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# QUEER LIVING AUTOMOTIVE

**Driving the Future with Rob Browatzke.**

**Menaka Skrypnuk shares Love at First Drive.**

**Second thoughts about the queerness of cars by Kian Javier.  
Plus, Bryen Dunn helps us plan for some great Canadian road trips.**

**Bryan Greenwood asks us "who makes one a senior?"**

**Amaya thinks about being Q and Zed, and the question of parental rights.  
Cooking Incr'edible Bites with Kara gives us something warm and creamy,  
while "and the wine to go with that" offers us a fantastic wine pairing for that.**

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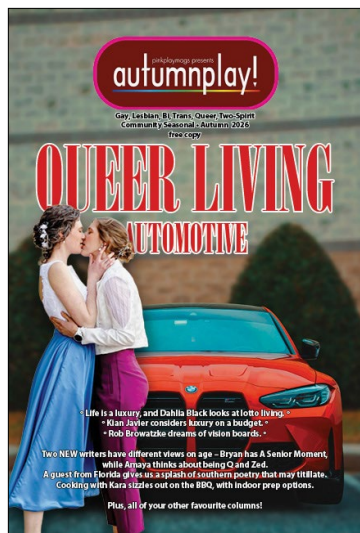
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Community Seasonal from PinkPlayMags  
Free • Autumn 2026

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## In this issue

- 12 Driving the Future  
— Rob Browatzke
- 21 Love at First Drive  
— Menaka Skrypnik
- 28 Maybe Cars Are a Little Queer  
After All — Kian Javier
- 47 Fiction: Hench  
— Natalie Zina Walschots

## Regular features

- 34 Travel: Road Trippin' Across  
Canada — Bryen Dunn
- 40 Incredible Bites: Roasted  
Butternut Squash Soup  
— Kara Thurston
- 41 ...and the wine to go with it...  
— Sparkling Winos
- 43 Hot Artist: Trash Panda Brass  
— Sean Ban Beaton
- 45 Community Cornerstone:  
QueerTech — Sherry Sylvain
- 51 Queer Zed — Amaya Kodituwakku
- 53 A Senior Moment  
— Bryan Greenwood
- 56 Autumn In the City  
— Sherry Sylvain
- 62 From the Heart — Mychol Scully
- 64 Autumn Horoscopes

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## From the Publisher

I may be the least qualified person to  
introduce an automotive issue. I don't drive.

There is, however, a story behind that.

When I was younger and just beginning to  
find my place in the community, I went to a  
cottage with a friend who decided to teach  
me how to drive. Well, that went terribly  
wrong. I managed to crash the car, send it  
into a ditch and come dangerously close to  
a propane tank. My friend and I—and, most  
importantly, the dogs—ended up climbing  
out through the window.

Thankfully, everyone was fine. The car  
survived. The propane tank survived. But  
my future as a driver did not. I decided there  
and then that the roads of Canada might be  
safer without me behind the wheel. I have  
been a very happy passenger ever since.

That doesn't mean I don't appreciate cars or  
understand the role they play in our lives.  
For many people in our 2SLGBTQIA+  
communities, a car is much more than a  
way to get from one place to another. It  
can represent freedom, independence and  
adventure. It carries us to work, family  
gatherings, first dates, weekend escapes,  
Pride celebrations and sometimes toward an  
entirely new chapter of life.

Cars are also personal. Some people care  
about performance, others about safety,  
sustainability, technology or comfort—and  
some simply want something fabulous that  
looks good pulling into the driveway. Our  
community is as diverse in its automotive  
tastes as it is in everything else.

That is what our continuing Queer Living  
theme is all about: exploring the many



different ways we live, work, travel,  
celebrate and move through the world. In  
this issue, we turn our attention to cars,  
automotive culture and the products and  
services that help keep our community  
moving.

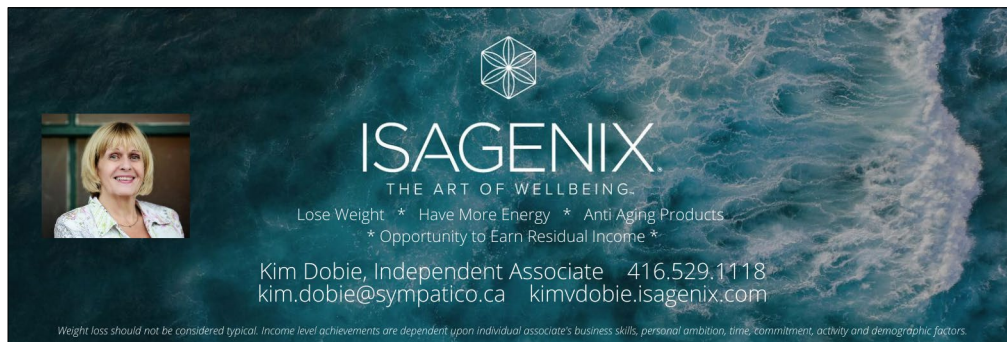
As autumn arrives, the roads begin to  
change along with the leaves. There are  
fall drives to enjoy, Halloween adventures  
to plan and, before we know it, holiday  
gatherings and winter weather will be upon  
us.

Next up, our winter issue will explore  
matrimony—which is, apparently, another  
subject I am uniquely unqualified to  
introduce, since I have never been married. I  
am beginning to wonder who chooses these  
themes. I need a meeting with my editorial  
team.

So enjoy the issue, travel safely and buckle  
up.

As for me, I'll be in the passenger seat—  
where I belong.

**Antoine Elhashem**  
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## From the Editor



Autumn is officially upon us, and the weather should be getting chilly. We should have cold nights, crisp mornings, and fresh days, as the leaves change their colours and begin to drop from the trees to create a carpet over the ground. At least, that is what should be happening; what is or will be happening might be something a little different, if only a little later into the autumn months than usual, if the weather experts and their predictions of El Nino have anything to do with it. I relish the cooler weather, and the opportunity to wear comfy sweaters, tweeds, wool, and (faux) fur; but, I won't cry if it stays a little warmer a little longer, and the snow arrives later and the roads stay clear longer.

And, in this issue, we look at cars! Vroom vroom! The new models are coming down the road for 2027, and we wanted a look at what is coming at us, what has been, and how to get either. Used car, new car, buy, or lease? Rob Browatzke looks at the intersection of cars and tech, while Menaka Skrypnyk considers the options and costs of getting a car. Meanwhile, Kian Javier questions if cars are really the testosterone driven symbol of hetero-masculinity society might lead us to believe.

Meanwhile, our fiction section offers something very special; a custom piece by Natalie Zina Walschots, author of the very successful, "Hench" and her highly anticipated sequel, "Villain". Watch for an interview with Natalie

in the upcoming October issue of our sibling publication, [theBUZZmga.ca](http://theBUZZmga.ca).

However, as entertaining as all of this may be, you'll love the suggestions we have for autumn entertaining in our cooking column, "In'edible Bites", and the new companion piece, "...Which will pair nicely with..." offering wine pairings for the featured recipe.

And, as you enjoy consuming this recipe and wine pairing with friends, you can read Bryn Dunn's suggestions for a selection of all Canadian road trips.

Regardless of your age, we have something for you with our "Senior Moments" and "Q Zed" columns which provide views on queer life from different perspectives of age and experience.

All of this on top of such regular, beloved features as our listing of events with, "In The City", our look at an inspiring community organization in, "Community Cornerstone", our interview with a new talent in, "Hot Artist", plus the always entertaining horoscopes.

So, curl up, wrap yourself in a comfy sweater or blanket, grab a bowl of that fabulous soup from the cooking column, paired with that inspiring wine selection, and have a good read about so many things to support your own queer living.

**Sherry Sylvain**  
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# Driving the Future

By Rob Browatzke

If you're like me, cars are mostly logistical tools. They're the vessel that gets me from A to B, the heated haven where I hide to avoid Edmonton winters outdoors, and sometimes, a bit of a mobile office.

For most of my life, a car was simple. It was a metal box with four wheels, a steering wheel, a stereo that hopefully played something with a decent bass line, and a heater that took twenty minutes to blow anything warmer than arctic frost. If something went wrong, you opened the hood, looked at a bunch of dirty metal components, pretended to know what you were staring at, and called a tow truck.

That world is dead. Dead, buried, and replaced by a rolling supercomputer that knows your schedule better than your partner does, monitors your heart rate, predicts when you need a coffee, and might very well refuse to let you drive if it thinks you look a little too exhausted.

We have officially arrived at the threshold where the automotive industry and artificial intelligence have merged into something straight out of sci-fi. Cars are no longer just machines that transport us from Point A to Point B; they are spatial computing platforms, conversational companions, and predictive living spaces on wheels. And as someone who spends a terrifying amount of time thinking about how human connection shifts alongside culture, I find myself completely

fascinated—and occasionally terrified—by what's happening in our driveways.

Remember when the biggest tech upgrade you could get in a car was a six-disc CD changer in the trunk? Or maybe an auxiliary cord that worked three times out of five if you held it at a specific forty-five-degree angle? Today, the entire interior user experience is being rebuilt from scratch around Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs). Automakers are embedding natural language models—powered by OpenAI, Google Gemini, and custom proprietary stacks—directly into the vehicle's brain. We are moving away from rigid voice commands toward fluid, contextual conversation.

Take Mercedes-Benz and their new [MB.OS](#) (Mercedes-Benz Operating System) architecture, previewed in models like the upcoming Concept CLA Class and rolling out across their electric fleet. Mercedes isn't just giving you a voice assistant; they're giving you a conversational personality equipped with generative AI. You don't say, "Set temperature to 21 degrees." You say, "Hey Mercedes, I'm feeling a bit chilly, and I had a really long night at work." The AI recognizes the emotional context, bumps up the cabin temperature, turns on the seat warmers, adjusts the ambient LED lighting to a warm amber, and suggests a soothing playlist. It understands nuance, complex follow-up questions, and non-linear requests. You can ask it to summarize your unread emails, explain the plot of an obscure 90s film while you're stuck in gridlock, or find a vegan-friendly restaurant along your route that has parking wide enough for an SUV.

Meanwhile, BMW is pushing this concept into pure visual spectacle with their Neue Klasse concept vehicles and the flagship BMW i7. The dashboard as we know it—full of physical buttons, dials, and plastic trim—is disappearing. In its place is BMW Panoramic Vision, which projects information across the entire width of the windshield at the driver's line of sight. Combined with their AI Personal Assistant, the car acts almost like an attentive butler. It reads your facial expressions and eye movements via interior micro-cameras. If it detects signs of micro-sleep or distraction, it doesn't just sound an annoying beep; it actively engages you, adjusts air circulation, pulls up your preferred podcast, or gently advises taking a break at the next exit.

It's personal, intuitive, and a little eerie. The car is no longer an inanimate tool; it's an active participant in your drive.

Love him or hate him—and believe me, as a guy who runs queer venues, I have plenty of thoughts on tech billionaires—Elon Musk's influence on the automotive trajectory is undeniable. Tesla's push toward full autonomy has reached a critical inflection point with the introduction of the Tesla Cybercab (their dedicated Robotaxi with no steering wheel or pedals) alongside the continuous neural network updates to their Full Self-Driving (FSD Supervised) system in mainstream models like the Model Y and Model 3.

Tesla's entire AI philosophy relies on end-to-end neural networks trained on billions of miles of real-world video data. Instead of hard-coding rules ("if red light, stop"),

the vehicle's AI acts like a human brain, observing visual inputs through cameras and learning how to navigate complex urban chaos organically. Watching a Tesla navigate a crowded downtown intersection without human intervention feels equal parts magical and uncanny.

The end game here isn't just hands-free highway cruising; it's a total shift in vehicle ownership. The concept of summoning a driverless car to pick you up outside a club at 2:30 AM, taking you home safely without needing a human rideshare driver, is no longer speculative fiction—it's actively being deployed and refined.

If you told me twenty years ago that Hyundai and Kia would be leading the world in futuristic design and electric vehicle performance, I would have laughed you out of the room. Back in the day, a Kia was what you bought when your credit score was a two-digit number, and you just needed something with a working heater.

Today? The Kia EV9 is a three-row electric masterpiece that looks like a spaceship from 2040. It features bidirectional charging (Vehicle-to-Load, or V2L), meaning the car's massive battery can literally power your home during a winter blackout—or power an entire outdoor DJ setup at a community festival, which, frankly, speaks directly to my event-planner heart.

On the performance side, the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N uses AI software to solve one of the biggest complaints traditional auto enthusiasts have about EVs: that they lack soul. The Ioniq 5 N uses software algorithms to simulate an eight-speed dual-clutch transmission, complete with paddle



shifters, engine rev sounds, and torque shifts that physically jolt the cabin. It's a masterclass in how software can artificially craft an emotional, visceral human experience out of silent electric motors.

Then you have Rivian, which has captured the hearts of everyone who likes the idea of nature (even if their idea of "camping" involves a glamping cabin with Wi-Fi). The Rivian R1T pickup and the upcoming, more accessible Rivian R2 SUV showcase AI in a very practical, environmental way.

Rivian uses machine learning algorithms for real-time predictive suspension and terrain management. As you drive over uneven terrain, rocks, snow, or mud, the vehicle's sensors sample the ground surface hundreds of times per second. The AI adjusts individual wheel dampening, torque vectoring, and ride height instantly before you even register the bump. Furthermore, Rivian's AI-driven battery management system learns your driving habits and

ambient climate patterns to optimize range pre-conditioning—something that is an absolute lifesaver when you're driving through sub-zero northern conditions.

Now, let's bring this soaring technological optimism down to earth—or specifically, down to frozen rutted ice on the Whitemud Drive in mid-January.

Because it's one thing for an AI-driven autonomous vehicle to cruise down a sun-drenched, perfectly painted six-lane highway in Palo Alto, California. It is an entirely different beast when that same vehicle is thrown into a northern winter storm where the lane markings haven't been visible since early November and the road sensors are caked in salt and grime. This is where the rubber—literally and figuratively—meets the road for automotive AI.

The future of car safety isn't just about autonomous steering; it's about multi-modal sensor fusion. Early autonomous

systems relied heavily on simple optical cameras. But when a snowstorm hits, cameras get blinded. Modern vehicles are integrating solid-state LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), radar, and thermal imaging sensors wrapped in self-heating glass housings.

Companies are training AI models specifically on extreme weather physics. The car's computer learns to read microslippage in the wheels faster than any human driver could ever feel through their boots. If the front-left wheel loses traction on a patch of black ice for four milliseconds, the AI redistributes power to the other three wheels, adjusts the regenerative braking, and stabilizes the chassis before the car even begins to fishtail.

For those of us who have spent decades doing the white-knuckle winter commute—steering into the skid and praying to whatever deity listens to commuters—this kind of predictive physics management is nothing short of miraculous. It's not about taking away the joy of driving; it's about making sure you actually arrive at your destination in one piece.

There's another aspect to this shift that doesn't get talked about enough in technical reviews: the psychological and cultural transition of what a car interior actually represents.

In urban culture, our personal vehicles have long served as a weird kind of third space. It's the place where you decompress after a chaotic twelve-hour shift, where you cry after a tough breakup, where you sing along at the top of your lungs to pop anthems

because nobody can hear you, or where you have deep, midnight heart-to-hearts with a friend parked outside their house.

As AI takes over the mechanical task of driving, the interior of the car is evolving into an extension of our living spaces.

We are seeing the rise of biometric cabin monitoring. Future models are incorporating sensors in the steering wheel and seats that track your heart rate, breathing patterns, and stress levels. If the car detects elevated cortisol levels—say, after a high-stress meeting—it can initiate a "calm down routine": lowering the ambient soundscape, activating a gentle back massage built into the leather seats, releasing subtle aromatherapy scents, and offering to reroute you along a scenic, lower-traffic path instead of the chaotic freeway.

Entertainment is also being blown wide open. The BMW i7 features a 31-inch 8K Theatre Screen that drops down from the ceiling for rear passengers, complete with built-in Amazon Fire TV and surround-sound speakers integrated directly into the headrests. Tesla offers full video game integration through Steam, allowing you to play graphics-heavy games on the center console while charging at a supercharger.

When you combine level 4 autonomous driving with these immersive interior environments, the car ceases to be a machine you operate and becomes a private, mobile lounge. You can work, sleep, watch a movie, or meditate while your vehicle handles the stop-and-go commute through city traffic.



Of course, because this is modern tech, it's not all sunshine, rainbows, and automated seat massages. There is a dark side to the hyper-digitization of our rides, and we need to be clear-eyed about it.

First, there's the dystopian rise of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) in vehicles. We are rapidly entering an era where hardware features already installed in your vehicle are locked behind monthly paywalls. Want your heated seats to work in December? That'll be \$18 a month. Want access to the full horsepower your electric motor is physically capable of producing? Upgrade to the "Performance Acceleration Package" for \$1,200 a year.

Automakers, like everyone else, have realized that selling you a car once isn't as lucrative as charging you a monthly subscription to use the features you thought you bought. It's frustrating, greedy, and feels deeply predatory to consumers

who are already feeling subscription fatigue in every other corner of their lives.

Second, there is the undeniable issue of privacy and surveillance.

Modern AI cars are essentially data-vacuuming monsters on wheels. They track your exact location at all times, record audio inside the cabin, capture external video via cameras, monitor your driving habits, and build detailed consumer profiles on where you shop, where you eat, who you travel with, and how fast you drive.

Insurance companies are salivating at this data. We are already seeing instances where insurance premiums are dynamically adjusted based on telemetry data sent directly from the car's computer. Hard braking because a deer jumped out in front of you? That's a point off your safety score, and your monthly rate just went up twenty bucks.

When your car knows everything about you, the boundary between convenient personalization and invasive surveillance gets blurry fast.

Despite the corporate cash-grabs and the surveillance concerns, I can't bring myself to be a total skeptic about where automotive technology is heading. At its core, progress in this space has the potential to fundamentally change human lives for the better.

Think about accessibility. Autonomous, AI-driven vehicles offer unprecedented freedom to elderly folks who have lost their night vision, disabled individuals who cannot operate traditional foot pedals or steering wheels, or people living in remote communities who currently lack public transit options.

Think about safety. Human drivers are inherently flawed. We get tired, we get distracted by our phones, we get angry, we make reckless split-second decisions, and, far too often, people still make the catastrophic choice to get behind the wheel while impaired. An AI doesn't drive drunk. It doesn't text its ex while going seventy miles an hour down a dark highway. It doesn't get road rage because someone cut it off.

If wide-scale AI integration and autonomous fleets can dramatically reduce the thousands of lives lost every year to vehicular collisions, then every single gimmick—every ambient lighting strip, every conversational dashboard assistant, every simulated gear shift—is worth it.

As for me? I'll probably keep driving my reliable human-operated rig for a while longer. There's still a small, stubborn part of me that likes feeling the mechanical connection between the pedal and the road, even when that road is covered in Edmonton slush.

But the next time I'm sitting at a red light on Jasper Ave, shivering in the freezing cold, waiting for my heater to kick in, I won't be looking at the futuristic cars gliding silently past me with cynicism. I'll be looking at them with a smile, knowing that the future has officially pulled up to the curb—and for once, it's actually smart enough to heat the seats before you ask.

Rob Browatzke is an Edmonton-based writer and teller of gay stories.





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# Love at First Drive: What to Know When Looking for a Car

By Menaka Skrypnyk

If you are getting ready to make the big decision of purchasing your first car or a new one, you are in for a ride (pun intended).

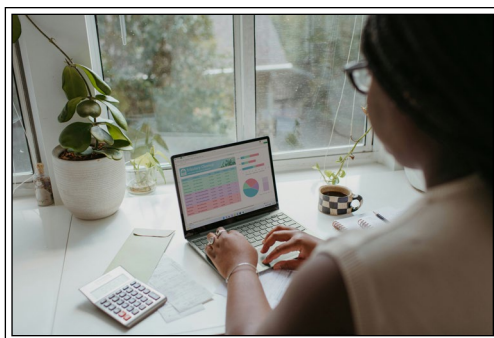
If this is your first time, get ready for a mini panic session post-purchase, because buying a car is one of the biggest and often most anxiety-inducing financial decisions many of us will make. To ease some of that anxiety, do as much research and preparation as you can. Think about what you need; not just for right now, but what will still make sense for you 10 to 15 years from now. Consider the brand and model, new versus used, and whether you'd prefer to buy or lease. Planning ahead will make the experience smoother, and you'll be less likely to leave the dealership with a Flintmobile.

## Budget Beyond the Sticker Price

The startling reality with major purchases is that you'll be spending much more than just the sticker price. Before visiting a dealership or scrolling online listings, figure out what you're actually comfortable spending every month. A salesperson may ask what monthly payment you're looking for, but that number doesn't tell the whole story. As explained on MyCar, an online dealership, a lower monthly payment spread over seven or eight years can cost thousands more in interest than a slightly higher payment over a shorter loan.

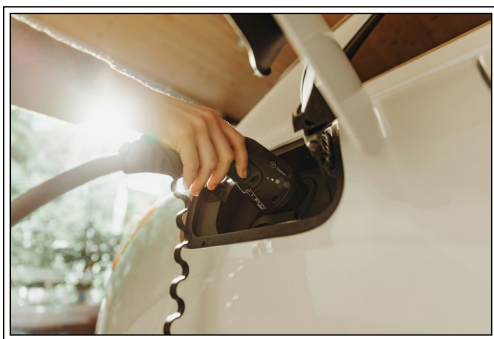
Build a realistic monthly budget. Include the monthly loan or lease payments,

insurance costs, fuel or electricity, routine maintenance, winter tires (almost a necessity in Ontario), and any miscellaneous payments, such as parking, car washes, registration renewals, and repairs.



A good rule of thumb is to leave room in your budget for any unexpected surprises. Even reliable vehicles need new brakes, tires, batteries, or windshield replacements eventually.

## Gas, Electric, and Hybrid – Oh My!



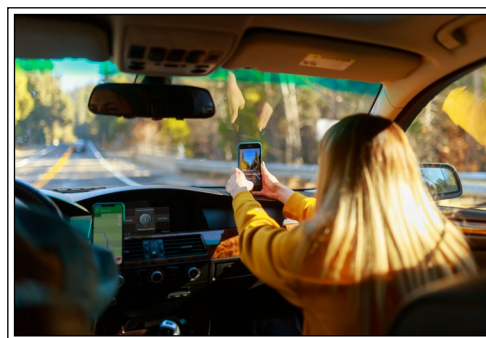
This is probably one of the biggest decisions facing buyers today. Gas-powered

vehicles are still the most common choice in Ontario, but electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrids have become increasingly popular as charging infrastructure grows, and fuel prices fluctuate. The best option depends less on trends, and more on your driving habits and what makes the most financial sense for you.

Let's break it down a little further:

## Gas-Powered Vehicles

Gas-powered vehicles typically have a lower purchase price than electric vehicles, offer a much larger selection of new and used models, and are especially practical for people who regularly drive longer distances. Refueling is also quick and convenient, and you're rarely far from a gas station – even in smaller communities or on road trips.



The trade-off is higher ongoing operating costs: fuel prices fluctuate throughout the year, and gas-powered vehicles require more routine maintenance over time, including oil changes, spark plugs, transmission servicing, and exhaust system repairs as the vehicle ages.

Environmental impact is another consideration. Gas vehicles produce exhaust pipe emissions, so buyers who want to reduce their carbon footprint may find an electric or hybrid vehicle a more appealing option.

## Electric Vehicles

While EVs typically come with a higher sticker price than comparable gas-powered vehicles, they can be significantly cheaper to operate over time. Since they run on electricity instead of gasoline, drivers often spend much less on fuel; especially if they charge at home overnight when electricity rates may be lower.

According to EV education organization Plug'n Drive, "the average Canadian driver travelling 20,000 km per year, can save as much as \$3,000 per year on fuel alone."

EVs also require less routine maintenance because they have fewer moving parts than traditional gas vehicles. There are no oil changes, and components such as exhaust systems are eliminated entirely.

The environmental factor gives electric vehicles their primary edge. EVs produce no exhaust pipe emissions while driving, and Plug'n Drive notes that "the only greenhouse gas emissions associated with an EV are from the generation of electricity." For buyers looking to reduce their carbon footprint, that can be an important consideration alongside the financial savings.

Now, with all that said, an electric vehicle might not be for everyone. Although prices have become more competitive in recent years, the upfront purchase cost is

still generally higher than a gas-powered vehicle. Charging is another major factor to consider. Home charging is often the most convenient and cost-effective option for EV owners; however, purchasing and installing a home charger can be a steep upfront expense, and not everyone lives somewhere with dedicated parking or charging access.



Public charging infrastructure continues to grow across Ontario and Canada, but availability still varies depending on where you live and travel. Car and Driver, an online automotive publication, points out, "for a lot of folks, charging at home overnight is sufficient, but those who travel long distances with some frequency may still prefer the flexibility of something with an engine."

## Hybrid Vehicles

If you're torn between a gas-powered vehicle and a fully electric one, a hybrid may offer the best of both worlds. They combine a gasoline engine with an electric motor, automatically switching between the two depending on driving conditions. For example, the electric motor often

powers the vehicle at lower speeds or during stop-and-go city driving, while the gasoline engine takes over during highway driving or when additional power is needed. As Car and Driver notes, hybrids have become increasingly mainstream, with "most automakers offering at least one hybrid option."

One of the biggest advantages of a hybrid is improved fuel efficiency without relying entirely on charging infrastructure. Hybrids use regenerative braking to capture energy that would otherwise be lost when slowing down. Put simply, the battery is continually recharged while you drive, helping reduce fuel consumption.

Hybrids are also a practical option for drivers who want lower emissions and better fuel economy but aren't ready to commit to a fully electric vehicle. Standard hybrids do not need to be plugged in, as they recharge through regenerative braking and the gasoline engine, while plug-in hybrids offer the option of charging from home or at a public charging station while still having a gas engine for longer trips.

The catch? Hybrids are generally more expensive upfront than comparable gas-powered vehicles, and because they combine both electric and gasoline systems, maintenance can be more complex over the vehicle's lifetime.

## The Commitment Question

Now the question of, do you take the plunge and buy a car, or go with the less permanent, flexible option of leasing?

According to automotive website Roam, leasing is similar to renting a home. Instead of purchasing the vehicle outright, you pay to use it for a fixed period, which is typically three to five years. When the lease ends, you usually have three options: return the vehicle, purchase it for a predetermined price, or lease a different vehicle.

One of the biggest advantages of leasing is affordability in the short term. Monthly lease payments are often lower than financing the same vehicle, making it possible to drive a newer model with the latest safety features and technology. However, leasing comes with conditions. Dealerships expect the vehicle to be returned with only reasonable wear and tear, so significant damage beyond normal use can result in additional charges at the end of the lease. Think of it like borrowing a friend's car for an extended road trip—you still have to bring it back in good shape.

There are also financial considerations. Most leases include annual kilometre limits, and exceeding those limits can lead to extra fees when you return the vehicle. Ending a lease early can also be expensive. Consumer Reports notes that getting out of a lease before the term ends may cost considerably more than simply making the remaining monthly payments.

Buying, on the other hand, is generally a better fit for people who plan to keep a vehicle for many years or who drive long distances. Once your loan is paid off, you own the vehicle outright, with no kilometre restrictions or lease-end fees. While monthly payments are often higher than leasing, buying can be the more cost-

effective option over the long term if you keep the car for several years.

## Brand New or Pre-Loved?

For my first car purchase, I ended up buying a used SUV that was about three years old. It offered many of the features I wanted without the price tag of buying brand new, and it's been a great fit for my budget.

Buying new gives you the latest safety technology, a manufacturer's warranty, and less chance of immediate repairs. Dealerships also sometimes offer better financing rates on new vehicles.

Buying used is usually less expensive upfront and avoids the steep depreciation that happens in a new vehicle's first few years. A three-to five-year-old vehicle is often considered a sweet spot because much of that depreciation has already happened while many modern safety features are still included.

One advantage of buying from a reputable dealership is that many vehicles have been inspected and may include a limited warranty or certified pre-owned program. If you're buying privately, ask for maintenance records and don't be afraid to walk away if something feels off. Be sure to also inquire about the vehicle's accident history, service records, mileage, and number of previous owners.

## Insurance: The Plot Twist

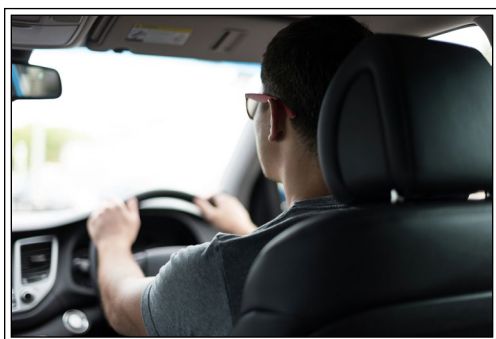
Shopping for a car is thrilling until the insurance quote lands in your inbox. The Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (FSRA) explains that drivers in

Ontario are “responsible for ensuring you have proof of auto insurance (sometimes called a “pink card” or “pink slip”). Two cars with similar purchase prices can have very different monthly insurance premiums depending on where you live, the vehicle model, theft rates, your driving record, and how much coverage you choose.

Ontario drivers should also pay attention to optional accident benefits. While lowering your coverage can reduce your monthly premium, it can also reduce the financial support available for medical care, rehabilitation, or income replacement after a serious collision. Before choosing the cheapest policy, ask your insurer or broker exactly what your coverage includes.

A simple tip: get insurance quotes on two or three vehicles before making a final decision. It could change which car is actually the most affordable.

## Before You Say “I Do”



Before driving off the lot, create a tangible checklist that you can refer to before

sealing the deal. Here are some important points to note:

- Test drive more than one vehicle
- Compare insurance quotes
- Read the financing agreement carefully
- Ask about warranties (if you want to buy into it)
- Get a used vehicle inspected
- Understand lease kilometre limits
- Budget for maintenance, not just payments

Whether you're buying your very first car, replacing an old reliable ride, or finally upgrading to something you've been dreaming about, the goal isn't to drive away with the flashiest vehicle on the lot. It's to drive away with one that fits your lifestyle, your future, and your budget. A little research before signing on the dotted line can save you thousands of dollars and a whole lot of post-purchase panic.

Menaka Skrypnik is a Sri Lankan-Canadian communications and writing professional with an innate passion for literature and exploring the unfamiliar. She enjoys spending her free time with her family, and the occasional cheeky glass of wine.



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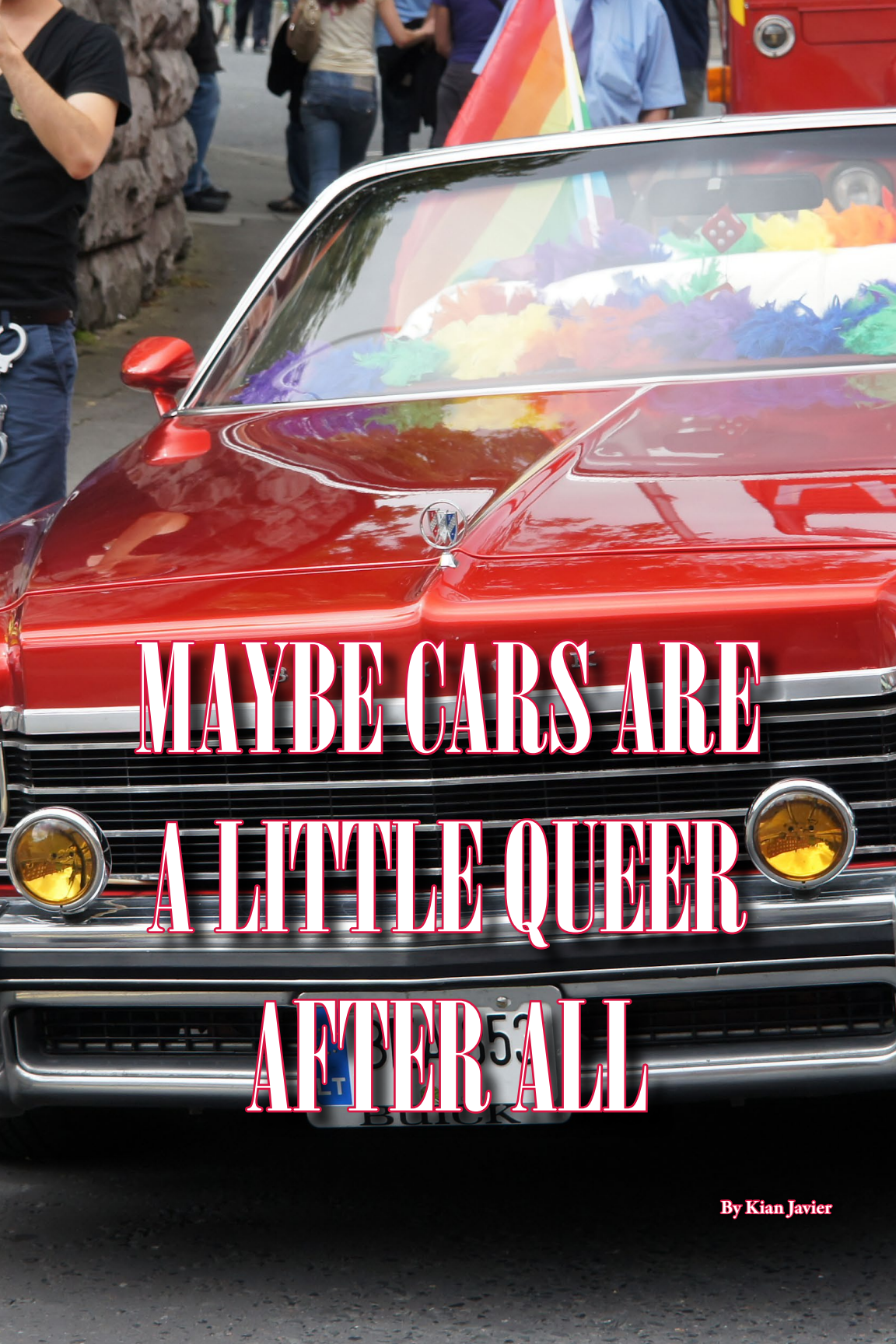
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Cars have always felt like one of those things we quietly assign to heteromascularity. You know like how boys get toy cars or boys get taken to the racetrack.

Boys, at times, learn what an engine does before they learn how to properly fold a fitted sheet. There's also something almost aggressively macho about the way cars are marketed, talked about, or displayed. They always have big engines, loud exhausts, or horsepower numbers being thrown around, like we know what it means (I don't).

But the older I get, the more I realize that my relationship with cars and the relationship I've observed within my own queer space is a lot more nuanced than that.

Queer people also love cars. Maybe not always with the stereotypical "Fast and Furious" trivia winner kind of love, but some other way. If you think about it, there is something deeply queer about customization, collecting, aesthetics, reinvention, and taking something that already exists and making it feel like your own.

So maybe—just maybe—cars aren't as straight as I've been led to believe.

### MY FIRST CAR MEMORY

An early and tangible memory of cars I have comes from my dad taking me to car shows and meets that my cousins would

organize or attend. I remember seeing fancy cars, loud cars, colourful cars, and frankly cars that looked like they cost more than some of the houses in our neighbourhood.

I just remember thinking: "This is not for me". It wasn't because I hated cars; I just didn't understand what I was supposed to be impressed by. I didn't have the words for it. What made one car better than the other? I didn't understand why someone would spend thousands of dollars modifying something that already worked perfectly well. (Up to today, I still don't.) And I certainly didn't understand the appeal of standing around in a parking lot talking about cars for several hours.

Back then, it felt like another one of those spaces where I was supposed to know how to be a boy. So naturally, I wanted out.

Or at least, I thought I did.

### APPARENTLY, I HAVE A TYPE.

Looking back, I find it somewhat hilarious that, despite my early declaration that cars are not for me, I have somehow managed to date or see several men who are deeply and passionately involved with them.

So, maybe I do have a type.

The first was someone who spent a considerable amount of his money importing cars from Japan, upgrading them, modifying them, and creating social content around them. His cars were his babies. Thinking about it now, it was more than just a hobby because it was also a financial decision, a creative outlet,

By Kian Javier

and, occasionally, probably a source of emotional distress. There was something strangely intimate about watching someone care that much about an object.

It also made me realize that the car world isn't necessarily about the car itself. It's about what you can do with it.

You can take something mass-produced and make it deeply personal. You can change the colour, the wheels, the interior, the sound, the shape, the little details that nobody else would notice—except you. You can make it faster, louder, prettier, stranger, or simply more you. His friends even helped him do all these things. Honestly, that sounds pretty queer to me.

Another guy I was seeing became the mechanic of his entire friend group and family. But the funny thing is, he wasn't even a mechanic, professionally speaking. He just loved cars enough to become the person everyone called when something started making a weird noise.

"Can you look at this?"

"Do you know what this means?"

"Does this sound normal?"

"Is this expensive?"

What I found especially endearing was that he genuinely enjoyed doing it for people. It was cute. He wasn't necessarily trying to turn every favour into something he will get paid for. He just liked fixing them and maybe understanding how they worked. There is something very queer-coded about that too: having a person in your circle

who somehow knows how to do the thing nobody else knows how to do.

Need someone to hem your pants? There's a person. Need help moving furniture? There's a person. Need someone to fix your car? Apparently, there's a person. Admit it or not, you know I'm right.

The last one was less interested in modifying cars and more fascinated by their history. He attended car meets and shows around Whyte Avenue in Edmonton, collected little pieces and trinkets from historical or vintage cars, and displayed them around his condo.

He then made me understand something: cars carry stories. It could be a vintage steering wheel, an old emblem, a piece of memorabilia, a photograph from a particular era—these things can become little physical reminders of things that we love. I guess for him, it can turn an otherwise ordinary object into something with history attached to it.

## THE MOTORCYCLE GUY

Then there was the motorcycle guy.

He was really into motorcycles. Not in a casual "Yeah, I ride my Harley" way. It was definitely part of his identity. He didn't just ride them, he understood them deeply. He talked about them including their history. A lot of history. He understood them in a way that most people don't. I remember during our first few hang outs, he made me watch his favourite film. And yes, you guessed it, it was about motorcycles and a biker gang.



However, if I'm being honest, what stayed with me most wasn't all the information around the bikes themselves, it was the intimacy of riding with him. It was, to say the least, scary but there is something so deeply vulnerable about trusting another person with your life while you're sitting behind them in the middle of a busy highway.

You are quite literally placing your life in someone else's hands.

There's a strange kind of closeness in riding behind someone. You just feel every turn where you learn their movements without necessarily speaking. Not that you can—the helmets are thick and padded. You just have to anticipate what they're going to do.

I think that's what started changing my perception of the automotive world. I stopped seeing vehicles as purely machines and started seeing them as extensions of people—how they move, what they value, what they collect, what they modify, and

sometimes who they choose to tag along with them as their passenger princess.

## THE ROAD TO CALGARY

Pivoting a bit, one of my favourite memories involving cars has nothing to do with owning one, modifying one, or knowing anything about engines. It was a road trip. My friends and I drove to Calgary for the Stampede, partly because we wanted to experience the whole cowboy thing. Granted, we went to the gay part of Stampede for the most part.

Everyone seemed to be wearing boots, hats, denim, fringe, or some combination of all four. We ended up going to Drag Me to Cowboys with drag performers Willam, Jujubee, and Alaska tearing up the main stage.

However, similar to my earlier stories, what I remember most was the drive, not necessarily the event itself.

I was sitting beside someone who was, at the time, more of an acquaintance—

essentially a friend of a friend. We weren't particularly close; more like two people who said yes to our mutual friend to go to Stampede. At the end of that trip, we essentially became super close friends; I'd consider him one of my best friends, now.

I don't know what it was. Maybe it's the combination of being trapped together for hours, or having super random conversations that somehow become incredibly personal and at times, TMI.

Or maybe it's simply the child-like joy of knowing that you're going somewhere. That road trip to Stampede reminded me that cars aren't only about the destination. As cheesy as this sounds, sometimes, the car is the experience.

## MAYBE CARS ARE A LITTLE QUEER AFTER ALL

I used to think that the automotive world wasn't for me because I didn't understand the traditional language surrounding it. The more I've encountered cars through the people around me, the more I've realized that there are so many other ways to perceive them. And maybe that's the beautiful thing about the confusion of it all. You don't necessarily have to love cars in the traditional sense to find something meaningful in them. This is where I see the strongest connection between cars and my queer community. We are all made up of different parts.

My queer community is made up of so many different identities. People with different personalities who come from different histories. They move through

the world with different personalities, different aesthetics. Some of my friends are loud. Some of the guys I've dated are understated. Some are vintage. There's also always someone wanting to modify a part of them and for some, they're still figuring out what they want to do.

But the most beautiful thing about all of this is that we're all travelling down the same road.

So maybe that's why, despite my childhood certainty that cars were absolutely not for me, I've grown to appreciate them through the guys I've met and friend groups I've built around me. A big part of this is because I've learned that cars are rarely just about cars.

They're about people and self-expression.

The automotive world might have been marketed to me as masculine and heterosexual or I might have always perceived it as straight but I'm glad that the queer people I've had in my life have been quietly customizing the narrative all along.

Different parts. Different personalities. Different models.

But on the same road.

Kian Javier is a 27-year-old writer and creative based in Edmonton, Alberta who treats life like a first draft—always open to a rewrite. His work is a landing pad for lessons learned in real-time, capturing the messy, beautiful process of building a life in your 20s where the goal isn't just to arrive, but to thrive as the queer man he is becoming.



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There's no better time than autumn to take a road trip, especially within Canada. The weather's cooled down, roads are less busy, and the colours of fall await. Sometimes the journey can be as delightful and surprising as the destination, if you have the time to meander your way along secondary roads, rather than highways.

The Trans Canada Highway connects our wonderful nation from coast to coast, and offers plenty of sightseeing opportunities along the way. The ultimate Canada road trip is driving the legendary *Trans-Canada Highway*, a massive 7,821-kilometer journey spanning from Victoria, British Columbia, to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. A full cross-country trek takes at least 3 to 4 weeks, but because Canada is so vast, most travellers choose to tackle specific, bite-sized regional routes instead. However, it provides merely a snippet of our wild environs, historic

towns, and unique landmarks that can only be discovered off the beaten path. So, let's dig in and look at some autumn adventures worthy of a road trip.

### Fun Facts – Only in Canada

Canada is the second-largest country on earth, and home to some of the most extraordinary places you'll find anywhere. Let's do a bit of fun fact finds before hitting the road.

**Banff National Park** was established in 1885, making it the third-oldest national park in the world, and Canada's first. Today, it remains the country's most visited national park.

The *World's Highest Tides* can be found in the **Bay of Fundy**, where the difference between high and low tide can exceed 16 metres, or roughly the height of a five-storey building. The iconic *Hopewell Rocks* just outside *Moncton, New Brunswick* are one of the most popular spots for viewing this natural phenomenon.

The *World's Longest Freshwater Beach* is located just two hours north of Toronto in the town of **Wasaga Beach**, stretching more than 14 kilometres along the shores of *Georgian Bay*.

The *World's Largest Dark Sky Preserve* can be found within **Wood Buffalo**, in Alberta; Canada's largest national park that spans more than 44,000 square kilometres. It's also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

*Canada's Most Powerful Waterfall* is in **Niagara Falls, Ontario** and emits more than 2,400 cubic metres of water per second during peak flow.

*Canada's Largest Provincial Park* is **Tweedsmuir**, in British Columbia, and covering nearly one million hectares. It's a paradise for wilderness adventurers and definitely off the beaten track.

*Canada's Oldest National Park* was established in 1885, and is located in **Banff**, Alberta. Its turquoise lakes, soaring mountain peaks, incredible wildlife, world-class hiking, and scenic drives along the *Icefields Parkway* make it one of the most visited places in the country.

The *World's Largest Naturally Frozen Skating Rink* is located along Ottawa's historic **Rideau Canal**, stretching nearly eight kilometres through the heart of the nation's capital when completely frozen. A great time to visit is during the annual *Winterlude Festival*.

The *World's Largest Freshwater Island* is located in Lake Huron. **Manitoulin Island** contains more than 100 inland lakes, some of which have islands of their own. It's also a great spot to discover Indigenous culture.

*Canada's Highest Mountain* rises 5,959 metres above sea level. **Mount Logan** is located within the remote wilderness of Kluane National Park, Yukon, and is also the second-highest peak in North America.

The *World's Largest Dinosaur* is located in **Drumheller**, Alberta, and stands more than 25 metres tall. Visitors can climb inside its mouth for panoramic views of the badlands. This area is one of the world's premier dinosaur destinations, surrounded by fossil-rich badlands and located

just a short drive from Dinosaur Provincial Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for having one of the richest concentrations of dinosaur fossils ever discovered.

### Quebec's Fall Foliage

Leaf-peeping season is on the horizon as Québec's scenic landscapes burst into brilliant colour with the changing foliage. Whether you're travelling on two wheels or four, the province's dedicated tourist routes are a great way to explore the region throughout September and October as the autumn leaves turn. Hit the road and take in the fall colours along these posted routes. And if you want to seek out peak foliage, Québec's [Fall Colours Map](#) will help you spot the best seasonal displays in real time.

*Route de la Beauce*: Lush landscapes and agro-tourism experiences abound on this route that criss-crosses for 117 kilometres along Rivière Chaudière. The guided route takes travellers off the beaten path to explore the region's great outdoors and historic sites, with stops at parks and museums along the way. Don't miss a sweet stop at Maison J.A. Vachon to sample Québec's famous Joe Louis cakes, produced by the Vachon family.

*Route des Montagnes*: The hilly Route des Montagnes in the Charlevoix region is ideal for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. The 121-kilometre itinerary explores the Laurentian foothills and two of Québec's most scenic national parks: Grands-Jardins and Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie, which dazzle with bright colours during the autumn months. Along the guided route, boat excursions are a picturesque option for those who want to take in nature's beauty from a different perspective.

*Route des Sommets*: Dotted with mountains, rivers and beautiful villages, this 193-kilometre circuit explores the highest mountains in Québec's Eastern Townships, offering a birds-eye view of the autumnal leaf canopy below. A highlight along the route is Parc national du Mont-Mégantic, where visitors can see wild animals like white-tailed deer and moose, and go stargazing at the *ASTROLab* astronomy discovery centre.

## Ontario Orchards

If you're ready for the first taste of fall, apple-picking season is getting underway across Ontario. Depending on the variety and the harvest, farms begin opening from late August and continue into October, with plenty of options for picking your own apples, browsing farm markets, and stocking up on fresh pies, cider, and other treats.

[Destination Ontario](#) has rounded up orchards across the province, from Leamington and Port Stanley to Halton Hills, Prince Edward County, Kingston, and beyond. Before you head out, check the farm's open dates, hours, available varieties, fees, reservation requirements, and pet policy, as these can vary.

## Ontario's LGBTQ+ Travel Guide

Explore a diverse array of inclusive tourism experiences, attractions, accommodations, events and communities that warmly welcome the LGBTQ+ community across Ontario. Visit [Toronto's](#) trendy city strips and key attractions, uncover [Ottawa's](#) national treasures, see the world-renowned Niagara Falls, soak in scenic vineyard views in [Niagara-on-the-Lake](#) and [Prince Edward County](#), and witness expansive wilderness in [Algonquin Provincial Park](#). Countless wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, taste trails and local treats like butter tarts, chocolate and cheese creations are sure to tempt [food and beverage aficionados](#). There's also a growing list of [MICHELIN-starred restaurants](#), and of course, [maple-infused everything](#) from beer to bacon and doughnuts.

## Ottawa

[The nation's capital](#) offers plenty to explore, including galleries, theatres, museums, and landmarks of historic and political significance. [Bank Street in Centretown](#) is at the centre of the city's growing gay village and features well-established and newly blossoming [2SLGBTQI+ friendly businesses](#) like bars, restaurants and accommodations.

## Niagara Region

Witness the wonder of the [Niagara Falls](#), tour Ontario's most established [wine region](#), enjoy world-class theatre and sample farm-to-table cuisine in the [Niagara area](#). Join a local event hosted by [Pride Niagara](#) to celebrate and connect with the vibrant 2SLGBTQI+ community in this welcoming and inclusive destination.

## Southwestern Ontario

[Southwestern Ontario](#) is a picturesque region with freshwater beaches, biodiverse forests and 2SLGBTQI+ welcoming communities brimming with personality, from [Windsor Essex and Pelee Island](#) to London's annual [Pride festival](#). Find a map of [Rainbow Registered](#) attractions, accommodations, restaurants, breweries and other experiences.

## Southeastern Ontario

[Prince Edward County](#) is a trendy rural chic destination with a thriving [2SLGBTQI+ welcoming](#) wine, culinary, arts and boutique hotel scene. With fascinating historic attractions and a flourishing live music and culinary scene, the vibrant city of [Kingston](#) strikes the perfect balance between hip and heritage. It's home to several [Rainbow Registered](#) businesses and hosts festivals, events and workshops throughout the year, including [Kingston Pride](#). For fans of *The Tragically Hip*, this band tour has 19 stops that includes venues they've played, locations from their lyrics, and much more. Plan ahead with this [Proud Places 2SLGBTQI+ guide](#) to The County and Kingston.

## Ontario's LGBTQ+ Campgrounds

Fall is the perfect time to get camping, as the bugs are gone, the air is fresh, and nothing beats a chilly night around a campfire.

- [Cedars Campground](#), Milgrove: Gay and lesbian tent and trailer resort near Hamilton.
- [Rainbow Ridge Resort & Campground](#), Grand Valley: An adult 2SLGBTQI+ resort and campground near Orangeville.



- [Clearview Cottage Resort](#), Young's Point: 2SLGBTQI+ friendly, welcoming summer cottage resort for all families in the Kawarthas, situated by the gorgeous Stoney Lake.
- [The Point Tent & Trailer Resort](#), Vittoria: Just minutes from Turkey Point on Ontario's South Coast, this charming resort is for gay men.
- [The Northridge](#), Lake Bernard: An upscale, queer-welcoming resort with private chalets, glamping tents and luxury lakeside rooms near Algonquin Provincial Park.
- [Riverside Resort and Campground](#), Tweed: members-only resort, campground and safe space for adult cis men, trans men and non-binary people on the trans-masculine spectrum who identify as gay, bisexual, queer or questioning.

So, where will the road take you this fall? Be sure to pack for the changing seasonal weather, bring along some bikes, kayaks, and hiking gear, and enjoy the best season of the year, in my humble opinion!

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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**AUGUST 2027**

## Incr'edible Bites

There's something about fall that makes me crave food that feels warm, cozy, and comforting. This roasted butternut squash soup is one of those recipes that brings all of those feelings to the table. The squash and carrots are roasted until caramelized, giving the soup a deep, naturally sweet flavour, while the spiced apple cream adds a little brightness and a touch of indulgence.

The combination of roasted squash, apple, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves reminds me of crisp fall days and the comforting aromas of the season. It's simple, rustic food with just enough elegance to make it feel special—perfect for a cozy lunch, a Thanksgiving table, or an evening when you just want a bowl of something delicious and comforting.

### Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp salt, plus more to taste
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 3–4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ½ cup heavy cream or coconut milk, or alternative dairy

### Method

1. Roast the vegetables: Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Place cubed squash, carrots and onion on a

baking tray. Toss with olive oil, salt and pepper.

2. Roast for 40 minutes, turning the vegetables once halfway through, until the squash is very tender and starting to caramelize.



3. Blend: Transfer the roasted vegetables to a blender or pot. Add 3 cups of stock, thyme and nutmeg. Blend until completely smooth.

4. Adjust consistency: Add additional stock as needed until you reach your preferred soup consistency.

5. Finish: Return to the pot and gently heat. Stir in cream or coconut milk or dairy alternative.

Taste and adjust salt and pepper.

6. Serve: Finish with a drizzle of spiced apple cream.

### Spiced Apple Cream Sauce

- 2 Apples, peeled and cored
- 2 cups Ginger ale, enough to cover the apple peels
- 2 Tbsp Cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp Allspice

- 1 tsp Nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp Cloves
- 1 cup Whipping cream
- 1/2 cup Sour cream.

### Method

1. Prepare the apple infusion: Peel the apples and place the apples in a pot.

2. Add enough ginger ale to cover the apples. Add cinnamon, ginger, allspice, nutmeg and cloves.

3. Bring the mixture to a boil. Once boiling, turn off the heat and allow the mixture to cool and infuse.

4. Once cooled, remove the apple and strain the poaching liquid.

5. Prepare the apples: Place the peeled apples into a blender.

6. Add a mixture of whipping cream and sour cream. Blend until completely smooth and thickened.

7. If the cream mixture is too thick, add a small amount of the spiced ginger-ale infusion as needed to achieve a smooth, squeezable consistency.

8. Transfer to a squeeze bottle and refrigerate until needed.

9. To serve: Drizzle over the butternut squash soup just before serving.

I look forward to creating an incr'edible' experience with you in every issue, with a little Tender Love and Kare in every bite! "...and the wine to go with it."

After many years in the restaurant world, Kara Thurston decided to venture out on their own. Now, they focus on the things they love the most - small intimate parties of approximately 40-60 people, serving a variety of filling bite-sized items that are sure to please the palate.



### "...and the wine to go with it."

For this cozy, roasted butternut squash soup, we're popping a bottle of Kew Fracette 2025 (\$26.95, LCBO #53239). Its crisp acidity and bubbles cut beautifully through the richness, refreshing your palate after every spoonful. Meanwhile, generous notes of apple and pear complement the spiced apple cream and tie those warm, autumnal flavours together. Festive, food-friendly and proudly Ontario-made, it's a perfect bottle to pop throughout the holiday season!

What happens when two of Canada's greatest wine superpowers (sparkling wine and Icewine) collide? "Fracette" (pronounced like "cassette") is one of the most exciting new stories on the Canadian wine scene. This uniquely Ontario sparkling wine puts a spin on bubbly by using our iconic Icewine to kick-start its second fermentation (the process that creates the bubbles). But don't let the Icewine fool you! Fracette is decidedly dry, with bright acidity, a lively effervescence and a big punch of fresh fruit and floral character.

Mike and Jeff are the Sparkling Winos, award-winning wine writers, enthusiasts and authors of *Life is the Bubbles: An Effervescent Guide to Sparkling Wine*. Their mission? To make wine fun, exciting and a little less intimidating. Follow their wine adventures @sparklingwinos.





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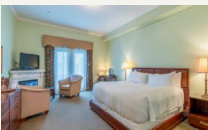



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I don't want to worry anyone, but...it's been brought to my attention that there is a shortage of queer brass ensembles in Canada. Our people keep showing up more and more in politics, the military, professional sports - almost like we were there all along - but somehow the world of brass has yet to march on our path to queer cultural domination.

Well, good news - we've finally broken through this final frontier of queer representation with an all-queer, racially diverse and woman-led brass band out of Toronto, aptly named Trash Panda Brass, and they are as joyful and adorable as they sound.

The band is known for their crowd-pleasing live and interactive sets, performing instrumental reinterpretations of all our favourite queer pop anthems from the 70s to the present.

Founding members and fellow mellophonists Ilinca Stafie and Charlotte Alexander attended U of T's Classical Performance program together with two other future members Bien Carandang, and Ray Sun - they formed the band while all working as line chefs at DROM Taberna in Toronto. Aside from Trash Panda Brass, Alexander has also recorded with Toronto acts Bangerz Brass, the Holy Gasp, Dwayne Gretzky, Jennarie, the Marie Goudy 12tet, and had the honour of playing last year's World Series.

Bien Carandang (trombone) works extensively in musical theatre and is a part of the Live Video Game Orchestra, the Symmetry Project, and most recently played for artist St. Vincent at Roy Thompson Hall. Ray Sun (trombone) is active in Toronto's big band scene, and runs "Petal Loop", a monthly ambient jam where he invites musicians

by Sean Ban Beaton

## Hot Artist

to "explore their instrument through pedals, synths, and other electronic means."

Deciding the band needed a bass instrument, they invited Anaïs Kelsey-Verdecchia (sousaphone) to join, bringing her experience from fellow brass act Big Smoke Brass, and as vocalist with groups Opera Atelier, Nathaniel Dett Chorale, and the Holy Gasp. And lastly, after a few percussion lineup changes, they landed on Angelica Zavala (drums), whose impressive list of artist collaborations includes Hill Kourkoutis, Ahmed Moneka, Lucy Yeghiazaryan, and the long-running Honey Jam development program.

The band's goal is rooted in queer representation, so along with numerous queer weddings and Pride events, they regularly make their presence known in non-queer spaces as well.

"Overall we have been welcomed with open arms... [but] there have been times, especially during our busking days, that we've been harassed for our queerness", says Stafie. "On the flip side, we've had people come up to us and say they've never felt more seen and represented, and that if they'd had role models like us in the music scene, they might have continued on with their own musical journey."

For more on Trash Panda Brass, go to Insta @trashpandabrassband, [www.trashpandabrass.com](http://www.trashpandabrass.com), or see them live Sept. 26 at Kingston's 'Skeleton Park Yard Sale and Block Party', or at Hugh's Room in Toronto for their 'Queer Halloween Extravaganza.'

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



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## QueerTech

Founded in 2016, in partnership with MontrealNewTech, QueerTech started as a meetup group to connect 2SLGBTQIA+ tech professionals in Montreal. As a grassroots initiative, QueerTech began with a simple yet powerful mission: to uplift and connect queer voices in the tech industry. This grassroots approach continues to drive everything they do. They grow by listening to the Queer and Tech communities, building with intention, and collaborating closely with the people they serve.

In two years, they became QueerTech, a non-profit organization committed to building a more inclusive tech ecosystem. From career development and entrepreneurship acceleration to workplace inclusion and policy advocacy, their programs and partnerships empower 2SLGBTQIA+ professionals and businesses to succeed. They champion inclusivity, elevate voices, and build a tech industry that reflects the diversity of the world around us. QueerTech believes that innovation can be unlocked through inclusivity.

Today, they are expanding their impact across Canada and beyond, with a clear goal: to make tech more queer.

They take a community and ecosystem-first approach to transforming Canada's tech industry. QueerTech works across the full tech sector pipeline - supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ people from initial access point to career advancement and entrepreneurship - while driving systemic change through employer, investor, regulator, and community organization partnerships.

QueerTech builds pathways into tech through skills development, mentorship, and career-ready programming that prepares queer talent for meaningful tech work.

They advance queer leadership by supporting professionals as they grow into decision-making roles where they can influence culture, policy, and innovation internally.

They empower queer founders with the tools, networks and access to capital needed to launch and scale tech ventures.

They create safer, connected spaces where community, learning and opportunity can bloom.

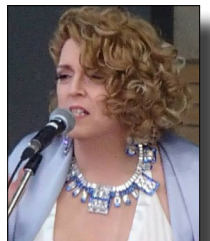
They shape inclusive technology through research, cross-ecosystem convening, and strategic partnerships that centre lived experience in how tech, including AI, is designed and deployed.

The Canadian technology ecosystem is a living, breathing organism; sustainable change is only possible if all areas of the ecosystem are addressed, and if informed, mutually beneficial solutions are delivered to all of its players.

Queering The Tech Ecosystem means transforming how tech works - from who gets access and opportunity, to how technologies are designed, governed and used. At QueerTech, this includes advancing queer people in tech and queering technology itself, by centering queer lived experience in workplaces, products and policy.

Through community connection, career and leadership development, entrepreneurship support, and responsible tech tools, QueerTech builds pathways, shifts systems, and shapes a tech ecosystem where queer people are thriving.

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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# COMING NOVEMBER 2026

## Fiction



*Editor's Note: Watch our in the October issue of our sibling publication, [theBUZZmag.ca](http://theBUZZmag.ca), for the interview with Natalie Zina Walschots, author of Villian, the sequel to her highly successful debut novel, HENCH.*

From HENCH (pub. William Morrow, 2026)

No one was in the room yet, but Blowtorch and The Spark were lurking outside the boardroom door, looking uncomfortable in their suits (costumes were considered hostile inside the compound; heroes generally expressed their commitment to a peaceful conversation by

dressing in civvies). Jana from HR was walking away from them rapidly; from the blandly pleasant expression on her face, I knew she was furious.

She intercepted me on my way over and grabbed my arm. "I updated the brief, but just in case: since her transition, her name is The Spark."

"I made sure my tablet was synced with the update."

"Got it." Her teeth were clenched. I raised an eyebrow in question. "Also, don't get too close to Blowtorch."

"Creep?"

She shot me some "good luck" eye contact and left, heels clicking with authority. I began to deconstruct how I could weaponize this new data.

"Friends," I said warmly, gesturing toward the open door with my cane. Blowtorch gave my body a long, full up-and-down look, which I chose to ignore. "Shall we take a seat and wait for my colleagues?"

The Spark nodded and walked through the entrance, but Blowtorch lingered, lounging in the doorway. He pointedly gestured for me to go ahead of him. I gamely walked forward, but kept a little extra distance between us.

As soon as I tried to pass him, he suddenly stepped in front, causing me to draw up short or else bump into his chest. "So," he said huskily, "what do you do?"

I smiled stiffly. "I handle information." I took a step back and raised the tip of my cane, shooing him into the room. He raised his hands in a gesture of mock defeat that implied he was anything but done and went in. It was going to take a mighty effort not to antagonize him before it was strategically sound.

I waited until he was lowering himself into a chair before entering the room. In the center of the meeting room's long table, there was a plate of muffins, a carafe of water, several glasses, and some bendy straws. The Spark was already pouring herself a glass. At the far corner of the room was a side table with coffee, and I fixed my-self a cup before taking a seat at the opposite end of the table from the twins. I was acutely aware of Blowtorch watching me openly the entire time.

"Information," Blowtorch repeated when I finally sat down. He leaned back and rested the heels of his wingtip shoes on the table.

"Does that mean you interrogate people? Rip out fingernails with needle- nose pliers?"

I attempted to look scandalized. "Hardly. I'm a researcher; I generally only brutalize databases."

"Ah, nerd chick. Nice."

I let my smile become strained. The Spark cleared her throat.

Her brother glared at her, annoyed.

"You look familiar," The Spark said uncomfortably.

"I doubt it; I'm generally stuck in the office." I tried to sound encouraging; I suspected talking to The Spark would be more pleasant than continuing to deal with her vaguely repulsive sibling.

"Mmm. Did you ever work for, what's his name, the Electric Eel?"

I fought to keep my shoulders from rising. "Briefly, back while I was still freelancing."

Her face lit up a bit and she nodded. "Yeah, yeah, I remember. You were in the room when he used the Mood Ring on the mayor's Kid."

"I was," I said mechanically. "I was a temp at the time."

"Pretty badass," Blowtorch drawled.

"Not really. I wound up in the hospital. Supercollider shattered my femur."

They didn't know how to respond to this; The Spark looked suddenly stricken and Blowtorch made a blustering sound. I found I enjoyed the discomfort. I held up my cane. "This is a souvenir."

Blowtorch recovered first. "Pretty tough, then, for a nerd chick."

Blowtorch let his eyelids become heavy and he smirked at me. "That's hot." He shot some sparks out of the tip of one finger for emphasis. It was extraordinarily embarrassing for everyone in the Room.

I took that as the signal to humiliate him; putting up with him was no longer even remotely fun. I gave him the frostiest, most threatening smile I could muster. "Mr. Torch, what do you think my rank and role in this situation are?"

"Huh?"

"Let me rephrase for you: Why do you think I am at this meeting?"

He didn't understand the point of the question. "Taking notes, I guess?"

"No, I am not 'taking notes'; I just happen to be particularly punctual. I'm the head of my own department and one of Leviathan's representatives at this summit. Quite frankly, I find your behavior most unbecoming thus far."

His face turned ugly; he looked at his sister and jerked a thumb toward me. "Why would a supervillain keep this frigid auditor bitch around? No fun at all." He angrily grabbed a blueberry muffin. I noticed the water in the glass nearby had started to boil.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," Keller said brusquely. I stood gratefully as he, Molly, and a couple extra suits I didn't recognize walked into the room.

"Good, some real conversation," Blowtorch muttered. He stuck out a hand and blandly shook each of theirs. He didn't bother to stand, but at least he sat up straight and put his feet on the ground.

Keller gave me a questioning eyebrow and I shook my head slightly.

After the meeting, with overtures made, old grudges addressed, and a mutual plan to reduce tensions between Leviathan and the Flamethrower brand (once the torch had officially been passed to one of the siblings), Jana returned to escort the two heroes out.

Blowtorch shot me a last, hostile look, while The Spark continued to look deeply ill at ease. As soon as they were safely out of sight, a forensics team descended like starving buzzards upon the boardroom, carefully collecting and bagging everything the heroes had touched, sipped or left uneaten to harvest any DNA evidence.

Surely there was enough spit for a good, old-fashioned paternity test.

The rest of the team had left for a dinner break, so I retreated into my empty office for a few minutes of peace and quiet. I rubbed my temples for a moment, breathing out the tension of the meeting. Feeling it start to seep away, I absently checked my email. Two immediately caught my attention.

There was a short message from Surveillance that read:

Anna,

Keller asked to see the video of your interaction with the heroes during today's meeting. Just a heads-up.

I swore quietly. I expected Keller would be trying to look for proof I'd been unnecessarily rude to the dirtbags, and braced myself for a small war.

A moment later, however, Keller wrote me himself.

A,

*Way to handle those two asshats, Frigid Auditor Bitch (FAB).*

Cheers,

Bob

I cracked a smile. I had won that bastard over after all.

*That's Head Frigid Auditor Bitch to you. — Anna (HFAB)*

Two seconds later:

LOL

Sometime between when I finally went back to my suite rather late that night, and when I wandered back to my office in the morning, someone found the time to tape a sign to the door that read.

Warning: Frigid Auditor Bitch. I opened the door slowly and was greeted by my entire team grinning at me.

"This is going to be a thing, isn't it?" I sighed. Nour giggled.

It was a good week before I realized that Greg had changed my email signature from "Anna Tromedlov" to "The Auditor." It stuck.

The characters in Hench and Villain inhabit a world that echoes our own in many ways, both wonderful and horrific. One thing that mattered deeply to me was to place the novels' narrator, the Auditor, within communities that mirrored my own. Queerness is common, omnipresent, and completely unremarkable in both books, whether those characters are villains, heroes or regular citizens. There is a lot of trauma and violence in Hench and Villain, but it was important to me that queerness not be a source of that trauma or a cause for that violence; rather it was a part of identity and community that was simply allowed to exist.



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I have always been confused (more so annoyed) by the “parental rights” narrative pushed by conservative groups and lobbyists regarding the freedoms of trans children and comprehensive sex-ed curricula. To me, it reads as code for “I deserve the legal right to control my child’s agency”—which is the reality in practice, too.

Provinces across Canada have passed various anti-trans bills, particularly surrounding the requirement for “parental consent” for children to use their chosen names and pronouns in schools, and restricting access to gender-affirming healthcare. Saskatchewan’s Minister of Education is currently appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada to use the notwithstanding clause to justify such a policy. With all of these bills being pursued and passed, I’m concerned with how often the family hierarchy is often weaponized as a political tool.

When we talk about the parent rights movement, we often act as though it is a phenomenon of the now. Rather, as Haneil Sorensen for the Canada Centre for Policy Alternatives notes, this is only the current iteration of a regressive campaign that extends back to the 1880s (initially pushing back against mandatory universalized elementary education, then moving to push for educational privatization and against child labour regulation, and now rejecting public education surrounding sex, gender, sexuality, and race).

Many kids grow up being taught that their body is an extension of their parents’ bodies,

and as a result, they should always exhibit deference to what mom and/or dad knows best. I am drawn to bell hooks’ scholarship on the subject, where she talks about how children are positioned as property within the nuclear family and as a result are denied true love, care, and respect. Parental rights is just code for seeing children like objects to put into enforced tiny cis-heteronormative boxes. How do we expect kids to feel any semblance of confidence and self-concept when they are actively being denied the language and space to make sense of who they are in relation to the world?

After a conversation with a former co-worker about family and control, she gifted me a deck of affirmation cards created by Planned Parenthood Toronto in consultation with a bunch of queer and trans youth. My favourite from the deck is one that says, “I get to choose what family means to me.” The card is taped to the wall next to my bed—a constant reminder that children are, and should be treated as their own people with their own ideas, beliefs, and identities.

Amaya Kodituwakku (they/them) is a Sri Lankan-Canadian graduate student, beginner knitter, and intersectional feminist.



## A Senior Moment

Eventually I developed an answer. I thought I was immune to getting older; I wasn't. If you don't want to get old, I have the cure. Die young. I learned that cure in January or February of 1986. AIDS. The young and beautiful died by the thousands.

Gay men of my generation know very much about the "deal with the devil". We watched people disappear and whole rooms empty in under 2 weeks. You survived but you didn't know anyone who had taken over the seats at bingo. We learned growing old is not an indignity.

There are emotional losses (imagine reducing it to four words). A body sends notices. Time becomes reality not theory. Some doors close. But something else happens, too. You begin to realize how much of your younger life was spent auditioning. Am I desirable enough? Talented enough? Masculine enough? Gay enough? Interesting enough? And setting yourself up for rejection. Sometimes you made excuses to not succeed, too, and indulge in victimhood.

Now, I find myself increasingly unwilling to apply for the job of being myself. So perhaps the suit fits after all. It's a little worn. There are scorch marks, sequins, dog hair and probably a receipt in one pocket I should have thrown out in 1997.

But it's mine. And I'm still wearing the thing.

Bryan is a senior, long-lived member of Toronto's LG... community having inhabited the culture since 1977. As such, he has a rather well-informed, cynical view (to a fault) of how the culture changes.



## Apparently (?), I'm a Gay Senior Now.

Recently, in my addle-brained memory, something happened. I'm not sure I remember exactly when, but without consulting me, the world decided I was a senior.

I don't remember signing anything, nothing said I consent; but, memory is now an executive choice. Bonus? As a senior I am no longer obliged to remember anything if I don't want to. I learned that from my drag Mother, Michelle DuBarry.

I did not wake up one morning feeling fundamentally altered, and announce, "Well, that's youth over with," and begin shopping for beige trousers.

It is the will of the people that you are old. Well, there are Thursday discounts, and People say, "at your age," which is always a delightful caveat that frames an insult.

I still see beautiful men; but, I'm really not interested. Pretty? Sure. Boring? I can't be bothered finding out, and I don't feel comfortable comparing myself to that. I still create and find ideas faster than ever. I have well-documented and supported evidence of my art, music, clothes, and whether somebody has hung something three inches too high.

And yes, I've been on Grindr, Scruff, DaddyHunt, Squirt, et al. Older men there sometimes discover that merely having a preference is a declaration of word war. I once said, "Sorry, I don't think we have much in common", after a chat where the youth tried hard to keep up answers to my line of enquiry. Well, really junior, I want to share an old Davis movie. You haven't got a clue? "Who's Davis?" Then, "Who's Madonna?" And, the nail in the coffin for me, "The Spice Girls?" And the inevitable "I need a sugar daddy." Who's the predator? OK, then suddenly I was old, undesirable, smelly, decrepit or whatever insult happened to be nearest the thumb. Poor delusional youth. I can't afford my own groceries, let alone yours. I'm a senior after all.

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Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto

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

[www.flashonchurch.com](http://www.flashonchurch.com)

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A fundraiser for the Reign 39 Charities of Choice.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### TICOT Charity Drag Brunch

**September 27; 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Monthly Open Stage Drag Brunch for Charity

Hosted by: ICP to Reign 39 Hugo Hudson; ICP to Reign 39 Georgina Hudson. Funds raised in support of Reign 39 Charities. All tips for all performers are donated to the charity.

The Well, 487 Church St., Toronto

[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Gay AF Comedy @ Just For Laughs Toronto

**October 2; 8:30 p.m.**

Serving big laughs with a lineup of Canada's top LGBTQ comedians, be prepared for a fabulous night of Queer comedy that's straight up hilarious! Hosted by Robert Watson.

Comedy Bar, 945 Bloor St. W., Toronto

[comedybar.ca/shows/gay-af-jfl](http://comedybar.ca/shows/gay-af-jfl)



### Sappho Say What?

**October 7; 8:00 p.m.**

Gay AF Host Robert Watson has heard your pleas for "No more dick jokes!" and is offering up a super-sapphic-ultra-modern-girl lineup of comedians!

Comedy Bar, 945 Bloor St. W., Toronto

[comedybar.ca/shows/sappho-say-what](http://comedybar.ca/shows/sappho-say-what)

### TICOT Out Of Town Show

**October 9; 7:00 p.m.**

Featuring premier drag queen and king artists from NYC, LA, Chicago, Vancouver, and all over Canada and the US, this is a show not to be missed.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Crowns The Care - Coronation 40

**October 10; 5:30 p.m. to midnight**

This is a charity gala to help raise funds for community organizations. This is a night of glitz and glam, so dress to impress. Theme: Spanish Royalty - Red, Black and Gold.

Marriott Downtown CF Eaton Centre, 525 Bay St., Toronto

[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### TICOT Charity Bingo

**October 11; 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Raising funds for the Reign 39 Charities of Choice: PWA Food Essentials Market, Durham Alliance Outreach Food Pantry, Friends of Ruby.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Toronto Burlesque Festival

**November 12 to 15; various times**

A celebration of all things burlesque, with various shows and artists, a marketplace of attire, accessories, and more, plus special events.

Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St., Toronto

[www.showpass.com/the-toronto-burlesque-festival-2](http://www.showpass.com/the-toronto-burlesque-festival-2)





### Thought You Knew with Shade Electra

November 26; 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

This is an intergenerational LGBT event. They want people to come enjoy some rounds of trivia with the residents of Toronto's only Rainbow Wing for the Senior LGBT residents. Hosted by Jade Elektra as her alter-ego, Shade Elektra.

Rekai Centre, 345 Sherbourne St., Toronto  
[www.rekaicentre.com](http://www.rekaicentre.com)

### Looking for Queer fun outside The Village?

#### Fall Witches Market

September 20; 11:00 a.m. to 5:0 p.m.

This event brings together a beautiful mix of vendors, artists, healers, mystics, witches, readers, and creators in a welcoming, and supportive environment.

The Village at Black Creek, 1000 Murray Ross Pkwy, Toronto  
[blackcreek.ca](http://blackcreek.ca)

### Hairspray and Grease Drag Brunch

October 4; 2:00 p.m.

A mashup of two fan favourite musicals that changed HAIStory forever... it's Hairspray and Grease! Hosted by Audrina Venti and Naomi Barz.

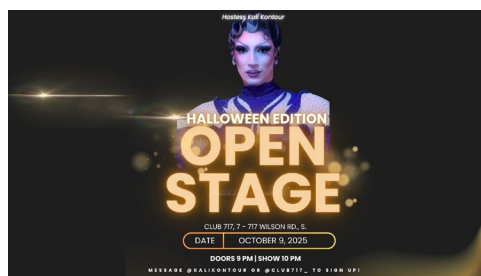
Bloom Bistro, 225 Ferndale Dr. S., Barrie  
[bloombistro.ca](http://bloombistro.ca)

### Hallowe'en Open Stage

October 9; 9:00 p.m.

Join your host Kali Kontour for a night of fresh faces, familiar favourites, spooky performances, and all the chaos that comes with giving the stage to whoever is brave enough to take it. Performers must pre-register and arrive by 9:30.

Club 717, 717 Wilson Rd. S., Oshawa  
[www.club717.com](http://www.club717.com)

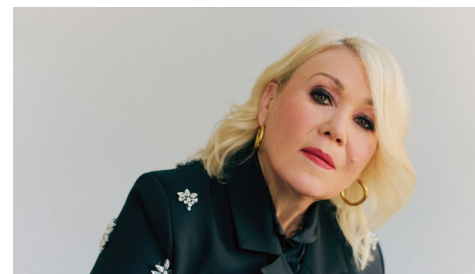


### Jann Arden and her Holiday Orchestra

December 1; 7:30 p.m.

The holiday tour brings Arden's voice, spirit and humour to an evening of Christmas music, hits and fan favourites with her holiday orchestra.

FirstOntario Concert Hall, 1 Summers Lane, Hamilton  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)



### Sing Pitch Perfect with Deke Sharon and Splush

October 24; 8:00 p.m.

Join the legendary Deke Sharon, Father of Contemporary A Cappella, to learn and sing a song from the famous movie franchise.

Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga  
[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

### Orlando

October 29; 7:00 p.m.

Orlando is a riff primarily on the character and energy of Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking 1928 novel, as well as subtle echoes of the medieval Chanson de Roland and Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem Orlando Furioso.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto  
[www.rcmusic.com](http://www.rcmusic.com)

### Looking for fun with the Queer-adjacent crowd?

#### From Sunset to Sunrise

October 9, 10 @ 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and October 11 @ 2:00 p.m.

A kingdom needs an heir. A king cannot provide one. Bold, intimate, and unsettling, From Sunset To Sunrise delves into the psychological turmoil this crisis unleashes upon the royal couple.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton  
[tickets.brampton.ca/Online/default.asp?](http://tickets.brampton.ca/Online/default.asp?)

### Bazaar of the Bizarre

October 18; 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

This unique marketplace and art show celebrates all things independent and Canadian-made, with a touch of the macabre and a lot of creativity.

Parkdale Hall, 1605 Queen St. W., Toronto  
[www.instagram.com/thebazaarofthebizarre](http://www.instagram.com/thebazaarofthebizarre)



### Mrs. Doubtfire

November 3; 7:30 p.m.

Based on the beloved film, this heartfelt and hilarious musical comedy tells the story of Daniel Hillard, an out-of-work actor who will do anything to stay close to his kids.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener  
[centreinthesquare.com/event/mrs-doubtfire](http://centreinthesquare.com/event/mrs-doubtfire)

### Ballets Jazz Montreal

November 18; 8:00 p.m.

Developed with Leonard Cohen's personal blessing, Dance Me transforms his legendary work into movement, capturing the depth of his voice, the wit of his lyrics, and the emotional pull that made him an icon.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener  
[centreinthesquare.com/event/ballet-jazz-montreal-dance-me-the-music-of-leonard-cohen](http://centreinthesquare.com/event/ballet-jazz-montreal-dance-me-the-music-of-leonard-cohen)



## 'Twas The Night Before... by Cirque du Soleil

December 10; 7:30 p.m.

A young girl by the name of Isabella has become jaded by the spirit of Christmas. She is brought into another world where she meets the characters from the Christmas poem.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)



## Looking for fun with the Str8 peoples?

### Reggae North Music Awards

September 27; 4:00 p.m.

A celebration of Canada's reggae and dancehall communities, this is an evening of live performances and cultural recognition.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

[tickets.brampton.ca/Online](http://tickets.brampton.ca/Online)

### Not Dead Yet - John Cleese and the Holy Grail at 50

October 2; 7:30 p.m.

Celebrate 50 years of one of the greatest comedies of all time with Monty Python and the Holy Grail. This unforgettable evening begins with a special screening of the classic film followed by a Q&A with John Cleese.

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

[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

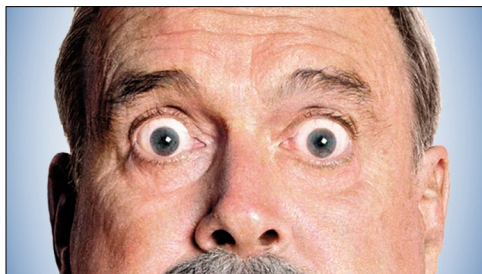
### Sleuth

October 16 through November 1; matinees and evenings

When a celebrated mystery writer invites his wife's lover to his secluded English country estate, what begins as a seemingly civilized encounter quickly spirals into a dangerous contest of wit and manipulation.

Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W., Toronto

[harbourfrontcentre.com/event/sleuth](http://harbourfrontcentre.com/event/sleuth)



### Royal International Show Jumping Challenge

November 13; 7:00 p.m.

Experience the thrill of international show jumping at the Royal Horse Show, where Olympic-calibre riders and their horses compete at top speed in a high-stakes event.

Coca-Cola Coliseum, 45 Manitoba Dr., Toronto

[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

### Illia Ovcharenko

November 24; 7:30 p.m.

Ukrainian pianist Illia Ovcharenko returns to Music Toronto with a program shaped by the spirit of fantasy.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)

### Sinfonia Toronto - Holiday Cheer

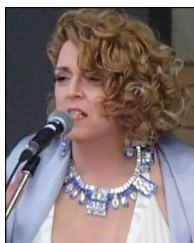
December 5; 7:30 p.m.

Montreal piano prodigy Angela Yixuan Miao joins Music Director Nurhan Arman and Sinfonia Toronto for an audience favourite, Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2.

Meridian Hall, 1 Front St., Toronto

[www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.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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## From The Heart



I've had a few automobiles in my adult life. I've also lived with public transit and hitching a ride with friends.

I currently drive a Passion Red 2012 Fiat 500 Pop. It's a fun vehicle that often feels like a miniature Italian sports car!

Having a driver's license and owning a car feels like validation of adulthood. The freedom of movement and opportunities for spontaneity make owning a car an empowering experience. There's an independence and self-control afforded by the ownership reality that no amount of Uber rides can match.

Whether doing a grocery run or heading out on a road trip to visit friends in other cities, there's an awesome sense of independence that can't be beat.

Owning my Fiat has enabled my regular participation in fundraising events with the *Imperial Court of the Waterfall Empire*, a chapter of the *International Court System*, in Hamilton, Ontario. Without my own vehicle, I would not have been able to attend the monthly fundraising events there.

From chauffeuring the kids to and from karate classes, to picking up visiting out-of-town friends at the bus depot, my car puts me in charge of life and living that no alternative arrangement can beat.

An aspect of owning your own vehicle is the sovereignty one has over the soundtrack of one's travels. Whether it's a favourite radio station (*Classical 96.3*) or the CD that's been playing in my car since I bought it several years ago (a compilation CD called *abstract vibes* released in 1995), the acoustic environment is an essential part of car ownership for me.

I rarely drive simply for the pleasurable experience of driving. My use of the car is very much task-focused. However, I do take much enjoyment in the various excursions I undertake in my day-to-day routines.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media publications *PinkPlayMags*, *theBUZZ*, and *The Pink Pages Directory*. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing any time at [mychol@mychol.com](mailto:mychol@mychol.com).



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# Autumn Horoscopes

Autumn is pulling up, gorgeous, and apparently it expects us to have somewhere to be. Some of us are driving, some are riding shotgun, and others are taking transit, cycling, walking, or ordering a car because parallel parking is simply not part of our queer journey. However you get around, this season leaves plenty of room for romance, reinvention, cozy nights, chosen family, and one fabulous jacket. The stars may point you in a direction, but unlike your GPS, they won't keep shouting when you miss a turn. Take the scenic route, change lanes when you need to, and remember: queer life was never meant to stay between the lines. Let's see where autumn takes you.

## Aries (Mar 21 – Apr 19)

You've been given the green light, Aries. Autumn brings fresh energy to plans that have been idling for too long. Step into something bold, make the invitation, and put yourself back at the centre of your life. Just remember: confidence is attractive; running every red light is not.

## Taurus (Apr 20 – May 20)

Your cozy season has officially arrived. Refresh your space, gather your favourite people, and fill your table with food worth lingering over. Comfort isn't laziness — it's how you recharge. A little seasonal maintenance will help life feel calmer, warmer, and beautifully grounded.

## Gemini (May 21 – Jun 20)

Your social calendar is filling quickly, and one unexpected conversation could lead somewhere fascinating. Say yes to new faces, creative ideas, and a little harmless flirtation. You may take the occasional wrong turn; but, somehow you'll still arrive with a great story.

## Cancer (Jun 21 – Jul 22)

Home, belonging, and chosen family come into focus this autumn. Make time for the people who let you soften, laugh, and be entirely yourself. Whether you're hosting dinner or travelling across town, the right company will make even the longest journey feel worthwhile.

## Leo (Jul 23 – Aug 22)

This is your season to be seen. Wear the statement coat, share the big idea, and take up space without apologizing for it. Your presence opens doors this autumn, especially when confidence meets generosity. Take the wheel — but let someone else choose the playlist, occasionally.

## Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

A personal tune-up is calling. Revisit your routines, clear out what no longer works, and give your well-being the same attention you give everything else. You don't need a complete overhaul. One thoughtful adjustment could make your days run much more smoothly.

## Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)

Romance, friendship, and partnership are beautifully highlighted this season. Notice who shares the effort, respects your pace, and makes ordinary moments more enjoyable. Whether you're looking for love or strengthening it, choose a co-pilot who doesn't keep changing the destination.

## Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

Autumn brings transformation, and you're ready for it. Release an old expectation, secret resentment, or emotional attachment that has become too heavy to carry. There's no room for fabulous new experiences when the trunk is still packed with last season's baggage.

## Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Adventure is calling, although you don't need to cross an ocean to answer it. Explore a new neighbourhood, attend something unexpected, or break from your usual routine. Car, train, bicycle, or boots — curiosity remains your favourite and most reliable form of transportation.

## Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

Your ambitions are moving forward, but life doesn't need to become one endless commute between responsibilities. Make room for pleasure, friendship, and quiet moments that serve no productive purpose whatsoever. Success feels much better when you're present enough to enjoy it.

## Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Your originality becomes your greatest advantage this autumn. Experiment with how you work, dress, connect, and participate in your community. You don't have to follow the usual route to move forward. In fact, creating another way may help others travel more freely too.

## Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20)

Let intuition guide you toward softer spaces this season. Creativity, romance, and emotional renewal flourish when you stop rushing and allow yourself to wander. Take the window seat, notice the changing landscape, and trust that slowing down doesn't mean you've lost your way.





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