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From the Publisher



Dear Reader,

This year at PinkPlayMags we've been traveling the globe through our theme Queer Around the World in 365 Days. We began in Africa, moved through the Americas, and now, as autumn arrives, our compass points east toward Asia.

Asia is not one story but millions — from the Middle East to the Pacific, from ancient civilizations to modern metropolises. Queer life here is equally diverse: some communities are flourishing with greater visibility, while others face silence and repression.

This issue is personal to me. I am Lebanese and Palestinian by heritage, born in Kuwait. Lebanon, despite its challenges, has often been more progressive than its neighbours. In Beirut, queer organizations, nightlife, and voices have carved out space — fragile, but meaningful — in a region where many live under fear.

What stands out across Asia is the resilience and creativity of queer people. From underground art collectives to activists building community, our spirit finds ways to breathe and connect.

This autumn issue offers glimpses into that reality — not “all of Asia,” which no magazine could cover, but stories that remind us how our struggles and celebrations link us across borders.

As 2025 closes, our journey continues. Winter will take us to Europe, exploring how queer communities there shape culture, politics, and identity during the holiday season.

Finally, I want to thank our departing Editor-in-Chief, Mel MacMullin, for her wonderful leadership, and welcome guest editor Rolyn Chambers, a longtime contributor now stepping into this role.

Thank you for being part of this journey. May this issue inspire curiosity, empathy, and connection — because wherever we are, the rainbow threads that bind us remain strong.

With love,

Antoine Elhashem
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autumnplay!

Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Queer, and Two-Spirit
Community Seasonal from PinkPlayMags
Free • Autumn 2025

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Photo Elements: Creative Commons

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back of this issue.

From the Editor

Autumn brings change. Leaves turn from bright greens to shimmering reds. The air grips chills as warmth is loosened. The sun visits less, as we wear more. Professionally, this magazine is also changing and evolving. In the interim of the autumn of this change, I, along with our publisher, will be overseeing it to help guide it into a new era. In this issue, my first, we continue our year-long theme, “Queer Around the World in 365 Days.” This time, we head east to Asia, a region also stirring in change but steeped in traditions.

Comprised of roughly 50 countries that are as unique from one another as they are connected, Asia is a vast landscape. Writer, Menaka Skrypnyk, explores 2SLGBTQIA+ stories from Istanbul’s underground drag balls to Queer activism in Kazakhstan to Beijing’s underground queer film scene, to the Tokyo artists and trans activists who are reshaping Japan’s pop culture. Our PinkPlayMags editorial team bring you the best Asia’s pride festivals and queer cultural hotspots, including Taiwan’s Pride (Asia’s largest), Tokyo Rainbow Pride and Osaka’s queer art scene, queer nightlife in Bangkok, plus India’s Mumbai



Pride and queer literary festivals. I tackle the challenging issue of Asia’s third gender and gender-diverse traditions, including hijras in India, warias in Indonesia and Japan’s okama and newhalf performers. Through our Hot Artist column, Sean Ban Beaton shines the spotlight on Rosina Kazi, an electro music artist who has been creating music solo and as part of LAL for more than 25 years. The PinkPlayMags Book Club delves into the world of black queerness, drag, and prostitution of 1970s Chicago through Iceberg Slim’s gritty novel, “Mama Black Widow.” Travel writer Bryen Dunn helps you plan your trip to Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Plus, our regular columns, Community Cornerstone, From the Heart, Events in the City and the Horoscope are all here, and have not changed. Unlike the weather. Grab a jacket, it’s getting chilly.

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Published by

INspired Media Inc.

Operating INspiredcreative (www.inspiredcreative.ca), and publishers of The Pink Pages Directory, PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, and The Local Biz Magazine.

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www.thepinkpagesdirectory.com

www.pinkplaymags.com

www.thebuzzmag.ca

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Reimagining the Silk Road: Stories of Art and Activism

By Menaka Skrypnyk



At the mention of the Silk Road, we are often referencing the trade of textiles, fabric, and spices between Asia and Europe. What was once known for linking empires through goods and ideas is today being re-imagined as a route which stretches across the same landscapes, but through queer stories linking resilience, art, and activism from Istanbul to Tokyo.

What we are calling the “Rainbow Route” are drag performers dazzling behind closed doors in Istanbul, Kazakh activists rallying for visibility in the heart of Central Asia, underground filmmakers in Beijing turning private screenings into acts of defiance, and Tokyo’s artists, DJs, and trans trailblazers reshaping pop culture from the inside out. Together, these voices sketch a modern queer map across Asia — one alive with resistance, creativity, and connection.

Defiantly Drag in Istanbul

Istanbul had been known as one of the more tolerant cities for LGBTQ+ communities in the region. As reported by one attitude magazine article, that openness has unfortunately not endured. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan once promised to protect queer rights, only to walk back his words and embrace anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. And while homosexuality itself is not illegal in Turkey, queer

people today often describe living in fear amid systemic discrimination.

From 2015, Pride marches have been prohibited, and public life for queer communities has grown increasingly fraught. Queer events do take place, but secretly. The documentary, *Movement*, directed by Benjamin Muasya, highlights Istanbul’s underground queer dance scene. In an interview with DJ magazine, Muasya explains, “Underground dancefloors are a haven for connection, expression, and introspection [...] but globally they face threats of gentrification, commercialization, and political oppression.”

Drag is perhaps the most visible expression of queer art in Turkey, yet it remains contested even within the community. Onur Gokcek, an Istanbul-based drag performer, said in an interview with INTO magazine that the queer community in Istanbul is very divided — while drag performers dazzle on stage, it is not always accepted by everyone in the community. Gay clubs may even refuse entry to men in women’s clothing. In a city that straddles continents, drag has become more than art — illustrating both resistance and survival.

Growing Voices in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, queer life unfolds against a backdrop of legal and social challenges. According to a [post](#) on the FRIDA website, a feminist fund, activists point to housing insecurity, threats to safety, and barriers to organizing as some of the most urgent issues



facing LGBTQ+ communities across Central Asia. Despite these hurdles, queer collectives continue to push forward, staging demonstrations and building networks that demand visibility and acceptance.

But visibility often comes at a cost. When choreographer Alisher Sultanbekuly was criminally charged after a dance performance in stilettos, the case underscored a growing narrative: that queer and trans identities are “Western constructs” in conflict with Kazakh traditions. Activists counter that claim, pointing instead to the deep-rooted queerphobia of the Soviet era and urging a decolonial reimagining of identity — one that embraces inclusion rather than exclusion. In this tension between tradition

and transformation, Kazakhstan’s queer movement is growing louder, reshaping their queer landscape.

Queer Cinema in Beijing

In China, queerness on screen has always carried a double edge: visibility and vulnerability. *Tongzhi* — a slang term translating to “gay” — is also part of the 2008 film title, *Tongzhi in Love*, by director Ruby Yang. The [film](#) follows three men as they navigate family expectations, tradition, and desire, which remains a rare glimpse of queer lives in a culture where mainstream representation is scarce.

Groups like CINEMA Q, a Shanghai-based queer film collective, are working to change that. Since its launch in 2015 in collaboration with the



ShanghaiPRIDE Film Festival, CINEMA Q has curated films, organized screenings, and produced documentaries such as *Extravaganza* (2018), which captured the vibrancy of Shanghai’s drag scene. In an [interview](#) with *Queer Lens*, they explained that their goal is simple: to bring Chinese queer cinema out of the shadows and into community spaces.

Explicitly queer stories are absent from Chinese studio productions, cinema, television, and streaming platforms, where censorship cancels out positive representation. Despite this, content circulates through informal networks (i.e. pirated imports and subtitling groups like QAFone). These underground channels have been invaluable in sustaining queer screen culture, even as government crackdowns on

piracy make access more precarious. Independent filmmaking remains the backbone of queer cinema in China, and what unites them is an urgency to carve space for queer lives on screen. As CINEMA Q reflects, cinema is “subjective and reflective,” and representation matters not only for prominence but for survival.

Neon Lights of Tokyo

Japan’s capital, Tokyo, is often seen as a hub of queer visibility, with the nightlife and drag scene in Shinjuku, and Tokyo Rainbow Pride drawing international attention. The documentary *Queer Japan captures* how artists, activists, and performers are challenging stigma and claiming space, even as queerness remains muted in workplaces, homes,



and the law (where marriage equality is still absent). Japan's [drag culture](#), shaped by a history of gender-bending in kabuki and Takarazuka theatre, and influenced by Western films such as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *La Cage aux Folles*, has since evolved into a uniquely Japanese form of cabaret and satire, with queens performing as bar mamas, hostesses, and underground icons.

However, visibility remains a double-edged sword. While drag thrives in nightlife and pop culture, queer and trans people still face prejudice. Graham Kolbeins, the director of *Queer Japan*, [shares](#) that activists like Tomato Hatakeno work to dismantle the perception of transgender identity as a mental illness, reframing it as a matter of human rights. Together, Tokyo's drag performers and activists embody both joy and resistance, turning performance and advocacy into powerful tools for cultural change.

Just as the Silk Road carried textiles and spices across continents, the Rainbow Route carries stories of

resilience, artistry, and determination. From Istanbul to Tokyo, queer voices are weaving identity and solidarity, transforming landscapes once deserted by silence into vibrant, welcoming spaces. This road reminds us that while visibility can be complex, it also has the power to bind communities together — stitching a future where queerness is celebrated openly and proudly.

Menaka Skrypnik is a Sri Lankan-Canadian Communications professional with an innate passion for writing and exploring the unfamiliar. She enjoys spending her free time with her husband and adorable Sheepadoodle, Oscar.



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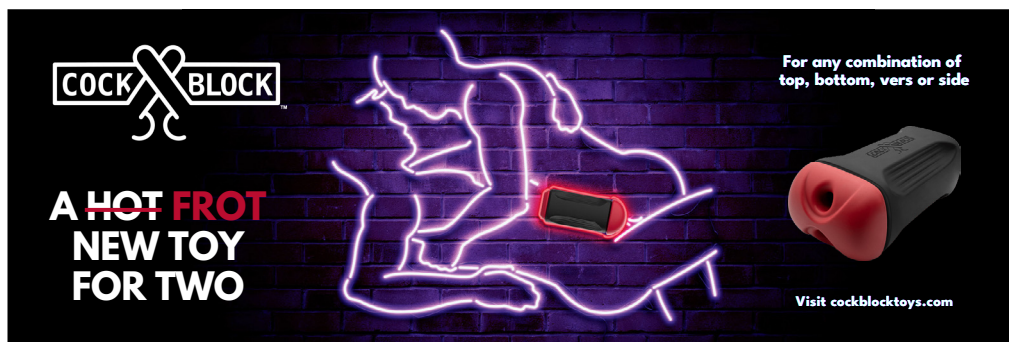
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Editor's note: This article contains the term "Third Sex." In modern culture, sex and gender are two separate concepts. In many indigenous cultures, especially in the East, Third Sex has long been used as a gender construct. The term acknowledges and validates the existence of people whose gender identities fall outside the Western male-female binary, which includes non-binary, intersex, and transgender individuals, as well as historically recognized non-binary genders in other cultures, like the Hijra of India or Waria of Indonesia. The term Third Sex is commonplace in Asia, and can be likened to saying, "third gender." It acknowledges that many cultures historically have had, and continue to have, gender systems that include more than two genders, recognizing identities that do not conform to typical Western notions of masculinity or femininity. Third Sex is also important because it is used to recognize both the historical presence of non-binary genders in indigenous societies and their modern development within LGBTQ+ communities as non-binary identities.

Modern society sees Thailand as the land of lady-boys, while Japan has a sordid history of deeming young males who fulfill the pleasures of both adult men and women to be right of passage. Before the arrival of English and European colonizers, Asia not only acknowledged gender diversity but also embraced and revered it.

South Asia's Hijras

Hijras beautifully integrate femininity and machismo. They are typically biologically born male but identify as neither man nor woman and belong to a "third gender" community that often follows a distinct kinship system. Many hijras often seek out a community, or this kinship system, to replace their biological families. And this family has a defined structure. Hijras live under a guru who provides them with social safety, shelter, and basic necessities in exchange for money and recognition. They start to nurture a family with a leader, like a North American sorority house. Daily earnings are all collected by the guru who then provides them with their necessities, and the rest is saved for future investment, including



Hijras of the street in Southern New Delhi

safety, event planning, travel and in some cases, they fund sex changes.

A hijra group offers stability, but choosing their new identity means making an individual vulnerable in a society that often sees them as outcasts. Bypassing the biological definition, hijras are more of a social phenomenon as a minority group and have a long-recorded history in South Asia. In the past, hijras held semi-sacred status and were hired to sing, dance, and bless newly married couples or newborns at household parties. They used to earn their living based on the cultural belief that hijras can bless one's house with prosperity and fertility. Over time, though, "hijras have lost their honoured space in society. Now, they are discriminated against and scorned almost everywhere. This has resulted in them struggling to make a living by walking the streets collecting money from shopkeepers, bus, and train passengers or by prostitution.

Many hijras in Bangladesh choose to migrate to India, where they are more accepted. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India ruled that hijras would be recognized on official documents under a separate

'third gender' category, allowing them access to government jobs and college places.

In conservative areas, there is a negative connotation to the word 'hijra'. Many associate the word with social outcasts. Yet even with this association, many are contributing members of their society despite the hate, negligence and discrimination forced upon them.

The Five Genders of Sulawesi

The Bugis people of South Sulawesi are an ethnic group who recognize five separate genders. While only numbering around six million in a country of 270 million, the Bugis are highly influential. Their words for five genders lead to their belief in five ways of being in the world.

In Bugis society, "makkunrai" and "oroani" translate to Western concepts of cis female and cis male. Calalai, though, are born with female bodies but take on traditionally male gender roles; they sometimes prefer shirts and trousers, smoke cigarettes, wear their hair short and work manual jobs. Calabai are born with male bodies but take on female gender



A group of Calalai (one of the five traditional genders of Bugis society)

roles, preferring dresses and makeup and long hair. In this society, many calabai work in beauty salons, plan weddings, and perform at wedding ceremonies.

Calabai do not impersonate or try to be women. They are a freer form of being who exhibit their own set of feminine behaviours that would be frowned upon in makkunrai women, like wearing miniskirts, smoking, and acting in a more outwardly sexualised manner. With this extroverted personality, calabai people may be disapproved of in some areas, but they are widely tolerated, even seen as playing an important role in their society. Most are generally not attacked or otherwise persecuted by their own community.

The fifth Bugis gender is bissu, which is considered neither men nor women, representing the totality of the gender spectrum. Bissu, like calabai and calalai, display their identity through dress, often wearing flowers (traditionally viewed as feminine), but they carry the keris dagger (which is associated with men). Many bissu are born intersex, but the term has implications beyond biology. While Bugis gender is often described as a spectrum, bissu are deemed to be

above this classification: spiritual beings who are not halfway between male and female, but rather embody the power of both at once.

They believe that on their descent from heaven, bissu did not split to become male or female, like most people, but remained a sacred unity of both. Because of this, they are seen as intermediaries between worlds and occupy a shaman-like role in Bugis religion.

There is a ritual performed in which bissu gather in the centre of the room around a pile of rice. As incense smoke swirls in near-darkness, drums are pounded, and the sounds of chanting amongst them quicken while they dance into a trance-like state. The bissu will then unsheathe their keris daggers and stab the wavy blades into their own temples, palms, and even their eyelids. To undergo this ritual, known as ma'giri, and come through it unharmed is seen as proof that the bissu have been possessed by the gods and are ready to give blessings. These ceremonies are often geared towards ensuring bountiful harvests, good health, and successful pregnancies.

Although their religious rituals and conception of gender are infused with pre-Islamic ideas, most Bugis are devout Muslims. This creates complex interactions between Bugis values and Islamic teaching, which leads to forms of Islamic-Bugis syncretism. And many calabai struggle with their sexuality and sense of self, believing that their lifestyle (which may include same-sex relations) is sinful according to Islamic belief, but also that they are the way they are because it was prescribed by Allah. They do not have a concept of being born in the wrong body, though some calabai may undergo cosmetic procedures to make them look more feminine, they do not consider themselves to be women.

A third gender known as waria (a merger of wanita, meaning woman, and pria, meaning man) has long been acknowledged in societies across Indonesia. Since the mid-20th Century, however, Indonesian society has become less tolerant of non-binary ideas of gender, which has resulted in persecution towards calabai and bissu people. Starting in the 1950s, a wave of violent attacks against the LGBTQ community occurred.

When Kahar Muzakkar's Darul Islam rebellion movement wanted to establish an Islamic state in the 1950s, the bissu were arrested, tortured, and forced to repent. Some bissu were publicly shamed by having their heads shaved, and some were killed. During the New Order era under President Suharto (1967-1998), an initiative called Operation Repentance, all bissu people were forced to renounce the ancestral religion and choose one of Indonesia's officially recognized religions. In 2001, Islamic extremists burned down the Makassar headquarters of GAYa Celebes, a gay rights organization. In 2018, transgender women were being rounded up and placed in detention centres in Indonesia's capital city, as a "deterrent" to people identifying as waria.

Bissu, calabai and calabai are now experiencing much stigma and discrimination. This correlates with the increase in assertiveness of Islamic policies. At the societal level, there is a strong tendency towards an increased puritanism, which can be compared to that of born-again Christians in the West.

Japan and Newhalfs

Newhalf shares the same negative connotation as the English word "shemale," and conjures up images



Japanese Woodblock Prints from Library of Congress Collection

of sex workers. It's a blanket term for people across the transgender spectrum, but generally refers to a trans-woman with male genitalia. Okama, on the other hand, means "kettle," and once (pronounced OH-nay) means "sister." Both refer to males who have become female after surgeries, or to effeminate guys. However, okama is generally considered both offensive and too sexualized as it also refers to male prostitutes. While both terms can be heard in private conversation, okama and once are not acceptable terms to use in public.

A person who identifies as newhalf is different from okama (which indicates a person who has undergone genital reassignment surgery). Like transsexual and transgender in English, there's a fine line between newhalf and okama, with newhalf more closely aligning itself with the word intersex, a person that doesn't conform solely to male or female binary standards.

And the history of these standards goes back to Edo Japan (1603-1867). Japan at that time was governed by strict rules on what hairstyles, clothes, and weapons could be worn by which gender, age, and social group. Some of these regulations were enshrined in law. However, gender roles in Edo Japan went beyond men and women to include what is often referred to as a "third gender," the Wakashu.

Wakashu were male youths, transitioning between being a child and an adult. Wakashu were identified primarily through their clothes and hairstyles. They wore their hair in a topknot, with a small, shaved portion at the crown of the head and long forelocks at the sides, as opposed to adult men, who shaved the entire crown of their heads. Wakashu clothes were like those worn by unmarried young women: colourful kimonos with long, flowing sleeves.

Wakashu usually ranged between seven to early twenties in age. Almost all Japanese males went through a Wakashu stage, which ended with a coming-of-age ceremony called genpuku. After this ceremony, they would take up their roles as men in society. However, some chose to delay their coming-of-age ceremony beyond their twenties or to remain a Wakashu for large parts of their lives.

As youth, Wakashu were considered free from the responsibilities of adulthood but regarded as sexually mature. As objects of desire for men and women, they had sex with both. The intricate social rules that

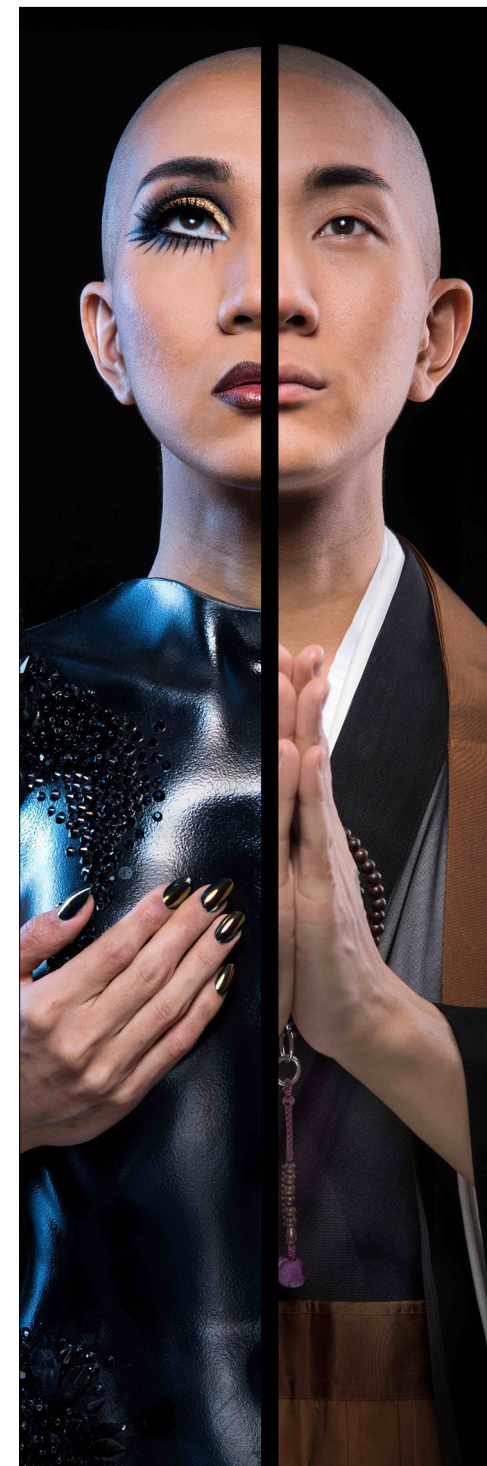


Photo by Tomo.Mat8 via Wikimedia.org

governed the appearance of Wakashu also regulated their sexual behaviour. With adult men, Wakashu assumed a passive role; with women, a more active one. Relationships between two Wakashu were not tolerated. Their most important relationship would be with an older man, which often had both a sexual and a teacher-student element. Gender fluidity in Edo Japan still had its limits. Wakashu were always biologically male. Females could dress up like a Wakashu, but they did not enjoy the same sexual liberties.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Wakashu had disappeared. Why? For two centuries, Japan had been almost totally isolated from the world, creating a distinctive Japanese culture with its own moral and sexual codes. This seclusion ended in 1854 when the US Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo Bay to negotiate treaties that would result in the opening of the country to Western trade and influences. This triggered unparalleled changes in virtually all areas of Japanese society, culminating in the creation of a centralized Japanese nation-state under the Meiji emperor in 1868. In the span of a few decades, Japan saw an unequalled influx of Western ideas and people. At the same time, Japanese people were sent to Europe and the United States to bring back knowledge in the areas of science, economics, politics, the military, and medicine. Japan quickly transformed from a feudal state into a modern nation, which also imported Western Christian and Victorian morals and ethics. With Western norms and values came the prevalence of strict gender roles.

Following the establishment of the new Japanese nation-state, sex and gender, not class, became the factors in establishing an individual's role in society, and masculine male and feminine female roles were maintained. In 1871, men were fined if they did not follow the newly mandated close-cropped haircut, and, from 1872 onwards, it was illegal for women to wear their hair short. For a Wakashu, hairstyle was an important marker of gender identity and a signal of their special status to the outside world. However, under the new rules, all men in Japan had to wear a similar haircut. In 1873, it was also illegal for men and women to cross-dress, thereby stopping Wakashu from wearing the same clothes as young women, which erased their second marker of identity. These strict gender hierarchies left no space for the fluidity of Wakashu, who were either ridiculed, condemned, or ignored. Without their distinct hairstyles and

clothes and faced with a strict moral code, Wakashu effectively ceased to exist as a "third gender."

The same connection between nationalism and gender that led to the erasure of the Wakashu continues today. The surge of nationalist tendencies around the globe often goes hand in hand with a tightening of gender norms and a policing of gender expression. In September 2021, the Chinese government released new regulations, banning "effeminate" men from TV and media in a bid to promote an image of aggressive masculinity. The ban coincides with a rise in nationalistic ideals and a tightening of social and economic controls by the Chinese government.

Gender expressions and LGBTQ+ rights are constantly negotiated and contested. It is currently happening all over the world, especially in the USA. While gender definitions and LGBTQ+ rights have expanded in many parts of the world, the Wakashu, in particular, illustrate how quickly more open and fluid understandings of gender and sex can be repressed and erased.

Jamaican-born Rolyn Chambers grew up in Mississauga and studied at OCAD. In 2001, he launched Deep Dish with fab Magazine, which ran for a decade and featured interviews with notable people. Deep Dish now continues in theBUZZ. Chambers also self-published The Boy Who Brought Down A Bathhouse through YumEee!



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Asia Out in the Open



By PinkPlayMags Editorial Team

As societies evolve, attitudes towards the queer community become more accepting because of local queer activism. Pride festivals, once limited to North America, have popped up all over the world. Asia is one of these areas.

Tokyo Rainbow Pride

Early June 2025

<https://pride.tokyo>

Tokyo's first parade took place in 1994, and participation continues to grow, with over 15,000 people participating in 2024. The heart of Tokyo centres around Yoyogi Park, where the completely free main Pride Festival takes over the Event Plaza and Outdoor Stage. Featuring booths by domestic and international companies and organizations, NPOs, and food vendors, the festival offers networking opportunities, informational booths, and stage performances by diverse artists. Teaming with events for everyone, it includes a two-day youth event, queer art exhibition, and a human rights

conference. Once the official festivities wind down, Tokyo's gay district, Shinjuku Nichome, becomes the unofficial after-party headquarters. Packed with an incredible number of bars, clubs, and social spaces in just a few blocks, this intimate, friendly area has been the center of Tokyo's LGBTQ+ nightlife for decades. The queer scene, though, is not limited to Ni-chōme, as a number of other areas, such as Ueno, Asakusa, Shimbashi, and Ikebukuro, have queer venues to check out.

Many international hotel chains also make commitments to inclusive service during Pride, especially, but also year-round, making Tokyo a welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ travellers. Plus, organizations like Stonewall Japan, Pride House Tokyo and TELL (Tokyo English Lifeline) provide support for Tokyo's LGBTQ+ community.



Osaka's Rainbow Festa

October 24th -25th

<https://enola.gr/prides/osaka-rainbow-festival-2025/>

Gay history in Osaka goes back to the 1950s with the opening of the Takeonoya Ryokan in the Nishinari ward of Osaka, which was Japan's original gay cruising area. Pride is held every October, with the first event taking place in 2006. Today, Osaka's queer community is thriving with over 100 gay bars, ten lesbian bars, and a burgeoning trans nightlife scene. And just in time for this year's Rainbow Festa (Pride Festival), Osaka has just become an International LGBTQ+ Travel Association Featured Destination and is launching the country's first Destination Marketing Organization-led Pride Month campaign.

Rainbow Festa includes the Kansai Rainbow Parade, usually held on the festival's second day.

After hours, Doyamacho, the city's LGBTQ+ district, comes alive with gay and lesbian bars and clubs, including Dungaree, Salamat, Grand Slam and Explosion.

Japan's Queer Art Scene

As Japan's LGBTQ+ rights evolve, its art scene follows suit. Many queer visual artists are establishing themselves, there and globally.

The works of artist **Mr.** are bright, cheerful, and visually sweet, but a twist exists beneath their gloss. His works often have an undercurrent of sexual deviance. One of his paintings of two schoolgirls, for instance, has one pulling the other's skirt up to reveal a penis. He aims to represent Japanese pop culture at its truest.



Illustrator **Moriuo** is pushing boundaries in Japan's society, bringing awareness and equality through his work by narrating gender rights and equality. As an LGBTQ+ artist, he depicts intimate stories of couples and their love stories.

Kazutaka Nagashima uses real-life events to shape his work. His piece, "Rose Boy", a woodblock print, incorporates a rose tattoo motif in a tribute to Yeh Yung-chih, a Taiwanese queer teenager who died because of bullying.

Natsuki Yoshida's monochrome paintings, rooted in manga, trace lesbian romance with clarity and intensity. Tender embraces and haunted gazes not only capture intimacy between young women but also the beauty, hesitation, and ache of desire.

Taiwan Pride

October 24th to 26th

<https://www.taiwanpride.lgbt/2024-info-en>

Taiwan held its first official Pride parade in its capital city of Taipei in 2003. In what would mark the beginning of a transformative annual tradition in East Asia, approximately 500 people marched through the streets despite significant social queer stigma. Early years focused on basic visibility and fighting discrimination, with participants often wearing masks to shield their identities. As societal attitudes shifted, the event grew in size and confidence. Masks gave way to elaborate costumes and joyful, open celebrations. By 2019, over 200,000 participants confirmed its status as Asia's largest Pride event. This growth reflects Taiwan's progressive evolution on LGBTQ+ rights, including the 2019 legalization of same-sex marriage—the first Asian nation to achieve this.



Photo by YC Lovia via Flickr

The main parade, attracting over 80,000 people, winds through Taipei's city center, starting at the Presidential Office Building and moving through key districts before concluding with a massive gathering in front of Taipei City Hall. Taiwan Pride maintains a strong grassroots and political feel. Each year features a specific theme addressing current LGBTQ+ issues facing Taiwanese society, from workplace discrimination to family acceptance to transgender rights. Combining celebratory elements with advocacy, political speeches, community testimonials, calls to action, alongside musical performances, artistic displays, and festive processions.

Pride Week also includes film festivals showcasing Asian LGBTQ+ cinema, academic conferences exploring queer issues in Asian contexts, art exhibitions featuring LGBTQ+ artists, workshops for community organizing, and specialized parties catering to different segments of the community.

Standing apart from other Asian and some global Pride events, Taiwan Pride maintains stronger connections to feminist movements, labour rights organizations, and social justice causes. Incorporating distinctly Taiwanese cultural elements, traditional folk-art aesthetics blend local cultural references with

global LGBTQ+ symbolism. Taiwan Pride has also developed unique traditions, including the "Pride Bear" mascots, that have become iconic symbols of the event, specialized hand fans featuring political messages and an extensive use of rainbow-decorated traditional foods and items.

Marked by tens of thousands of people parading through the city, this annual event hosts numerous after-parties and special events. Visitors can hop on a "rainbow" bus tour to explore the city, and Taipei City Hall participates with a huge nighttime light show and a special "rainbow road" painted on the pavement in front. Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) embraces LGBTQ+ rights as part of its progressive platform, which has greatly helped the queer scene flourish. Pride has become significant in Taiwan's international cultural diplomacy, showcasing the nation's democratic values and social progressivism on the world stage. This is particularly important as Taiwan seeks to differentiate itself from China (who pose an ever-present threat of invasion) and build stronger connections with Western democracies.



Photo by Naman Koul via Flickr

Mumbai Pride

Held last week of January, first week of February
<https://www.mumbaiqueerpride.org>

India first decriminalized homosexuality in 2009, but that ruling was overturned four years later. Many were put in dangerous positions, while others had to go back into the closet. It was a frightful five years until homosexuality was decriminalized, again, for a second time in 2018. The queer community in India is painfully aware of the fragility of freedom. This year's official Mumbai Queer Pride's 2025 official slogan, 'No Going Back,' serves as a rallying cry for them and for the global queer community.

Mumbai has held annual pride marches since 2005. The first official Queer Azaadi March, however, was held on August 16, 2008, as a protest against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized gay and lesbian sex. And while countries and cities around the world put their Pride festivals on hold for two years during the COVID lockdowns, Mumbai was on hiatus for four. As well as the pandemic, organizers had difficulty obtaining police permission for the event. But in 2024, it came back bigger and bolder. The previous organizers of the march, Queer Azaadi Mumbai (QAM) was disbanded, and Mumbai Queer Pride, a new collective, took over.

Kolkata was the first city to host a Pride walk back in 1999, followed by Delhi in 2003, and Mumbai in 2008. Since then, other cities, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Gurgaon, Kerala, Guwahati, Jaipur, Patna, and Lucknow have held their own Pride marches. Though everyone is welcome, some have noted that there is an absence of Muslim visibility in the country's Pride events. 2024 marked the first time that pictures from the Pride march captured people expressing their religious identity as Muslims in subtle ways. But apparently, no burqas or abayas are worn because they are not welcome at queer events. Traditional South Asian clothing is worn with gender non-conformity; some wear chandras – a crescent moon-shaped bindi that represents femininity – while others wear saris, lehengas, and rainbow turbans.

As well as the march, over 18 events are held during January. These included sports tournaments, like the QGames, a beach game tournament held on Juhu beach, and the Gulabi Mela, a fair held with queer artists, entrepreneurs, and activities. The march itself begins outside the August Kranti Maidan in Grant Road. Led by drummers, the parade includes a moment of silence to remember the lives of those lost. But it is a joyous celebration as Pride and trans flags fly.

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Out and About in Queer Asia

By Bryen Dunn

Several destinations in Asia offer vibrant LGBTQ+ scenes and welcoming environments for queer travellers.

Thailand, particularly Bangkok, is known for its welcoming atmosphere and numerous gay bars, clubs, and events, as are Chang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. Other popular destinations include Taipei, Hong Kong, Bali, and Singapore, each with its own unique LGBTQ+ scene and cultural attractions.

Thailand

Most of gay Bangkok's action occurs around Silom Soi 4, where crowds tend to gravitate to before going late night clubbing in nearby Silom Soi 2 at places like [DJ Station](#), the largest gay club in the city, and [G Bangkok](#), which stays open even later. Beyond these two areas, there are a few other LGBTQ+ places of note, in particular, [House of Heals](#), famous for its elaborate drag shows, is located on the upper floor of the [Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong Hotel](#), and the [Blue District Bar](#), located on the 38th Floor of the newly opened LGBTQ+ owned [JC Kevin](#).

[Sathorn Bangkok Hotel](#). Either hotel would make for a great stay as well. In Chiang Mai, the most popular gay nightlife area is located around The Night Bazaar, one of the city's main tourist destinations, where cabaret drag events happen nightly at [Ram Bar](#) and [Sixxret Bar](#). As well, more of the city's local gay bar scene can be found in the ChangPuak and Nimmanhaemin Road areas, located to the northwest of Old Town. Both [Chiang Mai Pride](#) and [Bangkok Pride](#) take place annually in June of each year, and sights are set on hosting World Pride in 2030! [Thailand Tourism](#) has all you need to start planning your next adventure, and [Go Thai Be Free](#) is a dedicated LGBTQ+ travel website.

Taiwan

Taiwan was the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2019. The capital of [Taipei](#) is a hotspot for LGBTQ+ travellers, boasting a dedicated gay district and numerous Pride events. The city also hosts the largest [Pride](#) parade in Asia, showcasing a vibrant and public queer community. There are also emerging queer scenes in other cities, such as



Kaohsiung. Taiwanese queer cinema and literature have explored LGBTQ+ themes for decades, and recent years have seen a surge in cultural productions. Examples include queer literature influenced by the landmark novel *Crystal Boys* and subsequent *series*. Check out [Taiwan Tourism](#) for more information.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a vibrant city with a mix of Western and Chinese culture, offering a welcoming atmosphere for LGBTQ+ travellers. Its unique blend of Eastern traditions and Western influences creates a complex backdrop for LGBTQ+ life. Gay bars, cafes, and various cultural events provide vital safe spaces for the community to gather, socialize, and express their identities. Hong Kong hosts and promotes LGBTQ+ events, and recently was host to Asia's first *Gay Games*. The city features a range of gay bars and clubs catering to different tastes. [Hong Kong Tourism](#) has all the information you need, and getting there is easy with Cathay Pacific, which has also published its own *Insider's Guide* to queer culture.

Singapore

Singapore diverse city-state with a growing LGBTQ+ scene and modern infrastructure. There's a growing queer culture, with community groups and LGBTQ+-friendly venues contributing to a vibrant social scene. Groups such as *Oogachaga*, *Pelangi Pride Centre*, *Sayoni*, and *TransgenderSG* offer support, resources, and community spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals. [Pink Dot](#) is an annual



gathering celebrating inclusiveness and the right to love, bringing together the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies. Singapore has a number of LGBTQ+-friendly bars and venues, such as *Backstage Bar*, which serves as a focal point for the social scene. Queer themes are explored through various art forms, including literature, theatre, and cinema, with some local arts centers like *The Substation* hosting queer events. [Visit Singapore](#) has all the information you need to start planning your getaway.

Japan

Japanese culture is known for its politeness and welcoming nature, making it an easy and enjoyable destination for LGBTQ+ travellers. There is a growing LGBTQ+ scene in major cities like Tokyo, especially in areas like Shinjuku Ni-chom, which has a large concentration of LGBTQ+ bars and clubs.

Visit [Pride House Tokyo](#), a permanent LGBTQ centre for information, events, and community resources. The [Japan National Tourism Board](#) is full of information, and watch this [documentary on Queer Japan](#) before your travels.

Philippines

Philippines is considered among the more gay-friendly countries in Asia and boasts beautiful islands and festivals. The capital city of Manila is often cited as Asia's gay capital, with events such as [Metro Manila Pride](#) and [TransMan Pilipinas](#). There are a few inclusive venues like *O Bar* and *Club Adonis*, which host drag shows and other events. [Philippines](#)



[Tourism](#) is filled with information to start your planning.

Indonesia

Bali is considered a popular and relatively LGBTQ+ friendly destination, with tourist areas like Seminyak, Canggu, and Ubud, having visible gay scenes with bars, hotels, and a welcoming atmosphere. In Seminyak, check out *Mixwell Bar* and *Bali Joe*. Ubud is known for its spiritual and artistic culture, with venues such as *Paradiso Ubud* hosting many LGBTQ+ events. Canggu is a hip and laid-back area known for surfing and digital nomads, attracting a diverse and open-minded crowd. Check out *FINNS Beach Club*, a popular day club that hosts various parties and events in a lively and inclusive atmosphere. Discover all things great at [Indonesia Travel](#).

Vietnam

The first large-scale Pride event, *Viet Pride*, was held in 2012 and has been growing ever since, expanding to include multiple cities and hosting film festivals, talks, and parades. Ho Chi Minh City has a growing LGBTQ+ scene for nightlife and culture concentrated within District 1. You'll find gay bars like *Frolic Bar* and *Chinchin*, saunas such as *Nadam Spa* and *Dot Soy 9*, and LGBTQ+-friendly hotels. [Visit Vietnam](#) is your go-to website for all your travel planning needs.



Tips For LGBTQ+ Travellers Within Asia

Research local laws and customs

While many countries are becoming more LGBTQ+ friendly, be aware of local laws and customs regarding public displays of affection.

Utilize LGBTQ+ Resources

Platforms like Tinder, Plenty of Fish, Couchsurfing, and Purple Roofs help you connect with locals and find LGBTQ+-friendly accommodations and events.

Embrace the Local Culture

Be respectful of customs and traditions and enjoy the unique experiences that each destination has to offer.

Local Tour Operators and Organizations

Book with confidence with companies such as [Out Asia Travel](#) or Globe Holiday. Check with local queer organizations at each destination to find out the best to stay, play, and slay!

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.



Hot Artist

Photo by Diego Isreal



Have you ever been to a music festival and heard a beat in the distance so infectious that it pulls you to the stage where you drop your things on the grass and instantly start dancing to this transcendent new sound? That happened to me recently upon hearing the poetic wails of Rosina Kazi and their electronic trio ROSINX performing tracks from their 2022 album, [Basic Income](#).

It's rare to stumble upon a performance so present and self-assured that it forms an unspoken bond with the audience, but Kazi is not new to this. Their critically acclaimed ambient techno group LAL has just celebrated 25 years together and is still reinventing themselves with compelling and topical material. Co-created with Nic 'Murr' Murray (Juno-winning producer for his work with hip-hop production team Da Grassroots), LAL's downtempo global rhythms and South Asian inflections serve as a stirring vehicle for their humanitarian advocacy.

While LAL is Kazi and Murr's primary musical focus, ROSINX is their alter ego, side project – more dance-oriented, with hip-hop, international, and electronic elements. It also introduces co-vocalist and queer drag artist Franny Galore-Wngz to the mix – her addition brings a unique harmonic texture,

and some fun stage play that gets people on the dancefloor. The group's eclectic tastes pull from their Caribbean, Bengali, and Chilean roots, and Murr's live beat layering sets them apart from other, more pre-recorded dance acts.

The sense of connection and inclusion that the group brings to their performances is one of their greatest strengths. This comes from their long history of community building in Toronto's arts and social justice advocacy circles. Over the years, Kazi has helped develop organizations like Bricks and Glitter – a more radical, grassroots alternative to Toronto Pride – and UNIT 2 – a community arts hub focused on supporting underrepresented voices through art classes, workshops, and a performance/rehearsal space for artists to experiment.

"I have a passion for supporting local indie queer/trans and/or Black and brown artists and seeing our communities thrive", explains Kazi. "We believe in being part of a garden – an interdependent community where we all need each other to grow."

When asked what the secret is to cultivating a rich artist/activist community, Kazi shares, "I think the key is to be humble, not use big words, haha, and keep it moving. Don't take yourself too seriously. Work collaboratively, listen—really listen—be able to change, and not demand too much of people while still encouraging folks and letting them lead."

ROSINX's new single "Jump Up to the Sky" is now out, with a video in the works – keep an eye out for remixes, and their full album launch set for spring 2026. For more about ROSINX or LAL, check out, [rosinamusic.xyz](#), or [lalforest.com](#).

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



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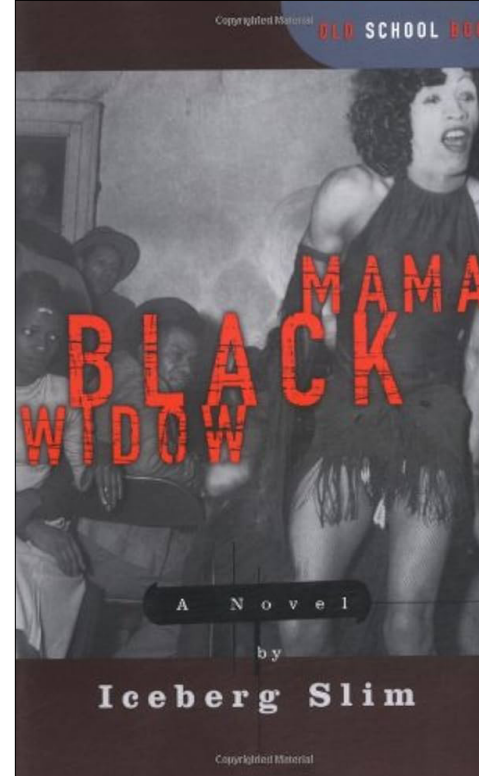
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Author Iceberg Slim is a legend to a few, yet unknown to many. Those who have stumbled, somehow, into the worlds he creates are instantly rewarded. “[Mama Black Widow](#)” is dark, gritty, paced, page turner. Slim became one of the thousands of black men that the US prison system relied on to prop up its roster and make its money. Slim, though, was determined, if not to turn his life around, to ensure that he didn’t waste his creativity while being locked up. Incarcerated as a pimp, Slim began writing, and as a result, he became one of the bestselling black novelists in American history. Taking place between the mid-1960s and the mid ‘70s, his stories are filled with drug dealing, pimping, and hustling of every sort.

Like his other works, “*Pimp: The Story Of My Life*” (written while in prison), “*Trick Baby*,” and “*The Naked Soul Of Iceberg Slim*,” you are compelled to devour page after page, but after the first two chapters of this novel, this was not possible. It was too much to consume, and breaks were needed from the brutal foreign world described, but for some, it was a reality. Yet even in this world of harshness and strife, Slim can get the reader waiting and rooting for a happy ending. It’s a marathon of sweat and tears that we are running along the main

Fiction

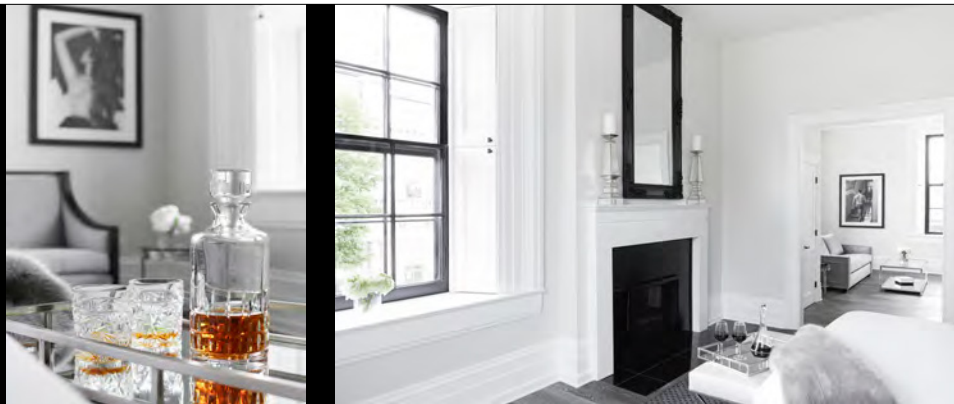
character, Otis Tilson, known as “Mama Black Widow.” Tilson is a tragic black drag queen existing in a dreary ghetto teaming with pimps and violent crime. Barely treading the waters of life with his like-minded brothers and sisters, his life is explored in the gut-level language of the gay underworld. It’s pre-Stonewall. Pre-gay liberation. It was dangerous and is a testament to a life lived on the margins of a racist and predatory urban hell.

At its core, though, it is a story of the family unity struggling to survive with what they have been allowed to have. Tilson’s family moves from the rural South to the urban landscape of Chicago in the hopes of a better life, only to find more racism, run-down slums and degrading, low-paying jobs. Unable to provide for his family, Otis’s father slips into alcoholism while his sisters and brother, lost in an uncaring city, drift into prostitution and petty crime. But it is the secret gay life of Otis that sets him apart from them. In his attempts to navigate this life, he is faced with never-ending rapes, beatings, and failed attempts at forced heterosexual love. Even today, it speaks to the struggle of trans individuals and the systematic situations that force many to turn to selling their bodies to survive. It’s brutal at times, but Slim’s ghetto cattiness and defiant queer voice encapsulate the core of his unsentimental truth. *Mama Black Widow* is not only about homosexuality in the ghetto at a time when it was unspoken and unseen, but also about the myths and expectations of masculinity that exist even today.

Available on Amazon.

About the Author

Iceberg Slim (1918–1992), also known as Robert Beck, was a Black American pimp and author whose vivid semi-autobiographical books made him a cultural icon. After a criminal career lasting over two decades, Beck became a prolific writer, producing seven books that detailed his experience. His works, which chronicled his life on Chicago’s South Side, became underground bestsellers and a major influence on “street literature,” also known as [blaxploitation](#) culture.



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Senior Pride Network (Toronto)

Hopefully, we will all see our senior years. If we do, an organization like Senior Pride Network Toronto (SPN-T) will be there to keep us active and engaged. As a volunteer-run association of intergenerational individuals, organizations and community groups, SPN-T share an interest and commitment to expanding programs and services for older 2Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer and intersex people in the City of Toronto. By meeting quarterly to share experiences, they work collaboratively on activities and projects designed to enhance services for older 2SLGBTQI+ people.

In 2002, Senior Pride Network Toronto began as a group of representatives of service provider organizations, including faith groups, interested in expanding and improving programs and services for older 2SLGBTQI+ people. They started by organizing forums ("Healthy Aging for Older 2SLGBTQI+People" and "Dreaming Community: Making It Happen"), developing brochures and info posters, including one called "End-of-Life Things Older 2SLGBTQI+People Need to Prepare For."

The Network formalized itself in 2005. That year, they established one of their key objectives:

by Sherry Sylvain

Community Cornerstone

advocating for the human, economic, social, and cultural rights of 2Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, intersex, and other elders, seniors, and older persons. This objective acknowledges that the life and aging experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons vary significantly because of their race, gender, sex, and other identities. Many, including 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, lesbians, transgender, and persons with disabilities, or who came to Canada as immigrants or refugees, also live at the intersections of two or more of these identities.

In the future, SPN-T envisions a series of communities of 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors and older persons that are respectful, affirming, supportive, safe, and healthy who seek to eradicate all forms of oppression, including homophobia, heterosexism, lesbophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexism, cissexism, racism, antisemitism, settler colonialism, xenophobia, islamophobia, ableism, and ageism.

Now in its tenth official year, Senior Pride Network -Toronto work with all levels of government to effect change in legislation, regulations, and public policy. By engaging in public education and advocacy, they have created awareness and promoted social change around 2SLGBTQI+ elders, seniors, and older people. Because we will hopefully all be elder queers, they have shown that we must work to protect who we are and who we will become. To learn more about them or to get involved, visit

www.seniorpridenetwork.ca

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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by Sherry Sylvain

Let's Support Local Charities!

TICOT Drag Brunch

October 26, November 23, December 28 • 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Join Xavier Thrace and Toke-ita Bonita Blake as they host this drag brunch with a difference. This event is an open stage where all performers donate all tips to benefit the 2SLGBTQ charities supported by The Imperial Court of Toronto.

The Well, 487 Church St., Toronto

<https://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com/>

TICOT Charity Bingo

November 9, December 14 • 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Join Teran Blake & Burger for FUN-draising BINGO.

Supporting: PWA Food Essentials Market; Durham Alliance Outreach Food Pantry; LGBT Youthline.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

<https://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com/>

What's Happening In And Around The Village?

C.U. Next Tuesday - Open Stage

Tuesdays • 9:00 p.m. to midnight

Bring your sheet music or pick a song from their songbooks. Musical Theatre & Jazz Standards encouraged but you may sing what you like.

O'Grady's On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto

<http://www.ogradyschurch.com/>

Open Stage Cabaret

Tuesdays • 10:00 p.m.

An open stage event hosted by a stunning array of leading queens, with special guests. DJ Cory Activate. GLORIOUS Star Making Machinery & BIG Fun. Arrive early to sign up as a performer.

Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto

<http://woodystoronto.com>

Hump Night Honeys

Wednesdays • 10:00 p.m.

Hosts Carlotta Carlisle and Katinka Kature welcome an array of special guest stars with DJ Chris Steinbach, and Toronto's sweetest staff.

Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto

<http://woodystoronto.com/>

Jock Night Thursdays

Thursdays • 10:00 p.m.

Join hostess Morgan James, everyone's second favourite drag queen, and the semi-clad (or less) men of Cock Bar for an evening of feisty fun and frivolity. Drink specials, prizes, and surprises. This is a "men only" space on the second floor, and not handicap accessible.

Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto

<https://www.flashonchurch.com/>

The Dmanda Show

Fridays • 9:00 p.m.

Friday Night Drag Race viewing party and live Drag Show with Dmanda Tension and Vitality Black, plus some of Toronto's best performers! Must be 19+ with valid ID.

The Drink, 459 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto

<https://beacons.ai/drinkatthedrink>

Hollywoody to Broadway Show

Sundays • 6:00 p.m.

Hilarious host Georgie Girl welcomes a selection of guest performers every Sunday evening serving up your favourite hits of stage and screen, and more.

Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto

<http://woodystoronto.com/>

Oh My Magic Brunch

November 22 • noon to 3:00 p.m.

A magical afternoon of sparkles, sass, and fabulous drag performances.

O'Grady's On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/oh-my-magic-drag-brunch-tickets-1597928851209>

Looking for fun with the Queer-adjacent crowd?

The Rocky Horror Picture Show 50th Anniversary

October 28 • 8:00 p.m.

Join the original 'Magenta' - Patricia Quinn - for a 50th anniversary screening of the original unedited movie with a live shadow cast, and audience participation.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

<https://roythomsonhall.mhrth.com/tickets/the-rocky-horror-picture-show/>

The Prince of Egypt - The Musical

November 7 to 9

Journey through the wonders of Ancient Egypt in this sweeping musical epic as Ramses and Moses, two young men raised together as brothers in a kingdom of privilege, find themselves suddenly divided by a secret past.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

<https://tickets.brampton.ca>

Shea Coulee

November 14 • 8:00 p.m.

Step into a dazzling world of RuPaul Drag Race excellence, fierce artistry, and unforgettable performances. Supporting artists - Lemon, and The Virgo Queen (both of Canada's Drag Race)

Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>

Jinkx and DeLa Holiday Show

November 26 • 7:00 p.m.

Award-winning comedy icons, writers, actors, and Drag Race drag queen powerhouses BenDeLaCreme & Jinkx Monsoon are coming back to town with their wildly successful, internationally acclaimed show.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>



Jann Arden Christmas Tour

December 16 • 8:00 p.m.

Celebrate the holidays with Alberta's own Jann Arden as she puts her unique spin on the classics you know and love, featured on her 2015 release 'A Jann Arden Christmas.'

Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>



Broadway - The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year... Maybe

December 21 • 2:00 p.m.

Four of Canada's finest musical theatre, jazz, and cabaret artists doing the music of Broadway - and the Holidays - their way, and delighting audiences in the process.

Meadowdale Theatre, 6315 Montevideo Rd., Mississauga

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>



PANIC: 80s/90s Video Dance Party w/ Human League spotlight

December 27 • 9:00 p.m.

A brilliant evening of new wave, post-punk, classic alternatives, synth pioneers, Britpop, shoegaze, Madchester, new romantic, classic industrial, ska, and more.

Ground Control, 1279 Queen St. W., Toronto

<https://www.instagram.com/groundcontroltoronto>

How About Hanging Out With The Str8 Peoples?

Toy Story in Concert

November 21 • 7:30 p.m.

The animated classic on the big screen in its entirety, accompanied by a live orchestra performing composer Randy Newman's vibrant score note-for-note.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>

Rheostatics

November 21 and 22

The band will present "The Great Lakes Suite," a multi-media show including visuals by long-time collaborators Nicholas DePencier and Jennifer Baichwal.

TD Music Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

<https://tdmusicall.mhrth.com/tickets/rheostatics/>

Disney's The Muppet Christmas Carol in Concert

November 29 • 2:00 p.m.

See The Muppet Christmas Carol, with so many beloved Muppet characters, while the score is performed live by an orchestra. Ideal for children of all ages.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>

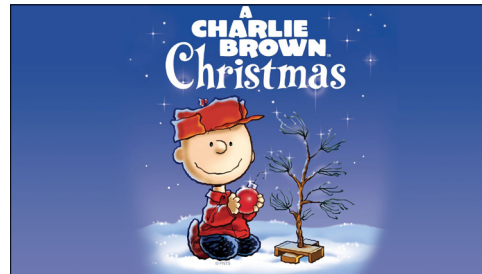
A Charlie Brown Christmas - Live at the Symphony

December 6 and 7

The Peanuts gang is bringing this holiday classic to life. With a triple-threat cast performing live on stage, an animated backdrop, and Vince Guaraldi's iconic jazz score.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

<https://www.ticketmaster.ca/>



Dala Christmas Show

December 12 • 8:00 p.m.

Dala write and sing in harmony that is best described as angelic. These two best friends met in their high school music class in 2002. They have since released five albums and toured extensively across North America.

Hugh's Room, 296 Broadview Ave., Toronto

<https://www.showpass.com/dala-2/>



Loreena McKennitt - Under A Winter's Moon

December 14 • 2:00 p.m.

A live performance of carols and tales blends Celtic, Indigenous, and Welsh cultures. With Cedric Smith, and Ojibway artist Christin Dennis, also known as Gzhiiquot/Fast Moving Cloud.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

<https://www.rcmusic.com/>



Good Lovelies Holiday Concert

December 17 • 8:00 p.m.

Caroline Brooks, Kerri Ough, and Susan Passmore are known for their rich harmonies and nostalgic sound. Blending folk-roots, old-time swing, bluegrass, pop, and soul, their music is the perfect soundtrack for the season.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

<https://masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/good-lovelies/>

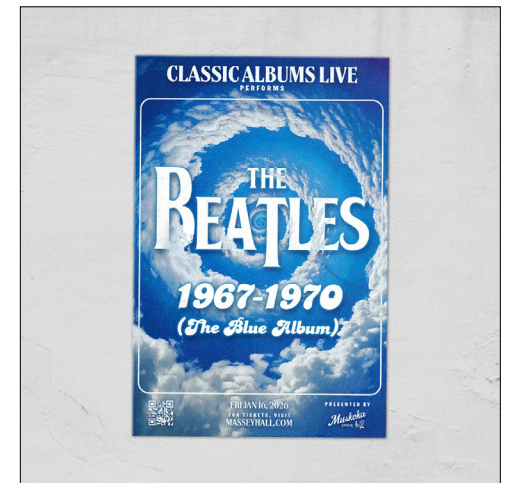
Classic Albums Live - The Beatles - The Blue Album

January 16, 2026 • 8:00 p.m.

Featuring a powerhouse lineup of A-list musicians from across the country, these unforgettable classics are brought to life exactly as you remember them — note for note, cut for cut.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

<https://masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/cal-the-beatles-the-blue-album>



The Musical Box performs Genesis Live

January 17, 2026 • 8:00 p.m.

Internationally renowned for its zeal and historical accuracy, this band will present the original 1973 performance of this live album in painstaking detail to give the audience an evening of time travel.

Oakville Centre For Performing Arts, 130 Navy St., Oakville

<https://secure1.tixhub.com/oakville/online/index.asp>

What About A Road Trip?

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

October 25, 30, 31 at 7:00 p.m. • October 26 at 3:00 p.m.

A sing-a-long, dance-a-long, outrageous screening of this timeless cult classic. Props included! Prizes for best-dressed! And more surprises on the night. Hosted by Darryl Dyball.

The Film House, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines

<https://firstontariopac.ca/Online/>



The Bowie Lives

October 31 • 8:00 p.m.

The Bowie Lives with play host to the area's biggest "Rock N Roll Halloween Bash" helping the legion raise needed funds. Come dressed as your favourite musician or your "Best Bowie!" Prizes for best costumes.

Royal Canadian Legion #126, 334 Westminister Dr., Cambridge

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/the-bowie-lives-a-david-bowie-tribute-halloween-spectacular-tickets-1275226429579>

Garth Brooks and Shania Twain Double Live Tribute Show

November 14 • 7:30 p.m.

Featuring Elton Lammie as Garth Brooks and Donna Huber aka Shania Twain as Shania Twain. Dust off your cowboy boots and get ready to sing along to the hits you love – back-to-back tributes to two country legends, under one roof.

Maxwell's Concerts and Events, 35 University Ave. E., Waterloo

<https://ticketscene.ca/events/55380/>

Kansas

November 16 • 8:00 p.m.

KANSAS will be performing a set of their Classics. Fans will hear KANSAS Classics such as 'Carry On Wayward Son,' 'Dust in the Wind,' 'Point of Know Return,' 'Fight Fire With Fire,' 'Hold On,' deep cuts, and much more.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener

<https://centreinthesquare.com/event/kansas/>

Colin James Trio

December 6 • 8:00 p.m.

Colin has set the bar for consistency and talent in Canadian music, always challenging himself musically. A consummate professional and superb guitarist, Colin is a musician's musician.

FirstOntario Arts Centre, 1010 Main St. E., Milton

<https://www.firstontarioartscentremilton.ca/en/shows-and-events/colin-james-trio.aspx>

Hamilton Handmade Market

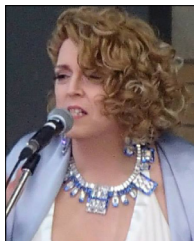
December 13 and 14

Two festive days packed with over 150+ talented local makers, food, music, and holiday cheer. With a fresh vendor lineup each day, it's the perfect way to shop small and local this season.

McMaster Innovation Park, 175 Longwood Rd. S., Hamilton

<https://www.craftadian.ca/hamilton-handmade-market/>

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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by Mychol Scully

From The Heart



The term “rice queen” refers to a gay man, usually Caucasian, who is attracted to Asian men.

This label can be seen as offensive or a point of pride, depending on the context, and has led to similar terms like “*potato queen*” for Asian men attracted to Caucasians. The rice queen community is a notable part of the broader gay culture, though it exists in a bit of a grey area, stirring up discussions around racial fetishization and stereotypes about Asian men.

While this scene typically thrives in bar settings, it’s less centralized compared to other gay subcultures. In San Francisco, for example, there are bars catering specifically to rice queens, showcasing their unique mix of attraction and inclusivity. Some venues feature Asian performers and attract a diverse crowd, while others have more of a mixed clientele. Overall, the rice queen phenomenon reflects a complex interplay of race and sexuality within the gay community.

In the multiple preferences espoused by diverse denizens of that mythical beast, “*Gay Culture*”, we see focuses on body aesthetics, costume, cultural affinities, ethnic and racial attributes, and a huge variety of micro-variations of same.

Where this reality becomes problematic is when the term “preference” is misused. Too often in online discourse, preference becomes a laundry list of what the proponent *doesn’t* want, rather than a more

positive list of what the proponent *does* want and is looking for in their encounters.

Much of the negativity that pervades online connection seeking would be alleviated if we all shifted our use of this term, “preference,” to itemize what we ARE looking for and not what we wish to avoid.

It’s a truism that “everyone is someone’s type” and we would improve the digital spaces where so many are seeking connection (sexual, emotional, or platonic) by focusing on this more positive use of that beleaguered word “preference.”

So the next time you’re tempted to post “no fats, no feds, no Asians” please take a moment to consider how your post contributes to the problem. If more of us engaged online with that in mind, everyone’s experience would be immensely improved.

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



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Autumn Horoscopes

As the leaves turn and sweaters come out, the stars remind us that change is beautiful, necessary, and a little bit sexy. For one, this writer finds peace in change. This season is about balance (Libra) and passion (Scorpio), and whether you're cozying up with someone or strutting solo, the universe is inviting you to lean into transformation.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)

It's your season, darling! The spotlight is on you. Don't be afraid to say yes to opportunities that make you sparkle. Love, career, friendships — it's all about balance. But remember, you don't have to keep everyone happy. Sometimes your "no" is just as powerful as your "yes."

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

The season turns into your playground by late October. Expect some deep feels and maybe a spicy new connection. You're magnetic right now, but be mindful of boundaries — not everyone can handle your intensity (and that's their loss).

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

You're dreaming of your next big adventure, even as the air turns crisp. This fall, your "journey" might not be a flight abroad but a deeper exploration of your community, creativity, or relationships. Keep your eyes open — inspiration is everywhere.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

You've been grinding all summer. This autumn asks you to slow down, sip something pumpkin-spiced, and nurture yourself. Rest doesn't mean you're falling behind. In fact, slowing down might lead to your next big breakthrough.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Connection is the theme of your season. Collaborations, friendships, and networking will flow easily now. Be open to someone surprising entering your orbit — they may bring a spark of romance or an idea that lights up your path.

Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20)

The season has you feeling extra intuitive — trust it. Creative juices are flowing, so channel that into art, music, or passion projects. Just make sure to ground yourself too (yes, walks in crunchy leaves counts as spiritual practice).

Aries (Mar 21 – Apr 19)

The fire in you meets autumn's chill — which makes you irresistible. Relationships heat up, but don't bulldoze others in your enthusiasm. Take a breath before diving headfirst. This season rewards patience and thoughtful action.

Taurus (Apr 20 – May 20)

Cozy season is your happy place. You'll find comfort in home, food, and sensual pleasures — but don't let hibernation mode keep you from social sparks. An unexpected encounter could shift your outlook in a beautiful way.

Gemini (May 21 – Jun 20)

Your calendar is filling up quickly (as usual). Between social invites and creative projects, you're buzzing. Just make sure you're not scattering yourself too thin. Focus on what lights you up, and let the rest fall away.

Cancer (Jun 21 – Jul 22)

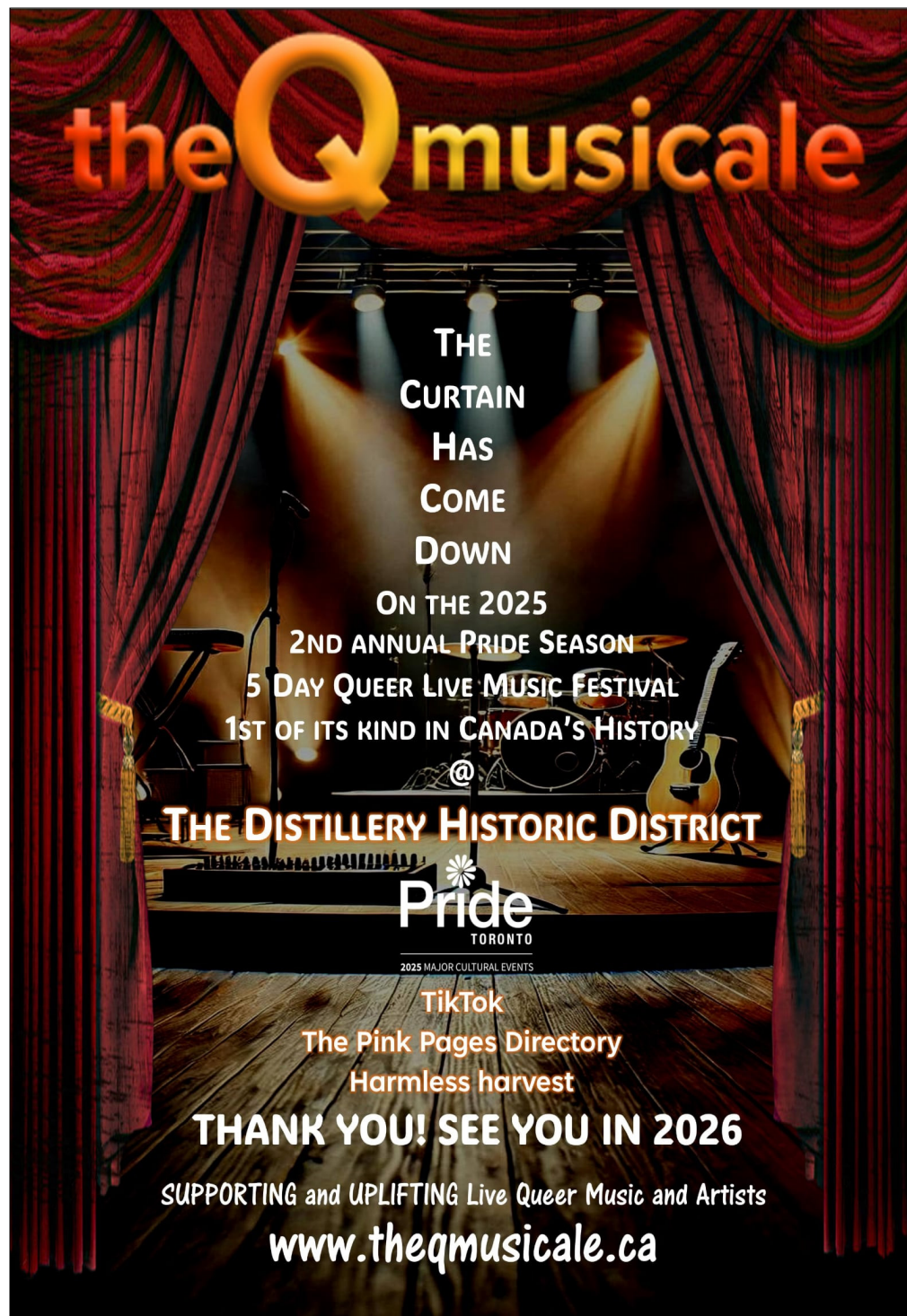
Autumn pulls you inward, but not in a bad way. You're reflecting, nesting, maybe cooking up plans for the months ahead. Let yourself feel cozy and cared for, but also share your heart — someone close needs your warmth right now.

Leo (Jul 23 – Aug 22)

Even as the days shorten, you're still shining bright. This is a season for creative expression and bold moves. You might also find a spotlight moment — on stage, at work, or in love. Take it. You've earned it.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

Your birthday season just wrapped, and now it's time to ground yourself in routines that keep you glowing. Autumn blesses you with productivity — but also nudges you to savour beauty in small things. Slow down and enjoy the crispness of now.



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