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# the monster issue

**Ron Oliver, Scott Dagostino, Karen Fulcher, Jules Richer,  
Deb Pearce, Steven Bereznai, Scott MacDonald,  
Manny Machado, Michael Rowe,  
Ricky Boudreau, Judith Crane,  
and Donnarama**



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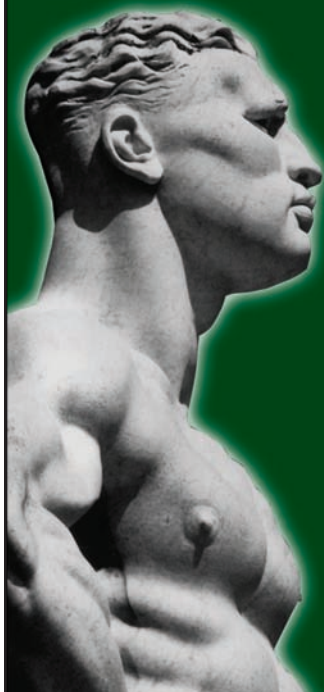
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# Publisher

## *From the Publisher*

### **"It's a thief in the night to come and grab you..."**

When I was a kid I used to convince my little sister and two brothers to stay up after my parents had gone to bed and we would watch horror movies and then spend the rest of the night talking because no one was able to sleep. I remember after watching *Salem's Lot* that I stayed up for many nights because I kept imagining that my little brother would turn into a vampire (okay I was just a kid) and come knocking on my window (if you haven't seen the movie go rent it so you can get the reference. It's a good horror flick).

### **"...It can creep up inside you and consume you..."**

Now fast forward to today where we would love to convince you to take a scary trip with us on the pages of this new autumnplay!

Once we decided on the theme of this issue I called our friend Donnarama—who just happens to love cheesy horror movies a tad more than I do. I wanted her to be on the cover but I also wanted her to add her thoughts to ours to create the ultimate Halloween edition. I figured if this issue passes Donnarama's approval then it would be horror certified.

### **"...a disease of the mind it can control you..."**

In the last issue of summerplay! we celebrated the '80s and discussed its relevance. We paid a tribute to the movie *Pretty in Pink*, and since then we lost John Hughes, the director of PIP and many

other movies that are a defining part of that era's cinema. We also recently lost the most successful recording artist of our time whose music had many influences in shaping the scene back then, and is still felt today. I was going to pay a bigger tribute to Michael Jackson in this issue as well as debate people's opinions of him, but as we got closer to press time I was feeling enough had been said. May both of those artists who gave us a lot of cherished gems rest in peace.

So I always get asked what inspired each new issue's cover. The words and video imagery of Rihanna's song "Disturbia" have been haunting me for the whole year. Something about the stylized, dirty, chilling setting just fit what we were trying to do with this issue. Add to that a cocktail of *The Cell*, and *SAW* movies, and I just had to make one call to our cover photographer to sell him on the idea. Donnarama also gave us the thumbs up and she jumped on board. Ed at Priape, as his usual self, was eager to help with the clothing and be part of this. Hence The Monster Issue was born.

And there you have it. Go ahead, dim the lights, crawl under the covers, tuck your toes under the sheets...and read this issue, if you dare.

### **"...I feel like a monster."**

Happy Halloween,

*Antoine Elhashem*





# autumnplay!

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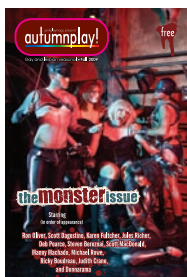
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# In This Issue

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While putting together this issue, Antoine and I had many a discussion about strong images of violence and how in North American society in particular, violence seems to be far more acceptable than similarly intense images of sexuality. Isn't it interesting that the first to die in most genre horror movies are the teens that sneak off to have sex?

Now don't get me wrong, I love me an intense action flick with guns a blazing, cars and people rocketing through the air pulling off these crazy moves to take down the rat-bastard of a villain. When the Matrix pioneered that abrupt stop motion *in media res*, I was floored by how much it ratcheted up the adrenaline. So why do we enjoy it so much?

I think it's for the same reasons we all love a good horror movie: violence and fear get our blood pumping, but in a socially acceptable way. Sex does too, but in a much more potentially embarrassing way and so we like to keep that as private as we can.

If I take a moment now to tell you my favourite monsters have always been the seductive and erotic vampires, you can understand how I like my particular blend of horror—violent and scary, sure, but also with a healthy dose of sensuality. And I'm not the only one. The rampant popularity of the *Twilight* franchise and the run away success of TV's *True Blood* series seem to underline how a good fright, especially from something dangerous, always gets us all charged up. Throw the monster into a drop dead gorgeous package and you've suddenly got the perfect blend of everything that gets our hearts hammering in our chests: sex, violence and fear, the three primal states that jumps our fight or flight response into overdrive. No wonder we've

had such an enduring fixation on these blood sucking creatures of the night.

Maybe that's why our homo society has such a special place in our hearts for Halloween. We've always been able to effectively channel the mounting tension of the season into our hormones, and sneaking off into the woods to satisfy that urge scares us no more than any of the other violent oppressors we've had to face down during our coming out.

In this issue we run the gamut of your fears, from things as simple as dating and spiders, to the more gut-wrenching, like dungeons and surviving a gay-bashing. Throw in gay movie directors Ron Oliver and David Decoteau talking about homo horror and guys being chased in their underpants, and you'll understand why we've called this our Monster Issue.

You know, I think there's another reason why our community loves this scary time of year so much—it's because we're brave. We've looked into society's funhouse mirrors, found ourselves and come to accept ourselves and then we courageously stride forward and continue to be ourselves in a society that sees US as the monsters. Once you've endured that trial by fire, there's really not a lot left to be afraid of, is there?

**Jeff Harrison**





## Letter to Editor

Hey there. Just read Our Opinion...and We Have One in the summerplay! issue....and wanted to share in response.

The discussion is one I've heard and sometimes been part of for the past 20 years between Vancouver and Toronto. Out west, 20 years ago, there was a very clear split between Commercial Dr. (Women/East End) and Davie St. (Men/West End). There were plenty of women's dances, and thank God, cause I was extremely shy back then and the women-only spaces helped. Being a "bid" was scary but the women were very supportive.

In Toronto, I have found the story to be quite different. I am guessing it has a lot to do with being a much larger city and a community with much financial fluidity and cultural diversity—let alone more variety of sexualities. In Vancouver, I'd walk into a bar and there was always someone/couple that wanted to take me home. In Toronto, it has always felt like a meat market. In the men's bars, I find it impossible to be comfortable. The one thing I have observed at lesbian bars in the past (I mostly stick with straight

bars now), is this attitude of superiority. Easily overheard and sometimes even personal to me: "I don't do fatties," "what's it worth to you?" "maybe, if you can afford to buy me a few drinks," and I'm being light here. I'll never forget observing this one woman who approached another at the Rose Bar, and before she could say a word the lez sitting at the bar told her to "fuck off, I don't do ugly." I really felt for that woman and thanked God that most think I'm attractive. Stupid hey?

Anyhow, in terms of spaces, I now occasionally go to straight bars and just people watch. And almost always I get women come on to me or just flirt. The attitude is quite different.

**Best  
wishes**

**Li**



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## **The Monster & The Master**

*Somewhere not far from where we are  
Deep in the bowels of hell  
The Monster, newly born to darkness  
Writhing in agony and ecstasy*





**the Master**



**the Harlot**



**The Master lords over his shady minions**  
They torture The Monster  
But torture is its sweet reward for turning to the dark side  
And they keep on dragging it down, down to where it belongs

**Angry Punk Girl**



**the Executioner**





**Dog Boy**



**One-Eye**





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Brendan Osborne

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**Angry Punk girl**

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**The Monster**

Donnaruma

**The Harlot**

Jen Mitchell

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# Making a **KILLING** with **HOT BOYS** in speedos

Ron Oliver talks to David DeCoteau about Career, Hollywood, and making the gayest of horror movies.

I've never met David DeCoteau.

The legendary B movie maker behind such films as *The Brotherhood*, *Voodoo Academy* and the cult gay film fest favorite *Leather Jacket Love Story* and I have been friends for going on a decade, in that "internet and cell phone" way which is peculiarly indigenous to the 21st century. We've swapped war stories, casting tips and crew recommendations as survivors of the perils of the low budget film industry, but in spite of having spent weeks, even months, in the same city at the same time, we've never shared so much as a single martini in person. This, however, was all about to change.

For Halloween, the editor of the magazine you're holding in your hands graciously offered me the opportunity to interview David and to talk about Gay Horror. We planned to meet for my regular Wednesday lunch at the classic Hollywood

watering hole "Musso and Frank," and I anxiously prepared my questions like a good little Brenda Starr, determined to learn something new about my old friend. Alas, t'was not to be.

When financing suddenly came together for David's latest motion picture, our long-awaited "meeting" had to take place over the phone. But we discovered we had far more in common than either of us had previously thought...

**Ron Oliver:** Good lord, David, the IMDB says you've made over a hundred films and you're only in your forties. You must have started storyboarding in the womb.

**David DeCoteau:** Well, I got into the business when I was eighteen. I was born and raised up in Portland, Oregon and I was lucky, I was tall enough that I could get in to see the R-rated movies when I was a kid. And frankly, I know I'm a hack director who hasn't seen all the classics, but I didn't care about *The Godfather 1* and *2*, I liked horror movies, I watched the Roger Corman pictures...

**RO:** Like *Galaxy of Terror*?

**DD:** I worked on *Galaxy of Terror* with James Cameron as a production designer and Bill Paxton as a carpenter.

(*Galaxy of Terror* features, among its other



deliciously overwrought highlights, *Happy Days* star Erin Moran getting sexually violated by a giant worm. Around our house we called it "Joanie Loves Sluggie".)

**RO:** How did THAT happen?

**DD:** I started the Roger Corman Fan Club when I was a kid. I was the only member, and I used to write to Roger and his lovely assistant Gale Ann Hurd (producer of *The Terminator*, *Aliens* etal) would answer the letters. She set up a meeting with Roger in Los Angeles when I was sixteen, and he spent almost two hours with me and told me if I ever moved to Hollywood he'd put me to work. And so when I was 18, I did.

**RO:** That was a gutsy move.

**DD:** Yeah, Hollywood at the time was a pretty hermetically sealed place, but in retrospect I probably should have moved north to Canada instead of south and I might have been as successful as Ron Oliver.

**RO:** You're sweet, but I think *successful* is a pretty strong word for a career like mine.

**DD:** According to director Paul (the original *Prom Night*) Lynch, you did make the "gay"-est of the *Prom Night* movies, (*Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night Two*; *Prom Night Three: The Last Kiss*). I moderated Paul's director's commentary on the *Prom Night* dvd and he said that in yours all the guys died and the women were the killers. I guess that makes it gay?



**RO:** Or maybe I just like to see cute guys chased around by demons? It's an interesting question though, what do you think makes a film "gay"?

**DD:** I don't know...anything with Judy Garland or Bette Davis or Joan Crawford...or Brad Pitt or Vin Diesel. I guess movies that either celebrate incredible female bitchy characters or incredibly hot young men. I don't know if that's homoerotic or just "gay appeal"...

**RO:** Yet you've managed to walk that line very well in your career, with horror movies that appeal to gay audiences as well as straight gore fans. I'm thinking of something like your film *Leeches*, for example.

(*Leeches* tells the time-honored story of an invasion of angry steroid-enhanced giant bloodsuckers who take their revenge on a high school boys' swim team. It features hot guys in Speedos being devoured by large, pissed off slugs and is not to be missed.)

**DD:** Well, in *Leeches* I got to have my cake and eat it too. Monsters, cute guys in bathing suits, it sold to Here! TV, Logo—(both gay US television networks)—AND to Walmart, Blockbuster and the SyFy Channel. So it was kind of a movie for everybody.

**RO:** I think this is why there are so many gay horror film fans; it's a common denominator thing. Gay or straight, we're all scared by the Thing Under The Bed.

**DD:** Or in the closet.

**RO:** Which leads us to what I refer to as "Dave's Underpants Movies" -

**DD:** It's PG erotica, thank you...

**RO:** Right...and you were one of the first filmmakers to understand that there was a market



for horror featuring hot guys in tighty-whites when you made *Voodoo Academy*.

**DD:** I made that because I was an angry filmmaker, sick of doing the same old shit, and I said to my boss Charlie Band "let's make the first horror movie for girls". That was my pitch. A complete and total lie, but you have to pitch to get it sold. And I didn't know there would necessarily be an audience of gay men out there who would watch it, I just wanted to make it.

**RO:** And it was a big hit.



**DD:** Because there was really nothing out there quite like it, all that imagery, the religion, the young guys—it was a totally fucked up movie and the Director obviously only had one thing on his mind!

(That "one thing" led David into a whole new phase of his career, with the wildly successful *The Brotherhood* movies (1-7) among others, as well as a series of horror pictures based, in the style of his mentor Roger Corman on the works of Edgar Allen Poe: *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Raven*, and more. All of which include, of course, hot guys in their underpants. )

**RO:** What's fascinating to me is the sort of "stealth" influence your movies have been having on popular culture recently. I'm thinking of a film from a few years ago called *The Covenant* which was dreadful but had lots of very hot guys in underwear writhing around with each other; even the poster for the movie looked like the cover art for one of your *Brotherhood* DVDs.

**DD:** And the most recent poster for the *Twilight* sequel *New Moon* doesn't even SHOW the girl from the movie, just the wolf boys, all shirtless and one who looks as if his pants are about to fall off!

**RO:** Which is either an homage to or a ripoff of you, but nevertheless it's hot. And when exactly will it be legal to look at Taylor Lautner's body without being in danger of breaking the child porn laws?

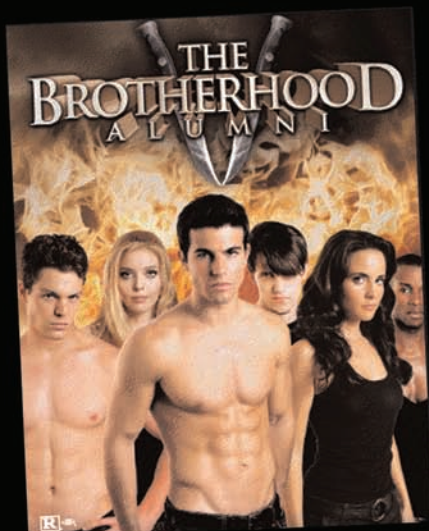
**DD:** My whole career I've been hearing from Producers, "Dave will you stop bringing in these pretty boys?" and now they're all saying "Just cast the guys you want..."

**RO:** Like Canadian hunk Cory Monteith. You gave him his break and now he's the star of the big Fox TV series *Glee*.

**DD:** Corey's first movie was *Killer Bash* for me up in Canada. He's gorgeous, I got him in his underwear, it was shameless. Vancouver didn't know what hit them when I got there...

(David Decoteau became a Canadian citizen several years ago; while he admits to being, " he is by no means a "carpetbagger," having grown to love his adopted country for its support of filmmaking—and its free health care.)

**RO:** They say that as gay men we never really mature beyond the emotional level of a fourteen year old girl, which—given the current state of popular culture—pretty much puts gay directors like us in the pole position...as it were. And now we get to influence a whole new generation. Any memories of gay images in horror that stuck with you when you were a kid?





**DD:** I remember the TV movies; *The Night Stalker* sequel, *The Night Strangler*, had a lesbian couple in it. *The Legend of Lizzie Borden* with Elizabeth Montgomery getting naked to kill her parents, there were evil lesbians in *Born Innocent*—

**RO:** Linda Blair and the broom-handle rape. How did they get away with that on network TV back then?

**DD:** You only had five channels but even then the movies really had to have shocking material to get an audience...they had to push issues to get eyeballs.

**RO:** And "gay" was still shocking. Remember *Alexander*; *The Other Side of Dawn*?

**DD:** Leigh McClosky, Male Prostitute. Hot.

**RO:** Especially when he spends the night in the park, sleeping under some playground equipment and comes crawling out looking gorgeous. It totally made you want to be a hustler because even though selling sex for money might be tragic, your hair was always perfect.

**DD:** In 1972, I remember opening up the TV Guide and seeing the word "homosexual" for a Movie-of-the-Week called *That Certain Summer* and thinking "I think that's me."

**RO:** Martin Sheen in love with Hal Holbrook. And Scott Jacoby as the son who discovers the queer truth!

**DD:** I felt incredibly liberated watching it. This was about the same time as I became an atheist.

**RO:** Me too; must have been something about that movie...

**DD:** I was raised Catholic. But when I was 8 my mother died of brain cancer, a brutal, ugly death, and it just destroyed my father.

**RO:** Is it a stretch to think that dealing with this tragedy was the beginning of an interest in horror?

**DD:** It was the beginning of the end of my church going days. I kept thinking, "I'm being sold something. The music is too loud, the stained glass windows are too art-designed. I don't believe this..."

**RO:** It's such a ridiculous and unnecessary leap of faith.

**DD:** I didn't believe in God, but I did believe in Santa Claus.

**RO:** That's because Santa ACTUALLY shows up and brings you cool shit..

**DD:** And it was one of my first realizations of how the church has persecuted homosexuals.

**RO:** That's a real horror movie.

**DD:** And from then on, I was always aware that I was an atheist AND a homosexual.

**RO:** Of course being a low budget horror-

moviemaker is still considered worse in some circles.

**DD:** Especially a gay one.

**RO:** Well for a while there I was winning the "gayest director" competition among the various crew members you and I have had in common over the years —

**DD:** —only because of your leopard skin director's chair.

**RO:** But then you showed up on set one day playing Anne Murray music. Which automatically means you win, bitch.

**DD:** As a proud "new" Canadian I think it's important to teach the younger generation about their musical heritage.

**RO:** Yeah but Anne Murray? She's responsible for several generations of bad lesbian hairstyles.

**DD:** At least it wasn't Gordon Lightfoot.

---

*Emmy nominated writer/director/producer Ron Oliver has made over a dozen feature films, countless hours of television and his short stories have appeared in several award winning literary anthologies. Twice nominated for the Director's Guild of America Award, Oliver hails originally from Barrie, Ontario, Canada, but now lives in a glamorous California desert town with his long-suffering boyfriend and a miniature Manchester terrier named Crawford. He can be found at*

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# Trickin' and Treating

By Scott Dagostino

"As horror fans and creators, gay people have been Halloween's greatest fear factor."

"I always want Halloween to go on forever," says Toronto drag performer (and this issue's cover girl) Donnarama, "It's the kid in me, but I think everyone should be like that." While October 31st is the one day when a great many people discover their own inner drag queen, it's the holiday's terror themes that Donnarama loves most. "There's a kind of release from watching horror films," she laughs. "John Carpenter said that the night he first saw *The Exorcist*, he never slept better in his life afterwards!"

From *Bride of Frankenstein* director James Whale to *Books of Blood* author Clive Barker, some of the greatest masters of horror have been gay men. York University history professor Nicholas Rogers explains in his book, *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night*, that "it has been the gay community that has most flamboyantly exploited Halloween's potential as a transgressive festival."

As Halloween became jokingly known as "gay Christmas," our love of the horror genre hasn't been reciprocated. Fey fright fans have often faced a nasty backlash while trying to show the world that even vampires, psychopaths and

zombies aren't always heterosexual. Thanks to such efforts, horror is now more popular than ever, but we still struggle to define a place for ourselves in a genre based on mankind's own slippery, shadowy fears.

Even the origins of Halloween are murky. Originally based around the Celtic New Year on Nov. 1, it's believed the festival of Samhain was eventually merged with Roman feast days after what is now Ireland and the UK was conquered in the first century AD. From there, Christians grafted All Saint's Day around it, yet this essential pagan quality of Halloween stubbornly remained.

Over the centuries, the ever-mutable holiday has celebrated the harvest, the souls of the dead, drinking, fantasy and practical jokes but after





events like Toronto's Kew Beach riots in 1945 and the rise of urban legends about razor-blades-in-the-apples that peaked in the 1970s, Halloween was lapsing into a mere evening event for children and, says Rogers, "a parable of urban anxiety in North America."

Fortunately, gay people were quite used to urban anxiety and the pagan vibe of Halloween fit nicely with the beginnings of gay liberation. The first issue of *The Body Politic* newspaper in 1971 featured a piece in which Tony Metie wrote, "I've discovered the paradox of Halloween: that it's not the drag queens who are in disguise; the ones who are hiding behind masks are the many gays on the other side of the street who are trying to pass themselves off as straights, and the straights themselves." The drag queens on Halloween, he wrote, "shout at us, 'See how silly your disguises are, we can see through them.'"

That sensibility was reflected in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which celebrated horror movie clichés, queer expression and fishnet stockings. The 1975 film became a Halloween staple (still is) and its cult appeal grew while lavish costume parades were becoming the norm in major North American cities. On the 10th anniversary of Key West, Florida's Halloween parade in 1988, the New York Times' Jeffrey Schmalz wrote, "For thousands of homosexuals here and in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and elsewhere, Halloween has become the big holiday of the year. It is to gay people what St. Patrick's Day is to the Irish, a time to celebrate who they are and flaunt it, too."

## "But why should gay people have all the fun?"

laughs Shawn Hamilton, owner of The Amazing Party Store in Toronto. For 18 years, he's maintained a massive warehouse of Halloween props, costumes and novelties and he doesn't disagree with Rogers' assertion that "it is the gay community that has been arguably most responsible for Halloween's adult rejuvenation." Hamilton says sales of costumes for adults have increased roughly 20 percent every year in the last decade. A 2007 Retail Council of Canada poll showed that half of the adults in Canada planned to dress up. Fright night has become a \$700 million industry.

Not to mention the vampires. The surprising success of HBO series *True Blood* and the massive phenomenon of the *Twilight* saga have brought bloodsucking into the mainstream but also entrenched a new stereotype: the young girl in love with the brooding older vampire. Whether they're bonded to Buffy, Bella or Sookie, these vampires are sadly far removed from the shifting sexuality of Anne Rice's elegant Lestat. *True Blood*'s gay head writer, *Six Feet Under* creator Alan Ball, stuffs the show with homoeroticism and male nudity but the hetero love triangle must take precedence, even if—as Ball admitted to *Entertainment Weekly*—he's "confused" by the rabid desire of some fans to see Sookie paired up with the show's even crueler vampire: "Eric's hot, but beyond that he's dangerous, and I don't know if he'd love anybody besides himself. What's the appeal there? The bad boy? The danger?"

Of course, says actor Peter Stickles, the *Shortbus* star who now lurks in *The Lair*, Here TV's





gay vampire soap opera, beginning its third season: "There's always been that archetype of the woman attracted to this dark stranger—sexy and maybe dangerous." A huge horror fan himself, Stickles is delighted that "people are more comfortable embracing the allure and the sexiness of the vampire" and he's proud of *The Lair's* uniquely queer spin on the formula. "It's a power play," he says, "The hero needs the bad guy and vice versa and in our show, it's physical—my character is the big baddie, the vampire king, but he can't live without his mortal love interest." Stickles isn't worried about having to share his lair with so many vamps these days either. "Vampires are awesome," he laughs, "I feel very proud to be part of that family. I'm just excited that people are watching horror-themed shows at all. We came along before *Twilight* and *True Blood* so it's nice to think that we were ahead of the curve."

Meanwhile, Stickles says, "I just shot a zombie movie called 'George's Intervention,' which has a gay director...Zombie movies are more intense and exciting but vampire movies are smarter. Zombies and vampires are like dogs and cats," he jokes, but if so, the Toronto International Film Festival last month saw Dundas Square become a dog park. Hundreds of fans shambled out in full zombie makeup to greet *Night of the Living Dead* director George A. Romero upon the premiere of his latest film in his 40-year-old series, *Survival of the Dead*.

"Zombies are bigger than ever," agrees Bruce LaBruce, director of indie gay classic *Hustler White*, "They represent this free-floating anxiety about contagious diseases like the swine flu. They're less easy to romanticize because they represent these almost apocalyptic fears." If so, the apocalypse is upon us because the undead are

everywhere right now: *Zombieland* is in theatres, both *World War Z* and the Jane Austen parody *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* are bestselling novels and the acclaimed comic book *The Walking Dead* is being turned into a cable television series. Even fan Donnarama sighs, "I'm tired of zombies—we don't need to see any more—but what Bruce is doing is cool."

Zombies, says LaBruce, are conformist and "the ultimate signifier of advanced capitalism...What I tried to do with *Otto* was to invert the paradigm and create a zombie with a personality, more of a romantic figure." The result is a very gay, utterly unique take on the concept that LaBruce is now continuing in his next film: "*LA Zombie* is kind of a companion piece to *Otto* although it's an actual porn movie," he says, "Francois Sagat is an alien zombie who finds people who are dead and f\*\*\*\*s them back to life. It's kind of a romantic notion as well. He's not a destroyer, he gives life." Knowing full well his satirical approach will annoy diehard horror geeks, LaBruce insists, "I'm a huge horror fan—not necessarily the current cycle—but it's a very playful genre to work in. I was referencing these old American films like *Night Tide* and *Martin* and *Carnival of Souls*. I love the tone of all those movies—they're sort of horror movies but more whimsical, which is so out of fashion right now."

LaBruce is referring to the ongoing trend of "torture porn," disturbingly visceral movies like *Hostel* and the *Saw* series. Donnarama is not a fan either. "I don't like to see people being tortured," she says, "The best horror films are always the ones with the most suspense." She was offended by an interview with *Hostel* director Eli Roth in which he defended the movie's gratuitous



use of the word “faggot” by saying, “Well, that’s how people speak in real life.” It’s an old issue. A fan of movies like *Prom Night* and *The Howling*, Donnarama was unimpressed by what came next in the early-80s. “There’s always been a lot of homophobia in horror films,” she says, “There was always a gay friend who dies and the killer always turned out to be someone dressed up in drag or with a confused sexual orientation, like the transgender girl-boy in *Sleepaway Camp*—remember that ending? No one could eat hot dogs for a week!”

In his classic book on Hollywood homophobia, *The Celluloid Closet*, author Vito Russo mocked this backlash emphasis on gay psycho-killers. “By some twisted logic,” he wrote, “these shy theatre queens somehow become raving, knife-wielding maniacs.” He pointed to *The Fan*, a 1981 film in which *Terminator* star Michael Biehn stalks Lauren Bacall but not before picking up a guy in a bar and leading him out to the alley. “The guy blows him!” squeals Donnarama, “I’m like, oh my God, am I watching this? And did Lauren Bacall read the script? I find it all offensive but at the same time it’s hilarious...Always in the slasher films, the promiscuous kids who disobeyed were the first ones to die!”

Clive Barker once said in an interview, “By and large, the horror audience is curiously conservative when it comes to erotic matters,” but LaBruce is less gentle. “They’re actually very cowardly,” he says, “these horror geeks are working out these very basic anxieties about their

sexuality.” The whole genre, he says, is “homophobic and misogynist. People gloss over that. It’s this very juvenile desire to see women eviscerated because it’s always the adolescent girls like Carrie who awaken this horror with blood and menstruation and these very primal Freudian fears.”

In his introduction to *Queer Fear*, an anthology of gay horror stories, author Michael Rowe wrote, “Horror fiction incites the same response in the mainstream reading public as erotica does. Both of these “outlaw” genres deal with strong emotion, violence, and a lack of control that is uniquely human.” But while books and movies can explore this and gay horror creators can work to change attitudes, the actual Halloween night itself has often been a battleground. Those daring drag queens championed in *The Body Politic* had eggs thrown at them by crowds on Yonge Street. Even more frightening—more than any vampire or zombie—was the gunman who opened fire in San Francisco in 2006, wounding nine people. Police responded to the homophobic attack by shutting down the Castro’s longtime Halloween parades and street parties from then on—the end of an era.

Happily, here in Toronto, our “Halloweek” festivities have been popular, lively and safe. What happens next, writes historian Rogers, “will depend on how inventive people can be in bending this carnivalesque consumer rite to express their own desires, dissatisfactions and fantasies.” While the gay community’s history with horror and its holiday has largely been one of struggle, we continue to claim Halloween as our own, for it as always offers us one night to reinvent, disguise, challenge, terrify or delight ourselves. Make it your own!

**Scott Dagostino** is a Toronto-based freelance writer who adores the city that Canada loves to hate. Scott is the former managing editor of *fab*, he also writes for *Xtra!* and spent his youth working in three of Toronto’s best bookstores. He rambles on at [www.scottdagostino.com](http://www.scottdagostino.com)

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo of Scott outhatted by a gay wizard by Scott Dagostino.

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# THE Haunting of Toronto

by Karen Fulcher

## Squint your Eyes, Look a Little Closer

### Halloween Past

Overlay a map of Toronto from the 1800s on today's map and you will see history layered on present time. Quantum theories propose that time is not linear and the past, present and future are all happening right now. According to these theories, there are many worlds (or realities) existing side-by-side, parallel to one another. We just don't perceive them all and apparently we have unconsciously agreed to see the same reality—you see what I see, right?

Except when we don't. Sometimes we can see these other realities. And apparently glimpses of these other worlds, in the form of ghosts, can happen more often at Halloween.

According to historians, Halloween began approximately 2000 years ago in Europe as Samhain (Sow-in), a pagan new-year ritual during which they believed the veil between the living and dead worlds was at its thinnest. Ritual

harvests including sacrifice were conducted to appease the dead. Presumably during this time psychic work was most successful and predicting events helped people feel safer in a changeable world.

Several hundred years later, Samhain was folded into a more Christian tradition of honouring the dead and became All Hallows Eve or All Saints/Souls Day. These old rituals live on. Ghoulish costumes and "trick or treat" are directly related to appeasing the ghosts that walk the land during this time. The idea persists that providing a "sacrifice" or offering (the treat) to the dead (the goblins and other monsters knocking at your door) ensures protection against bad fortune (the trick).

The theme of honouring the dead seems to be a common thread through quite a few other cultures. In fact, people honour the dead in more than 25 countries and regions. In Japan, O-bon is a festival that honours the deceased but includes a curious ritual of floating lanterns down a river to help ghosts get back to the underworld. Are jack-



o-lanterns the same thing? And during the Chinese ghost festival, it is said that the realms of Heaven, Hell and Earth are opened. Sound familiar?

I am not an anthropologist, but the strength of the tradition and its existence all over the world adds to the authenticity of the belief that ghosts walk among us. Is it possible quantum theories now support that which has been understood and accepted throughout history?

Some philosophers think that ghost stories are society's need to uncover something that is lost or hidden. Could these experiences be vibrations from the past, like footprints that leave an impression, or perhaps a glimpse beyond the veil? Just one walk around the Toronto Archives photography display, and you are struck by the rich history of this city. Do you know who lived on the land your condo or home is now built on? Are there ghosts roaming the streets of Church and Maitland? Perhaps some of the lost lovers of Alexander Wood, a merchant and magistrate in Upper Canada in the 1800s, whose lands were known as Molly Wood's Bush ("molly" meaning homosexual)?

They say history is written from the perspective of the observer. As members of the LGBTTQ community, we've had to extrapolate meaning and markers to recognize our unique family throughout history. What lost or hidden stories have we yet to find?

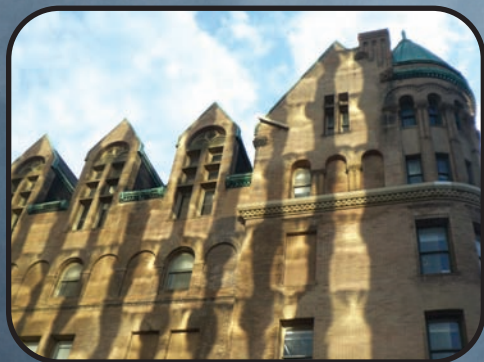
# Ghost Hunting

Toronto has its share of ghost stories and I decided to find out if any might suggest a queer slant. I booked a visit with Muddy York tour guide, Richard Fiennes-Clinton. He explained that a ghost is a visual apparition and a poltergeist is sounds or moving objects. Richard began his business of ghost tours because he was interested in history. In his tours, he only includes stories that have consistently been retold by many, the stories have common facts and there is some historical support to them.

He told our small group about the friendly ghost reported to be the original director of the Royal Ontario Museum, just trying to help employees feel less lonely when working late. ROM employees tell stories of music playing and

footsteps sounding and "reassuring" pats on the shoulder when working at night and alone. Next door, Richard told us of a little girl dubbed Celeste who roams the halls and moves things around in the planetarium. Apparently, the private home beside the planetarium included a girl of 7 or 8 in the family but there has been no link or report of whether they are the same.

At the Christie Mansion, we shuddered to think of the mistress locked in a secret chamber by



the owner, kept there even after he lost interest until she went mad from loneliness. She hanged herself in that secret chamber built in the middle of the mansion with no windows and a secret panel. Mostly students report getting trapped in room 29 – perhaps loneliness drives this poltergeist to force company to stay?

Richard talked about the women's asylum that existed on the very same land that Queen's Park is now located. He explained that legislative pages (a program for youth) are tormented by apparitions in the parliament tunnel that runs beneath the crescent and parliament staff avoid the tunnel for that very reason. Three female ghosts are reported to haunt Queen's Park buildings and a particularly grotesque spectre of a hanging woman in the tunnel has been the most disturbing to staff. Historically, asylums were used for a variety of purposes some of these included "taking care" of women who didn't marry or who failed to fit society's norms. This sounds like a story of a certain lesbian flavour.

As we strolled a long path through the downtown and the evening stretched on, Richard shared with us the story of a malevolent energy that caused the closing of a stairwell due to a high number of falls (pushes?) reported by students at a university facility near College and University. No





one really knows who or what is lurking in that stairwell to this day.

Standing beneath the gargoyles and on the steps of old city hall, we heard about how Courtroom 33 was plagued by injuries and a story of an accused murderer wrongfully executed. It was assumed later, that because his IQ was so low, he was surely incapable of the premeditated nature of the crime and ended up being a fall guy. It has been a tradition for writers to attempt to spend the night on Halloween but Richard reports that the courtroom has been closed due to the unexplained incidences that have occurred there. These are just a few of Toronto's shadows.

## The Queer Layer

Ghost hunter, Ken Summers who just published *Queer Hauntings: True Tales of Gay & Lesbian Ghosts* told me how he came to identify ghosts of certain predilections. "It's very much a matter of

luck. I don't set out in search of LGBTTQ ghosts, but instead look for signs that they could be not-so-straight...some involving horrible tragedies and murders, including hate crimes."

Ken mentioned he had found a few gay hauntings in Canada including Buddies in Bad Times theatre. Staff report cold spots, footsteps and noises but nobody knows who could be the source of this energy. Some suspect it could be related to the businesses located there prior to 1978.

I decided to employ Ken's idea and look a little closer at Toronto's history. If ghosts hang out in places where they spent time, experienced something traumatic or lost a love, it follows that we need a LGBTTQ map for Toronto.

According to writer John D. Stanley, by the turn of the twentieth century, the glory holes at Union Station evidenced well-established gay culture in Toronto. Are there thrill seekers long past lingering on?

The Keg Mansion (the old Massey home) ghost story struck me as curious. After Lilian Massey died in 1908, a maid was so grief-stricken she hanged herself. Subsequent stories of the Mansion include a hanging apparition. Could this be a story of lesbian love lost?

## Thrill of Chill

Researchers have conducted studies that show smart people, those who drink a lot of instant coffee, who have an ocular condition called Charles Bonnet Syndrome (a disease that causes patients with visual loss to have complex visual hallucinations) and those who just have a talent, are often reported as seeing ghosts.

Is there something in our brains that creates the experience of ghosts? Paranormal researchers say that humans can even create internal conditions into external phenomena—that others can see (as in the Philip Phenomenon that occurred here in Toronto). But does the experience of seeing or hearing something that has no plausible explanation have to be caused by someone who died to be interesting? I think not. The unexplained or unknown are equally delightful in my books.

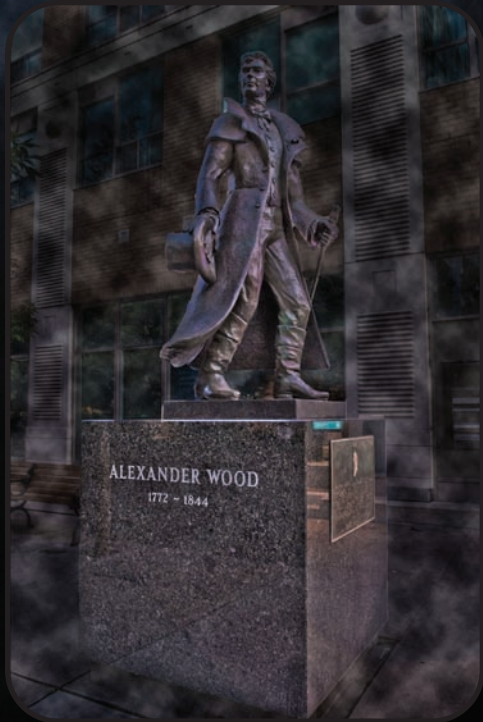
What's more, how scary the experience is depends on how strongly religious a person is.

The more religious you are, the more likely you would see a ghost as an evil entity. Whatever your religious commitment, I would say that seeing a ghost or experiencing a poltergeist would be creepy indeed.

As a teen I relished the chance to read Stephen King novels in the middle of a hot, sunny afternoon on summer break. I loved being scared, but in an incongruous-to-ghosts kind of place. It is good for kids to explore the mysteries of life and death, confront fears, connect with a world gone by and scare themselves silly but safely. It's fun!

So, looking for ghosts and scaring ourselves silly is entertaining? Well, if you look at the number of murder mysteries, horror shows and amusement parks that aren't any time soon going under due to lack of interest, then yes, scaring ourselves silly seems to be something we even as adults experience as enjoyable.

Whatever (or whoever) causes supernatural occurrences, we can still revel in the tingles of possibilities, delight in the stories of mayhem and murder, shiver and cling to our lovers or friends while we join in the rituals of Halloween and sigh with relief that we are safe, loved and have appeased the ghosts for one more year.



# Ten things to try this Halloween

1. Get into the spirit by going on the Toronto Zombie Walk on October 24. ([www.zombiewalk.com](http://www.zombiewalk.com))
2. Test the idea that psychic powers are increased: schedule a tarot, palm or psychic reading (start the day this way: [www.psychicbrunch.ca](http://www.psychicbrunch.ca))
3. Go on the Muddy York ghost tours (the late one) but book in advance. ([www.muddyyorktours.com](http://www.muddyyorktours.com)).
4. Host a party that includes a murder mystery.
5. Leave a dish of treats at the foot of your bed on Halloween night with an invitation and incantation of good wishes.
6. If you're a more introverted person, curl up with a good but dark book (I recommend the Sarah Waters gothic novel, *Affinity* set in the 1860s partly in a women's prison or Ken Summers' *Queer Hauntings*).
7. Host a horror film fest – be sure to include *The Grudge* (sleepover recommended).
8. Or if you are feeling more social, check [www.rue-morgue.com](http://www.rue-morgue.com) and attend an event or collect some friends together and go to a CineMacabre screening.
9. Plan your own ghost hunt (get your ghost hunting guidebook from [www.torontoghosts.org](http://www.torontoghosts.org)) and begin with Gibraltar Lighthouse on the Toronto Islands, a famous and well documented haunting.
10. While you are on the island, visit Hanlan's Point. Perhaps you'll see a glimmer of same-sex lovers wearing 1920s beachwear walking hand in hand under the full moon.

*Karen works as a corporate communications professional and a freelance writer. She prefers being free to explore and write about things beyond policy and procedure and nearer possibilities and play.*

**PHOTOGRAPHY** *The Keg Mansion & Alexander Wood by Robert Foster. Other photos by Karen Fulcher*



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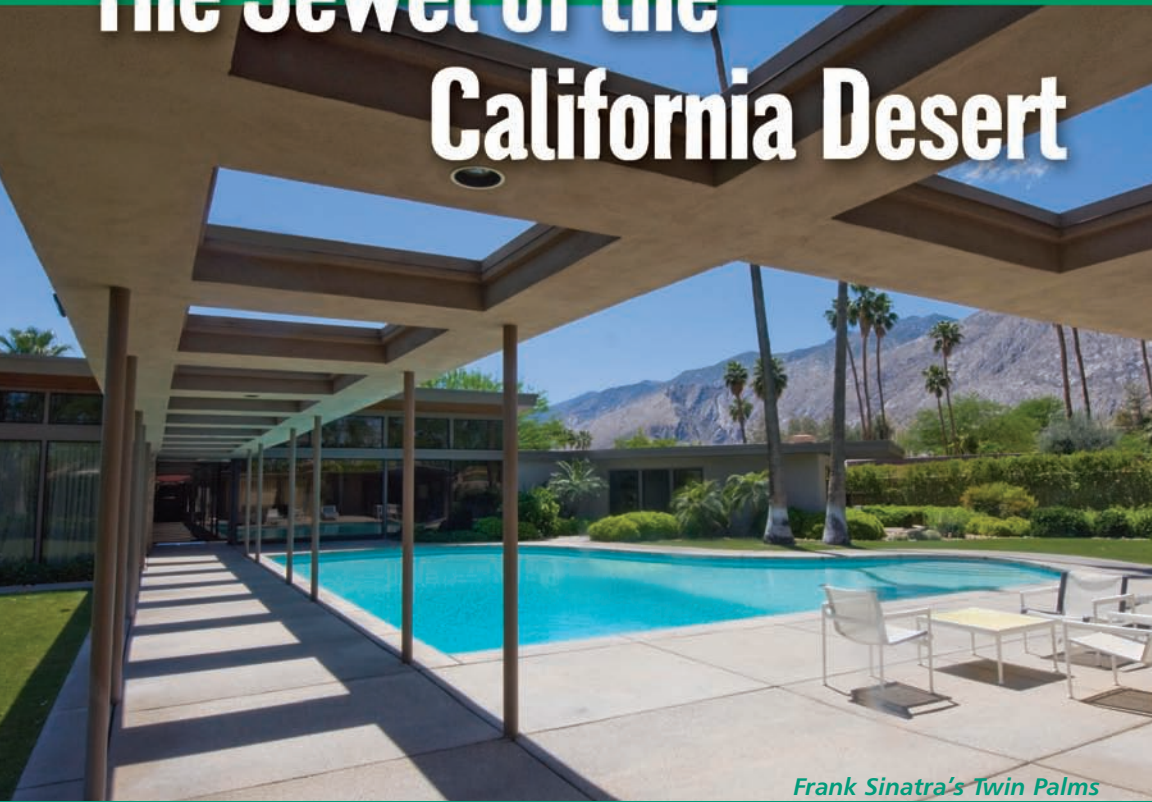
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# The Jewel of the California Desert

by Jules Richer



*Frank Sinatra's Twin Palms*

In every sense of the word, Palm Springs is one the hottest destinations in North America for LGBT travelers. Every year the city throws one of the best White Parties around and holds the famous Dinah Shore Weekend, a unique event in the lesbian community. All this under perpetually blue skies, torrid weather and a mystifying desert environment.

But Palm Springs is more than just parties. In the last decade, this jewel of the California desert has become a "retro chic" destination par excellence. The city has been through a revival of its many circa-1950s hotels and motels. Great efforts have been made to preserve the emblematic style of this signature period in Palm Springs: mid-century modern architecture.

In the 50s, the city came to be known as an ideal resort town because of its desert climate. In Hollywood star's contracts there was a provision stating that they couldn't go more than a 100 miles away from Los Angeles while working for the studios. Palm Spring was exactly on the edge of that limit.

So they all came: Marilyn Monroe, the Rat Pack, Elvis Presley, Lucille Ball. Other celebrities soon joined them: Frank Sinatra, Liberace and, later, Barry





Manilow and Sonny Bono (who was once the city's mayor). Their former homes still exist today and some of them can even be rented out, like Frank Sinatra's Twin Palms, a marvelous example of mid-century modernist architecture. Like in Los Angeles, it is also possible to tour the houses of the rich and famous with guides that will tell you all there is to know.

"Palm Springs has the largest concentration of boutique hotels in the U.S.," says Jake Cohen, owner of the Rendezvous Bed and Breakfast, when we meet him. The Rendezvous is 70 years old and, on different occasions, welcomed Marilyn Monroe as a guest. The room she used is still there, although it went through a lot of renovations. Today, it is all decorated in pink with memorabilia of the tragic actress. "It is now designed to fit the needs of a true Marilyn fan," says the website of the Rendezvous.

Palm Springs had a lot of significance for Marilyn. In 1954, she spent the first days of her honeymoon with Joe DiMaggio in the city. She also bought a house later, which can also be seen on tours.

Surrounded by elegant palm trees, the Rendezvous is typical of Palm Springs' offering of modernist hotels. The hotel has a limited number of rooms, all of which are arranged around a pool, perfect for those in search of uninterrupted relaxation in the form of long days spent near water. And when in Palm Springs, proximity to water is crucial as it gets very hot during the day, with summer temperatures regularly hitting 50°C. Fortunately, it is a dry heat because, after all, it is the desert.

The mountains, covered in vegetation, that surround the city are a constant reminder of the

desert's presence. At sunrise or sunset, the views are spectacular as the mountains take on a variety of beautiful colors.

Despite the lack of rain, Palm Springs' golf courses are always in great shape because of the presence of underground water in the Valley of Coachella, where the city is located. And there are many to choose from, with the area featuring some 130 courses. However, that supply of water is being used to capacity and the municipality has restrictions in place to reduce water consumption (such as prohibiting the planting of grass on new properties).

In Palm Springs, many hotels and motels cater to the gay clientele. All of them are small, intimate and centered around a pool. Most are also clothing optional. The Palm Springs Travel Bureau has prepared a list of all those hotels and motels that you can reach with this abbreviated address: [tr.im/palmgay](http://tr.im/palmgay).

Even more interesting than the Rendezvous, the Orbit Inn offers guests an unbeatable "retro chic" experience. The inn's rooms are particularly inviting because of the well-chosen colours and furnishings reminiscent of the 1950s. With only nine rooms, the Orbit Inn features plenty of individual attention from staff. During our visit, hotel guests were gathered at the bar enjoying a complimentary cocktail hour featuring martinis and plenty of conversation.

Other than golf, Palm Springs is also the perfect starting point from which you can go exploring in the surrounding desert. Joshua Tree National Park is located only 30 km from the city, named after the type of tree that is only found in desert areas in the southwest United States.



Joshua Tree is also the name of one of the biggest albums put out by rock band U2. Even closer to the city is the Tahquitz Canyon, which is located on Cahuilla Indian land and would make for an excellent start to your excursion in the desert.

If money is no object, there is a least one experience that shouldn't be missed. It is possible to rent the house where Frank Sinatra lived from 1947 to 1954.

In reality, it should not be solely considered Frank Sinatra's home, but more accurately the home of Sinatra and Ava Gardner. It was in this home where the singer and the movie star lived their tumultuous love affair. It was also here that the couple realized that they could not live together. Though many years have gone by, time has not erased the history of this beautiful Palm Springs home. The presence of the two famous lovers can still be felt while touring through the house's vast rooms, decorated in the mid-century style. The nostalgia is so intense inside that you can easily imagine what it was like when the couple lived there.

There is also physical proof of Sinatra and Gardner's life in the house that remain today, such as a chip in the master bathroom's sink, the result of Sinatra smashing a champagne bottle during an argument with Gardner. The masterpiece of the Twin Palms property is undoubtedly the pool. It's shaped like a grand piano, with the curves in the shape also serving as a reminder of the nearby mountains. Built with materials that allow it to blend in with the desert the home fits in perfectly with the decor of the rest of the city.

After changing hands several times, Twin Palms (the name given to the property by Sinatra)

## Special events:

- Film festival. It might not be the TIFF, but the Palm Spring's Film Festival will show for its next edition (January 5th to 18th) 200 films from 60 countries. Big stars from Hollywood also come along. [www.psfilmfest.org](http://www.psfilmfest.org)
- Modernist week: To celebrate Palm Spring's rich architectural heritage, different organizations in the city hold a week of activities, including exhibition of vintage furniture, special tours of modernist houses and a selling event at the convention centre. The next one is February 12 to 20, 2010. [www.modernismweek.com](http://www.modernismweek.com)
- The Dinah Shore weekend: The event, which is a big party, is labeled as "the greatest women's weekend on earth." The next one will take place from March 31st to April 4th 2010. It is held at the same time as the LGPA Kraft Nabisco Golf Championship (founded by Dinah Shore). [www.thedinah.com](http://www.thedinah.com) and [www.dinahshoreweekend.com](http://www.dinahshoreweekend.com)
- White Party: on the following weekend, from April 9th to April 12th, the stage will be set for the White Party, considered one of the 5 best of its kind in North America (the others being New York, Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Montreal). More than 20,000 people are expected. [www.jeffreysanker.com](http://www.jeffreysanker.com)



## Must see:

- A tour of the homes of the rich and famous:  
[www.thebestofthebesttours.com](http://www.thebestofthebesttours.com)
- Tahquitz Canyon:  
[www.tahquitzcanyon.com](http://www.tahquitzcanyon.com)
- Joshua Tree National Park:  
[www.nps.gov/jotr](http://www.nps.gov/jotr)

## How to get there:

There are no direct flights from Toronto to Palm Springs and flying through another American city is required. You can fly directly to Los Angeles, however, and then drive to Palm Springs, which will take between two and four hours, depending on the traffic.

## Where to sleep:

- The Rendezvous:  
[www.palmspringsrendezvous.com](http://www.palmspringsrendezvous.com)
- The Orbit Inn: [www.orbitin.com](http://www.orbitin.com)
- Frank Sinatra's house:  
[www.sinatrahouse.com](http://www.sinatrahouse.com),  
[www.beaumontdevillas.com](http://www.beaumontdevillas.com)  
(reservations)
- Gay hotels and motels:  
[tr.im/palmgay](http://tr.im/palmgay)

is now owned by a company that renovated it and rents it out to people on vacation. Of course, renting the property is by no means cheap: the house can be yours for a nightly rate of \$2,600 (though it was on sale this summer for \$1,995).

Sinatra originally built the house as a family home for him, his first wife and their three children. He hired local architect E. Stewart Williams to design a home in what is now known as the mid-century modern style. The home quickly became the place to be for lavish cocktail parties. This tradition seems to continue to this day as, on the day of our arrival, a cleaning crew was mopping up the leftovers of a wild party held the night before.

Gardner came to live at Twin Palms in 1951 following the demise of Sinatra's first marriage. Both armed with hot tempers, the couple fought frequently. "It was the site of probably the most spectacular fight of our young married life, and honey, don't think I don't know that's really saying something," Gardner wrote in her 1990 autobiography. The couple eventually separated in 1953 and Sinatra remained in the house until he sold it in 1957, never to return again.

---

*Jules Richer studied journalism at Université du Québec à Montréal and soon after started his reporter's career at La Presse newspaper. Soon to follow were positions at the Canadian Press news agency, News Editor at Quebec's Le Devoir and Managing Editor at Radio-Canada's Téléjournal. Travel writing is quickly becoming his new love.*

*PHOTOGRAPHY by Isabelle Laflamme*  
After completing a successful bachelor's degree in Art Direction at Université du Québec à Montréal, Isabelle Laflamme has worked with some of the top advertising agencies in Quebec for both local and multinational companies. Over the years, she has developed a growing interest for photography, especially experimenting with forms and colours while walking the streets of her beloved hometown of Montréal. After wonderful trips to Italy and California, travel photography has become her new passion.



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# OUR OPINION...

## This Issue's Topic: Our Intimate Fears



**Steven:** When it comes to relationships, I'd say guys definitely scare easier than girls. There's the old U-Haul joke about lesbians and the second date. We've all heard it so many times it's surpassed urban legend and taken on the gravitas of a scientific study led by Kinsey himself. As for gay men, that's a different story. I've become terrified of using the word "date." If I'm meeting a guy for dinner, my friends have advised me in no uncertain terms to call it "hanging out," or for sure I'll scare him off. I remember one guy saying to me, "Oh, we were never dating," and yet we were talking everyday, seeing each other a couple of times a

week, and I'd meet him for sex on his lunch break. I'm not saying we were boyfriends, but how is that not dating? Scary.

**Deb:** I suppose my definition of 'relationships' may be a wide one. Relationships can be dating openly, dating exclusively, hanging out, booty calls etc. In my experience, our GLBT community members can and do become involved in most of these dynamics. However, do lezzies differ from the gays when it comes to relationships, I would have to say in most cases, yes. Lesbians on a whole (see what I did there?) tend to gravitate towards emotional and physical connections when it comes to relating and my male friends tend to have one-offs and casual sex much more frequently and openly. When I think about how many casual relationships I've had and how many 'serious relationships' I've had, one of those certainly outnumbers the other...

**Steven:** I like that you bring up a wide variety of relationships. For myself, I know there are times when I've had these gripping terrors over being committed to a guy, and that has at times sent me running, BUT when I think about the variety of relationships in my life, friends, families, and at times fuck buddies, I realize that I already have a lot of commitments, so what am I so afraid of? That thought calms me down. But not too long ago I experienced the flip side, where I found myself liking a guy a lot and feeling like an overwrought teenage girl all of a sudden. Now that's scary. Where's Jamie Lee Curtis when I need her?



# and we have one!

by Deb Pearce and Steven Bereznai

**Deb:** Gripping terrors over commitment! Well Steven, you've said a mouthful there. I can't say that I can identify with that particular feeling when it comes to relationships. It would be an understatement to say that in the past I've had anxiety when it comes to commitment, but when there's been no anxiety, that's when I know that I'm having feelings for someone beyond physical ones. The dance all of us do when we realize we're attracted to someone is always pretty exciting and it's where we choose to go with those feelings that lead to thoughts beyond the bedroom.



**Steven:** Beyond the bedroom? What's that? Just kidding! But there are studies to show that fear (the right kind anyway) can be a great bonding experience, and a way of upping sexual tension. Going to a horror movie or riding a roller coaster are great examples. And I think gay men definitely love this kind of adrenalin when it comes to coupling. Should things start to fizzle, I think it's because things have become too day to day, and an injection of excitement, perhaps in the form of something somewhat scary, can do a lot of good, and push people outside their comfort zones. The gay men who I see in successful long-term relationships seem to be masters of this.

**Deb:** Well now I want to go to a haunted house or Canada's Wonderland to get a little frightened and then turned on! As someone who's in an over 4-year relationship I must say that keeping things fresh and exciting is the key to keeping my attention. I have been in long term relationships, short term relationship, casual connections and I've even had a one night stand with a stranger in Hamilton (don't judge) and I must say that I enjoy all of those relationship dynamics and I'm not scared of connecting with anyone as long as I don't find them peering in to my living room or bedroom window. That kind of overly enthusiastic connection is always a turn-off...for me.

*Deb Pearce is a dynamic on air host at Proud FM 103.9 in the morning 6-10. She is also fabulously opinionated.*

*Steven Bereznai is the author of the super hero novel Queeroes, and the dating Bible Gay and Single...Forever?. His anthology contributions include Second Person Queer, I Like It Like That, and Best Gay Love Stories 2010. He can be reached online through his website [www.stevenbereznai.com](http://www.stevenbereznai.com).*



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# HOT

# ARTIST

by Scott MacDonald



## Marta McKenzie

Commercial Illustrator Marta McKenzie loves the people of Toronto, but not the well groomed ones you see shopping along Bloor Street. She likes the “ugly” ones. She likes people who are worn down and gnarled like an old tree that has weathered too many storms. She takes long walks through the city every day hunting for characters, which she says are in no short supply, providing a horde of inspiration for her illustrations, the uglier the better.

“They’re not necessarily ugly,” says McKenzie, “just not beautiful. I like wrinkles and folds. I find things like that reflect internal complexities and I find those very fascinating. What goes on in the mind?”

A Toronto native herself McKenzie has been drawing most of her life. It’s her obsession. She approaches her work with a compulsiveness that, in her own words, “makes Woody Allen look chill.” It’s hard for her to explain why she draws, “I don’t know if I actually get anything out of it. I

think that sometimes it [the work] controls me. It’s there, images in my mind, and I have to get it out on the paper and it’s done. It’s more like a release. It’s more like, an assault than nurture.”

Her characters are freakishly fascinating creatures with a morbid sense of humour. Her style is distinct, but it has a certain familiarity about it. Each character is hand drawn with pen and ink, giving them an individuality not found with most computer generated illustrations today. “It’s definitely very personnel,” says McKenzie, “I have a very complex relationship with my drawings. I think on some level I’m tapping into something. Some sort of—I don’t want this to sound hippie—interconnectedness, some sort of energy.”

McKenzie has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University, where she studied lithography, etching and screen-printing, but it is her family that she credits for nurturing her talent. “Both of my parents are musicians and they always encouraged any sort of creative play. So I started drawing and building things and doing stuff like that at a very early age. In fact my Opa, my Dutch grandfather, used to tear up newspapers and





throw them into the baby crib and let us play with them. We'd be all covered in newsprint, but these were our toys, newsprint, macaroni, and stuff like that. It was a lot of fun. That's how they spoiled us, in a way, you know, allowing us unlimited creative freedom."

Beyond her family McKenzie sites many sources of inspiration from *Mad Magazine* to Robert Crumb and Ren and Stimpy. "There was this old comic book called *Ralph Snart*," says McKenzie, "that was a major influence when I was a child." Their influence is evident in her work. She has that same sort of playfulness, her characters border on the grotesque, but always have a healthy dose of humour. One might say that her work is dark, even ghoulish. "I think my characters have a certain... they're unsettled. There is a certain marginalized look there."



and aspects like that. I tend to not want to use it for the bulk of my work. I like doing everything in a very tactile way, brain, pen and paper. What I studied at school, printmaking, these are ancient techniques."

In the future McKenzie plans to put her work in galleries, focusing on printmaking and large-scale illustrations, but provides no details as to what she might be up to until then. For now she is content to walk the streets and neighbourhoods of Toronto, peering down alleys and skulking through crowds, in search of her next great character, her next great project.

---

*Scott MacDonald has an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design from George Brown College and has studied acting with The Studio on The Drive in Vancouver and is presently studying with Second City Toronto. This is his first foray into professional writing and hopefully not his last.*

**ILLUSTRATIONS** by *Marta McKenzie*

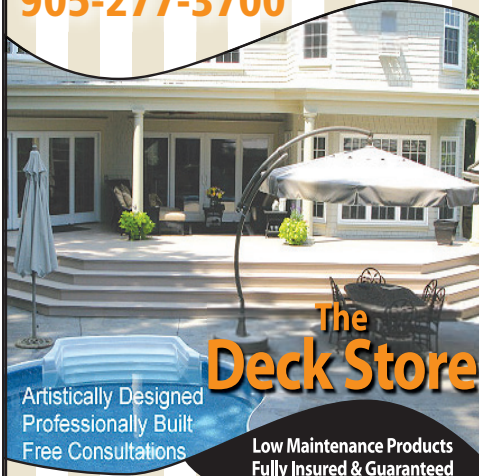


She pinpoints the title of an etching from Spanish Painter and print maker Goya—"The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters"—as a major influence on her work. "Definitely many of my characters are unsettled and agitated. There is definitely a lot of rage, and there's combativeness, and when those emotions are expressed, reason can be asleep. A lot of the characters share a sense of anticipation. Some people have looked at my work and say they feel very uncomfortable looking at it, but that's because I don't draw little kitties and dogs."

In this new digital age, where it seems every one is headed the way of the computer, McKenzie believes that it is her hand drawn illustrations that allow her to stand out among her peers. "I'm still not working within my own comfort zone." She says. "I still push boundaries even though I'm not using the latest technology. I do use it [the computer] for very small things, finishing touches,



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# URBAN SPACES

by Manny Machado

## Goth Style

Most of us aren't lucky enough to live in a Gothic rich structure, so instead we can draw inspiration for our homes from the thousands of references and resources available, and with a little tinkering, can turn just about any big box or in stock item into something magical and medieval.

Goth, or Gothic Revival as it's formally known, stems from a rich history of dramatic architecture that dates as far back as the 12th Century. A common misconception about the style is that it is dark and moody when in fact it is light, bright and inspired by nature. Gothic architecture was the turning point in the middle ages, when innovation allowed people to start letting light into their homes and public buildings, commonly with stained glass. Textiles and colors of the period evoked warmth and coziness amidst mainly stone structures crafted by talented artisans and masons; their structural supports dominated the architectural features, like peaked arches, along with stone and mortar construction ensuring these buildings would last, and some still do.

Simplicity is key when introducing a style into your home that is laden with drama—don't throw everything into the mix. Remember, a well-designed space must have a focal point: all other elements in the room are there to support and interact with the main feature. Start small, like with a foyer or entryway, it welcomes and bids you goodbye every time you walk through your door, so why not make it as memorable as possible. Branch the style out to the rest of your space as your comfort levels increase.

A good foyer consists of a "landing pad," any surface/ledge or table for you to leave items like keys, wallets and mail, storage for shoes and jackets, as well as a mirror for final adjustments as you walk out. Create your own mini shelves with plaster sconces, found in most craft or art supply stores. The decorative items don't have to match (it's better if they don't) just keep to the same



color, preferably black. Use a wall color that has major impact, like reds, golds and purples, all commonly found in Goth décor, but your favorite saturated color can also work. Wallpaper is another easy method of adding depth and texture to your walls. Look for printed motifs such as fleur de lys, trellis designs, roses, lions, dragons and stylized crosses, which all evoke the mood of the style. A faux finish textured paper also works quite nicely.

Mixing styles is a common trend in most urban homes, and with a little editing and discretion, two contrasting style periods like modern and gothic will pleasantly play off one

another. In the living room I would suggest staying modern and sophisticated with your large upholstered pieces, like sofas and sectionals in solid neutral colors. (Designer's tip: sticking to neutrals when buying your investment pieces, will ensure you can switch your décor without having to refinish or replace them).

One of the easiest ways to incorporate Goth into your home is through wrought iron accessories and light fixtures. Chandeliers, candle sticks and torch lamps are just a few of the lighting options available through most retailers. Reasonably priced wrought iron fixtures are available in most big box hardware stores. Estate and garage sales are also great resources for inexpensive Gothic furnishings.

Buy pieces for their shape, not for their finish, color or even fabric. The money you save at the garage sale can go towards the coat of paint or rich textiles for your new found treasure. Tapestries or traditional style rugs are not only visually reflective of the theme, but they add a rich quality to the space as well. Choose traditional, geometric, floral or heraldic patterns, in lovely rich colors. A wall-hung tapestry makes a great visual statement or focal point in a living room.

Architectural features such as wooden ceiling beams, and fireplaces either genuine or reproduction also make great focal points for your Gothic style room—a lovely, roaring open fire will give the perfect warming and old-fashioned look to your room. Curtains should be quite simple yet nice and full, made from quality, soft, heavy-weight fabrics, and full length. Use luxury velvets, brocades, damasks and tapestry fabrics, and for extra style add tie-backs with tassels and corded trim in an accent color like gold.



If you do decide to use the style in a smaller room, be aware it will darken the room, thus making it feel smaller but still very dramatic. If you like, you can lighten the look by using white, cream, or paler colors on the walls, and only add the deep, rich colors as accents. You can also lighten your surroundings by using stained glass. Vintage and antique shops are a sure bet when scouting for unique pieces, or have something custom designed through a glass shop. Clever uses of framed objects and art is an inexpensive way to add personality, like "scrying" mirrors, a frame with glass in it and the back of the glass sprayed black,

Candlesticks are key for a successful Gothic interior design look, as are decorative boxes, metal plates, bowls and drinking-ware, like mugs and pitchers. Fill your glassware with dried flowers, marbles or beads.







Canopy beds and four-poster beds are excellent choices to evoke the feel of the medieval ages; choose rich fabrics and textiles to layer the bedding for more luxury.

A well thought out design scheme includes elements that are not only decorative but also functional, such as oil lamps, indicative of the style and a great light source—try filling them with red or purple oil for an extra bit of edge. Storage both small and large can be an added feature to the space, by way of jewelry boxes, trunks or any type of container with an ethnic flair.

Take some time to discover what it is about the style that attracts you. A little knowledge on the subject will no doubt help your enthusiasm when it comes time for decorating, as well as guide you in locating pieces that work in your space. Current trends in popular culture have brought the Gothic style to the forefront, so finding decorative items to fit the design requirements is no big chore. Just remember that less is more.



Manny Machado, the Design Chair behind the fantastic revamping of Fashion Cares 2008, finds that being an Urban Space Stylist affords him the opportunity to work on many interiors both locally and abroad. Transforming some of the city's smallest areas into home environments through unique perspectives and solutions that relate directly to the homeowners lifestyle, is his passion. Feel free to write to him at [urbanspaces@pinkplaymags.com](mailto:urbanspaces@pinkplaymags.com) with your own design concerns and questions.

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# Ghosts

By Michael Rowe

I saw you standing just inside the wrought-iron fence around the graveyard at the corner of Winchester and Sumach this evening when I was out with the dogs, right around sundown.

I waved, but you didn't wave back.

Two fourteen-year-old boys went right by you on skateboards through a cloud of dead autumn leaves. I didn't see their faces under their helmets and untidy dark hair as they flew past through the lengthening shadows. Remember in the 70s when we were kids and no one ever wore a helmet for anything? We used to make retard jokes about kids whose parents made them wear helmets, even for skating. Isn't it odd how something that sounds so cruel today seemed so funny back then? I never wore a helmet for hockey. You never played hockey. Remember that time I teased you about how you should be wearing white skates with black heels and done figure skating with the girls? Dad always told me to shut up when I teased you. Once he even slapped the back of my head, hard. I pretended that it didn't hurt, but it did. I hated you when he did that.

But he was right. It was a mean thing to say. You couldn't help the way you were, but I could probably have helped being an asshole about it.

You didn't even look at the boys on the skateboards. I figured they reminded you of the guys we grew up with in Auburn—guys like I was: guys who played hockey, who chased girls, who weren't afraid to get into fights.

I wonder if they even saw you? I wonder if

they might have felt a sudden cold as they thundered past the cemetery. What would they have seen if they'd looked up?

But still, I wish you'd waved.

This week, I drove west on the 401 to Auburn, like I always do at the end of October, to see Dad. We don't talk much anymore, but he likes it when I check in. Since Mum died, he doesn't do a lot around the house. There's a widow lady from church, Mrs. Normoyle, who has a thing for him. She's always bringing him food and tidying up. He tells me she's annoying, but I think he's a lot happier she's there than he likes to let on. It's lonely up in that big house on the Milton Escarpment with nothing but memories, especially in October.

It's the month of ghosts, especially family ghosts.

The rooms seem darker now that Mum is gone. Maybe Dad turns the lights on less, or maybe he keeps the blinds drawn more than he used to. Dad always says Mum took the light with her when she died, after forty years together. Even though he didn't mean it literally, the other day I remembered that another word for ghost is "shade," which made me smile. It also made me switch on a couple of lamps in the living room next to Dad's chair.

In the lamplight, pictures are everywhere. On the walls. On the tables. Mum and Dad's wedding. Mum holding me in her arms when they brought me home from the hospital. Me, at five, reaching up to touch you when they brought you home from the hospital. Birthdays. Disneyland. Hockey pictures—me, not you. You, at your modern dance class recital. You, gently holding Maven when she was a puppy. Maven licks your face with her pink tongue. The colours have faded, but Maven still looks like a small bundle of soft black mink. Your smile is beautiful in that picture. You're cradling





her in your arms like she was your baby.

"I know," Dad says. I didn't hear him come up behind me. He puts his hand on my shoulder. "Never a day goes by. A handsome boy." His voice sounds unbearably old all of a sudden. "It was easier when your mother was alive. It's against nature. It should have been she and I. You two boys should have outlived us both."

"I'm still here, Dad."

"I know," he says. "I know you are. I wish you had..." His voice trails off. The bitterness has mellowed over the years like old brass. It's still there, but it gleams dully.

"Dad, stop it. Not now. It's not fair. Not after all this time."

"I'm sorry, Robert. I didn't mean it that way."

When I look at him, there are tears in his eyes. Old-man tears. I touch his shoulder. I want to hug him, but I know he'd rather not have the human contact right now. So I squeeze his shoulder, the way real men do. Fucking real men. Jesus.

"Yes you did, Dad," I whisper. "You did mean it that way. But it's OK. I agree with you. I wish I'd been there that night with Scotty too."

Brothers. Loaded term. Born of the same parents, raised in the same house. One normal, one—well, different. We knew you were different, but we never talked about it as such. Mom called you "sensitive." When you were little, you'd follow me around everywhere. You drove me crazy with your love. Later, you embarrassed me with your mincing and prancing. My friends laughed at you. I joined in their laughter. My girlfriend, the incredibly hot born-again Christian to whom I lost my virginity, asked me if you were an actual fag, or if you just acted like one.

Dad was angry with me when you came home with your latest black eye.

"Why can't you look after him? He's your brother. He's the only brother you'll ever have. You're stronger than him. You need to protect him."

I said I'd rather have no brother at all than an embarrassing queer one.

Dad smacked me in the back of the head. "Be a man, Robert. It's time for you to grow up and act like a man."

I told him that I hated him, and I hated you more. I stormed out of the living room. When I saw you crying in the doorway to the kitchen, I passed you without a word. You held out your hand. You touched my elbow as I went by.

"Robbie, I'm sorry. I—"

"Fuck you, Scott. I hate you. I wish you were dead."

Three years later, when I was home from university, you told us you were moving to Alberta with some guy you were "in love with." Mom cried. Dad went to his workshop and locked the door. I told Mom and Dad that I was done pretending.

I drove back to school. In my dorm, I threw the only framed family photo across the room. It shattered against the wall, spraying shards of broken glass across the floor.

Dad called me from the hospital in Calgary. My girlfriend woke me up and passed me the phone. It was 3:00 a.m. At first, I didn't recognize his voice at all. It was the voice of a man nailed to a cross.

"Your brother's been hurt," he said. "We're in

Calgary. Mum and I. Can you come right away? We're at the hospital."

"Dad? What happened to Scott?"

"They hurt him," he said. "They beat him up. He's in intensive care."

"Who?" I asked stupidly. "Who hurt him?"

"Who else? The same ones that always hurt him." Dad was crying now. "Damn them." He was silent for a few moments, trying to compose himself. "Your brother needs his family with him now. You have to come."

"Dad—"

"You come now, Robert. I mean it. It's time for you to be his brother again. It's past time."

Then he told me what they'd done to you in that alleyway outside the bar.

Three hours later on the plane to Calgary, I dreamed horrible, unformed, crimson-tinted dreams. I heard the terrible crunch of bones cracking beneath the weight of fists and boots. I saw the puddles of congealing blood. I must have cried out because the flight attendant asked me if I was all right. I told her I was. She handed me a napkin. I reached for it, suddenly embarrassed to have allowed this woman see me cry, even in my sleep.

I landed in Calgary on the bluest October morning. The houses across the street from the hospital had carved pumpkins by the front door. Of course, I thought. It's Halloween morning.

"We did everything we could," the doctor had said, holding a clipboard under the fluorescent light. "I'm so sorry." Perhaps his clinical choice of words had been intended to be anesthetic: "blunt force trauma;" "massive head injuries;" "persistent vegetative." As the machine measured out your remaining heartbeats in flattening spikes of green light, I touched your broken fingers and promised myself—and you—that I would be strong for Mum and Dad.

When it was over, we stepped out of the hospital into the sunlight. Across the street from the hospital, two little boys displaying the effortless familiarity of brothers raced along the sidewalk to school, laughing. One was draped in a bed sheet, a ghost. His brother wore a pirate costume. The older of the two, the pirate, reached out and took his younger brother's hand, pulling him joyously along the sidewalk towards school.

It had taken me exactly seventeen minutes to break my promise not to cry.

— • —

These days, I can quantify my remaining decades. I can measure them out in life-events. I can gauge my value as a man by who I've loved, who has loved me, and by the ones I didn't love nearly enough. My marriage didn't last, of course. No one was surprised.







But our son, Scott—named after you—is the one thing we did right. He's away at Western this fall. He's your age. The age you were when...well, when whatever.

I believe in ghosts. And I see you everywhere.

The first time was just before I turned on the soft nursery light, the night we brought Scott home. You were standing over his crib, a familiar shape in the dimness.

Scotty, I whispered. Then I turned on the light.

The room was empty except for my sleeping son. I felt no fear, just the gentle spectral aspect of something peaceful and benevolent. But you were there. I know what I saw.

I've seen you many other times over the years, sometimes more clearly than others. I've seen you in my son's handsome, sensitive face, as he's grown. I've felt your spirit in his sweetness, his trusting nature. I've heard your voice beneath his.

I feel your spirit moving in me when I react with patience and kindness to the fact that he's not like me, and in fact couldn't be more like you in many, many ways.

And in loving that in him, in knowing that he might someday tell Susan and I what you told Mum and Dad that terrible afternoon thirty years ago, I'm granted some sort of absolution, a redemption I don't deserve, in knowing I'll know how to love him at the moment he'll need my love the most.

In my dreams I see you rising out of that bloody alleyway on a fountain of radiance like some sort of immortal angel full of fire, full of power, full of light.

But other times, like tonight, by the graveyard in late October when the daylight is short and the night chill settles in early, I see you very, very clearly. I wave. And I wish you'd wave back. Just once.

---

*Michael Rowe is the Lambda Literary Award-winning creator/editor of the Queer Fear anthology series (Arsenal Pulp Press) and co-author of the gay horror novella collection Triptych of Terror (Alyson Books). His most recent book, Other Men's Sons (Cormorant Books) was nominated for two Lambda Literary Awards and won the 2008 Randy Shilts Award for Non-fiction. He lives in Toronto.*

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By Ricky Boudreau

**Hi everyone!** I can't believe it's that time of year again—where does the time go? Can somebody please slow the ride down? The summer weather was meh, but with enough sun to make it enjoyable. I've got some fun autumn things lined up for you in this issue and with the witching hour upon us as well, twist your imaginations and create some festive fun this spooky season.

Fall always brings warm, fuzzy feelings, or maybe that's just the alcohol and the smells of baked goods and warm dinners, stimulating the appetite. Who doesn't love to eat during this season of Thanksgiving? So make sure you get out there and experience the delicious meals and comforting drink our city is offering this season along with great events to experience. So much to see and do again, so stay warm, healthy and happy and I wish you and yours, an outstanding fall!

## HIDDEN SECRETS

### **P.S. Kensington**

Ongoing to October 25th  
Kensington Market

#### **Free**

P.S. Kensington is for pedestrians only. It's on the last Sunday of every month and features plenty of artists, musicians and performers. Kensington Market is south of College, west of Spadina, north of Dundas and east of Bellevue. Check it out, because there's lots of great food and shopping.

**TIP:** *Wear comfy shoes.*

### **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**

Ongoing to October 24th  
Young Centre For The Performing Arts  
416.866.8666  
[www.youngcentre.ca](http://www.youngcentre.ca)

**\$28 - \$68**

Due to the scandalous content, this show dominated the Tony Awards in 1963. Both serious and hilarious this piece

strips heterosexual marriage of all its facades. George and Martha invite another couple over for drinks and end up displaying their dysfunctional relationship. Controversial in nature for the time, yet outstanding.

**TIP:** *Dress up and treat yourself to a night out.*

### **Cirque du Soleil: OVO**

Ongoing to November 8  
Portlands - intersection of Commissioners Street and Cherry Street.

1.800.450.1480

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

**\$49 - \$250**

Cirque du Soleil shows, are always amazing. If you've never been to one, I highly recommend it. To think this incredible enigma started on the streets of Montreal! Ovo, Portuguese for egg, centres around a love story in the insect world. Sounds strange, but you can bet you will be dazzled by the lights, set, costumes and makeup. The performers will defy gravity and the show will be burned into your memory. A definite must for those who have never been.

**TIP:** *Get your tickets ASAP!*



## ARTS AND CULTURE

### Capital One Just For Laughs Comedy Tour 2009

October 29, 7pm  
Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St.  
[www.masseyhall.com](http://www.masseyhall.com) or  
[www.hahaha.com/comedytour](http://www.hahaha.com/comedytour)

**\$35.50 - \$59.50**

Just for Laughs presents their comedy tour with some of the hottest names in comedy. A night full of fun and laughter? Count me in!

**TIP:** *A great first date.*

### Aretha Franklin

November 6, 8pm  
Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St  
[www.masseyhall.com](http://www.masseyhall.com)

**\$79.50 - \$169.50**

The undisputed "Queen of Soul," graces our city with her presence and a performance. A definite must see, this is a show you will be chatting with friends about for a long, long time.

**TIP:** *Seeing her live will be unforgettable.*



### King Tut Returns

November to April  
AGO, 317 Dundas Street West  
416 979 6648  
[www.ago.net](http://www.ago.net)

Tutankhamun, the world's most infamous boy king, arrives in Toronto at the gorgeous new AGO for his only Canadian appearance. The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs exhibit features 130 pieces from King Tut's tomb, and other ancient sites, spanning 2000 years of history. Some of the pieces are newer discoveries that have not been seen in North America before, including a ten-foot statue of the ancient King himself.

**TIP:** *Teach yourself hieroglyphics so you can unravel centuries old news and gossip.*

### Gordon Lightfoot

November 18th to 21st, 8pm  
Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St.  
[www.masseyhall.com](http://www.masseyhall.com)

**\$45.00 - \$75.00**

Bob Dylan calls Gordon Lightfoot one of his favourite songwriters—a legacy that is still being written. In a career spanning nearly 40 years, the Canadian folk legend has recorded over 200 songs, written many more, and influenced the sound of so many highly successful artists.

**TIP:** *Brush up on your songs.*

## FESTIVALS

### Ten Thousand Villages Christmas Festival

November: Fri 6pm-10pm; Sat 10am-6pm; Sun 12pm-5pm

Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay West  
416.973.4679

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

#### FREE

130 artisan groups from more than 35 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, take part in a fantastic Christmas festival. You can stock up on Christmas gifts, home accessories, carpets, coffee and food, while drinking up the sights and sounds of a Christmas market.

**TIP:** *Get your holiday shopping done early.*

### The Gourmet Food and Wine Expo

November 19 to 22

Thu 6pm-10pm VIP Preview; Fri 2pm-10pm;  
Sat 12pm-10pm; Sun 12pm-6pm

Metro Toronto Convention Centre

905-634-8003 ext. 350

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

**Thu VIP Preview \$35; Fri - Sun General Admission \$15**

NOTE: Must be 19+ to attend, no infants or children permitted

This year's theme country is Portugal, home to the gorgeous Azores Islands. Voyage through the nation's distinct wine

and food as the expo celebrates its 15th year. Over 35,000 guests come to enjoy the gourmet tasting offered via the over 1,200 fine wines, spirits and beers from all around the world. Taster's glass provided.

**TIP:** *Leave the car at home, so you can really indulge.*

### 5th Annual Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival

November 10th to 15th

Ticket and venue info are available on the website

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

What could possibly be healthier than an evening filled with laughter? Okay, well I could think of a few others, but really, laughter is the best medicine, right?

**TIP:** *You may want to protect yourself with a diaper!*





## HALLOWEEN

### Screamers

October 16th to 31st  
Exhibition Place-Scream Elizabeth Building  
[www.screamers.ca](http://www.screamers.ca)

**\$28.50**

This screamingly delightful, bone chilling experience is super fun and a must do this Halloween. With 6 fear-filled attractions, bring a whole group of friends and make it a night out with cocktails following!

**TIP: The web site has a printable coupon for \$5 off the admission, making it a mere \$23.50!**

### Halloweek

October 24th to 31st  
Church Street

**Free**

The Gaybourhood's freaky, fun-filled, costumed street party. Last year's event was quite a hit for all involved. There was a Drag Swap, Block Party, jack-o-lantern competition and lots, lots more. Don't forget about all the eye candy walking around! A feast for all your senses, so make sure your costume is a good one, because it will be seen by hundreds of people.

**TIP: You might wanna keep some "protection" on you, cause you never know...**

### Halloween Haunt

October 2nd to November 1st, Fri, Sat and Sun nights, 7pm to Midnight  
Canada's Wonderland, Highway 400 and Rutherford Rd.

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

This amusement park will again, become the largest haunted attraction in Canada. There are menacing mazes, horrifying creatures and terrifying rides.

**TIP: You might want to bring a clean pair of undies.**



## OPERA & ORCHESTRA

### Madama Butterfly

Ongoing to November 3rd  
Four Season Centre for the Performing Arts  
[www.coc.ca](http://www.coc.ca)

**\$68 and up**

This opera is one of the most popular of all time and is set to an incredible score by Giacomo Puccini. Sung in Italian with English subtitles, this performance will move you.

**TIP: Bring a box of Kleenex for those teary moments.**

### The Sleeping Beauty

November 13th to 22nd  
Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts  
416.363.8231  
[www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca)

Be amazed as this fairytale is brought to life by the National Ballet of Canada. Music by Tchaikovsky and restaged by Karen Kain, the ballet's Artistic Director. Rudolf Nureyev created his own version of this ballet in 1966 and set the work on the NBOC in 1972. This led to one of the company's most significant historical milestones.

**TIP: Opera glasses are a must, because we all know about dancers' butts...**

Ricky Boudreau blossomed as a true social butterfly while traveling the world as a professional figure skater for 15 years. He loves the gift of the gab and discovering great parties in the city. With a love for culture, great food and beauty, Ricky spends his time very creatively as a professional makeup artist for MAC Pro cosmetics. He has helped artists like Deborah Cox and Dame Shirley Bassey look gorgeous. Heard of a new hot spot? Email him as [inthecity@pinkplaymags.com](mailto:inthecity@pinkplaymags.com)

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# From the Heart

By Judith Crane

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself"  
— so said Franklin Delano Roosevelt during his 1933 inauguration speech. Who among us hasn't quoted a garbled version of this without ever stopping to ponder what it means? What does it mean? I don't know about you, but I can't imagine waking up at 3am in a cold sweat because I'm afraid of being afraid.

Yet American voters chose to let FDR hold their hands through the dark days of the Depression and WWII, when absolutely everything in the world seemed to be open to doubt and question. Financial collapse, violence on a global scale and an explosion of technology were changing everything. Certainty was gone: chaos loomed. Fear became a way of life.

So is it different now? Recent financial upheaval has been relatively greater than that of 1929 but no one is throwing themselves out of office windows. War daily erupts in multiple locations around the globe and though we may be interested, passionate or even partisan, we're not in a state of panic. Technology rules

our lives, and we are no longer intimidated, but have in fact embraced it. So what do we fear now?

Last week I saw a t-shirt that said "**WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR**

**ITSELF.....**and spiders". According to several on-line sources, what we in the western world fear most now is spiders—followed closely by what used to be called public speaking but now falls under the heading of social phobia. I am at least as neurotic as the next person, so please don't think I'm trying to point fingers here, but I am deeply ashamed of the fact that so many of us list social anxiety and a bug as



our top fears. Our urban streets are packed with people for whom fear of spiders or of being judged are niceties they can't afford. Who has time to worry about these things?

Fear plays an important role in our lives. There are still a lot of very real dangers surrounding us and their consequences are not just physical. Fear is universal and, depending on where you live, your fight or flight responses get refined to instincts—your fear of car accidents determines your driving style, or your fear of land mines determines how you walk. A healthy fear stops us from getting hurt—we know there's a danger so we act with caution. Unhealthy fear stops us altogether. We believe there might be danger so we refuse to act at all. Our fears often don't even stem from direct experience. What we can't predict or control, we deem dangerous. Unfortunately the list of things that are completely out of our hands is growing by the minute.

The list of modern fears is seemingly endless, and every single one of them has a "scientific" name. In effect we've medicalised them and have thereby turned ourselves into helpless victims who suffer from our fears. We set boundaries beyond which we refuse to live our lives, and blame our fears for holding us back.

What are you afraid of? Are your fears based on the economy, losing your job and income; are you afraid of world wars or personal violence? Maybe your one and only fear is of spiders, but did you ever stop to ask yourself why? Many of the things we fear are a direct response to trauma and trauma is everywhere. Every day the world thrusts upon us horrors of a scale and scope never previously

imaginable. Conquering our fears has come to resemble battling the Hydra. Not only are our fears multiplying exponentially, but proliferation of media has made them inescapable. Add to that, we are endlessly discovering new ways to make the old fears go away and then discovering that the cures are worse than the disease. Is it any wonder then that we prefer our smaller, personal fears?

So, more than three-quarters of a century later, FDR is still right. It's not the spiders or the public speaking that harms us. It's not the heights, the dark or the enclosed spaces that cripple us. The only thing that stops us is our fear. Can we change that? Absolutely! How do we do it? We seek counselling, therapy, medication, meditation—but most importantly, we take the time to look at our fears, to know them, not just name them. We need to stop avoiding the dark scary places in our lives and start shining a light on them. I'm betting we discover that the monster under the bed is us.

---

*This is Judith's last time writing From the Heart as she pursues other avenues of creativity. Judith wanted to bid you all farewell:*

*I've written research papers, erotic horoscopes and everything in between, but this has been my first experience of writing from the heart. I knew that this column would challenge me. Good writers are honest writers—don't ever let anyone tell you that writing is safe or easy. You actually have to write from the heart. This is work I'm proud of and I want to thank you for reading.*





# Fall Horoscopes

## Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

It seems you've gotten your head stuck in a giant fish bowl. You can see everyone and everyone can see you, you just can't communicate. This is bad—you have things to say. Now might be a good time to figure out how your head got stuck in the first place

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## Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

A stroke of good luck lands you a windfall and sets the tone for several weeks to come. It's not like you worked hard for this so play the high roller if you must and enjoy every moment. Do your best not to brag and remember to share.

---

## Gemini: May 21 - Jun 20

You've been working hard and you're down to the wire on this project so watch your p's and q's for the next little while. Considering what you define as normal, let me explain—it means dotting the i's and crossing the t's not vice versa.

---

## Cancer: Jun 21 - Jul 22

Put a lot of energy into starting a relationship right now and you will find yourself with a cozy partner for the winter. It won't be easy; you'll really have to work at it. Keep in mind that it's not legal to shoot someone and drag them home.

---

## Leo: Jul 23 - Aug 22

Summer is your season so it's difficult for you to see it end. You seem to be getting a sort of spiritual spa package to compensate and to sooth you as winter approaches. Enjoy the experience, but don't ask for services that aren't offered.

---

## Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

You've still got Saturn hanging around performing an audit of your life. He'll question everything you value, all of your beliefs and test most of your relationships. Previous attention to detail pays off—if the paper work is in order this will be a breeze.

---

## Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

You think you're getting away with it' but when they round up the usual suspects a finger will point directly at you so you had better have all of your ducks in a row before the eggs hatch. Don't make me use more clichés, just clean up your act now.

---

## Scorpio: Oct 23 - Nov 21

You're not winning any beauty pageants but you've been too busy to comb your hair. Don't worry, you're a shoe-in for Miss Congeniality and when it comes to the talent portion I'm betting they add a new category just for you to win.

---

## Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 21

I know you make lists. Oh don't worry, the rest of the world still thinks you're all devil-may-care, but I know better. Hey you can't plan for everything and in fact what's about to happen, you could never have predicted. Relax and let it happen.

---

## Capricorn: Dec 24 - Jan 19

Have you lost weight? Oh, I know you coloured your hair. No? Well whatever it is you look years younger; what's your secret? Seriously darling, I can't believe the change. One might almost guess that you had stopped beating yourself up.

---

## Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

Okay so you're about mid-way through shooting Extreme Makeover: Life Edition, and they're doing way more than slapping on a coat of paint and cutting your hair. How are you enjoying the process? Chin up—I promise it will all be worth it.

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## Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

It's possible that you feel as though you're lip reading by strobe light. It's very likely that you're annoyed at this and have a feeling that it's everyone else's fault. There are things no one will tell you and there are things you just won't hear.

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# lookingback

By Donnarama

My grandparents' house up in North York terrified me. Growing up with an Italian family is creepy enough, but the stories they spun were unbelievably frightening. There was supposed to be a witch named Baba Yaga who swooped down and gobbled up naughty kids who played outside after dark. However, the tale about a boogey man that stalked the neighborhood and lived behind the pipes and furnaces in basements, is the one that spooked me the most.

The name of this boogeyman was "Omo," which in Italian means "man." Looking back now, I know they were just trying to keep us kids away from danger with these stories, but strange things happened then that were either an eerie coincidence or something absolutely sinister.

At the time, my hairy siblings would torment me because I was the youngest and that old house creaked and those jerks knew it. They'd often hide in the basement where Omo the boogeyman would allegedly be and call out "Omo" in a ghostly deep voice. I would fall for it every time, even though I knew that, much like a spook house in Niagra Falls, the thrills were cheap and orchestrated.

One stormy night when we were alone with just my aunt babysitting, our fun and games were suddenly disrupted by a slamming door downstairs. It had come from the basement. I remember the look of alarm on my aunt's face and it intensified our fear that we were suddenly not alone and had a visitor. Like three soon-to-be victims in a bad '80s slasher flick, we slowly crept with a flashlight (why bother turning on the lights?) to where the sound had come from. At

the top of the stairs we could see the basement door was wide open and the looming shadows and darkness were more than enough to have all three of us flee to my aunt's bedroom and bolt the door shut. Boy, did that house creak! As we listened petrified with fear, a slow creaking began down the hall towards us. Was it a burglar? Omo himself? Baba Yaga looking for the salt and pepper? We hid paralyzed under the bed until my grandparents got back and knocked on the bedroom door, wondering why the hell we had locked ourselves away in the corner of their house, under a bed.

Perhaps it was just a draft that blew that door open and the creaks were that of an old house settling in the night, but what we heard was enough to keep us guessing and talking well into out adult years. My grandparents moved years ago from that neighborhood and a lot of time has passed, but when fall comes and the days grow darker and there's a chill in the air I think of that story the most. Sometimes when I'm down in the storage room in my building putting away crazy show props and hideous costumes, I remember the musky scent and damp smell of that old basement. Before I leave, I turn and look back into the darkened room, past the cages of old Christmas trees and bikes and boxes, way back to the furnaces and boilers...and an uneasy feeling comes over me.

*A Canadian drag performer and scene writer for 12 years now, Donnarama has won numerous titles and awards such as the "Coors Light Queen of Halloween," "Miss Smirnoff Twisted" and is the winner of the 8 week PWA fundraiser "Drag Idol." Known for inventive and comedic celebrity impersonations and skits, she has also used her voguing techniques to raise money and awareness for various good causes.*



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