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The Year of the Cinema Part Four

Starring HIV/AIDS in Film * Bruce LaBruce * Reelout

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Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Fiction excerpt from Michael Rowe,
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The last of “*The Year of the Cinema*” is here and I am very happy we did this.

It was a cool theme, with lots of info over the four editions of 2019 about the influence of queers on an art we all love very much (does anyone actually not love the movies, or at least some movies? lol).

I also hope you enjoyed our creative covers; PinkPlayMags’ 11 years in publishing has always been anchored by what have been called some of the “most creative covers in the history of LGBTQ media.”

Last issue I went over my most favourite mainstream films of all time, or at least some of them (so as not to risk boring you lol, because I have too many faves). I promised you that in this one I am going to go over the less mainstream, and more obscure, eccentric, and just plain weird. So, here we go.

1. **Clockwork Orange:** In my opinion one the more mainstream films that should not have the right to be, because it’s a freak of a movie. It is brilliantly and chilling directed by Stanley Kubrick, and no one could have done what Malcolm McDowell ingeniously did with the role. It feels like an acid trip from start to finish.
2. **The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover:** The wicked dialogue, the fashions by Jean-Paul Gaultier that change colours as the actors glide between the different rooms in the restaurant, [SPOILER ALERT] and the cooked penis, all make for one of my most favourite bizarre films. And Helen Mirren is in it, so you can’t go wrong.
3. **John Waters films:** Right off the bat his work falls under the weird mostly since he unleashed *Pink Flamingos* and *Divine* on an



unsuspecting world. He did have a few more mainstream movies, but it is the ones that are truly messed up that are my favourite of his films.

4. **Honourable mentions:** *Twelve Monkeys*, *Brazil*, and other assorted Terry Gilliam films. *The Devils*, *The Lair of the White Worm*, and other assorted Ken Russell films. Ex-Machine, I love this film, it is such a creepy sci-fi (and a dire warning for the future of A.I.). Plus Christopher Nolan’s excellent *Memento*.

I do like the horror movie genre, I watch the mainstream, but give me a more obscure, foreign, and odd, and I get more excited watching it.

Being gay is being mainstream, so I can’t finish this year’s theme without a quick list of my favourite gay films: *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Maurice*, *Jeffrey*, *Longtime Companion*, *The Boys in the Band*, and the *Eating Out* series of films (WHAT, they’re funny.)

So there you go, now you know everything about me (lol)

You may have noticed that after lighthearted covers for spring and summer, we went for some social and political slant on our autumn and winter covers. The fact even at this day and age we have acceptance issues within our own community and society at large to people who don’t fit our “normal,” and we still have to fight for our human rights to not be taken from us. When you see that, you’ve got to speak up.

Happy Holidays and may 2020 bring you all your hearts’ desires.

Antoine Elhashem
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winterplay!

**Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Leather, and Queer
Community Seasonal from PinkPlayMags
Free • Winter 2019**

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Cover Collage: Mychol Scully



Cover **LEAVE US ALONE**

Stella Skinner's family is packing to go away on vacation for the Holidays. When Stella gets into a tussle with her siblings, she is sent to bed, where she wishes her whole family would disappear. The next morning, the Skinners wake up late and in the hustle and bustle, the family forgets to awaken Stella. When she finally wakes up, she is overjoyed to have the whole house to herself. That joy is short lived when she realizes that two up-to-no-good politicians are after her, and she has to fend for herself and her community, with all measures possible, against them stealing away her trans and human rights.

Written & Directed Antoine Elhashem

Cinematography Jrd Skinner

Starring Stella Skinner

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From the **Editor**

Here we are, the end of another year, which also means the end of our editorial theme for 2019 — **The Year of the Cinema**. We've had a fun time spotlighting filmmakers, organizations, and festivals, providing an overall queer perspective from within the film industry. This last issue is no exception, as we have a wonderful offering of talent once again.

Jerry Schaefer continues his four-part series, this time taking a look at **HIV/AIDS in Film**. We discover the first films to touch on this subject when it was still blanketed in secrecy, right up to when mainstream films with big name actors brought the topic to wider audiences. The article also looks at films depicting women and trans individuals who were either depicted onscreen, or worked behind the scenes. Jerry had the opportunity to chat with some of the film industry's biggest names, including John Greyson, Nik Sheehan, and Christine Vachon, who provide their expert input on this topic.

Our second feature has Raymond Helkio completing his filmmaker spotlight series, with none other than bad boy, **Bruce LaBruce**. Not one to shy away from controversy, Bruce has been pushing buttons and getting banned for over two decades now, and he's not stopping. He has a new feature in production, which has an anticipated release date of next year. Our final feature takes a look at all the great work the **Reelout Queer Film Festival** is doing in Kingston, Ontario. The organization presented its 20th anniversary edition last year, and is gearing up for this year, which takes place February 2020.

Cat Grant wraps up her series of **Hot Artist** spotlights with **Alison Reid**, a stunt woman



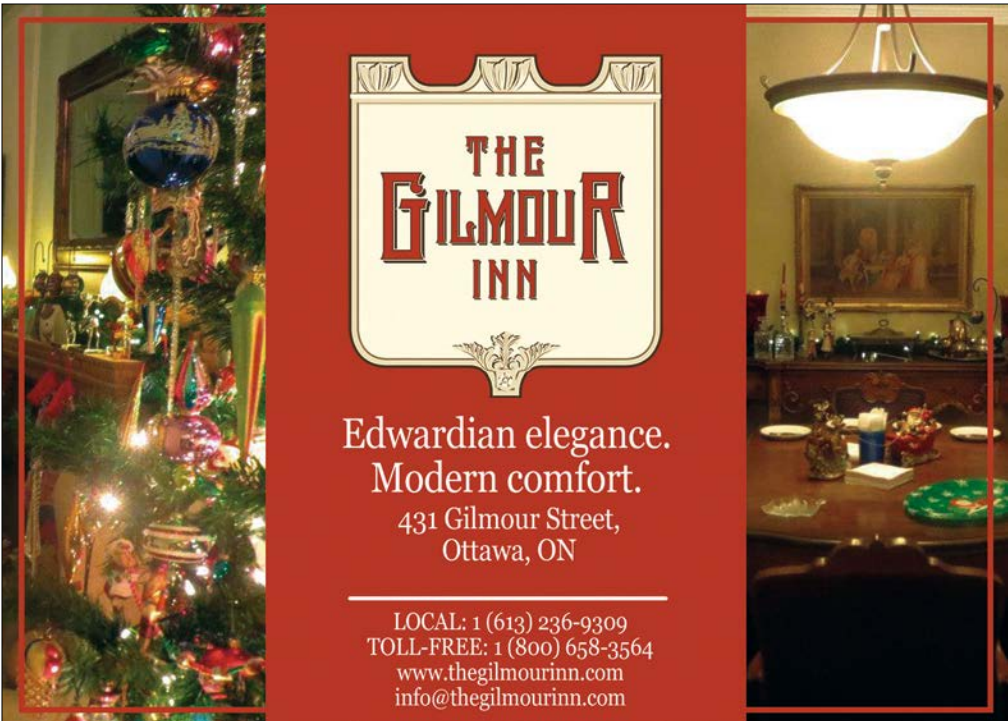
by trade, who went on to producing in television and film, with such features as *The Baby Formula*, and *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*. The **Community Cornerstone** series concludes as Kelly Wilk does a spotlight on **Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre**, who offer a wide spectrum of queer initiatives. Our **Fiction** excerpt is from *October*, a novel from author **Michael Rowe**, about teenage angst, isolation, and what happens when one is bullied too far. Finally, our **Travel** piece provides the perfect sunny escape by way of a road-trip through the gayest parts of **South Florida**.

We also have **Mychol Scully** pen his personal thoughts with his **From The Heart** column, **Horoscopes** by **Julie Antoinette**, and we close out with our **Looking Back** piece written by **Kate Johnston**. Be sure to flip to our back pages for a listing of our top **winterplay! Event** listings compiled by **Sherry Sylvain**.

We'll be back in the spring with our new theme — *Being....*

Wishing you and yours a wonderful holiday season!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief
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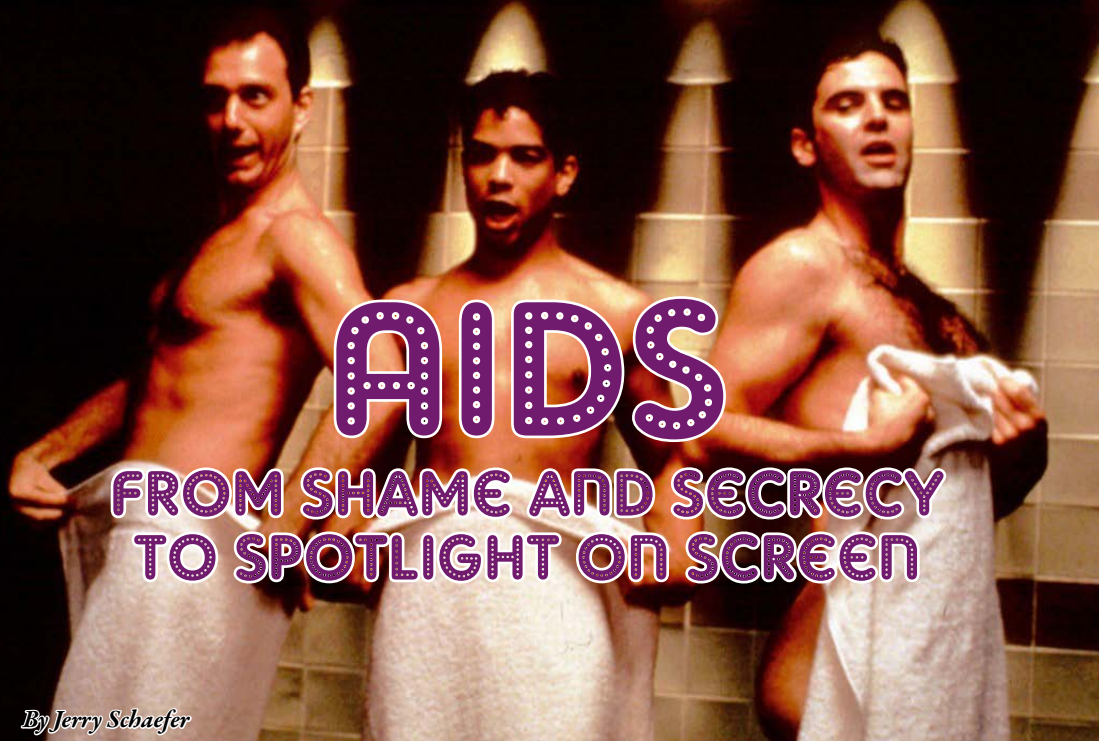
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By Jerry Schaefer

Many fine films have been made about AIDS, with two of the best being by Canadians: *Zero Patience*, by John Greyson, and *No Sad Songs*, by Nik Sheehan. *PinkPlayMags* interviewed both directors about their groundbreaking work, and we also take a look at films from a female and trans perspective.

Zero Patience

When I told **John Greyson** that *Zero Patience* — his 1993 musical comedy about AIDS — reminded us of *Springtime for Hitler*, he laughed and said, “I’ll take that as a compliment!”

Sometimes, viewing tragedy through the lens of comedy is the best way to go. But Greyson wasn’t going for cheap laughs, he was “trying to make a film that captured the outrage, humour, and agency of an activist movement.”

“I was both a member of **AIDS Action Now** and also working with **ACT UP** in New York on a bunch of collaborative video projects,” he says.

“So, there was already lots of activity and activism around trying to find imaginative ways to get activist messages out to people. It felt like the next step was doing a feature film that wasn’t just a four-hankie melodrama, which was really the only thing being made at the time.”

I recently watched several of these four-hankie melodramas, so you don’t have to. (You’re welcome.) They were earnest, but timid attempts whose only real message was AIDS is bad. (Got it. Thanks.) *Zero Patience*, on the other hand, was a satirical and timely response to Randy Shiltz’ book, *And the Band Played On*, which launched “the demonization of notorious Air Canada flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas, the ‘patient zero’ accused of bringing AIDS to North America.

“Zero Patience, in particular,” Greyson says, “talks about how Gaëtan could not have been the ‘patient zero.’ It was the opposite. He was someone who really helped the doctors understand transmission and the epidemiology of this emerging disease.”

Zero Patience begins with Sir Richard Francis Burton — the famous English explorer and sexologist — preparing an exhibit for a museum’s



Photo: Jerry Schaefer



Albert Nerenberg and Nik Sheehan — Credit: Shannon Brown

Hall of Contagion. Why Burton? Greyson was trying “to get some history in the room.”

“I think the most important thing we wanted to contribute by using Burton was to say, ‘We’ve been here before.’ A history of diseases shows us that governments, corporations, people — especially the right-wing — will cash in on the fear of epidemic, the fear of plague.” And there’s no cure for fear like comedy! The film features Busby Berkeley dance numbers, underwater ballet, and songs about boners.

As Greyson sees it, “the limits of drama were demonstrated by those early melodramas. While *Philadelphia* was a later example, which was released the same week that *Zero Patience* was released in the United States. One was an earnest melodrama about a very enabled white rich man succumbing to AIDS, and it’s a four-hankie tragedy, while our story was purposely fantastical, and purposely Brechtian, but very much coming from the spirit of activism.”

Currently, Greyson is working on “a feature film about boycott activism, particularly around Israel and Palestine.” Comedy gold! Maybe. Maybe not. Either way, he believes it’s important that activist filmmakers continue speaking out.

“Always,” he says, “the job for us is looking at whose voices aren’t being heard, yet. Like, where are the indigenous queer stories? Where are the stories of queer prisoners, queer marginal prisoners, prisoners of colour in particular? And so it’s always looking for the stories that aren’t getting the headlines, that aren’t getting the chance.”

For more on the debunking of “patient zero,” see Laurie Lynd’s recent documentary, *Killing Patient Zero*.

No Sad Songs

No Sad Songs was the first major documentary about AIDS ever made. In 1985, the **AIDS Committee of Toronto** sent 23-year-old **Nik Sheehan** to make a video. With only \$15,000 and help from the **National Film Board**, *No Sad Songs* was produced, premiered at the **Toronto International Film Festival**, and later seen all over the world. Sheehan recently told *PinkPlayMags* why he combined experts, interviews, and performance art in the film.

“The idea was that the gay community was reacting to the threat of AIDS,” he said. “Whether it be dramatic from the performance artist, or from a psychiatrist, or from a doctor, and so on.” So, *No Sad Songs* was the means by which a whole community said, ‘We’re here! We’re queer! And we’re dying!’ — especially important, given the bizarre invisibility of the crisis.

“I remember that sense of sitting on the streetcar,” Sheehan recalls, “and imagining there’s this terrible war on, and all these people are dying, but then everyone’s acting totally normal, right? Because society is going on, and it felt so disengaged.”

So little was known about AIDS at the time, that many were fearful. “When we went to make the film,” Sheehan recalls, “the cameraman had to check with his doctor that he wouldn’t get infected making the movie.”

The central figure in *No Sad Songs* is Jim Black, a young man with AIDS who died not long after the film was finished. On screen, he’s stoic about his diagnosis and admits to having a morbid sense

of humour, but watching a man narrate his own slow-motion death in such a matter of fact way is not so much funny, as chilling. Another segment, featuring Catherine Hunt talking about her brother's diagnosis, is also powerful and affecting.

Many in the industry did not believe the film could be broadcast. "They told me I had no idea what I was doing," Sheehan says. "One said, 'Well, there's nothing in it that says that homosexuality is bad,' one TV programmer told me. 'You don't show the other side,' he said."

The other side? The pro-AIDS side? There was one. For example, when the Reverend Jerry Falwell wasn't protecting America from the very real threat posed by Teletubbies, he was preaching that AIDS was God's punishment for homosexuals. Falwell has since gone on to meet his maker — Praise God! — but his legacy of bigotry lives on.

I think the fact that *No Sad Songs* was bootlegged all over the world proves there was a need for it. The film is out there and it's worth watching. Watch it.

Women and AIDS

Something we often can easily forget, is that AIDS was not just about men. Women were often at the forefront, both within the medical industry, and also on the big screen. In the early days of AIDS, some medical professionals refused to treat victims, and some mortuaries wouldn't even take the bodies. *The Battle of amfAR* (Rob Epstein & Jeffrey Friedman 2013) reminds us that when the US government refused to help scientists, Dr. Mathilde Krim began funding her own research. Thanks to her — and spokesperson Elizabeth Taylor — the **American Foundation for AIDS Research** (amfAR) was the first national organization to mobilize the scientific community in the fight against AIDS.

For her part, filmmaker **Jean Carlomusto** spent much of her life documenting that fight. One of her best films is *Larry Kramer in Love & Anger* (2015). Kramer, author of *The Normal Heart*, upset friends and foes equally with outspoken diatribes against government inaction and unvarnished opinions condemning gay



promiscuity. Although a close friend, Carlomusto doesn't hesitate to show Kramer at his most caustic, while also revealing the motives behind his strident activism.

PinkPlayMags also spoke with producer **Christine Vachon**, the "Godmother of New Queer Cinema." Her films include *Stonewall* (Nigel Finch 1995), *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberly Peirce 1999), and *Carol* (Todd Haynes 2015).

Her most controversial was *Kids* (Larry Clark 1995), starring Chloe Sevigny and a gang of boys who think sex is the greatest thing in the world, condoms don't work, and AIDS is made up. Vachon notes that it was made over twenty years ago. "So, I don't know if it would get made now, no matter who's making it."

Of other films about AIDS, she says, "In some ways, *Longtime Companion*, while I think it's quite worthy, it didn't have enough distance yet." Although Vachon has yet to see a feature film that really captures the AIDS crisis, she does recommend *BPM (Beats Per Minute)* (Robin Campillo 2017), which she says "gets pretty close."

Documentaries on AIDS

We Were Here (David Weissman + Bill Weber 2011) is a powerful documentary that chronicles the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco during the early 1980s. It was hard for many there to imagine a future, but they kept their sense of humour. "In '87, there was a great big march in Washington," Bill Weber remembers. "I was by this San Francisco contingent ... They had on, like, purple dresses. I remember when the police came out to start arresting us, they had on these rubber gloves because they didn't want to touch us because of AIDS. And the San Francisco group was chanting:

‘Your gloves don’t match your shoes — they’ll see it on the news!’”

Another great film about activism is, *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* (Jim Hubbard 2012). It shows how the group formed and mobilized to effect social change and promote healthcare as a human right for all. The documentary features successful protests against drug companies (upsetting their stock prices), the Catholic church (by staging a die-in at St. Patrick’s Cathedral), and the federal government (by spreading the ashes of loved ones on the White House lawn).

We mustn’t forget that AIDS is a problem all around the world. In 2007, the **Leitner Center for International Law and Justice** documented the situation of HIV+ women in Malawi. Many are stigmatized and victims of violence, often with no other option but turning to prostitution. Worse, men rarely use condoms and often avoid testing. *The Female Face of AIDS: Crisis in Malawi* (Doug Karr & Edward Boyce 2007) offers a sobering take on what seems like an impossible challenge.

The Best of the Rest: Features

While many were critical of the film, *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme 1993) humanized AIDS for a massive mainstream audience and brought many straight people into the fight. Tom Hanks stars as a lawyer fired for having AIDS; Antonio Banderas plays his lover; and Denzel Washington plays a homophobic lawyer who eventually agrees to take the case. With star power like that, how can you miss?

For many, *Philadelphia* was the first AIDS feature they ever saw, but for others it was the film, *An Early Frost*, known as the first AIDS film. However *Buddies* (Arthur Bresson Jr. 1985) was actually released a bit earlier that same year. It’s the story of a gay man who volunteers to be a “buddy” to a man dying of AIDS. The acting shows heart without becoming maudlin, and one particular scene demonstrates an intimacy that is still shocking today.

If you’re not a fan of **Petro Almodóvar** movies, find a doctor and ask them what’s wrong with you. Almodóvar is courageous, outrageous, and

way out front. *All About My Mother* (1999), for example, is the story of a single mother nurse who loses her son in a car accident and travels to Barcelona to find his father, who is now a transgender woman. She helps and, in turn, is hilariously helped by a trans sex worker, an HIV+ nun, and two lesbian actresses. Almodóvar’s passion for strong women shines in this fictional and highly recommended tribute to the women in his own life.

Hollywood may never catch up with him, but *Dallas Buyers Club* (Jean-Marc Vallée 2013) makes a pretty good attempt. Matthew McConaughey plays a homophobic HIV+ cowboy and Jared Leto portrays a trans woman dying of AIDS. Loosely based on a true story, the film centres on this truly odd couple who outflank the FDA to smuggle unapproved meds to AIDS patients. As a sympathetic doctor, Jennifer Garner helps deliver a movie that satisfies on many levels. Both leads earned Oscars for their work, so you know you’re in for a damn good show.

Finally, you really should see the film version of Larry Kramer’s successful Broadway play, *The Normal Heart* (Ryan Murphy 2014). He wrote this at the height of the AIDS crisis in New York City, and the scenes are based on events he lived and witnessed, so it’s personal and it’s also political. You might have trouble with the casting, though: Mark Ruffalo is far too nice a guy to play Larry Kramer; Jim Parsons is great, but not funny because it’s a drama; and some people who see Matt Bomer suddenly don’t hear a word he says (because look at him!). But Julia Roberts does a great job as a doctor who is frank, abrasive, and outspoken — Damn it, she should have played Larry Kramer!

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



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BRUCE LABRUCE

Sexual Liberation Through Obscenity

by Raymond Helkio

“You really have to put everything into the context of the time, pre-internet and social media, and the reason we had fanzines on paper. I was just making these very crude Super 8 films that I would show underground, in queer bars and punk venues and stuff. Literally I would take a projector and show them, not thinking that they would ever be seen outside of the city.”

~ Bruce LaBruce

As a filmmaker, writer, and photographer, Bruce LaBruce was born in Toronto in the mid-sixties, and before he was thirty he had his first official film debut, but it was no ordinary film. When I first saw, *No Skin Off My Ass*, I was floored. This unapologetic exploration of sexuality felt like watching a taboo unfold before my eyes, a taboo wrapped in a political statement shot on Super 8 film. LaBruce explains why it likely became a hit so quickly, “There were tons of queer festivals, and it was shown at mainstream film festivals as well.”

He continues, “My second film *Super 8½* was a fictionalized response to that, to me having shown myself having sex to audiences around the world. It was not something I ever expected. I wasn’t quite prepared for the way, at that time, when you cross the line and show yourself having explicit sex, it’s a taboo and people look at you somewhat differently, quite often down their nose. So that was probably something I wasn’t prepared for. It doesn’t mean I would have done it differently, it’s just the implications and impact that it had on my life was more extreme than I thought it would be. I didn’t really think of it, partly because I didn’t think it would be seen outside the underground.”

In 1991 when, *No Skin Off My Ass*, made its debut here in Toronto in the pre-internet, pre-high school Gay/Straight alliances era, our mayor at the time openly refused to proclaim *Lesbian and Gay Pride Day*. Those were not easy times to make or try and distribute films about queer people and as LaBruce attested to in our recent interview, he wasn’t quite sure either, “The one thing I would say is that I think I was a bit naïve when I started putting myself in my early films in sexually explicit scenes. I didn’t really consider myself a pornographer

at that time. I was in my 20s and I was making short experimental Super 8 films that had some explicit content, but it was mostly found imagery. Then I started making, *No Skin Off My Ass*, in which I performed sexual scenes. It was done very naively as well, with no crew. For part of it, I just had the camera on the tripod and my co-star who was playing the skinhead was my boyfriend, so it was very innocently filmed yet it became a kind of cult movie around the world.”

A pioneer in filmmaking, LaBruce continues to produce works that are as challenging to the status quo as they are liberating for queer viewers. His take on queer politics may not be new, but his approach is still radical, because his films distort the boundaries between sexuality and pornography. Films like *Hustler White*, *Gerontophilia*, *The Misandrists*, and *L.A. Zombie*, further reinforce his place as a radical thinker and cultural influencer. “I think people related to my first two films, along with *Hustler White*, because they had a big impact on them. It gave them permission to be gay or queer, because it wasn’t a typical kind of gay movie, and it didn’t represent the typical gay identity politics,” he explains, adding that his films “also inspired a lot of people who make pornographic work or imagery to see that it could be done in a way that is also artistic or romantic, and it doesn’t have to be industry-style porn.”

As LaBruce blurs the lines between pornography, art, and queer politics he’s no stranger to push-back, including his films being banned outright, like *L.A. Zombie*, which was banned by The Melbourne International Film Festival, only to be snatched up by the Locarno International Film Festival, as well as the Toronto International Film Festival.



LaBruce is currently working on a trilogy of films that so far includes the previously released, *Saint-Narcisse*, and his current project, *Santo the Obscene*, which is scheduled for a release date in early 2020. There are no details as yet on the third and final part of this trilogy.

Santo the Obscene features Luiz Vega, who went on to collaborate with Bruce on the photo exhibit, *Obscenity*, at Madrid's LaFresh gallery. The show's mix of religion and sexuality brought out Christian protesters who picketed for weeks, and even the mayor attempted to close it down. Explains LaBruce, "The theme for the show was the intersection between religious and sexual ecstasy, and it was produced by an Argentinian performer that I had worked with, Luiz Vega, in Berlin. I did a stage adaptation of Shostakovich's *Pierrot Lunaire* [a Canadian/German film], and it was then that we decided to collaborate on *Obscenity*. The night of the opening someone threw an explosive device through the front window of the gallery which didn't explode, but it was all over the papers again, so it was a big drama."

Incidentally, the name *Obscenity* is a direct reference to the reason Canada Customs had given to LaBruce as to why they confiscated previous works of his. *Obscenity* isn't the only film that has been met with violent, or at least vigorous protests. "When I showed, *SkinFlick*, a kind of neo-nazi porn film, at the Institute for Contemporary Art in London, there were protesters outside for the entire three weeks. I've dealt with a lot of angry people at Q&As and such, and you should never be deterred by

that kind of response, it just means that maybe you're asking the right questions."

To say LaBruce's career has been a success solely because of his intellect, would be missing his notoriously genius casting of alt-sexy queer people in both of his moving and still photo works. His knack for bringing together talented underground A-listers gives his works authenticity, street credibility, and ultimately a ballooning fan base.

To appreciate his career today, it's clear how his work has benefited us all by pushing boundaries, however in his earlier days it wasn't obvious that his contributions as an artist would ever be taken seriously in the mainstream. In many ways that's the genius of his work today, it still sits just beyond people's comfort zone, enough to provoke thought, and challenge our firmly held beliefs about gender and sexuality.

In addition to having his films screen at festivals around the world, Bruce LaBruce's work is held on permanent display at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). *Saint-Narcisse*, the second in the trilogy, is expected in early 2020.

www.brucelabruce.com

Raymond Helkio is an author, director filmmaker, and graduate of Ontario College of Art & Design. He currently lives in both Toronto and New York. His most recent play, LEDUC, is now available in paperback. www.raymondhelkio.com



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by Bryen Dunn

Kingston's **Reelout** queer film + video festival was originally established by Marney McDiarmid, who held test market screenings in the backroom of the city's only gay bar, 477. As a result, McDiarmid rallied together both professionals in academia, along with enthusiastic film buffs and activists, to create what became known as the "reelout collective".

The group incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2004, called the *Reelout Arts Project Inc.* In 2007, the group became a registered charitable organization and a member of Volunteer Canada, and in 2008 established the *Reelout in Schools Project* specializing in diversity and gender diversity education. In 2019, the 20th annual festival took place over 15 days, with a total of 116 film screenings, as well as 39 workshops and dance performances from 14 different countries.

Executive Director, **Matt Salton**, has been programmer and film festival organizer at *Reelout* for the past 19 years. Salton also writes and directs his own productions, including *REALITY HIGH*, which was nominated for Best Student Film by the Alberta Film and Television Industry in 2009, and most recently he directed the production of *Death Trap* at the Domino Theatre in Kingston.

"I started volunteering with Reelout in its first year back in 1999. I stayed with the organization until I moved to Calgary to go to film school. While there, I became the Festival Director of the *Fairy Tales Queer Film Festival* for two years. After graduating, I was hired on as the Executive Director of the *Reelout Arts Project Inc.*, the charity that runs the festival, and I've been in this position for 11 years now. In 2020 I will be celebrating 20 years in the industry, which makes me feel really old, but it also gives me a real (or reel) sense of accomplishment," he says.

"It really is a great feeling knowing that a city the size of Kingston (approx 120,000) can sustain a niche film festival like Reelout for 20 years. Many of our supporters are actually cis gender/heterosexual who see the festival as a platform to raise the profile and visibility of marginalized communities. It's a queer film festival in that



the films are about LGBTQ+ lives, but that our audiences represent any and all who wish to build bridges and learn more about experiences that aren't their own."

As for year round initiatives, Salton states, "We like to screen older films in a more informal setting in our office space at **HIV/AIDS Regional Services** in Kingston that are free of charge, as an opportunity to bring people together in a situation that doesn't involve alcohol. We also collaborate with the Downtown Kingston Business Improvement Agency to put on an outdoor screening in the market square." As well, Salton pointed out that they initiated Drag Queen Story Time back in June 2015 as a collaboration between *Reelout* and the *Skeleton Park Arts Festival*.

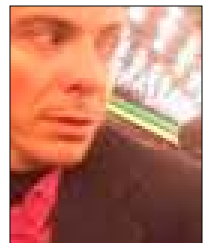
With regard to what can be expected this year, Salton states, "We can tell you that we are planning to offer anywhere between 17-25 different programs over seven days and 45-50% of those titles will be made here in Canada/Turtle Island." And what about the future? "Our vision moving forward is to continue to program works about queer lives, but especially the intersections that exist within that alphabet soup. Movies about different abilities, ages, races, and ethnic groups," Salton concludes.

Reelout
January 30 to February 8, 2020

All screenings take place at Kingston's art house cinema, The Screening Room, 120 Princess Street.

Reelout Arts Project Inc. has a lending library of over 2000 LGBTQ+ movies that is open to the public for loan for a \$20 membership per year. There's also a small collection of LGBT/Film related books that can be borrowed. The REEL (Reelout Entertainment and Educational Library) is located at 844A Princess Street.

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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Road Trippin' in South Florida

by Bryen Dunn

Florida. One of the more popular sun destinations for Canadians, especially for those living on the eastern side of the country. As it is quite a large state, one of the best things to do is rent a car and go road-tripping. So let's start at the beginning, the southern most point in the continental USA, at Mile Zero of Highway 1.

Hetero-Friendly Key West

Being so distanced from the rest of Florida, and the entire country, **Key West** has always been considered a haven for outcasts, from as far back as the days of pirates. However, in more modern history it became known as a place of respite for writers, artists, vagabonds, nomads, and *the gays*.

Fun Facts: In the late 1800's, Key West was once the largest city in Florida. Also, back on

April 23, 1982, the city declared independence from the United States mainland, designating itself as the **Conch Republic**, the globe's first "fifth world" nation. This all came about as a protest to the *U.S. Border Patrol* roadblocks that were set up along Highway 1 to help prevent the flow of illegal substances being transported north after arrival on foreign vessels docking at the Key West Seaport. This also had a counter effect on inbound tourism, and although it was all a hoax, today there are still annual Independence Day celebrations that take place each April in the city, and tourism has never been better.

Duval Street is the main touristic strip, where drunken tourists with oversized t-shirts collide with drunken drag queens with oversized wigs. Closer to *Old Town* is where the cruise ship crowds and heteros stroll, until they begin to notice an unusual amount of Pride flags, and do a quick 360 turn around back again. *Old Town's* cobblestone streets are lined with quaint shops, touristic bars, street performers, and the best sunset viewing possible at *Mallory Square*. It's also where most water based activities depart from, such as snorkelling and sunset sails, kayaking, parasailing, jet skiing, and other adventures. This is also where the ferry departs for a short ride over to the private island of Sunset Key, where one of the finest dining opportunities in the city for fresh seafood can be found, at *Latitudes* restaurant.

A fun and informative way to get to know the city is by hopping on one of the local bike tours. *Key Lime Bike Tours* takes riders on a historical journey around the island to discover the history,

architecture and culture. Stops include *Hemingway House*, *Mallory Square*, *Key West Historic Seaport*, *Southernmost Point*, *Mile Marker 0*, *Key West Cemetery*, *Margaritaville Resort*, and ends at the *Key Lime Pie Factory* for a slice of frozen Key lime pie. Yum!

Stop by *Ernest Hemingway House*, where not only can you view several artifacts depicting the life of this great writer who lived here for some 20 years during the 1930s, but also hang out with some of the descendants of his original six-toed pet cat. There are literally dozens of these six-toed felines that linger on the lawn, with names like Pablo Picasso, Hairy Truman, and Audrey Hepburn. It's also commonly known that Mr. Hemingway had an affection for booze, making his way into town to imbibe at his local watering holes. Today, tourists still flock to the original *Sloppy Joe's* (now *Captain Tony's Saloon*), and the current *Sloppy Joe's* at its second location.



Other unique Key West libation destinations of interest, include *Green Room Eco Bar*, where the cocktails are big and strong, as is the focus on being environmentally sustainable and efficient. Most of the bar is covered in reclaimed wood from a large tropical almond tree that fell in 2014, and they recycle glass, cardboard, plastic and even cigarette butts. *Blue Heaven* restaurant has a storied history as a bordello, dance hall, tavern, and pool hall. It now serves up local dishes, and the inner courtyard has a small graveyard for deceased roosters, a symbolic reminder of Key West's past history of cock fighting. Today, there are hundreds of these birds that roam the streets freely, protected and kept under control by local wildlife organizations.

First Flight Island Restaurant and Brewery, Key West's first microbrewery, is located within the space of the former *Pan American World Airways* first office. It was here that the first American

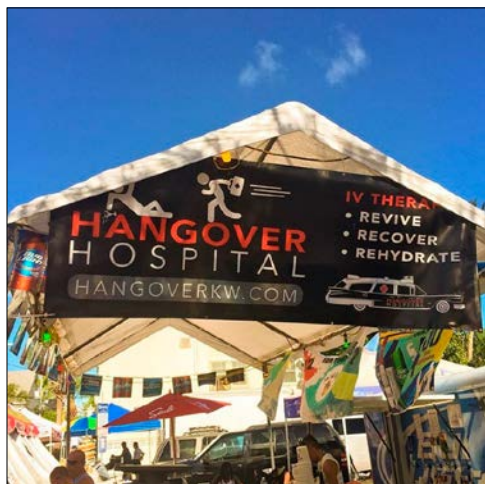
international air flight ticket was purchased, and on October 28th, 1927, Pan Am Flight Number One took off from Key West, headed for Havana, Cuba. Across the street is the *Bull and Whistle*, a multi-level establishment that bills itself as "the oldest open-air bar in Old Town Key West." The lower level (*Bull*) is a traditional pub featuring live entertainment, the second floor (*Whistle*) has a wrap around terrace offering great views below, and the third floor is the clothing optional *Garden of Eden*, offering views of a different sort. Try the *Knock Me Naked* cocktail if you do make it to the top level. Other fun stops might include, *Better than Sex*, a dessert-only, adults-only restaurant, and *Nancy Forrester's Secret Garden*, where the owner has been caring for orphaned parrots for more than 30 years, and welcomes visitors to meet them.



For a fun evening out, try dinner at *La Te Da* on the gayer side of Duval, offering both indoor and outdoor dining options. After dinner, pop upstairs and catch legendary *Chris Peterson's Drag Show, Eyecons*. Continue the fun into the late evening, by stopping into one of the many gay bars along Duval, including *Aqua Nightclub*, *801 Bourbon Bar*, *Saloon 1*, and *Bourbon Street Pub*. The latter also being where the *High Heel Shoe Drop* happens every year on New Year's Eve. Local drag queen, *Sushi*, has been lowered to the ground in a bright red shoe every year at the stroke of midnight since 1996, and continuously draws a large crowd of spectators.

There are several other events happening throughout the year, with one of the largest being, *Fantasy Fest*, the annual mask and costume festival held every October. Attracting upwards of 50,000 attendees, the event features masquerade balls, costume competitions, street fairs, performance art, Pet Masquerade, Headdress Ball, Zombie Bike Ride, Fun House, and an over-the-top grand parade. As for where to stay, there are three

gay-owned accommodation options – **Equator Resort, Island House, and Alexander's Guest House.** Finally, if you've had too much of a good a time, stop by the *Hangover Hospital* on your way out of town. Yes, it is a thing!



Living It Up In Lauderdale

The 100-mile drive up through the other keys is meant to be enjoyed, not rushed. There are several wildlife refuges and state national parks to visit, as well as some interesting towns. First stop outside of Key West would be **Big Pine & Lower Key**, at the *National Key Deer Refuge*. **Islamorada** is a great place to kayak to lesser known spots off shore, like the now abandoned Indian Key, and it's also home to the *Windley Key Fossil Reef Geographical State Site*. Be sure to stop by the Canadian owned, *Keys Brewing Company*, with tasting room and beer garden. Finally, before reaching the mainland, stop in Key Largo to visit the *John Pennekamp Coral State Park*, offering glass bottom boat tours, a mangrove trail, kayaking, and snorkelling. The *Laura Quinn Wild Bird Sanctuary* is a must as well for bird lovers.

As the traffic speeds up, so does the pace of life, as **Miami** approaches in the distance. For this particular journey, we're going to drive right past this amazing city, as its a whole separate visit on its own. Instead, we'll continue on up to **Fort Lauderdale**. This gay mecca has more same-sex couples living here than anywhere else in the state, and some estimates indicate that nearly a quarter of the population identifies as LGBT. All the fabulous boys and girls flock to *Sebastian Beach*, and about a 15-minute drive from the beaches, is



Wilton Manors, where the LGBT population is even higher.

This place is so LGBT-friendly that it currently has two Pride festivals, *Pride Fort Lauderdale* in February, and *Wilton Manors Stonewall Pride* in June. It's also soon to have a third Pride event, with the inaugural edition of *Pride of the Americas* set to happen between April 21 and 26, 2020. Join in the celebration of love and global activism to bring attention to the inequalities LGBT communities face in Latin America and the Caribbean. Events include runway shows, an arts festival, Health and Wellness Conference, Travel Symposium, Business of the Americas Conference, and a Transgender Summit.



Other points of interest include, the *Stonewall Museum, Archives, and Gallery, World AIDS Museum*, and one of the largest *Pride Centres* in the country. There are several other annual events to plan your visit around, including the annual *Southern Comfort Transgender Conference*, held in August, as well as the Halloween themed *Wicked Manors*, and the *Fort Lauderdale Gay & Lesbian Film Festival*, both held in October.

The gay-owned **Pineapple Point** is a great spot to stay, centrally located between the beach,

downtown, and Wilton Manors. The rooms are luxurious, and the service stupendous. Services and amenities include multiple pools, hot tubs, massage therapy, and complimentary bicycles and evening happy hour.

The Palm Beaches

The final destination of this one week adventure ends further north along Highway 1, up into **The Palm Beaches** area that includes several small enclaves of activity, such as **Delray Beach, Jupiter, Boca Raton, Pompano**, and super gay-friendly, **West Palm Beach**, which has the most to offer for dining, nightlife, and culture. The city has seen a spurt of growth lately with a couple new districts springing to life. The city's newest foodie and nightlife hub is the **Warehouse District**, where several independent retailers have set up shop, such as craft breweries, an alcohol distillery, surfing museum, record store, and food market.



Steam Horse Brewing is a locomotive-themed brew house located within a turn of the century train station, complete with train-inspired brews on tap. Both *Grandview Brewing* and *Ookapow Brewing* companies are located nearby, making this a craft-beer destination. As well, *Steel Tie Spirits* is a distiller of vodka, whiskey, and gin, along with its signature liquor, Black Coral Rum, made with black strap molasses. *Surfing Florida Museum* is a unique experience, offering surf memorabilia from the 1960s and 70s, such as photos, facts, and vintage surfboards. There are current plans to also develop the *District Flats*, a four-story complex with apartment units and ground-floor retail,

Old Northwood's mid-1920s architecture of Mediterranean Revival and Mission style, garnered it the status as one of the first districts to be included in the National Register of Historic Places. It's now home to several art galleries, restaurants, bars, and shops. The *Candlelight Home Tour* over the Christmas holiday period is



a great opportunity to see inside some of these homes, with several featuring food, drink, and entertainment.

To wrap up this wonderful getaway, why not splurge and book yourself into the upscale seven-acre beachfront **Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa in Manalapan**. Overlooking the ocean, this lush AAA Five Diamond beach resort with private beach offers a variety of rooms and suites, each individually designed by famed New York designer, Jonathan Adler. There are four restaurants onsite, including the contemporary American cuisine at *Angle*, the upscale casual offerings at *Temple Orange Mediterranean Bistro*, light bites at the indoor/outdoor *Breeze Ocean Kitchen*, and evening snacks at *Stir Bar & Terrace* lobby bar. A visit wouldn't be complete without experiencing the Forbes Five-Star, award-winning 42,000 square foot *Eau Spa*, with its luxurious spa cabanas, bathing rituals, and exotic pampering treatments.

There you have it. From the whimsical vibes of *The Keys*, to the glitz and glamour of *The Palm Beaches*, Florida is as diverse as the locals who call this place home.

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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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Hot Artist



Alison Reid

Toronto born director/stunt coordinator, Alison Reid, likes to say she fell into stunt-work, but it's far from the truth. "I actually wanted very much to be a stunt performer and pursued it hard," she confesses. At the age of 16, Alison took a chance and caught a bus to Los Angeles, where she met several stunt professionals.

"There are so many activities that you need to train for to become a good stunt performer, anything from driving to fighting to parkour," Alison explains. "When I started I came from show jumping horses, so knowing horses came in handy on quite a few shows. I've also rock climbed, gone scuba diving, had fight training, got my motorcycle licence, pilot licence.... you name it. I did my first stunt when I was 17-years-old on *The Littlest Hobo*. My early training came from **Dwayne McLean**, who is known as the grandfather of stunts in Canada.

Back in the day Alison's favourite stunt gigs were the high falls. "I free fell 84-feet into an airbag out of a building at the corner of Spadina and Adelaide. Now a lot of those falls are done on wires," she recalls. Eventually Alison stunt-coordinated on her first show *Road to Avonlea*, and since then her stunt credits have an impressive count of over 350 to date.

Storytelling is a part of Alison's makeup, so moving from coordinating bodies in stunt work to personalities in directing, was not a hard stretch. Alison founded her own independent film company in 2005, called *Free Spirit Films*. "I want to make films about topics that speak to me. I'm often drawn to stories about adventurous women who are underdogs," she explains.

Her debut was a short film titled, *Succubus*, which she also co wrote and produced. It's a short film about two women wanting to have a baby together. Ironically

when both actors actually became pregnant at the same time in real life, Alison directed a feature film sequel to her short titled, *The Baby Formula*, which garnered many nominations and awards.

Alison then went on to direct for popular television shows such as, *Saving Hope*, *Heartland*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, and *The Umbrella Academy*, just to name a few. Her recently released documentary that she produced and directed, *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*, features **Dr. Anne Innis Dagg**, and retraces the Girrafologist's steps from her epic travels in 1956 to study wild giraffes in South Africa.

Currently screening internationally and available on iTunes, the film uses original film-stock held dearly over the decades by Dr. Dagg herself. Incredibly the doctor also saved 400 boxes of personal archived letters, which Alison weaves throughout the documentary. Victor Mature (*Titanic*) and Tatiana Maslany (*Orphan Black*) do the voice overs for this historic film celebrating this incredible woman who pioneered her way to South Africa, resulting in groundbreaking research.

A dream project for Alison Reid is to do a feature film about Dr. Anne Innis Dagg's personal life. She explains, "I uncovered all kinds of interesting facets to her story that we couldn't go into in the documentary, so I'm writing the scripted version of her story now." Amidst writing that story, Alison is also currently directing on the television set of *Good Witch*, an American-Canadian comedy drama series on the Hallmark Channel.

You can find out more about Alison at www.freespiritfilms.ca.

Cat Grant (OCAD) is a multidisciplinary fine artist, with a focus on photography, multimedia portraiture, and illustrating children's books. She's also a published poet, and senior reporter for *On the Couch* LGBTQ TV show. Facebook @grantedarts



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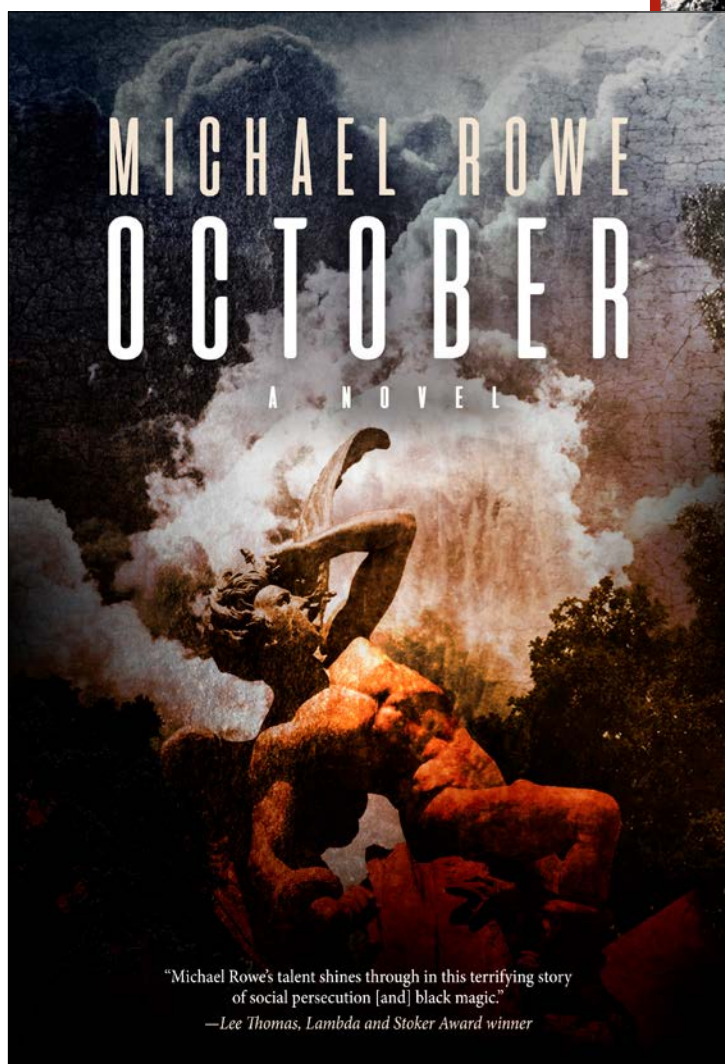


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Excerpt

It was still the first week of high school when Mikey met Wroxy, the same day his chief nightmare, Dewey Verbinski, tripped him in the lunch line at the Auburn High School cafeteria. Even as he felt the horrible lurch in his chest as his body arched in midair when his foot flew out from under him and he pitched toward the greasy floor of the lunchroom, he wasn't shocked. The random, public cruelty of this particular act had become so much a part of his life that Mikey expected it. His knapsack fell off his shoulder, spilling out the contents. A well-worn copy of Clive Barker's *Weaveworld* that Mikey had saved up for fell—pages out—into a filthy puddle of half-dried tapioca pudding and spilled milk. His new portable CD player went skidding across the laminated concrete floor toward the opposite wall until Jim Fields stopped it with a short kick. Mikey saw that he was wearing his scuffed black engineer boots, the ones with the square toe and the side buckle above the anklebone.

Jim cocked his head to the side, the way a beautiful, intelligent dog might, and stared at Mikey benignly. His full mouth curled into a smile that seemed to Mikey almost loving. For a suspended instant Mikey locked eyes with Jim, and he was sure that Jim would reach down in one graceful, gallant, athletic movement and hand Mikey the CD player, then help him up. Jim would explain that the tripping had been a mistake and apologize for his fucktard no-neck friend, Dewey.

In the cluster of seconds it took for this glorious fantasy to ripple across the surface of Mikey's imagination, Jim gracefully raised his booted foot and brought the heel down as hard as he could, smashing the CD player into shards of broken plastic and twisted wire.

The sharp crack ricocheted off the walls like a gunshot, and the lunchroom exploded into terrible, dark laughter. They laughed and laughed, till the walls echoed, as though the sight of that pathetic loser, Mikey Childress, red-faced and crying—for by now, Mikey

was sobbing, his heart as broken as the CD player—was the most hilarious thing they had ever seen. Whether anyone's mirth was leavened with relief that, at least this time, they weren't themselves on the receiving end of Dewey's and Jim's cruelty was something no one would admit, much less at that moment.

"Whoops," Jim said mildly, his smile broadening as Mikey's face twisted in pain. "You shouldn't leave your shit lying around, faggot. It can break."

More laughter. Jim was rewarded for his loyalty with a backslap from Dewey as Mikey fled the lunchroom. The last thing he saw as he dared a half-turn toward the hot-food counter was Jim and Dewey collapsed against each other, laughing till tears streamed from their eyes. Even in a moment of such abject wretchedness, Mikey remembered to walk, not run, as though there was any dignity left to salvage, lest he seem so beaten as to invite further derision or, even more monstrosly, a reprimand from one of the staff for running in the halls.

Escaping into the bright September sunshine, Mikey, weeping, sat down on a bench near the far side of the playground and wondered how to kill himself with the least amount of pain. He discounted hanging. He could swim, so drowning himself in the waters of the Glen Eden gorge was out of the question. Likewise, he didn't have a gun, and his mother didn't use sleeping pills.

Mikey heard the doors at the entrance to the school slam open. He looked up and saw a girl dressed all in black coming toward him, scuffling along with a curiously defiant gait. She wore burgundy Doc Martens, and her hair was cut in a Mohawk. As she came closer, Mikey saw a nose ring glint gold in the sun against her pallid skin. She carried a large black velvet bag that seemed packed full of books—mostly horror novels, Mikey noted, spotting the new Anne Rice hardcover and a couple of paperbacks by Stephen King and Douglas Clegg—and CDs. The sight of the horror novels in her bag, all of which he owned and had read more than once, surprised him. He was usually derided by his peers and

teachers for reading what they called “trash,” and his mother, who had more or less given up on trying to turn him into anything like a “normal” boy, in her words, never shied away from her view that his infatuation with horror fiction wasn’t healthy and would eventually lead him over to “the dark side,” away from God.

As the girl walked toward Mikey he looked up into her face. He had noticed her sitting at the back of his class earlier in the day, head down. She’d spoken to no one that he could tell, but Mikey, as usual, had been more interested in not attracting attention to himself than in noticing new arrivals. He’d heard some of the girls a couple of desks ahead of him whispering that she was some dirty slut who had just moved to Auburn from “the city,” that euphemism for everything Babylonian and foreign from the uncharted region down Highway 401, past the safe borders of Milton, Auburn, and Campbellville. And now here she was, walking toward him. Her head wasn’t down anymore.

She looked him straight in the eye and said neutrally, “You’d better stop that crying. If you don’t, that shit will never stop with those assholes. You have to get tougher.” She paused and cocked her head in a way that wasn’t dissimilar from the way Jim Fields had done moments before he’d smashed Mikey’s CD player. In the girl’s face, however, Mikey saw only compassion and genuine concern. “Trust me, I know.”

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www.chizinepub.com

Michael Rowe is the author of the novels *Enter, Night, Wild Fell*, and *October*. A former journalist and an award-winning essayist, he is also the author of the nonfiction books, *Writing Below the Belt*, *Looking For Brothers*, and *Other Men’s Sons*. He has won the Lambda Literary Award and the Randy Shilts Award for Nonfiction. He has been a finalist for the National Magazine Award, the International Horror Guild Award, the Sunburst Award, and the Shirley Jackson Award. As creator and editor of the anthologies, *Queer Fear* (2000) and *Queer Fear 2*, he was hailed by Clive Barker as having “changed forever the shape of horror fiction.” He lives in Toronto and welcomes readers at www.michaelrowe.com





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Community Cornerstone

by Kelly Wilk

The **Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre** (CFMDC) would like to change the way filmmakers are paid for their work. Speaking with **Morgan Sears-Williams** (she/her), the Member Services and Program Outreach Coordinator, she says, “We will always advocate that artists should be paid for their work, for critical space outside the mainstream, and for voices that are rooted in community that disrupt dominant discourse.” It’s in this way that the CFMDC works to impress upon the public that art can not only create change and challenge our conventions, but also transform our lives.

They have also done amazing things to support women and queer artists in particular. Sears-Williams points out that, “CFMDC has over 1,000+ queer titles in our collection, and one of the largest queer media art collections in Canada. A lot of our queer work intersects with other genres, such as experimental, animation, or documentary. Some of our queer filmmakers include Barbara Hammer, Wrik Mead, Melissa Levin, Allyson Mitchell, Scott Miller Berry, Anna Linder, and many more. We have a rich collection of queer experimental works, and works on analog film as well.”

She continues, “We see a lot of work from queer filmmakers that push boundaries of genre and create dialogue around political or social issues, that are either important to the filmmakers themselves, and/or their communities. For example in *Meet Me Under the Clock*, Sonya Reynolds and Lauren Hortie creatively use shadow puppet’s to share the story of queer Toronto in the 1970s. The work sheds light on a fascinating story of queer spaces in Toronto, and the queer members who often faced violence and hate from the public, and does so in an artful and engaging way.”

“The other two works in the series by Reynolds and Hortie, *Whatever Happened to Jackie Shane* and *Midnight at the Continental*, also explore Toronto history from a queer perspective. Barbara Hammer was a pioneering lesbian artist who often made films subverting the heteronormative male gaze. In *Sappho*, made in 1979,

a group of women unwrap the papyrus gauze of the lesbian goddess, Sappho, and bring her to life. It is an experimental film made on 16mm and creates a dream-like sense while viewing,” Sears-Williams explains.

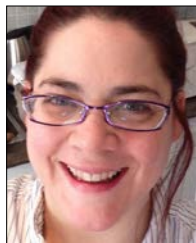
Established in 1967 the CFMDC is a non-for profit, non-commercial media and arts distributor. “It is a priority for us to bring emerging filmmakers into our collection, and we regularly attend many film festivals within Canada and internationally. It’s important for us to showcase emerging talent or films that have not been screened often due to the presentation format (for example, a 16mm film). We also aim to engage new audiences based on thematic programming, such as *Holes and How To Fill Them*, which is a feminist exploration on lost intergenerational knowledge.

Educational programming is such an amazing opportunity for youth to see representations of LGBTQ+ communities, documentaries, and animated and experimental films. Through workshops, study guides and programming they can actively invite and involve youth, bring these important discussions to the classroom, and even offer internships for those who want to earn a credit working with them hands on.

The CFMDC offers accessibility services, DCP creation equipment rentals, revision and technological services such as DVD and Blu-ray authoring and duplication, digitization and editing. They support artists and curators with facilitation of workshops, programming, screenings, exhibitions, support at festivals, and collaborative work with other community organizations that share their vision.

www.cfmnc.org

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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WINTER IN THE CITY

by Sherry Sylwain

Holiday Fair in the Square

Through December 23, closed Mondays

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto

Whether you're shopping for that unique perfect gift, taking the family out for an afternoon of skating, rides and games, stopping by for a quick lunch and some seasonal treats, or enjoying an evening drink at the Jackson Triggs Wine Bar, Holiday Fair in the Square has festive fun for everyone. Supporting Epilepsy Toronto.

www.fairinthesquare.ca

TIP: Dress in layers, with comfy footwear. And, bring shopping bags.

Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical

Through December 24

St. Lawrence Centre For Arts, 27 Front St. E., Toronto

North American Premiere. Based on the smash-hit movie that launched the careers of Keira Knightley, Parminder Nagra, and Jonathan Rhys Meyers. Both the movie and musical are gloriously written by Gurinder Chadha. Set in West London, this feel-good musical comedy is about bending the rules to reach your goals.

www.stlc.com

TIP: I like aisle seats at this venue – so you can get to the wine bar quickly during intermission.



Annie The Musical

Through December 29

Randolph Theatre, 736 Bathurst St., Toronto

Annie is a fiery young orphan girl who must live in a miserable orphanage run by the tyrannical Miss Hannigan. Her seemingly hopeless situation changes dramatically when she is selected to spend a short time at the residence of the wealthy munitions industrialist, Oliver Warbucks. Annie includes such unforgettable songs as "It's the Hard Knock Life," "Easy Street," "I Don't Need Anything But You," plus the eternal anthem of optimism, "Tomorrow."

www.lowercrossingtontheatre.com

TIP: A fabulous production for audiences of all ages.

EARLY RUBENS

Through January 5

Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas St. W., Toronto

Rubens is one of the most revered painters in Western art – widely recognized for his riveting, dynamic and even cinematic style, known as the Baroque. Early Rubens includes such masterpieces as The Head of Medusa (from The Moravian Gallery, Brno, Czech Republic) and The Boar Hunt (Musée des Beaux-Arts de Marseille), complementing treasures from the AGO Collection: The Massacre of the Innocents and his most finished oil sketch, The Raising of the Cross.

www.ago.ca

TIP: Go early and plan to spend much time reviewing each fantastic work, both from a distance and with closer inspection.

Bloodsuckers: Legends to Leeches

Through March 22

Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto
From leeches to lampreys, blood feeders are abundant in nature, and while their thirst can annoy or horrify, their behaviour has fascinated humans throughout the ages. As nature's vampires, they take blood, our very life source, for their own survival, yet they have given back by inspiring the story of Dracula, the legend of the Chupacabra and the practice of bloodletting.

www.rom.on.ca

TIP: *Maybe wear a high collar, to protect your throat... just in case.*

It's Alive! Classic Horror and Sci-Fi Art

Through January 5, 2020

Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto
Famous guitarist Kirk Hammett, of the heavy metal band Metallica, has created one of the world's most extraordinary collections of classic horror and sci-fi movie posters. This exhibition explores Hammett's significant collection and examines the connection between artistry, emotion, and popular culture through a selection of works from 20th-century cinema.

www.rom.on.ca

TIP: *Make a day of it and see the Bloodsuckers show, too; take a friend who will make you feel safe.*



The Illusionists - Magic of the Holidays

January 1 to 5, 2020

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

The Illusionists has shattered box office records across the globe and dazzles audiences of all ages with a powerful mix of the most outrageous and astonishing acts ever seen on stage. This non-stop show is packed with thrilling and sophisticated magic of unprecedented proportions.

www.meridianhall.com

TIP: *I'd take binoculars for close inspection, and remember to look where you are being distracted from.*

21C: Against the Grain Theatre's Ayre

January 11, 2020; 8:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Ayre is a thrill to experience with its lush fusion of Arabic, Hebrew, Sardinian, and Sephardic folk melodies. Lebanese-Canadian soprano, Miriam Khalil, sings this deeply moving song cycle staged by AtG's Joel Ivany. The evening begins with Golijov's other works such as Mariel, K'vakarat, and Tenebrae. Musicians include Jamey Haddad, Barry Shiffman, Gabriel Radford, Michael Ward-Bergman, Juan Gabriel Olivares, and Cantor Alex Stein.

www.rcmusic.com

TIP: *An excellent opportunity to broaden your horizons if you are not familiar with Middle Eastern musical stylings.*

Found Footage Festival

January 24 & 25; 8:00 p.m.

The Royal Cinema, 608 College St., Toronto

Joe Pickett (The Onion) and Nick Prueher (The Colbert Report) return to The Royal with a live guided tour through their latest VHS finds, including the 1987 Miss Junior America Wisconsin pageant, a mysterious tape labeled "bonion sergery", home movies taken at an Ontario hose factory, and a fitness video called Skiercise.

www.theroyal.to

TIP: *Leave room for popcorn and laughter.*



HYPROV: Improv Under Hypnosis

January 24; 8:00 p.m.

Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St., Toronto

Hypnosis and improvisation - two art forms that have captured minds and imaginations for decades worldwide - are brought together by two masters of their crafts, uniting to create a totally unique theatrical experience. Twenty random volunteers from the audience will be put under hypnosis by Master Hypnotist ASAD MECCI (the process of which is a show in its own right), their inhibitions evaporated and their minds no longer their own. The volunteers are methodically and hysterically whittled down until the five best are left on stage when one of the world's leading improvisers enters; Co-Creator COLIN MOCHRIE.

www.meridianartscentre.com

TIP: *Sit far back and do NOT raise your hand.*

Classic Albums Live: Billy Joel The Stranger

January 20; 8:00 p.m.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

Classic Albums Live and its roster of A-list musicians from across the country perform rock favourites exactly as you remember hearing them, note for note, cut for cut. Released in September 1977, *The Stranger* was the fifth studio album by Billy Joel, and it won two awards at the 1978 Grammy Awards - Record of the Year, and Song of the Year for "Just the Way You Are."

www.roythomsonhall.com

TIP: Remember to try *NOT* to sing aloud with the performance – unless everybody else is...

23rd Maple Blues Awards

February 3; 7:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Canada's blues music all-star concert and annual awards event features performances by some of the hottest blues musicians from across the country, hosted by Iranian-Canadian blues singer, bassist, and actor Raha Javanfar. Do not miss the after party, too. Presented in partnership with The Toronto Blues Society.

www.rcmusic.com

TIP: *Blues is the music of pain, loss, love and heartache – wear waterproof makeup (if that's your thing) and bring tissues.*

Classic Albums Live: Pink Floyd, The Wall

February 7; 8:00 p.m.

Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

The Wall is the eleventh studio album by English rock band Pink Floyd, released 30 November 1979. It is a rock opera that explores Pink, a jaded rockstar whose eventual self-imposed isolation from society is symbolized by a wall. The album was a commercial success, topping the US charts for 15 weeks, and reaching number three in the UK. It initially received mixed reviews from critics, many of whom found it overblown and pretentious, but later came to be considered one of the greatest albums of all time.

www.brampton.ca/sites/rose-theatre

TIP: *I'd wear my best early 80's gear. Who doesn't love a theme?*

Oscar Peterson's Africa Suite (World Premiere)

February 12; 8:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Early in 1983, Peterson completed and recorded his *Africa Suite*. Two songs from that suite, "Nigerian Marketplace" (containing echoes of gospel and salsa) and "Peace" (the blues-inspired conclusion) became part of his concert repertoire. The entire suite has never been performed live in front of an audience, until now.

www.rcmusic.com

TIP: *Prepare to be immersed the strongly thematic musical composition of a jazz master, never before heard live in its entirety, which will transport you on a tour of Africa.*



National Geographic Live: Tim Laman & Cheryl Knott

February 23 to 25

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

Solitary animals living in hard-to-reach places, orangutans are one of the most difficult large land animals to study. Since 1992, husband-and-wife team Cheryl Knott and Tim Laman have been combining innovative new techniques with old fashioned fieldwork to gain a better understanding of this intelligent, resourceful—and threatened—species, giving us insights not only into their world, but also our own.

www.roythomsonhall.com

TIP: *Please don't feed the animals.*



1st Annual Pride in Love

February 29; 4:30 p.m.

Fantasy Farm Event Centre & Banquet Hall, 50 Pottery Rd., Toronto

Get ready for romance, love, matrimony, and a whole lot of SEXY. Enjoy Fabulous Exhibitors, a Fashion Show, a Dance Party, and a chance to win your wedding at this LGBTQ+ wedding show.

www.prideinlove.lgbt

TIP: *The wedding trend for 2020 is stepping away from the ultra-traditional, focusing more on reflecting the personalities of the happy couple and their attendees.*

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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From The Heart

By Mychol Scully

I barely remember the last time I was in a movie theatre. It might have been when I went to see James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009).

Although I pay monthly for my Netflix subscription, I also can't remember the last time I actually watched a movie on that streaming service. I did binge watch a few of seasons of *Lucifer*, which was quite enjoyable, but even that excellent production couldn't keep me engaged into Season 4.

I've pondered why I seem to have this aversion to watching movies. It seems to me that in large part, I begrudge the time it takes. As a committed hermit, I resist the travel time to go to and from the theatre. Also, it's so very *people-y* out there!

At home, which is also my office, there's always one or more projects calling for my attention. The idea of stepping away from my computer to sit on the sofa to watch a movie without interruption leaves me rather cold. It's not that I haven't seen a few productions advertised that catch my attention. I do glance at movie trailers

fairly often. But when it comes to making the commitment to sit and watch a movie, there's a barrier there.

Again, as a hermit, I have few active relationships with friends or companions with whom I might choose to spend time watching a movie. So the social aspect of movie watching is entirely lost on me.

I have an old friend in another city who is an avid movie watcher. He enjoys watching movies with friends, even if they're not in the same room! I've watched him watch a movie with another friend on the phone and listened to the running conversation over the phone as they watch the movie together remotely. Seems extreme to me.

Books and movies are like apples and oranges. They both are fruit, but taste completely different.

—Stephen King

Interestingly, I have no such aversion to reading an entire novel in one sitting. My *Kindle* account has more than 650 titles in it (both fiction and nonfiction). I certainly haven't read all of them, but I have read quite a few novels; often from start to finish without a break. I suspect that the difference is that watching a



movie is primarily a passive activity. Reading a novel engages the mind in an entirely different way.

Even the handful of movies I do love and have watched more than once (see last issue's *From The Heart* for that short list) don't engage me so completely as reading a novel. While watching a 90 minute movie sounds excruciating, I have been known to spend several hours reading without a break and truly hardly noticed the time passing.

***The book is a film that takes place
in the mind of the reader.***

—Paulo Coelho

The mind of the reader is an infinite space, with an unlimited budget for sets and costumes and special effects, unfettered by the laws of physics or the economics of movie making. Most importantly, the rendering of books' story lines is incredibly intimate. *H. P. Lovecraft's* horrific novels were spell-binding and terrifying because the menace was largely only hinted at... a horror perceived out of the corner of your eye, that your imagination fleshed out in whatever presentation was most terrifying TO YOU.

I read a lot of erotica. I can assure you that the characters and events portrayed in those works

are infinitely more arousing than any porn movie, because my imagination provides details that are better than any porn star could portray.

At the risk of belabouring the issue, I'd like to offer one last point. The passive consumption of movies, while entertaining, cannot compare to the active engagement that reading books provides. Reading books exercises the intellect and actually strengthens your imagination muscle. The more often and intensely you imagine, the stronger and more available becomes your imagination. In a world of rote and routine, this might be the most important reason to read at all.

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@mychol.com.








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Winter Horoscopes

DECEMBER 2019 to FEBRUARY 2020

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

You are in a pivoting stage, gearing to launch into a new direction. The universe has lined up all circumstances and cooperative components. Everything you ordered is about to be served. It seems someone in your life opposes this change. They'd be best served if you were to remain as you were. Since our external reality often reflects the internal, you may want to examine what part of yourself this person represents. Fear of moving forward? Fear of the unknown? Do you fear you don't deserve all you've asked for? Work it out or miss out.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

A recent loss has caused you to re-evaluate how you've been living. Living in the past creates depression and living in the future creates anxiety. It is in the midst of each moment that you feel truly alive. Since you are always in the midst of one moment or another, the opportunity to feel truly alive is available to you always. This loss was designed for your gain. Carpe each diem.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

You lack a boundary with someone in your life who feels quite liberal with using your energy. Consider them your teacher. Your lesson is to learn the effective use of the word, "NO". Yes, it can also function as a complete sentence. Proper use of this word can help to identify the border where this person's respect for you ends — and your respect for yourself begins.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

It is said that you are the sum of the five people you surround yourself with. Consider the individuals in your life that you are in most frequent contact with. Chances are, you have absorbed and exchanged energies. Notice the quality of these energies and make changes if necessary.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

You are in awe at the synchronicities happening in your life. One day, you'll think randomly of a person from the past. The next day, they call or you bump into them or hear news of them. Trust that nothing is random. If you are thinking of them, they are also thinking of you.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

Control issues are surfacing lately. You notice little controlling quirks in others and it bothers you that every detail is micro-managed. Think about why this behavior is so bothersome to you. What does it trigger with you? It's time to examine your own control issues. Most importantly, remember to relax, nothing is under control.

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Conflicts around commitment are arising in your personal life. You love your freedom, but the planets have designed you specifically for partnership. The lesson here is to un-learn the negative associations you've attached to the idea of commitment related to loss of freedom. A balanced approach would help you realize that sometimes two heads are better than one and that backs cannot scratch themselves.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

That dream you've had since you were a kid is still waiting for you to bring it to life. But it seems that life got in the way. Still, it pops up in your thoughts, is present in your sleep and nags you in your silent moments. Your dream is valid and persistent. There are people whose dreams depend on yours becoming a reality. They say either build your own dream or help someone else build theirs. Luckily in your case, you can do both.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

As cooler temperatures approach, thoughts of sunny days and ocean vistas draw you away from concentrating at work. Put the wheels in motion by planning a vacation with loved ones or go solo if you must. It will be like hitting the proverbial RESET button. When you return, you'll feel refreshed, focused and energized.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

While considering a particular relationship, you see that your efforts to preserve peace and harmony have backfired. Someone has grown very comfortable with your accommodating manner and pushes your boundaries often. You wonder whether you are just kept around for the perks. When respect is no longer being served, it's time to leave the table.

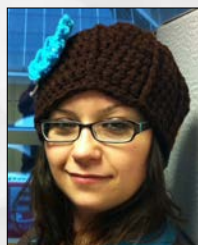
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

Avoidance and detachment have been your coping strategies since you endured that traumatic event long ago. To date, you've successfully avoided and detached yourself into several million fragments. Painkillers are for the acute period of injury only. Anything beyond that becomes a slippery slope into addiction. And eventually, the drugs won't work. Feel it and heal it.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

A recent health issue is causing concern. You would do well to consider that mind, body and emotion work in concert. Sometimes emotions get stuck in our bodies. If we refuse to feel things, our body will feel them for us. You can talk with your body, but listening would benefit you more. It's got lots to say to you.

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 Kate Johnston

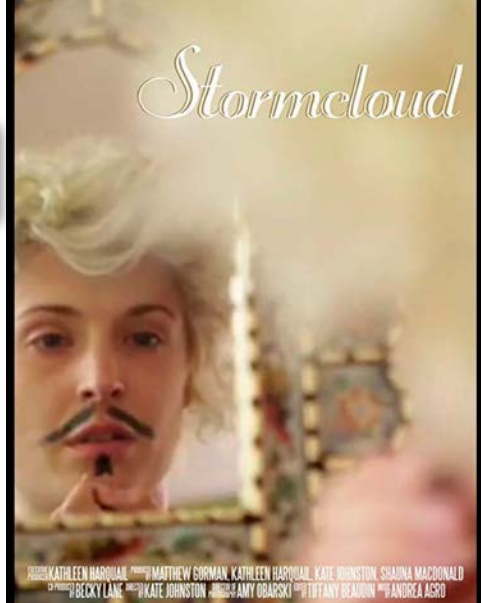
I am a filmmaker. I grew up in my dad's projection room. My passion for film began at age five, and it has been a lifelong wondrous love affair ever since. Film is my medium, the magic of stories - my lifeblood.

Most of the films I watched and loved while growing up were made by men who were heterosexual and white. The male gaze was normal and accepted. These films reflected and shaped the psychological landscape and consciousness, dominant values, power structures and mythologies of the time and the world we were living in. If you were female-identified, queer, or a person of colour, your stories were just not told on the big screen. You were invisible except for dangerous tropes and crippling stereotypes.

As a girl I became increasingly aware of this invisibility, and I knew, through my love of film, that I wanted to change that role. As a filmmaker who happens to be both female and queer, I have a unique lens and a different set of challenges in this world of making films which has traditionally been male, heterosexual, and white. Getting financed is the biggest challenge we face as outsiders.

I have produced, written and directed numerous films including my breakout hit feature film, *TRU LOVE*, which won critical acclaim and 15 international awards around the world between 2014 and 2016, and is currently distributed worldwide, including on OUTFtv. Now, here I am again working hard to get my next film financed.

We don't work within the traditional studio system as Indie queer filmmakers. We try to piece together financing through distributor presale deals, production companies, tax credits, private investors, and group fundraising campaigns. Anything and anyone to get back to camera. It is a puzzle and all of pieces must be in place before you can *greenlight* a film. So, if you see an Indie film made by someone female identified, LGBTQ+, and/or a person of colour, know that



it took enormous spirit, passion and sheer tenacity to get it made. And if you see one of us asking for help to get a film made, please help by sharing and/or contributing whatever you can to support it getting from script to screen. Our visibility depends on it.

I am currently collaborating with some pretty talented creative and producing partners on three new feature films, both here in Canada and the U.S. The films are all at various stages of development.

I am so looking forward to getting back to camera in 2020 to make my next feature and, short of robbing a bank, I will find a way to do so. If I do end up in jail, please know it was for a good cause and send bail.

Bring on the revolution. It's time!

Kate Johnston is an award winning filmmaker known for *Tru Love*, *Stormcloud*, and *Click and Slow Burn*. Her dedication to telling the stories of the LGBTQ community with passion and integrity has garnered her 15 international awards for *Tru Love*. Kate is currently directing the world premiere of Jan Miller Corran's play 'The Last Word' in LA, starring Barbara Niven (the Queen of Lifetime Network) and is working on three major film projects.
www.tomgirlfilms.com



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