of the walls of intolerance and ignorance.

Tomlinson feels that the local community needs to build up first through Pride celebrations, and then use Pride as a vehicle to educate the wider society about LGBTQ realities. "Not every LGBTQ person wants to or can flee their homeland, despite rising homophobia. Pride is a way to create a sense

# **MONTEGO BAY**

St. James, Jamaica



of community for those who remain on the islands and help them to work for equality. There are simply too few of us LGBT people on the ground for the government to take us seriously, so global solidarity is crucial in amplifying our voices. We also want the Jamaican government to see the economic benefit of supporting LGBT human rights from a tourism perspective. The UN WTO conference was recently held in Montego Bay, and the Jamaican Minister of Tourism encouraged LGBT people to visit the country," he stated.

Tomlinson explains some of the other initiatives being introduced. "In 2017 we painted the main police station in Montego Bay as a way of building bridges with officers who have frequently been insensitive to our cries for help. We also introduced a cash-prize talent show to both showcase the many talented individuals within the LGBTQ community and to provide the much needed financial support for them. Similarly, we will be introducing an LGBTQ craft and business expo this year as we seek to provide economic empowerment to the LGBTQ community. We are very fortunate to have the award-winning Round Hill Hotel and Villas in Montego Bay as our hotel partner since the inception of Montego Bay Pride, and we have also received support from GO! Jamaica travel agency, and the Montego Bay Cultural Centre," he explains.

Barbados Pride took place over the weekend of November 24 to 26, 2017 during the country's independence month, with the theme being "We put the PRIDE in Pride and Industry" which references the country's motto of Pride and Industry. Pride was launched at the High Commission of Canada to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and the launch also served to mark the start of the UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.



In addition to a very successful launch that saw community members, civil servants, and diplomatic missions in attendance, there was also a *Stand for Trans Rights* in front of the Parliament, a movie night where the public were invited to a discussion on the work to challenge anti-sodomy laws in Africa and the Caribbean, the first-ever Walk for LGBT Human Rights in the Caribbean, which took place in downtown Bridgetown, a talent show, an LGBTQ business expo, and a beach "lime" picnic.

Alexa Hoffmann has been a very outspoken champion for LGBTQ rights in Barbados for the past five years. She is also one of the organizers of Barbados Pride and is the director of Trans Advocacy and Agitation Barbados (TAAB). "Alexa has been pushing for a more strident rebuttal of the imported anti-LGBTQ religious rhetoric, and so when it came time to choose who to speak at the launch and lead the Pride events it was really a nobrainer," says Tomlinson.

The goal of both Montego Bay Pride and Barbados Pride is to bring international allies to stand in solidarity. Both of these events are primarily attended by locals, but are seeing increased interest from overseas allies, including North America, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and Germany. "Because of the stigma associated with LGBTQ people in the Caribbean very few individuals, businesses and organizations have been brave enough to publicly support Pride. As such, much of the financial support has come from international donors, including my organization, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. We are hoping to expand the support for Pride, especially from Canadian banks that have a significant footprint in the Caribbean, and are very prominent in

supporting Prides in Canada. It seems only fitting that they export their corporate values of inclusion to the territories where they operate," Tomlinson explains.

"We really hope that global north allies will come and stand in solidarity with us at Pride as we bravely try to claim space in our societies. Those who can't attend can also support by making a donation (www.generosity.com/community-fundraising/montego-bay-lgbt-pride-2018). They can also ask their governments to support Pride by having members of their diplomatic missions host or attend Pride events," Tomlinson encouraged.

Now more than ever, the Caribbean needs your support, not only by attending these significant LGBT initiatives, but to continue to help with the loss and devastation many islands faced during last year's tough hurricane season. Whether you're there for the parties or the politics, let's all unite globally to help spread love and inclusion!

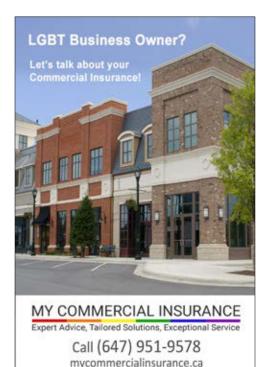
**Montego Bay Pride** – Oct 8 to 14, 2018 - www.facebook.com/MoBayPride

Barbados Pride – 2018 Dates TBA www.facebook.com/Barbados-Pride-882048015207985

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues.







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founder Alaska B considers their work to be on the "outside" which is precisely where their success is. What's art without politics?

Alaska is well aware that their work is also an ideal platform for issues dear to all of us, including our prevailing culture surrounding the way Indigenous peoples are treated. "Canadian reservations still don't have clean water and we have no justice for Coulten Boushie, Tina Fontaine, and every missing and murdered Indigenous woman," she said, adding her desire to see justice for murdered trans women and LGBTQ+ individuals."

Now based in Toronto, Yamantaka//Sonic Titan's third album, *DIRT* is out and also available on limited edition white vinyl. The music draws from Haudenosaunee and Buddhist themes, and members are Chinese-Canadian, Filipino-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian and First Nations, giving them their Indigenous North American sound. Their work has been featured in a dizzying array of mediums including the soundtrack for the video game *Severed*, which won Best Musical Score' at the Canadian Video Game Awards, several documentary film scores, and back in 2012 they performed a full-length drag-rock-opera during Buddies In Bad Times Theatre's Rhubarb Festival.

### **Hot Artist**

In the July interview with CBC, you said you are "no stranger to being the only queer, woman, or person of colour in the room". How has being an 'outsider' influenced your work?

It has definitely provided me with an ambivalence towards the expectations of others, imbuing my work with a sense of irreverence.

What advice would you give a young queer woman of colour who is just starting out in the music scene?

Grow a thick skin and play as many shows as you can, be personable but always stand your ground. Make yourself the best for yourself, and don't wait for validation from others, because if and when it eventually comes, the high doesn't last very long. The work is what makes it worth it.

### You've had an impressive list of tour dates. Looking back, what has been the most challenging part of this tour?

Staying sane in a cramped minivan dragging a trailer, while trying to get enough sleep on floors in houses and single hotel rooms. Especially getting enough sleep to drive. Sometimes I would drive 2+ hours at night after the shows just to save \$100 on hotels and shorten our next day drive. The trick is to get a late checkout and find a place with a hot tub for the next morning. If you hit the tub at the normal checkout time, it will almost always be empty.

## What do you know now that you wish someone had told you before you started?

Do it your way. You should still be respectful of others, but a healthy amount of irreverence keeps things interesting. If you ever get too comfortable, shake it up.

www.yamantakasonictitan.com

Raymond Helkio is an author, director and filmmaker. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art & Design University and is co-founder of The Reading Salon. www.raymondhelkio.com www.thereadingsalon.ca









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### **Toronto Pride**

### **Friday June 22, 2018**

### **Brandy**

### Yonge Dundas Square 5 pm – 11 pm

This huge free Opening Night Party includes fabulous hosts, queens, performers and DJ's on top of a live performance by Diva Goddess Brandy, presented by OLG.

# Friday June 22, 2018 Trans March

### Corner of Church & Hayden Streets Rally time 7 pm, March time 8 pm

Officially one of the largest events of the trans communities in the World. Since it began in 2009. The Trans\* March provides a place for trans identified people to rally, come together in solidarity and provide a safe space for trans people. Join in the March with 2018 Grand Marshal, Yasmeen Persad.

# Friday June 22, 2018

### **Alterna Queer**

### South Stage 7 pm - 11 pm

Hosted by Toronto's West End queer scene with the city's most vile vixens who will hopefully also give us a show in between performances from experimental hardcore/electro/dub band Above Top Secret, Montreal's Neo-Soul Kawaii Hip-Hop duo Hua Li, and transgender Iranian rap superstat Säye Skye.

# Saturday June 23, 2018 Dyke March

# Corner of Church & Hayden Streets Rally 1 pm, March 2 pm

The Dyke March is a grassroots event where women and trans people in LGBTTIQQ2SA\* communities take over the streets of Toronto.

### Saturday June 23, 2018 Yohomo Pride Stage

### South Stage

### 2:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Come out and party to DJs from Trade, As If, Tapette, Jelly, Daddy Next Door, and many more! Expect a full day and night of sounds from our city's finest parties, live performers, and drag queens and kings. This is the stage that's connected to the queer heartbeat of the city, discover Toronto's LGBTQ+ arts, culture and nightlife scene.



### Saturday June 23, 2018

### **Yalla Barra**

North Stage

6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Join in this landmark celebration of Middle Eastern culture, Yalla Barra (Arabic for "come out/get out"). Partnering with Arabian Knights, that promotes unity, understanding, hope, and love for Middle Eastern cultures and the Middle Eastern LGBTQ+ community.

## **Saturday June 23, 2018 & Sunday June 24, 2018**

### **Family Pride**

**Church Street Public School** 

Now in its 18th year, Family Pride gets bigger and better every year. Programming is geared to those 12 and under and their families.

## **Sunday June 24, 2018**

### **Blockorama**

**Bud Light Wellesley Stage** 12pm - 11pm

Celebrating 20 years, Blackness Yes! Celebrate with Toronto's Black, Caribbean, and African communities. Check out their high- energy lineup of DJs, and performers.

### **Sunday June 24, 2018 FAITH in PRIDE**

**Church on Church Street** North Stage (Church St. & Isabella) 11 am

Canada's largest annual outdoor worship Service. Celebrate our diverse sexualities, gender identities and faith backgrounds.

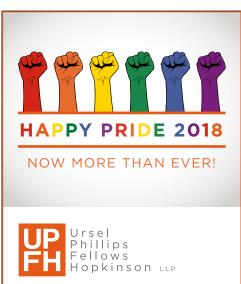
### **Sunday June 24, 2018**

Pride Parade

**Church St and Bloor St** 

2pm

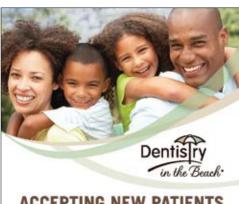
Celebrating a 37-year history, and it continues to grow each year with 120 groups marching. Everyone is welcome to celebrate and dance in the streets!



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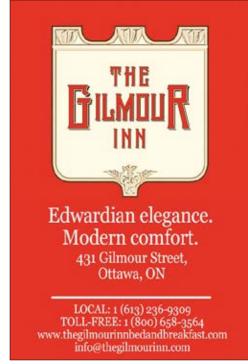




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#### **JUNE**

#### **Cobourg Pride**

June 22 – 23

#### **Kincardine Pride**

June 23

facebook.com/kincardinepride

#### **JULY**

#### **Peel Pride**

July 8 peelpride.ca

#### **Kawartha Lakes Pride**

July 10-14

rainbowservice.org/kawartha-lakes-pride

#### **London Pride**

July 19-29

pridelondon.ca

#### **Muskoka Pride**

July 2-29

muskokapride.com

#### **AUGUST**

#### **Simcoe Pride**

July 30-August 12 simcoepride.com

#### **Toronto Leather Pride**

hotfftoronto.wordpress.com

#### **Windsor-Essex Pride Fest**

August 8-12 wepridefest.com

#### **Capital Pride Ottawa**

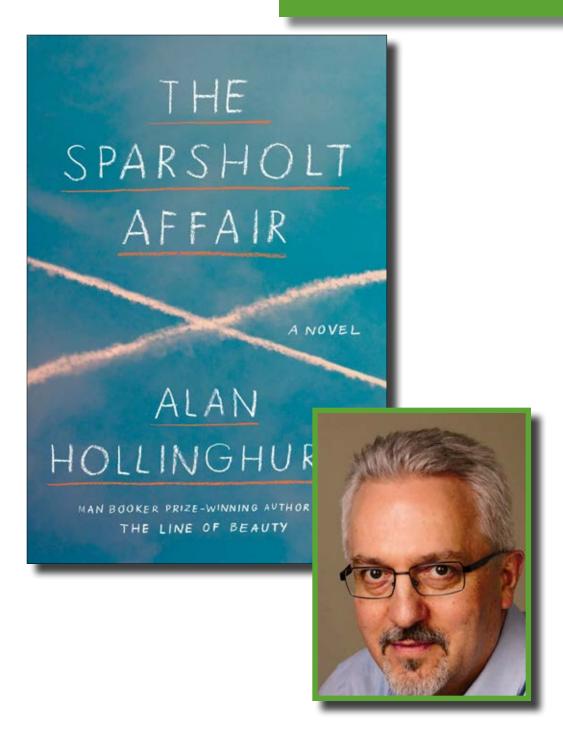
August 20-26 ottawacapitalpride.ca

#### **SEPTEMBER**

#### **Peterborough Pride**

September 1-23 peterboroughpride.ca





Alan Hollinghurst's new novel, The Sparsholt Affair, explores the legacy of David Sparsholt across three generations that spans seven transformative decades in England – from the 1940s to the present – as it plumbs the richly complex relationships of a remarkable family. Through its characters we experience changes in taste, morality, and private life in a sequence of vividly rendered episodes. Evoking the increasing openness of gay life, the novel becomes a meditation on human transience, even as it poignantly expresses the longing for permanence and continuity.

When speaking with Hollinghurst, he references WWII as a prime example of a time when gay encounters would happen under the cover of the night. "The war brought out the immediacy of hooking up, especially at night when the lights went out," he says. He also cited the London Spy magazine, published during the 1960s and 70s, as a resource confirming that "gay life has always been around, from cruising areas, to members-only clubs and code words that were used to bring the community together." He also indicated that the Earl's Court area of London was the original "gay village" prior to current day Soho.

"The interesting thing about writing on gay life is that it's always changing. I've always depicted the father figure in my books, but in this one I've eroticized the attractions in a gerontophilia sort of way," he explains. The other component to this book is the subtle humour, which often comes across quite campy. "I hope people find it somewhat comical. You never know if people will get it, but I feel Canadian readers are sometimes closer to understanding and more responsive than Americans, who sometimes might not pick up on the irony," he surmises.

The Sparsholt Affair is most definitely a great read for those interested in gay historical fiction.

#### EXCERPT: A NEW MAN

The evening when we first heard Sparsholt's name seems the best place to start this little memoir. We were up in my rooms, talking about the Club. Peter Coyle, the painter, was there, and Charlie Farmonger, and Evert Dax. A sort of vote had taken place, and I had emerged as the secretary. I was the oldest by a year, and as I was exempt from service I did nothing but read. Evert said, "Oh, Freddie reads two books a day," which may have been true; I protested that my rate was slower if the books were in Italian, or Russian. That was my role, and I played it with the supercilious aplomb of a student actor. The whole purpose of the Club was getting well-known writers to come and speak to us, and read aloud from their latest work; we offered them a decent dinner, in those days a risky promise, and after dinner a panelled room packed full of keen young readers—a provision we were

rather more certain of. When the bombing began people wanted to know what the writers were thinking.

Now Charlie suggested Orwell, and one or two names we had failed to net last year did the rounds again. Might Stephen Spender come, or Rebecca West? Nancy Kent was already lined up, to talk to us about Spain. Evert in his impractical way mentioned Auden, who was in New York, and unlikely to return while the War was on. ("Good riddance too," said Charlie.) It was Peter who said, surely knowing how Evert was hoping he wouldn't, "Well, why don't we get Dax to ask Victor?" The world knew Evert's father as A. V. Dax, but we claimed this vicarious intimacy.

Evert had already slipped away towards the window, and stood there peering into the quad. There was always some tension between him and Peter, who liked to provoke and even embarrass his friends. "Oh, I'm not sure about that," said Evert, over his shoulder. "Things are rather difficult at present."

"Well, so they are for everyone," said Charlie.

Evert politely agreed with this, though his parents remained in London, where a bomb had brought down the church at the end of their street a few nights before. He said, rather wildly, "I just worry that no one would turn up."

"Oh, they'd turn up, all right," said Charlie, with an odd smile.

Evert looked round, he appealed to me—"I mean, what do you make of it, the new one?"

I had The Gift of Hermes face down on the arm of my chair, about halfway through, and though not exactly stuck I was already alternating it with something else. It was going to break my daily rhythm, and was indeed rather like tackling a book in a foreign language. Even on the wretched thin paper of the time it was a thick volume. I said, "Well, I'm a great admirer, as you know."

"Oh, well, me too," said Peter, after a moment, but more warmly; he was a true fan of A. V. Dax's large symbolic novels, admiring their painterly qualities, their peculiar atmospheres and colours, and their complex psychology. "I'm taking the new one slowly," he admitted, "but of course, it's a great book."

"Any jokes in it?" said Charlie, with a hollow laugh.

"That's never quite the point," I said, "with a Dax novel."

"Anyway, haven't you read it?" said Peter, going over to the window to see what Evert was looking at.

Poor Evert, as I knew, had never read more than the opening pages of any of his father's books. "I just can't," he said again now, "I don't know why"—and seeing Peter join him he turned back into the room with a regretful look.

After a moment Peter said, "Good grief . . . did you see this, Dax?"

"Oh . . . what's that . . .?" said Evert, and I was slow to tell the new confusion from the other.

"Freddie, have you seen this man?"

"Who is it?" I went across. "Oh, the exhibitionist, I suppose you mean," I said.

"No, he's gone . . . " said Peter, still staring out. I stood at his shoulder and stared too. It was that brief time between sunset and the blackout when you could see into other people's rooms. Tall panes which had reflected the sky all day now glowed companionably here and there, and figures were revealed at work, or moving around behind the lit grid of the sashes. In the set directly opposite, old Sangster, the blind French don, was giving a tutorial to a young man so supine that he might have been asleep. And on the floor above, beneath the dark horizontal of the cornice and the broad pediment, a single window was alight, a lamp on the desk projecting a brilliant arc across the wall and ceiling.

"I spotted him the other day," I said. "He must be one of the new men." Peter waited, with pretended patience; and Evert, frowning still, came back and looked out as well. Now a rhythmical shadow had started to leap and shrink across the distant ceiling.

"Oh, yes, him," Evert said, as the source of the shadow moved slowly into view, a figure in a gleaming singlet, steadily lifting and lowering a pair of hand-weights. He did so with concentration though with no apparent effort—but of course it was hard to tell at this distance, from which he showed, in his square of light, as massive and abstracted, as if shaped from light himself. Peter put his hand on my arm.

"My dear," he said, "I seem to have found my new model." At which Evert made a little gasp, and looked at him furiously for a second.

"Well, you'd better get a move on," I said, since these days new men left as quickly and unnoticed as they came.

"Even you must admire that glorious head, like a Roman gladiator, Freddie," said Peter, "and those powerful shoulders, do you see the blue veins standing in the upper arms?"

"Not without my telescope," I said.

Alan Hollinghurst is the author of the novels The Stranger's Child, The Swimming-Pool Library, The Folding Star, The Spell, and The Line of Beauty, which won the Man Booker Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He has received the Somerset Maugham Award, the E. M. Forster Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction.

The Sparsholt Affair is available from www.penguinrandomhouse.com







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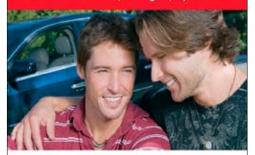
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The Gladstone Hotel was completely renovated in 2005 by founder and creative director Christina Zeidler. It's now a safe, familiar, and accepting space for those wanting to connect with the local arts community, where the design, function and structure of the building has been intentionally created to support this thriving, unique LGBTQ+ welcoming environment. Suffice to say, its added practical elegance as a boutique hotel not withstanding, this isn't your prototypical organisational model.

The Gladstone Hotel is a home to a gallery of revolving art 365 days a year, that also hosts up to 100 events a month. To put it lightly they know how to bring people together. "It's a unique business in that it's more than the sum of its parts", Zeidler tells me. We talk a lot about the alchemy of the property. "Many people are there concurrently for different reasons, and it's the kind of space that encourages participation. It's not prescribing to a kind of client. What it's trying to do is create a dynamic space where people feel comfortable coming to, and then allowing them to be here and experience it the way they want to. It's a very creative place, and that's not by accident."

I believe it! For instance the annual gay art event, That's So Gay, is curated by Syrus Marcus Ware. He chooses a theme based on a lyric and invites artists to participate. Ten-By-Ten was developed by James Fowler, who invites ten artists to take ten photos of ten queer people in the arts. The idea is, that in 10-years there will be 1,000 portraits of Canadian queer artists. In the annual Come Up to My Room, artists are given space in hallways and rooms to develop designs using their artistic vision to create a living dialogue with viewers. It's a comfortable place for an artist to be when they feel they can create experiential art and be met with open mindedness and trust.

Even the ambient in-house dining creates a didactic around the local food movement, and the story food tells. This summer the Chef-in-Residence, Suzanne Barr, was given free reign to create a love letter to her late mother, uniquely tracing her journey from Jamaica, to the United Kingdom, and finally Toronto.

To add to this dynamic of offering of an experiential hybrid space, The Gladstone offers weekly events such as the infamous Thursday night screening of RuPauls' Drag Race in The Melody Bar, hosted by The House of Filth. There's also familyfriendly events like the Halloween dance party staring a gender non-binary dance troupe, and a full month of Pride events in June. Zeidler seeks to partner with grass roots organizations and others who want to help create a strong economy in the world of art, while at the same time operating a hospitality business that's cognizant of their Victorian and colonial history that's located on indigenous land.

The Gladstone Hotel is a place for stories to be told and heard that are unreservedly welcoming for everyone, from newcomers and local residents, to artists and other creative forces. In this unique platform of welcoming everyone under one roof, the concept makes for profound discoveries and connections.

www.gladstonehotel.com

Kelly Wilk is a freelance writer and single mom to a

six-year-old, red-headed, Irish, Aries boy who is growing up way too fast. Follow "The Ginger Gent" on PinkPlayMags blog page, and Brave, Creative, Me at www.kellywilk.ca..





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#### Pride in Business

#### June 21, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

This event connects businesses of all sizes and specialties, business experts, and LGBTQ consumers. You're able to register to attend educational seminars of your choice, grab a few networking sessions, and reserve a table or booth for your business, all while enjoying your day at the stunning and historical venue, the Berkeley Bicycle Club.

Berkley Bicycle Club, 504 Jarvis St., Toronto www.prideinbusiness.lgbt

Tip: An exclusive event/reception for business professionals will follow the day's activities, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.



#### Pride Toronto 2018 Festival Weekend

#### June 22 to 24

Over 1 million people attend each year to take part in one of the world's largest LGBTQ festivals, and 2018 will be no exception. Festival favourites - the Dyke March, Pride Parade, Streetfair and the world's largest Trans\* Pride festival - will all be returning this year. Pride Festival weekend will have something for everyone, including programming for youth and families to showcase their talents and build community. Add in local and international artists and DJs bringing life to stages all throughout the Church-Wellesley Gay Village, and Pride 2018 is promising to be another incredible festival celebrating our diverse communities.

Various LGBTQ+/Friendly venues throughout the city www.pridetoronto.com/

Tip: Pride Month events happen throughout June until the end of Festival weekend, so grab a guide and don't miss



#### Homo Night in Canada

#### June 23, 8:00 p.m.

Created in 2000 by The B-Girlz, the annual Homo Night in Canada show showcases some of North America's best gay and lesbian comics. Well over 50 talented performers have delighted regularly sold out audiences over the past 17 years. Get your tickets early for what promises to be a night of hilarity and high-schticking! Hosted by the B-Girlz with Martha Chaves, Paul Hutcheson, Caitlin Langelier, Brian Millward, Ashley Moffat, Richard Ryder, Vong Sundara, and Dawn Whitwell.

Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St., Toronto www.buddiesinbadtimes.com

Tip: This is a very popular event, and you'll want to not only get your tickets in advance, you'll want to be prepared to get there early.

#### **TICOT Drag Bingo**

#### June 24, July 29, August 26; 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Join The Imperial Court of Toronto on the last Sunday of each month as they present "TICOT Drag Bingo" with a variety of hosts and special guests. Proceeds go towards the Reign 31 Charities of Choice: PWA Food Programs and Rainbow Railroad. Fun. friends, laughs and more.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Tip: For this event, Flash is open to persons of any gender identity over 19 years of age.

#### **Regal Beagle Bingo**

#### July 1, August 5, September 2; 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Join Randy Spearhead for an early evening of Bingo. Drink purchase gets you one (1) bingo card (capped at four (4)) cards per patron. There will also be a raffle sale. Proceeds from this event go to the charities of The Imperial Court of Toronto, PWA Food Programs, and Rainbow Railroad.

The Black Eagle Toronto, 457 Church St., Toronto www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Tip: You won't need leather, denim or any other fetish attire for this event; but, you're certainly welcome to wear it.



#### 15th Annual Peel Pride

#### July 8, noon to 5:00 p.m.

Join the Pride Committee of Peel, The Peel HIV AIDS Network and the City of Brampton for the 15th Annual Peel Pride, and the 1st Pride Festival in Garden Square in Downtown Brampton at Queen and Main Street in Brampton. Join for an afternoon of performances, art and community fair.

Garden Square Brampton, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton www.facebook.com/groups/2267893128/

Tip: This is a wonderful, family friendly event which is a little more intimate (less overwhelming) than that held in larger cities, and great for those just dipping their toe into the rainbow water.



#### **Baconfest**

#### July 14

Baconfest is a town-wide community event held in Lucan, Ontario that's "Everything Bacon & Bikes", with something for everyone. There are beer gardens, bands, vendor villages, Canada's only original Harley Pulls, biker games, bike wash, classic car show, kids zone, and much more. Bacon foodies and biker enthusiasts unite at this unique event, making this one of Southwestern Ontario's largest, unique single day draw attractions for rural Ontario.

Lucan Ontario

www.lucanbaconfest.ca/

Tip: Located in the triangle formed by London, Stratford and Grand Bend, this is a great destination for a day trip, particularly if you are a bacon fiend or a motorcycle fan – or both.



#### Mariachi Mystique ICP Ball

July 14, 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Their Most Imperial Highnesses, Imperial Crown Princess Denise Derring Twist and Imperial Crown Prince Randy Spearhead MLT, cordially invite you to the inaugural ICP Ball for the Imperial Court of Toronto. The festivities start at Sailors (467 Church St), before the show begins on the Woody's stage at 7:30pm. Performances feature past and present ICPs and invited guests. Wear your favourite Mexican outfit, enjoy the festive Mexican food, or visit the vendor table to add to your jewellery collection. Either way, this event will be an absolute blast and attract a wide array of revellers from all over. Proceeds to the charities of The Imperial Court, PWA Food Programs, and Rainbow Railroad.

Woodys & Sailor, 467 Church St., Toronto www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Tip: Dress in your finest, and prepare to be impressed by some fabulous fashions, joyful jewels, and tantalizing talent.



#### **Bollywood Monster Mashup**

July 20 & 21

This event is returning for its 8th spectacular season. Featuring FREE performances from international Bollywood stars, a fusion of cultures, and sizzling food. Bollywood Monster Mashup has something for everyone. The festival includes free Bollywood dance lessons, a KidZone and unforgettable performances. Dance, sing and feast at this one of a kind production. Mississauga Celebration Square, 300 City Centre Dr., Mississauga

www.mississaugacelebrationsquare.ca

Tip: Wear comfortable shoes, and a loose waistband – you'll want to walk and eat. Check out the underground parking option at the library on Duke of York Blvd. (one way divided) travelling south from City Centre Dr.



#### Toronto Vegandale Food Drink Festival

August 11 & 12, 11 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

This event is returning for its fourth summer in Toronto, and this year, they're bringing even more vegan than ever, gearing up for Toronto's first two-day Vegandale Festival. Check out a plethora of vendors in both vegan food and drink. There will be a DJ and MC operating games and draws, as well as music, throughout each day.

Fort York National Historic Site, 250 Fort York Blvd., Toronto www.vegandalefest.com/toronto/

Tip: Yes, this is another event where you may want comfy shoes and an elastic waistband. And, you don't have to BE vegan to enjoy some vegan.

#### **Bower Power - Royal Euchre**

September 15, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Brunch is 11 am to 1 pm - \$15/person; Tournament is 1 pm to 4 pm - \$15 to register to play. Top 4 prizes are \$100, \$75, \$50 and \$25. Raffle Tickets are \$2 each, 3 for \$5 or 10 for \$10. This is a fundraising event for The Imperial Court of Toronto Reign 31 Charities, PWA and The Neighbourhood Group. Hosted by Ricky Lake Ontario.

Bumpkins Restaurant, 21 Gloucester St., Toronto www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Tip: This is a fun and accepting social group of people who do a lot of hard work to raise funds for local charities – you don't need to be a member to participate, have fun and make some friends.

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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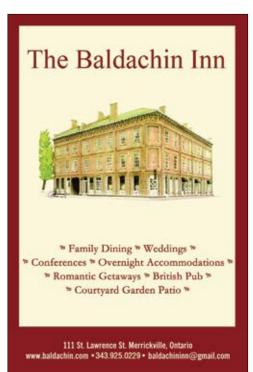
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A boy doesn't have to go to war to be a hero; he can say he doesn't like pie when he sees there isn't enough to go around."

E. W. Howe

I love this quote from E. W. Howe for the elegant simplicity of it. True heroism isn't about the grand gesture, the dramatic action or a larger-than-life performance. True heroism lives in stepping out of our narrow focus on serving ourselves to acknowledge the value of others.

In the current zeitgeist of selfies, "me first" and shoving our way the top, this definition of heroism is actually rather easy to accomplish.

Take a moment to step back from the moment and experience a bigger picture. Be aware of your connection to your immediate surroundings, the people you interact with and the people you pass by. Temporarily shift your perception from "me or them" to simply "us." The truth of life is that we're all in this together, whether we overtly acknowledge that fact or not.

You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

Jane Goodall

Living conscious, intentional lives as an example to those around us may be the most heroic thing we can do for ourselves and others. Capitalism sells us the idea that it's a "dog-eat-dog" world but I believe there's a biological imperative toward compassion and cooperation that is intended to keep the tribe alive. In this connected world we now live in, on a certain level all of humanity is our tribe. Our interactions with those physically near us makes an immediate difference (for us and for them) and it also initiates a ripple effect that spreads beyond the moment. Living our lives with positive intention powers an ever-widening circle of positive influence.

While the hectic pace of our lives (particularly in urban environments) can sometimes make it difficult to be consciously present, it is possible to cultivate "the pause" when we stop for just a



moment and allow ourselves to experience our connection to the world around us. Abraham-Hicks suggests that holding ourselves in that connected awareness for as little as seventeen seconds can provide a vibrational adjustment that builds over time.

Not all habits are bad habits. Practicing that awareness pause can also become a habit that refreshes us and becomes easier and easier as we do it repeatedly. The key is to learn to recognize our triggers and practice that pause response when we feel overwhelmed or stressed.

It's not about becoming a Zen monk! Gift yourself with that seventeen second pause to simply breathe and BE in the moment. Put a smile on your face, whether you're feeling it or not. The physical act of smiling will stimulate a matching positive internal response.

It is easier to act your way to a new way of thinking than it is to think your way to a new way of acting." Christopher S.

As you continue to practice this simple exercise, you will find your awareness of the people and situations around you changing. It becomes

easier to acknowledge others and feel your way to the compassionate response that engenders the "everyday heroism" I've been talking about.

As you develop the habit of pausing and sensing your connection to the world around you, you will be amazed and gratified by the increase in positive energy in your life. It becomes easier to smile in the midst of chaos. Compliments and supportive offerings to others begins to feel natural and "right."

Don't take my word for it. Try it for yourself and discover the truth of it. Cultivating that positive pause will make a difference that enables you to be that everyday hero, lifting others up and spreading a transforming energy that will improve the world.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media Inc. publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The Local

Biz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing anytime at mychol@ mvchol.com.



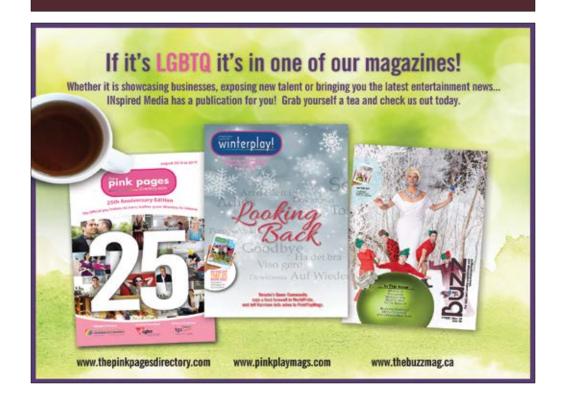
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## Summer Horoscopes

ov Julie Antoinette

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

If you want to know what you're made of, you may find clues in your ancestral history. Yes, we are all unique individuals, reacting uniquely to our environments. However, DNA does hold memory and your genes do contribute to your makeup. If you have living family members who know stories, get them talking and bring your voice recorder. There's a reason that certain peoples honor the ancestors. Find your reason.

#### Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

You desperately want to come to terms with that painful situation you've been living with for some time now. Perhaps it is time to exorcise it from your system once and for all. This can only mean one thing. Allow your emotions to surface no matter how excruciating. Feel it and heal it. Release now or forever hold your grief.

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

You are undergoing an important transition sparked by the adjustment to new people entering your life. While you may not have hand selected these new individuals into your life, they are here and surround you now. Motivational speaker Jim Rohn has said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." Take note of yourself in their company if you would discover yourself more deeply.

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

A young child will impact your life and your personality toward a fundamental change. Whatever the circumstance surrounding the appearance of this child into your life, this change is permanent and the changes in you will be drastic. While its fair to say that life is no longer about you, your role is now more crucial than ever.

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

All kingdoms and dynasties must rise and fall, Leo. You know that one day, you too will have to pass the proverbial torch to the next in line. Now is the time to ask the important questions. Will I have served my role the best I could? Will I have any regrets? What legacy will I leave for my successors to build on? Evaluate your decisions. There is still time.

#### Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

The planets urge you to speak up regarding a looming controversial matter. Someone needs to hear your point of view to assist them toward liberation in a specific situation. There is value in breaking convention. After all, it is said, "No one ever erected a statue of someone who followed the status quo." Your courage will be spoken of.

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

Someone is adamantly pushing against you in a stance you have taken toward a noble cause. Do not be discouraged. Such opposition is necessary to illuminate the intricacies of your position and thereby strengthen your stance. It may help to think of your opposition as a dumbbell. With each resistive pump, your strength is sculpted and honed.

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

Changes in your social circle recently are the universe's way of assisting in your evolution. You are no longer the person you were. Therefore, you can no longer interact with those around you in the same way. Some relationships have fallen away. Not to worry, new ones which are a much better match, are on the horizon. Welcome to the new you, version 2.0.

#### Sagittarius (November 23 – December 21)

If you've been in a whirlwind of rushing about from task to task, the planets urge you to slow your pace and rest — or risk an abrupt halt not of your choosing. Yes, all the other signs envy your boundless energy, but even Mother Nature takes a break sometimes to just hibernate. You will emerge from your cave refreshed and ready to begin anew.

#### Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

That thing you said in a heated exchange continues to haunt you. Perhaps you were driven to it in a way that would make even the strongest of characters unable to resist. But this feeling of cringing regret won't relent! What to do to get some peace? It's time for a little self-talk about acceptance and self-forgiveness. As the Brits would say, "Perhaps you'd like to have a word with yourself?"

#### Aquarius (January 20 - February 19)

Travel plans anyone? The travel bug has bitten and someone has a fever!
But where to go? Do ancestral lands beckon? Are exotic landscapes
luring you? One thing is certain, wherever you end up, adventure awaits.
Travel and unravel.

#### Pisces (February 20t – March 20)

Fear not. That matter you were afraid of becoming your greatest nightmare is nothing more than a subconscious fear bubbling to the surface for release and resolution. Many of the things we fear originate this way. Why carry that around any longer? Five hundred years ago, Michel de Montaigne said: "My life has been filled with terrible misfortune; most of which never happened."

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. As above, so below.





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#### **Looking Back**

by Ben McGuire

Y'know... I've been in drag for over 25 years! When I think about that it surprises me. It really does! In fact, frozen in my mind is the excitement... and terror.... of having been asked to put a show together at a club called "Boots and Buds". I remember the manager coming up to us and saying. "Hey... why don't you bitches do a show here... you're nuts and I respond to nuts! I'll give you every other Thursday and we'll see how it goes." HELLZ YA! And just like that, our lives changed.

The truth is.... we didn't know what we were doing, OR what was in store for us, OR the doors this would open. For years, we worked through Toronto, then Canada, then North America. We got to work in Mexico and I even found myself working in Dublin, Ireland. We did movies, television, fashion shows, concerts... all because of drag. Who knew?

I mean, c'mon, three Canadian queens getting to travel around singing, dancing, and just making people laugh... often drunk and/or high... and being paid copious amounts of money to do it.?!?!?!?!

It's hard to narrow down favourite or funny moments that I have from it all. Maybe I'll write a screenplay someday. I will say that I think that every time we got on a stage, or in front of a camera.... we found something... SOMETHING... that gave us joy. There are "moments", I think, that entertainers have that we can sometimes take for granted. It's when you see people "light up".... actually stand taller and smile... just because you're in front of them. It's an incredible feeling to



bring someone some happiness, or allow them to escape from the shitty things they might be going through.... even for a little while. It's amazing that, to this day, I hear... "you were the first drag show I ever saw", or "I met my partner at one of your shows", or "thank you for the great show"... stuff like that is really pretty important, not only to them, but also to me.

But... as life dictates, change happened again. We lost Felicia in 2010.... stupid AIDS. Her heart was bigger than anyone I've ever known. Her fearlessness was absolute, and it taught me courage. It still does. I use it. I remember.

We lost Amanda in 2017... stupid kidney. I wanted to be as cool as her, from the first day I met her. I never did though. But she loved me truly anyway. And I loved her. Oh and her legs.... I wanted her legs!

Don't get me wrong... we fought... a lot. I mean, we lived and worked together for about 15 years. But we always came back together... cuz we were... ARE... family. Forever.

I'll always hate that they're gone.

Sylvia (Ben McGuire) was an original member of The Fabulous Freaks, and continues to work in and around the community, most recently performing as part of the new "Great Imposters".



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