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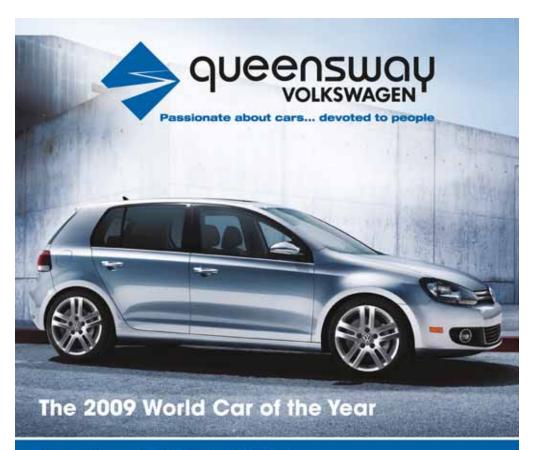
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### From the Publisher

I want to belong to this coveted group called "The Geek."

CNN reported not long ago that "Geek is Now Chic in Pop Culture." The report went on to talk about how the nerd is everywhere these days (hopefully this mag you're holding in your hand will shed a little light on the difference between a geek and a nerd—there is a difference). You can see the geek heavily in movies (Star Trek, Knocked Up, Superbad) and on T.V. (Myth Busters, The Big Bang Theory, Chuck). Of course, the internet is geekdom come. This has grabbed hold and catapulted the brilliant, yet often socially inept, into the realm of—dare it be said—the hip and the cool. CNN started that report with "If the world of entertainment is any indication, the geeks shall inherit the Earth."

Okay, you have to admit, growing up "geek" was not a name you wanted to be called in school. The geek was isolated, with little or no friends, and wrapped up in his or her obsessions. Although, I have been heard saying that one day, I'm going to find my own geek to marry. Hey, I figure anyone who loves something to the point of obsession spells stability in my book.

All kidding aside, I really have a lot of respect for the friends I have who would be called "geek." Let me be clear here though, I actually dislike the label. Maybe it's because of the way it has been forever used as a derogatory name for people I admire. My so-called geek friends are smart, sweet, funny, and more interesting than many people I know. I can even add to that: they are kind of inspiring.

Speaking of my friends, I need to take a quick moment to say thank you to Deb Pearce for being on board to write our regular column "Our Opinion...And We Have One." Deb, I loved having you be part of our humble little mag. I'd also like to say welcome to Maggie Cassella, who will be taking over the writing duties of the column, partnering up with Steven Bereznai.

Let me wrap up by saying, putting this issue together was a blast as well as an educational process. I had no clue that so many guys and gals on my team were mega-ultra-stupendous-supergeeks!

So what does it to take to be a geek? I read the comic books, mind you mainly the popular and the mainstream ones, but I have a vague idea of the other ones. I built lots of models as a kid, does LEGO count for anything in the geek world? And I played lots of Atari...sadly though, that's where my love for games and gaming *stopped*, unless Bejeweled on Facebook counts. If there is such a thing as a pop culture geek, I might be it—I know a little bit about everything.

So I ask you, oh Council of Geek Masters...can I be a geek? Please?

Antoine "One-Eyed" Elhashem





## springplay!

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## From the Editor

I play World of Warcraft. There. I said it. I am now officially out of the closet, again. This time, as a video game loving, comic book reading, cartoon watching, role-playing geek.

I've always preferred elves over dwarves, but I like my super heroes in spandex to have hairy chests. I'd love to be sandwiched between Wolverine and Colossus in a hot three-way. My Sunday morning ritual has me watching *Clone Wars, Spectacular Spiderman* and *Wolverine and the X-men* cartoons as I eat my bowl of cereal and drink my coffee. It's Alliance, baby, *never* the Horde, and rogues all the way, because we love to do it from behind.

Gays and geeks have never been mutually exclusive, but for some reason those of us who fall firmly into both camps have been hesitant to step forward. Coming out gay was hard enough, so many of us kept the second dark secret to ourselves. But no more! Ever since Willow turned gay—wasn't she especially cool when she was evil?-and Neil Patrick Harris went from being dorky Doogie Howser M.D. to an out, gay actor playing the über popular, straight, womanizing Barney Stinson on How I Met Your Mother, being gay AND a geek has suddenly become the coolest thing in the universe. Did you know that Buffy herself has a lesbian tryst in Season 8, which those of us in the know have been reading in its comic book form? And one of the world's leading video game studios, Bioware, located right here in Canada, features a well-scripted, emotionally moving, gay romance for the leading male character in their latest game, Dragon Age: Origins - Awakening. Yay Canada! Geek and ye shall find—we are everywhere now.

So when we here at Pink Play started putting this issue together, one of the first things Antoine asked was: "Geeks are so cool, can I be one?" My immediate response was, "No. Being a geek (or a nerd) is not something you wake up one morning and suddenly decide to be. It's not a choice, you're born that way."

As we continued working on the magazine though, I, a bonafide geek since grade school,

began to realize this social stigma had been appropriated. Now, with a lot of work, the right accessories, certain obscure interests now deemed cool, and the help from geeks who have been befriended, it's possible to become one. But young Padawan, this is still something that takes cultivating and we can spot a fake a light-year away. So tread carefully. Once the underdogs, we are now the rulers of the world—MUAHAHAHAHAHA!

Ahem. Sorry. Evil super villain moment. Gotta watch that Dark Side, it can creep up on you.

So it's at this point I offer a \*Caution\* to all of our 'normal' readers: The views and ideas expressed in this issue of *springplay!* are from the realm of those once oppressed geeks and nerds. You know them, the ones you shunned all throughout high school, and maybe still do. You secretly envy their finesse with all things high tech, but still think them strange. So, if in the coming pages you find yourself feeling confused or left out of the loop, maybe it's time you befriended one of us. You really don't know the adventure you're missing. And maybe, just maybe, we'll teach you the secret handshake that lets you into the clubhouse.

For the rest of you, my geeky brethren, the holodeck has been programmed for your pleasure, so grab your bag of tetrahedrons, retape your glasses if you need to, strap on your monster slayer's kit and beam up, or jack in, 'cuz it's going to be one hell of a fraggin' ride!

Jeff "Beast Master" Harrison



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# Geeklexicon

**Atari:** Founded in 1972 by Nolan Bushnell and Edwin Irrizary, it was a pioneer in arcade games, home video game consoles, and home computers. The company's products, such as *Pong* and the Atari 2600, helped define the computer entertainment industry from the 1970s to the mid 1980s.

**Awsomesauce:** Like the icing on a cake, the sauce on something awesome is the best part.

Basement Boy: The classic stereotypical nerd or geek who lives in the basement of their parents' house, well beyond the age they should. Said boy (or girl) typically engages in too much video game activity or scholastic endevours, including excessive amounts of time engaged in internet browsing, comic book reading, or Sci-fi entertainment in the form of movies or the television.

Bio: Bathroom break.

**ColecoVision:** A second generation home video game console released in August 1982, offering arcade-quality graphics and gaming style. Came with a catalog of twelve launch titles, with an additional 125 titles in total published for the system between 1982 and 1984, one of which was the über popular *Donkey Kong*.

**FPS or fps:** When all in caps it means First Person Shooter, which is a type of video game. All lower-case means frames per second, which is how fast your computer can render the game graphics; the higher the number, the smoother the animation.

**Gamer:** 1. Once upon a time it referred to role-playing nerds that got together for marathon sessions of *Dungeons & Dragons* in their parent's basements (see Basement Boy). Since the dawn of ColecoVision and Atari the gamer came to be known as someone who played a lot of video games. 2. Somebody who finds refuge from the sheer mundanity of everyday life by playing particularly engrossing videogames. They can often be largely misanthropic and typically find your average person uninteresting. Often well-read and erudite.

Gearhead: A person known to enjoy owning the latest gadgets.

**Geek: 1.** Originally referred to the carnival performers whose act consisted of biting the heads off chickens and eating glass; over time it came to be applied to anyone who got paid to do work considered odd or bizarre by mainstream society. **2.** A geek does not have to be smart, is someone who is generally not athletic and typically enjoys video games, comic books, or being on

typically enjoys video games, comic books, or being on the internet; **3.** The people you once picked on in high school and wind up working for as an adult.

Horribad: Badder than bad and worse than horrible.

**ID-10-T:** Looking at what it spells instead of how it's spelled and you get 'idiot.'

**Intexticated:** Driving or walking distracted while texting.

Lag: The delay between the time a user tells their computer to do something and the time it takes the computer processor to respond as directed.

**LAN Parties:** A temporary, sometimes spontaneous, gathering of people with computers, between which they establish a local area network (LAN), primarily for the purpose of playing multiplayer computer games.

Leetspeak or L33t: What you are learning right now.

**Luddite:** One who opposes technology. Interestingly, J. R. R. Tolkien was a luddite and it is believed that one of the underlying themes of *Lord of the Rings* was his opposition to the way technology was changing the world.

**Lurker:** One who reads forum and blog posts but does not post messages.

**Mashup:** A combination of two or more different pieces of media like music—from disparate styles mixed together such that they complement each other.

**Meme:** A popular and viral idea, concept or video, that is adopted quickly and assimilated into pop culture.

MMOG and MMORPG: Massive Multiplayer Online Game; one of the most popular kinds are Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

**Nerd:** 1. One whose IQ exceeds his weight. 2. An "individual" in the broadest sense of the word; a person who does not conform to society's beliefs that all people should follow trends and do what their peers do. 3. Often highly intelligent, but socially rejected because of their obsession with a given subject, usually computers. 4. A four letter word, for someone with a six figure income.

**Nerd-Rage:** Extreme anger, offence, indignation, and other similar irate emotions vented by a nerd or geek, often triggered by a number of things, such as: helplessness in the face of bullying, internet fights, or seeing their favorite film/show/anime/video game degraded or insulted in some way.

Role-Playing Game: Any of a number of table-top pen and paper games (or computer game), where players create characters that inhabit various imaginary worlds from Science Fiction to Sword and Sorcery Fantasy, who are guided through adventures by a Dungeon Master or Storyteller. Often makes use of various odd shaped dice to determine and resolve character actions and abilities.

**Scrub:** a player who's been playing a particular game for a while, but still plays it horribly.

Sexting: Sending sexually explicit text messages.

**Trope:** Originally a literary term to mean a common pattern, theme, or motif in literature in which words are used in a sense different from their literal meaning. Some examples include: metaphor, metonymy, irony, oxymoron, hyperbole, litotes, or antithesis. In modern usage, it's come to often mean a common or overused theme or device: a cliché.

WoW: World of Warcraft—one of today's most popular MMORPGs, with over 12 million subscribers.

**XD:** In the world of smileys it's someone laughing so hard their eyes are closed. Looking sideways the X is the eyes pinched shut and the D is the mouth full of teeth laughing.



Mr. Spock is not gay. But if there's such a thing as a patron saint of gay geeks, it would probably be him. Half passionate human and half logical Vulcan, he will—as his father gravely intones in the latest Star Trek movie—"always be a child of two worlds." Is it not the same to be gay and a geek? What could a gym-toned, martini-sipping fashionista possibly have in common with a chubby comicbook collector whose can of Red Bull is perched too close to his computer keyboard? Quite a lot, actually. We sought out a few of Toronto's best and brightest gay geeks to discuss how, behind these lazy stereotypes, gays and nerds have long been natural allies, protecting each other from a relentlessly conformist "mainstream" while the internet transforms what that word even means.

First, however, a note on labels: "I hate them," says Lance Sibley, an organizer of the annual Polaris sci-fi convention in Toronto and, this October, the queer-centered Gaylaxicon fest in Montréal. "'Nerd' and 'geek' are like 'fag' and 'queer,'" he says. "We'll use them amongst ourselves but hate when outsiders do."

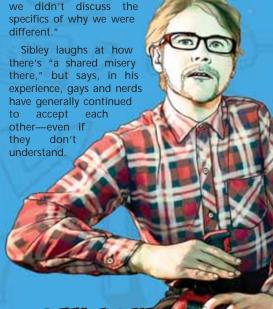
As you'll read here, I tend to cheerfully use "nerd" and "geek" interchangeably, even as IT trainer Cameron MacLeod explains the distinction:

"Being a nerd is bad, being a geek is cool-but it's all fabricated anyway." What about himself? "Oh, I'm a big nerd," he laughs, recalling his highschool days: "I was a theatre geek, I went to Star Trek conventions, I was in the gifted program...but even within it, we had the jocks, the geeks, the cool Asians, the mean girls and all that."

The first and most important link between gays and geeks is forged in high school: if you're lucky enough not to be outed as gay right away, you spend much of your teen years hiding (a lose/lose situation, of course), but being a nerd provides the perfect cover and requires a lot less black emo/goth eyeliner. No one will question your sexuality if you don't appear to have one.

"With my coming out," says MacLeod, "I think it helped, in some ways, to be nerdy. I was already friends with some 'outcasts' and we were able to

commiserate and connect on an emotional level, even if we didn't discuss the specifics of why we were different."



"I'm an oddity in all the communities I belong to because I have lots of interests that don't match up. Some of us are even sports fans!" Sibley says.

"Sports enthusiasts are nerds too!" says Jaime Woo, writer/activist and co-creator of the videogame conference GamerCamp. "Look at all the stats they know and their fantasy pools with all their imaginary match-ups-'What if the Pittsburgh team of '72 was up against the Atlanta team of '85?'" When he says it like that, it does sound pretty geeky. "What are the big battle scenes in Lord of the Rings", he insists, but "just a heightened version of football?" But he's playing with fire here-football is sacred in a way that Dungeons and Dragons is not. In a culture (straight and gay) that prizes a confident masculinity above all else, anyone feminine or introverted or unathletic or otherwise falling short of that ideal gets marginalized-even if the fantasies they love correspond with it.

Don Bassingthwaite, author of *The Doom of Kings* and other fantasy novels, admits that the brawny loincloth-draped heroes of Boris Vallejo's fantasy art were a big influence on him. "I read John Norman's *Gor* books not so much for the descriptions of the slave girls as the bronze-hued barbarians," he laughs. He's amused by the cultural stereotype that male geeks lack a sex drive: "The whole premise of [the sitcom] *The Big Bang* Theory is 'nerds with a sex life: shocking!'"

Sibley agrees. He describes his sci-fi conventions as almost idyllic in their acceptance of various sexualities: "When we were hosting the Queer Continuum parties at Polaris, half the convention

would come to the party, not

batting an eye at the rainbow

flags or the guys making out in the corner....I've never experienced any kind of direct disapproval from the fan community." That's because, Woo insists, "the rise of data and technology has made everyone into a nerd, whether they know it or not." Half the people you know are on Facebook and the biggest social change to come out of the rise of the internet is the realization that, no matter who you are, you are not alone. Whether your obsessions include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or leather wrist restraints (or both!), there are like-minded people out there who can now find each other. It's been nothing



less than revolutionary for gay teens and, as geeks have ruled the internet, their culture has become the popular culture.

Imagine if, after winning his Best Picture Oscar for *Titanic*, James Cameron had then announced that his next movie would be a 3D fantasy epic about blue cat-people who ride dragons and battle giant helicopters. He'd have been looked upon with alarm. But over a decade later, here we are: *Avatar* is the highest-grossing movie ever made and was nominated for an Oscar this year alongside Pixar's computer-animated *Up* and the alien-apartheid drama *District 9*.

It's Revenge of the Nerds, and some gay ones are out-front and proud. There's actor and self-described "magic geek" Neil Patrick Harris, who's channeled his love of cheesy variety specials into becoming the go-to host for awards shows; there's Brothers and Sisters producer Greg Berlanti, in talks to direct a movie based on classic comic book character The Flash; there are Ellen Degeneres and The L Word's Leisha Hailey, who have created a whole new stereotype of the endearingly dorky dyke; and there's Queer as Folk creator Russell T. Davies, who revived the BBC's

old sci-fi staple *Doctor Who* and created its spinoff series *Torchwood*, featuring out gay actor (and self-described sci-fi nerd) John Barrowman as a swashbuckling, "omnisexual" hero. For the next generation of gawky gay teens, there is now no shortage of role models.

This is all delightful enough, agrees Christopher Butcher, manager of Toronto comic-book mecca The Beguiling, but he warns that queer representation can't rely on the whims of pop culture. Butcher may love the medium, but says, "I personally gave up on comics to hit that need for queer culture in my reading. There is," he says, "actually very little of substance. The boy-meets-boy romances in the subset of Japanese manga called *Yaoi* seem very, very gay but it's all written by middle-aged heterosexual female authors."

What about the superhero comics long adored by gay men? Designer Chip Kidd loves Batman, Toronto's own Brad Fraser slips comic book references into his award-winning plays, and even straight writer Peter David recently outed *X-Factor* heroes Rictor and Shatterstar as lovers to mild controversy and much applause. But, Butcher says, "There are a lot of gay creators in comics, especially superhero comics, but they won't do a project that's explicitly gay because that's not where the money is." He notes how even while *Dykes to Watch Out For* cartoonist Alison Bechdel was winning awards for her autobiographical graphic novel *Fun Home*, "her more gay-themed work was all going out of print. It just wasn't making enough money for her publisher."

Bassingthwaite agrees that putting gay characters in fantasy material is always problematic: "Is the gay character just satisfying some kind of hip checklist or does it represent a genuine acceptance?" Sometimes, he admits, all those welcoming 'Gays in Science Fiction' panels at conventions leave him cold: "I tend to avoid those panels now. I don't feel I have anything new to say about it and it's just not an issue now."



Butcher would rather see attention paid to less adolescent gay-themed material like Howard Cruse's brilliant autobiographical civil-rights history Stuck Rubber Baby or Canadian material like Bryan Lee O'Malley's energetic, soulful Scott Pilgrim series and Mariko and Jillian Tamaki's delicate teen lesbian drama Skim: "I see myself in this book in a way that I don't in the coded, behind-the-times superhero stuff."

Amidst the hype about the *X-Factor* outing, Shatterstar creator Rob Liefield vowed to take back control of the character when David moves on and make the mutant heterosexual 'again.' He could—anything goes in comics—

but Butcher notes how "no one reporting on that story mentions that Rob Liefield is a born-again Christian. Nothing wrong with that but it certainly informs his opinion."

The ongoing, seemingly endless struggle between the queer community and the *Book of Leviticus* is a painful one, but the *Bible* is perhaps no friend to nerds either, as they're often confronted with 1 Corinthians 13:11: "When I became a man, I put away childish things." Is Butcher right about superhero comics, the traditional fantasy provider for powerless teen boys? Gay men have long endured Freud's notion of homosexuality being an adolescent "phase" they get stuck in—is that one more thing gays and geeks have in common?

No way, says Woo, who insists that nerdy fantasies are not only healthy but essential: "As a teen, you're trying to explore yourself through these fantasy elements, but as an adult, they're an extrapolation of where life can go. Just like dreaming, it gives you permission to try something different. When I play a video game or a role-playing game, I get to be the hero in the story and do all these things that don't hinge on my orientation the way real life can. As a kid, that was important to me." Plus, he notes, the gay/geek link is still in full effect: "Getting all dressed up as a sci-fi character and getting dressed up in drag aren't all that different. You're creating an alternate world."

It's all about making the real world more fun. Says Sibley: "There's not much point to an existence of getting up, going to work, and coming home to do it all over again." Life's pleasures are important, whether yours include collecting sexual partners or action figures.

Woo says, "All my best friends are dorks and I say that proudly. I use 'dork' for someone who is



more whimsical and playful." He admits, "It is silly to enjoy people flying in tights or in spaceships, and to deny that is just some kind of self-loathing." It's easy to think of Scientologists or especially hardcore Trekkies when Woo warns, "You don't want to turn it into religion, that's dangerous."

For all this celebrating of all things nerdy, there is the Dark Side of the Force. Sadly, nerds are often called nerds for a reason. "We tend to focus on something to the degree that sometimes we can talk people's ears off," admits Sibley, laughing at a recent *Onion* parody headline, "Lost fan even more annoying than usual."

Bassingthwaite agrees that what separates the geek from the 'normal' person is "how involved you are with something, I think."

A successful life is about balance, and MacLeod says everyone has to decide, "I'm willing to put this much of my life into this thing I'm interested in. Your social adjustedness and your ability to communicate really have a big impact. I'll geek out over all sorts of things but still look down on the really nerdy ones," he laughs.

"I think the worst kind of nerd is the wine snob," Woo says, "because they look down on other people for not having their obscure knowledge." But the wine snob is celebrated in gay circles in a way the *Star Wars* buff is not, and lower-caste geeks often react defensively.

Sibley admits that many a sci-fi fan has referred to those who aren't as "mundanes... It's just like gay people using the term 'breeder' a way of marginalizing the group that is marginalizing us." In mainstream circles, he sighs, "It's not considered cool to know too much. I don't know how many times I heard American people say they voted for Bush because he was the kind of guy they wanted to have a beer with at their barbeque."

But maybe, says Woo, "It depends on what barbeque you go to. I think there are plenty where you could open a two-four of beer and talk about carbon sequestering."

For all our talk of comic books and video games, most nerds are excited as much by the real world as fantasy. MacLeod, for instance, is a TTC buff, happy to puzzle over the logistics of people clogging the front doors. "If people would just move back and be a little more logical," he begins, and we realize that he has just uttered the Nerd Credo. "Maybe the difference is in feeling that need to correct people. If you're posting something on the internet that's not true, I will correct you," he laughs before admitting, "I am that guy who will just push through [on the TTC] because it needs doing."

Next to him at lunch, MacLeod's husband Vincent DuJohn sighs, "Well, wait 'til I'm off the bus before you do that."

A statistician himself, DuJohn rejects the nerd label. For one thing, "I f---ing hate Star Trek," he says, and while MacLeod jokes about using a Venn diagram in casual conversation, DuJohn snarks, "Ooh, you have to remember grade three math." Scrolling through a Japanese language course on his iPhone, he adds, "I don't think of this stuff as being a geek, I think of it as being intelligent." But although he condemns MacLeod's beloved vacuum cleaner robot as annoyingly expensive ("If we could get it under ten dollars a suck, I might be more supportive of the Roomba!"), he's quick to defend nerds everywhere: "I remember when the appropriate adjective to describe those people was 'passionate.'"

There's a definitive geek moment in the first Spider Man film (of course) when Peter Parker enthuses, "Some spiders change colors to blend into their environment. It's a defense mechanism." His bored friend replies, "Peter, what makes you think I would want to know that?" and, eyes wide, Peter says, "Who wouldn't?" Gay geeks care about things in a time when apathy disguised as cool detachment is now no longer just useless but outright dangerous. Nerds observe, they ponder, and they speak out. As Sibley plans his conventions, Woo ponders a Pride installment of GamerCamp and Butcher prepares to showcase queer artists at his next Toronto Comics Arts Fair in May, it's clear that their idiosyncratic fixations are bringing people together.

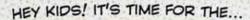
"That's what I love about nerds," says Woo: "They're so solely focused on things that make them happy and give them joy to learn about...Someone who's queer can find worth and acceptance in that culture that they can't find in one based merely on social standing."

And what is a 'queen' if not a 'geek?' Bassingthwaite says, "My partner loves musical theatre and puts *Rent* on all the time. There's a lyric that says, 'Anyone out of the mainstream is in the mainstream.' If you're out, you're in."

Be a nerd, says Woo: "It's in giving yourself permission to think broader, bigger, and a little silly that you find the best ideas. It's about passion and being engaged and that's never a bad thing."

Scott Dagostino is a writer still using a manual keyboard (VERY steampunk!) in Toronto while his brain slowly spreads across Facebook and Twitter, his consciousness roaming through most of time and space. Despite such Borg interests, however, he still finds human beings the most mysterious and fascinating creatures in the universe.





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EYE WEEKLY

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Many straight guys think that if a woman is smart, wears glasses, knows how to use a computer orgasp!—can understand the workings of a computer, and also looks really, really hot, especially when she takes her glasses off, she's a sexy geek. Straight guys' website Manolith's "2009 12 Hottest Geek Girls" got some of it right. The women that were featured on this list are indeed smart; some wear glasses; all are stereotypically attractive. It's a loose remake of the hot librarian cliché with a computer thrown in the mix. But this is not a complete picture of the big-brained species. The 'hot' factor is completely different for queer women.

Girl geeks make me weak in the knees. It's their smarts and the often quirky way they see the world. It's how they dress and hold their bodies. And if our biggest sexual organ is the brain, imagine the fantastic sexiness of the girl geek! The website that sweetly captures the deliciousness of the geek girl is nerdgirlpinups.com. This splendid little space highlights geeks of all kinds. These are real girls, real-sized, and all featuring their geeky interests with plenty of Canadian content and Toronto-based contributors.

Women are proudly reclaiming the terms geek and nerd. Pride Toronto has a regular and muchapplauded geek/nerd contingent. Women march with signs like "I read books!" And the Toronto Newsgirls Boxing Club's book exchange shows that tough girls can be geeks, too. Toronto's Roller Derby Club members are selected competitors on CBC's Test the Nation: IQ television show. If you want to see be-your-own-hero tough girl geeks on film, watch Whip It, Drew Barrymore's directorial debut.

What does geek mean? According to the Online Etymological Dictionary (where you can sponsor a word—yay!), "geek" appeared in 1916 as U.S. carnival and circus slang meaning a sideshow freak.

The contemporary interpretation stays true to its past. If a "geek" by definition is out of the mainstream, that is certainly where the girl geek lives, whether visibly or in her head-and, most probably, online. The girl geek chooses her own definitions. She stands outside of the mainstream. She resists the culturally reinforced stereotypes of how a woman should be in the world. She often doesn't care much for makeup or labels. Contrary to popular depictions, she is not generally grouchy, except maybe when confronted by tired conformist attitudes asking that she take off her glasses and become the popular sex kitten she apparently really wants to be.

She often rides a bicycle, probably wears glasses, seems innocuous until you talk to her, and



only then does she reveal her specific and highly specialized knowledge of \*insert specific interest here\*. It's then you realize how revolutionary she can be. She's been analyzing the state of the nation, how it relates to individual freedom, and how all human behaviour can be understood and explained very simply, if only people spent a little time discovering their true power and releasing their suppressed alter egos by playing RPGs (role-playing games).

"Nerd" and "geek" are often used interchangeably, but one can argue that there are subtle differences. Geeky women tend to more carefully select their worldly presentation. A true nerd scoffs at fashion and will choose comfort and function every time. Geeks often find their tribe; they gather and sometimes travel in groups, whereas the nerd prefers her own company and perhaps one other nerdy girl who understands and respects her peculiar nature, thank you very much.

The girl geek moves relatively undetected among the populace until you engage her in a conversation about one of her interests. She has an insatiable curiosity about said interest. The nerd cares nothing for what is thought of her. She makes no attempts to fit in and often finds her tribe on the internet where she can lurk or

anonymously participate in discussions about her obsessions. She is usually awkward because she can't find links outside of her interests through which to

engage in conversation with someone other than her comrades.

Geek types are as varied as their personalities and interests are. The main interests of girl geeks tend to involve computers, literature/words, comics, sci-fi/fantasy and anime.

In geek girl computer land, she must be a superhero if she wants to thrive. She fights the IT guy's presumptions daily. He (often delusionally) thinks she can't possibly know about programming or how to maintain her computer. She's apt to respond by ignoring him and doing her job (although she might get revenge by inserting conundrum codes to teach the ID-10-T a lesson).

A subset of the computer girl geek is the gamer. She knows that WoW (World of Warcraft) is often more relevant than RL (real life). She is at least a five-year veteran in MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games), has survived the corrupted blood plague, and has guild friends all over the world. Felicia Day, creator and star of the popular web-TV show *The Guild* is a prime example.

The girl geek knows that identifying her gender online often invites hostile or flirtatious interactions. Because she is a serious gamer, despite what many male gamers believe, she often chooses not to identify, even though "Women and Digital Lifestyles 2008" reported that 70% of women say they played a PC game last month vs. 69% of men.



the posture emoticon OTL but believes that most people overuse it (psst, it's an image of someone kowtowing and means subservience, apologies, or extreme disappointment). She knows that all internet memes are birthed on 4chan, including those lovable LOLcats. She has her favourite, livejournal-style message boards and doesn't

tolerate trolling, flaming or wanking (fighting, arguing on a tangent to the subject most posters are respectfully discussing, or direct, often misogynistic, attacks on posters). She thinks these cowardly hostiles are common demonstrations of the juvenile human condition.

The literary or word geek is the writer, editor, avid reader, typography-and-font freak. She is often older, and uses words that require others to use a dictionary. She likes the way certain words feel in her mouth, and will openly admit that certain words are her favourites because of their shape and their sound, as much as because of their meanings.

The literary geek has books—many, many books—will ardently align herself with either the dog-ear or no dog-ear camp, and can rhyme off her favoured authors and genres and a million reasons why they are so. She knows where the best used bookstores are and will wax poetic about the creaky wooden floors and crooked stairs. She has a library card with her at all times and loves the crinkle crack sound the plastic jacket makes when she opens a borrowed book.



She smells new books and has a decided preference for either a rough (leaving the edges of the pages of a book in an unfinished state to create an older feel), or finished page cut (smooth, even pages, sometimes with gilt edges). She will passionately debate correct grammar with you.

A subsect of the literary or word geek girl is the typography geek. She typically works in the publishing industry, perhaps as a designer. She can identify fonts, believes that 'comic sans' and 'papyrus' should never, ever be used, and is quite dismayed that Avatar used the latter. She will endlessly discuss the right match of font for the publication product, and feels at home with others who care as much as she does. She is not alone: there is even an iPhone application that helps the fontophile practice her identification skills.

The comic girl geek has shelves built for her collections. She endured the glares from boys at the comic stands and soldiered on, faithful to her passion. She was first in line when *Ghost World* became a movie and was pleased to see that Thora Birch played Enid perfectly.

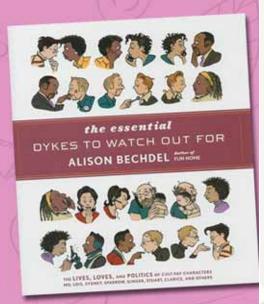




Comics appearing by the 1940s and geared to women readers, were full of conformist messaging, somewhat like a present-day Cosmo Magazine. 'educating' us about accoutrements necessary for being a woman. Female fans of comics in general began to question the depiction of women characters in these. Although Birds of Prey is a great example of female power in the traditional action hero genre, geek girl fans began to question "the woman in the refrigerator" literary device (murdering a female character for the sole reason of justifying a male character's motivation). The wider issue of violence against women in comics continues to be hotly debated on comic fan sites.

Beginning in the 70s, the alternative comics revolution offered more options for the comic geek girl. Underground comics like *Wimmen's Comix, Tits 'n' Clits* and *Pandora's Box* featured abortion, lesbianism, sexism, size-ism, and women's sexual revolution as subject matter. These led the way to grrrlz comics in which characters gave geeky girls a world to escape to where women could express themselves freely, funnily and often violently. *Bitchy Bitch* and *Bitchy Butch, Tank Girl, Rude Girls and Dangerous Women,* and *Hothead Paisan: the Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist* were responses to the woman in the refrigerator.

Thoughtful, quieter comics like *Dykes to Watch Out For, Ghost World* and *No Love Lost* helped



A small sampling of modern-day, realtime girl-geek role models can be found quite easily and close by. Look up these delightful women and your life will become so much richer:

- Evalyn Parry Toronto's very own geek, who can be seen performing her wonderfully geeky musical take on the world right here! (I mean come on... she even sometimes performs with the group, Girls with Glasses!)
- 2. kd lang 'nuff said.
- Margaret Cho freely admits her sci-fi obsessions and how odd she can be. Rent a few of her comedy videos and you'll know why!
- Mignon Fogarty THE Grammar Girl! \*swoon\*
- Tina Fey smart, funny, goofy and is reported to have an extensive Star Wars collection.
- Sarah Haskins does a
   CurrentTV.com show called
   Target Women and analyzes
   how advertisers try to manipulate
   women and is delivered in a
   funny, smart, quirky, entirely
   geeky way.
- Rachel Maddow MSNBC's Moment of Geek can be found on Youtube. Geeky news stories all hosted by the geek most voted to turn the straight girls. \*double swoon\*
- Daryl Hannah: smart, invented her own board games, has a geeky eco blog: DHlovelife, acted in many geeky sci-fi flicks.
- Arianna Huffington, Internet hero, feminist, started out as a blogger and founded Huffington Post.
- Eliza Dushku actor in *Dollhouse* (awesome sci-fi series by Joss Whedon), admits to being a WoW player.
- Annalee Newitz smart, wears glasses, is really, really cute, and is the editor of the comprehensive sci-fi blog io9.com.
- GeekSugar: blogger on www.geeksugar.com who describes herself as a dorky, fabulous gal hoping to make it big in the tech industry.



usher in the rising popularity of the graphic novel. The comic geek has much to choose from here, including many queer, female authors and artists.

Geeky girls' 'fandom' can range quite extensively and often begins with a gateway movie or book that sets them off to research, learn, and imagine more about the characters. Fangirls can express their obsessions in many ways and extremes. She may attend "cons" (comic conferences) to more deeply explore her interest. At the cons, she might engage in "cosplay" (costume play) by dressing up to create the possibility for another fan to engage her in conversation. In some instances, she might be looking for physical contact in exchange for Japanese candy: "Will Glomp for Pocky," but this behaviour is often against a con's rules because it suggests solicitation.

Japanophiles make up a large subsection of the fandom geeks, and queer content abounds: *Yuri* (mostly pornographic Japanese lesbian love stories and manga written by, and for the consumption of, men) and *Yaori* (idealized depictions of sexual relationships between men, written predominantly by women).

Slash fiction began in the 70s, inspired by Kirk/Spock's relationship on *Star Trek*, and arose from fans who were curious about the possibilities of sexual relationships between two

male characters. Oddly enough, the prefix "fem" is added to the female equivalent. Mostly, women write slash fiction; this could be because women are more curious about same-sex possibilities not found in the original work. The slash fiction writer seems to be allured by the meaning of a sideways glance between characters, and since the original author didn't delve, the fangirl does.

Star Trek is probably the most famous and oldest inspiration for the sci-fi geek girl. She can take university classes in Star Trek philosophy, she may invest \$12 on the Klingon language suite iPhone application and, just for fun, she reads the how-to manual for the Starship Enterprise. Start Trek cons have been going on since the 70s and show no sign of dwindling. The sci-fi geek girl can point to Star Trek as her gateway drug. The contemporary Battlestar Galactica (or BSG) is now claiming the newest generation of geek girls. The BSG-era geek girl has always wanted a toaster tshirt, ('toaster' is a derogatory term for Cylons from BSG), but would find most any gift from geeky gift-giving sites like www.thinkgeek.com to be terrific.

We need our girl geeks because they save us from the orthodox. They tell us about the details we miss and they make it all so interesting. They are the originals, the creatives; they invent things and give us art. And they are so very hawt.





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# New Year, ? same old you?

by Scott MacDonald

If you're like most people, you probably started 2010 off with a list of resolutions. 'These are the things I will accomplish before the year is done,' you said. You wrote them down, it felt good, and you were ready. You meant every word written on that list and initially put everything you had into accomplishing them. But like most people, you've probably lost your way already. Don't fret, this is normal, you haven't failed. Now is not the time to give up on your list; now is the time to return to it.

Most of you had one or more common resolutions: to lose weight, get fit, live healthier, and reduce stress. All pretty reasonable intentions, but for some reason you haven't been able to accomplish them yet. You signed a gym membership, and maybe even hired a personal trainer for a few weeks, but now you're on your own again, and you've found yourself back in the same old rut.

I'm not going to tell you to go to a gym. Our culture does a pretty good job of delivering this message already. It's everywhere we look: on television, in magazines, on billboards and posters throughout our day. Everyone knows that a gym is a pretty good place to start when it comes to feeling better, looking better, and getting more out of life. There are a multitude of gyms throughout our city and a host of personal trainers capable of finding the right exercise program for you. I highly recommend incorporating the gym into your lifestyle, but if you don't like going to the gym, that's okay. There are lots of other activities that can help you achieve your goals. Take the time to Google an activity of interest, or check out what your local community centres offer, you just might be surprised what you find available to you. Community sports are a tremendous way to introduce physical activity into your lifestyle, and they are often a great way to meet people as well.

"Working out is different for everyone. For some people, walking around the block is a workout; for others, running a 10k is a workout. It's all relative," says George Moneta, a Certified Personal Trainer and workplace wellness and health promoter. "How much physical activity a person gets in a day or a week is a better way of determining that. Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that we do thirty to sixty minutes of

activity per day, and that incorporates anything from walking up stairs to weightlifting."

So, why have you been unable to achieve your fitness goals so far? This answer will be different for everybody who reads this article and I can't address each one individually, but I would like to offer some advice



George Moneta

that I believe will be helpful on your journey to a healthier and happier you.

We live in a society that has become accustomed to instant gratification. We want what we want and what 'they' have, and we want it now. If we don't get it we get upset, we get angry, we get depressed.



Getting fit and healthy is not something that happens overnight, just as becoming overweight or out of shape didn't happen during the winter holidays. Healthy living is a lifestyle and lifestyles are developed, not bought or acquired. Before you start any workout/health plan you need to understand your reasons for doing so. Set reasonable short-term goals, and differentiate them from what you are trying to achieve in the long term. Also, don't forget to consult your physician.

"The number one problem people have with trying to lose weight is they try to do everything all at once," says Moneta. "The most important thing to do is to take baby steps. Start at a lower level and slowly implement your workout plans, so even if you are a beginner walking around the block or walking up a few flights of stairs, increasing your activity gradually will have the best long-term effect. People who work out, especially in the New Year, don't give the right value to working out. If you're working out three times per week, actually schedule your workouts Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at a certain time, so you incorporate that into your lifestyle like other appointments. Changing your behaviour your learned behaviour—takes about six to eight weeks. You put an emphasis on your career and other engagements, but also make appointments for yourself, because you are number one."

It's easy in our youth-oriented culture to get caught up in six-pack abs, a tight butt and bulging biceps—but our overall health is a much bigger issue that encompasses more than abs and butts. Try not to get too focused on losing weight; that will happen in its own time. Activity is the key. Living a healthy, balanced life is something that benefits us well beyond our youthful party years, and it involves more than just a few trips to the gym each week.

## Components of a Healthy Lifestyle (in no particular order):

- 1. Priorities and Time Management We each have twenty-four hours in a day. How do you choose to spend those hours, and what is most important to accomplish? Make time for yourself, it's your life.
- 2. Mental Wellness and Stress Management Maintain good family relationships and social networks. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. If you're going to party, then make responsible, informed drug and alcohol consumption choices.
- 3. Diet and Nutrition Make healthy food choices and eat wisely. Avoid beverages and meals that are high in sugars, fat, and caffeine.
- 4. Exercise and Physical Activity Maintain an active lifestyle.
- 5. Sleep Health Canada recommends 8hrs of sleep. Studies have shown that losing one night of sleep is the equivalent of losing 10 IQ points.
- Knowledge and Education Learning new skills and information has been shown to be effective in fighting depression.







Put simply, "Yoga is a system to make people feel good, not just on the mat, but off the mat, by loosening their body, by making them stronger, more focused, and calmer," says Robert Young, a Certified Yoga Instructor and member of the National Coaching Certification Program for Gymnastics. "Start slow. Baby steps. I teach each Yoga pose to different levels, and the whole class is not at level one. The hardest thing with someone starting out is they see people in the class doing the fourth and fifth levels and they think, 'Wow, that's really great! I want to do that pose too.' They should get the foundations first: get their grounding, and their breathing. There are a lot of subtle aspects and if you don't have the subtle aspects when you do the level three or four stuff you're just not accomplishing what you could be. In the short term there will be a lot of challenges that you will need to overcome to get into a physical state where you're actually going to lose weight and gain flexibility. It takes a little bit of time for your body to get into that."

Young recommends finding a studio that is convenient, so that you can easily make it part of your weekly routine, and choosing an instructor that you feel comfortable with. The great thing about Yoga is you can practice at home on your own time once you've established a good understanding. There are an incredible number of types of Yoga and most studios offer a free introductory class that will allow you to try out its specific style. Most classes range from \$15 - \$20.

"The greatest benefit of yoga is breathing. Being able to lengthen your breath and deepen your breath. One of my students went on a scuba diving vacation, and they recorded how much oxygen she used. She did this trip before she started her yoga practice, and after a year of yoga she did the trip again, and she used 50% less oxygen to do her dive," says Young proudly.

person take Yoga? "Once a week is a good way of getting your toe wet," says Young. "Three times a week is a way of advancing, a way of

making progress. Like any workout, like weight training, you do it twice a week, it's okay, it's good for maintaining, but getting that third or fourth routine in there for the week, you're definitely going to make some strides."

"Body awareness," adds Young, "is a great result of Yoga. You're asking to put your body into specific spots. In some poses, you have to keep your knee over your foot; or in some poses you've got to keep your elbows straight or your back flat. You have to learn to say with your mind what your body needs to do. Body and mind connection is the biggest thing, and with that comes an increase in flexibility, strength and concentration."

Over 80% of Ontarians are stressed at work, and 60% are stressed outside the workplace, according to Buffett & Company's "National Wellness Survey Report" from 2006. Trying to overachieve with a heavy physical activity regime will not help reduce your stress level and will eventually, if not immediately, have you sitting at home channel surfing with a bag of chips.

Often, when we write our list of resolutions for the year, we overlook the 'whole package' quality of a healthy lifestyle. I once heard it said that 95% of abs happen in the kitchen, and I couldn't agree more. The benefits of a healthy diet of nutrientrich foods are vast. A balanced diet can help prevent illness and depression, increase metabolism, boost energy, and promote mental alertness. Starving your body is probably the single biggest error made by people who are trying to lose weight. In fact, starving your body of food triggers fat storage and muscle depletion.

Try to avoid sugar- and caffeine-laden drinks; they make you feel more energetic in the short term, but the spike and fall of these false boosts eventually drain you of the energy required to get a good workout and prohibit the ability to sleep well. Dietary information is readily available online from Canada's Food Guide (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php).

This brings me to my last recommendation: meditation. A meditation practice is often overlooked by wellness seekers. The goal of meditation is to empty the mind of the constant chatter that keeps us up at night or burdens us with negative thinking or self-doubt during our waking hours. Glen



Glen Laubman

Laubman guides people through meditation practices at weekly seminars on the Danforth.

Laubman understands people's hesitation to embrace meditation. "I believe there are a gazillion different ways of meditating. So 'meditation' is a very general term, an umbrella term, that describes practices or techniques that an individual can use to work with their inner energy. There are a lot of people who might be thinking, 'That's something I'd like to try because it might help me reduce my stress levels, or cope better, or be more balanced,' or whatever they are after, but they have no idea where to begin. I think that's quite common. I think it can be a little daunting and intimidating."

"We live in a very stressful culture," Laubman states, "so the alleviation of some of that stress, the ability to be more centred, grounded and balanced, is of great advantage. Other people, whose lives are not stressful, might get something different, like developing clearer thinking and a sharper mind. The benefits depend on what you want to get out of it."

"I find 'practice' is a great term for this because practice is what you need to do," says Laubman. "Just like when you are learning to play a musical instrument: you sit down for the first time, you can't really play. It's a similar thing to sitting down to meditate and emptying your mind for the first time. It just doesn't happen. You keep practicing that musical instrument and you get better and better; it becomes more natural and you get to a point where you don't have to think your way through playing the song on the piano, you can just sit down and play and be expressive and allow it to happen in a more natural way. The same thing happens with meditation. The more you practice, the less that chatter in the

happens, the more adept you become at it, the deeper the meditation you can get into. It's a progressive thing. It's very common in the beginning for it to be a little chaotic and difficult."

Now go dig that list of resolutions out of the drawer and sit down with it. Look it over and ask yourself if you're being realistic. It's easy for us to think that going to the gym and losing ten or fifteen pounds will make us happier, but we lose sight of the real benefits of a healthy and balanced lifestyle with that sort of focus. The challenge with setting these types of short term goals is that we either don't reach them, and then feel defeated or hopeless, or we do reach them and we're done-until the next time we feel the need to lose weight. The biggest piece of advice that I have is to set realistic, medium- and longterm goals and to stick with them in spite of selfdoubt. Try not to focus on your weight, but rather, try to gradually increase the number of push-ups you can do, or the length of time you can hold a yoga pose, or other such steady, achievable goals. Increase these slowly over time as you become stronger and more capable. It's clichéd, but take the stairs instead of the escalator, and before you know it you'll be looking better and feeling better than you did on December 31, 2009. Happy New Year all over again!

George Moneta is a certified personal trainer with an Undergraduate Degree in Human Ecology with a Major in Food and Nutrition from the University of Manitoba, and is currently finishing a postgraduate degree in Workplace Wellness and Health Promotion at Centennial College.

Robert Young is a certified Yoga Instructor, a Reiki Master, and a member of the National Coaching Certification Program for gymnastics. He teaches his own Yoga Fusion™ style, uniting Hatha Yoga postures, Ashtanga movement, and breath control with gymnastics and dance. He is available for private or group classes and can be contacted at www.bodylanguageto.com

Glen Laubman has studied a variety of energy, healing, and meditative techniques for several years and now teaches classes and workshops for the benefit of others. He has a regular meditation workshop on Tuesdays @ 7:30 at The Centering Space located at 59 Cambridge Ave. (Broadview / Danforth)

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.

PHOTOGRAPHY courtesy of Geo0rge Moneta, Robert Young and Glen Laubman







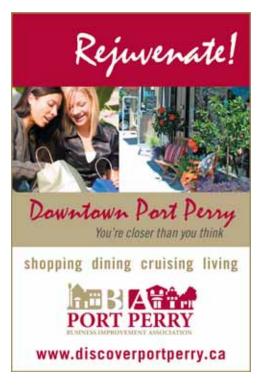








down



# ISLAND HOPPING IN GREECE'S SUNNY CYCLADES



Ah, spring! It's my favourite season, since I love to watch gardens burst into bloom and to see the city come alive after a long winter. I also love springtime because that's when my partner and I travel to Greece for our annual island-hopping holiday.

Why Greece? And why return every year? We enjoy the country's rich history and culture, friendly people and wonderful food, and especially, the spectacular scenery, gorgeous beaches and brilliant blue seas. Greece is safe, fun

and relaxing, and makes us feel at home—even though we don't speak the language.

We never anticipated that this would become a yearly ritual, but some people weren't surprised. When we were trying to choose a spring holiday destination seven years ago, a travel agent suggested Greece. "I know you'll love it," she promised. Others agreed. A gym buddy said he and his boyfriend fell in love with the Greek Islands on their first visit. "You'll get hooked and keep going back, too," he predicted.

We weren't sure what to expect. We certainly liked what we saw in the glossy travel brochure photos: whitewashed cube-shaped buildings gripping arid, rocky hillsides; blue-domed churches perched precariously on soaring cliffs; classical monuments, ruins and archaeological sites; sensational sunsets at Santorini; and golden sand beaches on Mykonos.



That's exactly what we found in the Cyclades, a group of 26 rocky isles scattered in the sunsplashed Aegean Sea between mainland Greece and Crete. But we also discovered that the Cyclades is just one of seven separate island regions in Greece. In all, there are more than 2,000 islands in the Aegean and Ionian Seas. Fewer than 200 are inhabited, and only 150 are accessible by commercial ferries or regularly scheduled tour boats. That's still plenty of



potential travel destinations, and it would take decades to visit them all

But once you've seen one Greek isle, haven't you basically seen them all? Happily, no! Thanks to history and geography, each region has a distinct look and atmosphere, while individual islands have unique personalities. They all share some similarities, of course, but every island presents a completely new holiday experience, and that's what keeps drawing us back for more.

With so many options, it can be difficult and even daunting for first-time island hoppers to decide where to go. It was for us. Fortunately, the Cyclades chain offers an easy introduction, particularly for gay and lesbian travellers, since its islands are well-connected to Athens and to each other by regular ferry services. Some even have daily airline links to the city.

Gay-friendly Mykonos is our personal favourite because it offers a remarkable variety of things to see and do. This compact island boasts a picturesque port city with abundant shopping, dining and nightlife; more than 20 amazing beaches; alluring landscapes and beautiful people—nearly a million visitors from around the world flock here annually.

Mykonos holds bragging rights to the most sophisticated nightlife in the Greek Isles, and its dynamic gay scene is among the liveliest in Europe. Mykonos Town amuses and entertains gay and lesbian travellers with a variety of venues for fun and frolic, from piano bars and cocktail lounges with drag shows and live music performers, to discos and nightclubs with sexy gogo boys and some of the hottest guys on the planet. Ramrod Club, Porta, Pierro's, Jackie O', Lola, Kastro, and Montparnasse piano bar are the top nightspots for guys. There are no bars exclusively for lesbians, so the girls generally gravitate to Diva, Coffee Cat and Montparnasse to mingle over martinis. But lesbian and straight revelers alike always receive a warm welcome at the boys' clubs.

The Mykonos beaches are legendary. For decades, Paradise and Super Paradise reigned supreme as the Mediterranean's most notorious gay strands for outrageous round-the-clock partying and playing. But in recent years, the gay turnout has waned. Paradise and Super Paradise draw predominantly straight crowds nowadays, but clothing-optional areas there—and at nearby Paranga—still lure sun-loving homos. The main gay scene has relocated several kilometers down the coast to Elia, where the boys descend in droves. A lovely long stretch of pebbly sand where nude sunbathing is permitted, Elia entices an open-minded, mixed group of sunseekers, with a noticeably large gay presence. A rocky headland that juts into the sea between Elia and nearby Agrari is an active cruising area. For their own fun in the sun, sea, and sand, lesbians prefer Super Paradise and Elia.

Mykonos has the biggest—and best—selection of shops and restaurants in the Cyclades. We enjoy strolling the twisting cobblestone streets of the town to browse the stores and art galleries, many of which stay open past midnight. The lively lanes are a shopper's paradise packed with

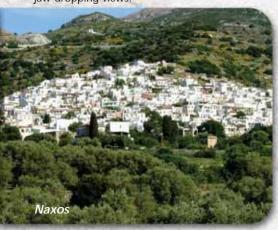




hundreds of retailers: tacky souvenir stands, designer clothing outlets, exclusive high-end jewellery boutiques, and everything in between. Dining choices are endless. Countless cafes sell cheap eats like gyro, spinach pies and souvlaki, while scores of tavernas—our preferred places for wining and dining—serve traditional Greek seafood, meat and vegetarian fare. Dozens of fine dining establishments, including internationally-acclaimed and über-expensive Nobu at Hotel Belvedere, tempt the tastebuds of foodies with money to burn.

To appreciate local culture and history, my partner and I visit the archaeological, folklore and maritime museums in Mykonos Town, or take an excursion boat to nearby Delos island to see the ruins, monuments and antiquities collection at this fascinating UNESCO heritage site.

Santorini is the Cyclades' second superstar island. Popular primarily for scenery, sightseeing and romance, it's one of the world's most indemand "dream" destinations for weddings and honeymoons. Stunning vistas and incomparable landscapes were created by a violent volcanic eruption that blasted the island into its distinctive crescent shape in 1450 B.C. Santorini is famous for fabulous sunsets, too; tourists crowd the rustic village of Oia each evening just to watch the sun go down. The island's capital, Fira, is a buzzing commercial center crammed with hotels, bars, restaurants and shops. Santorini's leading attractions include an archaeological museum, the Hellenistic-era ruins at Ancient Thira, wineries, sailboat cruises, black and red volcanic "sand" beaches, boat excursions to the volcano crater and hot springs at Nea Kameni island. Our typical Santorini pastimes are photographing the quaint villages that spill down the steep sides of the caldera, and hiking the six-kilometer clifftop path between Fira and Oia to savour the incredible, jaw-dropping views.





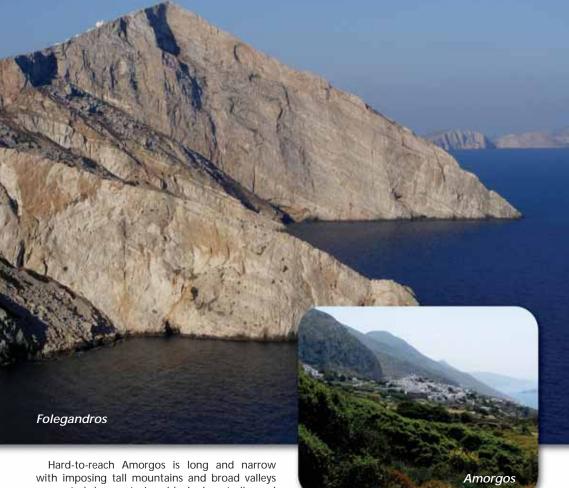
When we need a break from the hectic pace of Santorini and Mykonos, we hop a ferry to less-touristed islands that offer additional splendid sights and settings—without annoying crowds and sky-high prices.

Laid-back Naxos is blessed with superb swimming areas and watersports facilities, picture-postcard mountain villages, lush farm valleys, historic monuments and ancient ruins. We love to walk or bicycle for miles along the breezy, beach-lined southwest coast, then venture into Naxos Town to stroll the bustling harbourfront restaurant strip and browse shops in the narrow alleys of the medieval Kastro and Old Market districts.

Paros is a pretty island where we tour sleepy mountain towns and seaside fishing villages, compact vineyards, groves with olive trees hundreds of years old, and the busy port town Paroikia, the humming hub of the Cyclades' ferry system. Nearby Antiparos island beckons with a charming village, excellent swimming spots and a vast network of caves discovered during the time of Alexander the Great.

On Milos, we have a blast mountain biking to some of the 60 outstanding beaches, and taking an exhilarating day-long sailboat ride to view the island's extraordinary coastline geology—miles of marvellous, multicoloured cliffs, a gigantic cavern at Sykia, and towering white rock formations at Kleftiko.

We'll never forget the food on Sifnos. This little island is renowned for quirky local pottery and exquisite cuisine, reputedly among the finest in Greece. To work off the calories from our hearty meals of delectable local dishes, we spend hours hiking the extensive network of footpaths and mule trails that criss-cross the bucolic hillsides and valleys.



connected by centuries-old donkey trails and walking paths. Spring is an ideal time to visit: wildflower blooms blanket the serene, rolling slopes above Egali in a riot of vibrant colours, while surprisingly strong scents of wild thyme and oregano waft over the countryside. We enjoy wandering the warren of stone-paved streets in Chora, the traditional village of whitewashed cube houses, cafés and churches. And we still vividly recall gasping in awe at our first glimpse of the magnificent 1,000-year-old Chozoviotissa monastery, a fortress-like structure clinging to a jagged cliff wall on the island's east coast. The striking cerulean and cobalt blue colours of the sea below the monastery are equally astonishing; this eye-popping Aegean seascape has been nicknamed "The Big Blue," and scenes from the movie with that title were filmed nearby.

Folegandros' photogenic main village features an attractive 13th Century Kastro quarter that leaves us speechless whenever we see it from a distance—it sits on the edge of a heart-stopping precipice that plunges 980 feet to the sea. With cheery bougainvillea-filled restaurant courtyards and breathtaking views of an enormous white

church on the mountainside high above the tranquil town, it's one of the prettiest and most unforgettable places we've seen anywhere in Greece.

There are over a dozen more Cycladic islands that we still haven't visited, not to mention the hundreds in other island regions we have only just begun to explore. But we'll eventually see many of them. After all, we're hooked on Greek island hopping!

Don Stevens is a Toronto writer who travels twice yearly, visiting the Caribbean or Central America in winter, and the Greek Islands in spring or summer. His preferred island-hopping destination in Greece so far has been the Cyclades chain where he has seen more than 16 islands including his favourite, Mykonos. This year, he will venture east of the Cyclades to visit islands in two completely different chains, the Dodecanese and Northeast Aegean.

PHOTOGRAPHY Don Stevens



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## OUR OPINION This Issue's Tonice

This Issue's Topic:

Rise of the Geeks



Steven Bereznai: So there I am, New Year's eve, at fly, shirtless—naturally—totally picking up (two words: Disney. Dancer.), so I was feeling pretty cool. BUT, at the same time, I was wearing Battlestar Galactica dog tags, which is SO geeky. In high school I would NEVER have dared wear anything that gave away how much I loved Sci-Fi and fantasy. I was enough of an outcast as it was. And even after I came out of the closet, I still kept my love of science fiction as a dirty secret around gay guys I considered the "cool" crowd. I just want to be loved Maggie. Lucky for me geek now seems to be chic.

Maggie Cassella: You think? You think geek is chic? Maybe the look is chic, you gay guys and your "Where's Waldo" glasses are killing me, but actual geeks chic? Me thinks we are importing our "we're now older and wiser" maturity levels on a part of our population that is probably still getting the ball whipped at the back of their collective big heads in grade school. Sure eventually the kids with the pocket protectors and sack 'o electronics in their Star Wars backpacks get to rule the world, but I still think when they're kids, not so much. In fact, I was a bully of geeks (and queers—of course, she that doth protest...) when I was a kid, and sure I regret it NOW, but if I was a kid today I'm not sure it'd be any different. (Of course, I'd be nicer, I'm just talking about the other kids.) Oh, but just for the record, if I see you shirtless at Fly with Battlestar Gallactica dog tags on, I'm not responsible for what might happen.

SB: I too was a geek hater in high school, which is why I had no friends, cause I was a geek who couldn't embrace his own nature (nor that of his brethren), and yeah, it SUCKED, partly because of people like you Cassella, always picking on poor souls like me. And of course I couldn't hate other geeks without despising myself. Read: internalized geek-o-phobia. Do I think that's changed in high school, with its cliques and social strata? Doubtful. Michael Cera can be adorably awkward until the cows come home (leaving behind a giant carbon footprint), but geeks in high school still get picked on. But let's not confuse reality with chic. Chic is about image, and what fashionistas (and posers like myself) do with it, including co-opting geek accessories. Note to self: pick up "Where's Waldo" Glasses and Versace Pocket Protector.

MC: Hey, I said I REGRETTED that behaviour. And wait a minute, who says you're a geek? It's like being queer. You can't just declare "I'm a geek" and actually BE a geek. You have to

## and we have one!

by Maggie Cassella and Steven Bereznai

have the proper "geekeristics." [Ed's note: You reading this Antoine?] Like, you know, if you're a gay guy at some point you have to go near some dick. I'm just sayin'. If you're a geek, well, you have to be part of that circle that gets called geek AND you have to have lived the geek lifestyle since like day one. There's a guy I went to school with, let's say his name is Zack Jiblick, who to me was the embodiment of geek—including possessing the kind and gentle soul of the tortured. I see him on Facebook now and I want to friend him desperately but I can't help but think he'd say "kiss off geekhater." And yet not, because geeks don't do that, because they're kind and gentle souls. Not that you're not kind and gentle Steven, but seriously, can a gay man even be a geek? You guys are



just too cool for it. Mind you, you guys can wear ANYTHING and pull it off—hello, how love I those Bears in flannel—but that my friend, is a geek of a different colour...

SB: Gay Geek credentials: I have a T-shirt that says Gay Geek; I made a placard for Pride that read "Jean-Luc Makes Me Wet;" I'm going to the Gaylaxicon queer Sci-Fi convention being held this fall in Montreal; and I wrote a novel about gay teens with super powers. As dick is to gay, Steven Bereznai is to gay geek. I've just learned the proper accessories to go with my phaser and tricorder. And I (along with Zack Jiblick) am so glad you left the Dark Side behind you!

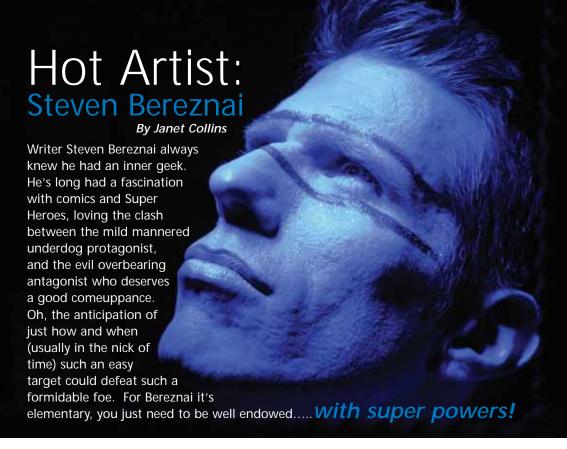
**MC:** Okay, okay, you obviously need this. You are a huge geek Steven. A geek of epic proportions. You are the Queen of the Geeks. I bow to your geekdom! And I hope like crazy that the kids in grade school, and middle school, and high school are taking heed of this new trend and treating the geeks (along with the queers thank you very much) with the respect they deserve, knowing that some day they'll all be working for that kid with the band-aid on her "Where's Waldo" glasses. Praise all things geek. Kirk, out.

Maggie Cassella is a current events commentator, actor, writer, producer, and founder of the We're Funny That Way™ queer comedy festival, now in its 14th year.

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.



**Pride of Toronto** www.proudfm.com VOTED BEST RADIO STATION BY TORONTO'S GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY



As a teenager he wasn't content to just read other people's stories, he had his own sci-fi/fantasy percolating in his brain and began to commit it to paper. While his first writing effort remains a work in progress, Bereznai has since published two books: *gay and single.....forever?* and more recently *Queeroes*. What was the impetus for these books and how did they come about? Let's start at the beginning.

Bereznai was born "in a galaxy far, far away" called Scarborough. He grew up under the influences of "Tolkien and Roddenberry" and started writing at an early age. After high school he moved to Guelph and studied Environmental Science, however he admits, "I've enjoyed writing since my early teens so even in University, when I wasn't taking courses for my degree, I worked for the radio station, I worked for the school newspaper and I freelanced." Hmmm, sounds like the Environmental Science degree was akin to Clark Kent's day time gig at the *Daily Planet*. It's no surprise that he never worked in his chosen field but built a career out of his side pursuits in media. He's a former editor-in-chief of *fab magazine* and *Fab Style Quarterly* and for a decade he worked through the ranks at CBC becoming a writer for several of the broadcaster's news programs.

At age 22, with his parent's support, he'd come out and knew there were something more than Guelph's gay scene to explore. He moved to downtown Toronto tout de suite and admits his rationale at the time was "I'm ready for a



boyfriend...I thought I was moving to Toronto to fall in love."

In 2006 Bereznai published his first book, gay and single.....forever? "One of the reasons I wound up writing the book was because by 32 I still hadn't found a relationship," he says. His book doesn't have the answers to singledom, but rather poses some interesting questions about the journey to finding a partner and the pressures we place on ourselves and perceive from others when pairing up. Bereznai identifies Generation "M" and the shift towards marriage and relationships stating "even our fellow gays expect us to be coupled up!"

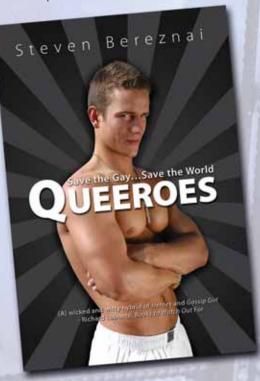
In 2009 Bereznai returned to his true love for his second book, a sci-fi/fantasy comic book story for adults entitled *Queeroes*. He explains the genesis of the book like this: "I was always a huge fan of *Buffy* and *Smallville* and *Heroes...*.at least the first season, and I really wanted a gay version of it. I started mulling over in my head, how might that look? And I started coming up with a couple of characters and few scenes and I just kept mulling it around in my head until I needed to start putting it on to paper and it grew from there."

Set in suburban "Nuffim," the story begins at the epicentre of all suburbia—the mall. Here a group of teens, some gay, some straight, some male, some female, some geeks (the "Games and Geeks" crowd), some hip + cool (the "Aberbombie and Stitch" crowd) and every combination thereof, interact and/or attempt to avoid each other. In the mix are ex's and those hiding long-held crushes, bullies and kids that just want to be left alone, which makes them too much fun to torment.

What they all have in common is that no matter their place in the dominance chain, they are all, to some degree, on the path to self discovery and acceptance. What separates them is that some have super powers unwittingly bestowed on them when they drink what they think is just your garden-variety bottled water. The reader thinks nothing of the water until a television news report announces to no one in particular that "Etienne bottled water is being pulled from the shelves, after reports of a contaminant getting into the supply." Will they be benevolent caretakers of their powers, or be out to destroy? When asked if "Etienne" isn't in fact a French form of the name Steven, Bereznai answers tongue-in-cheek, "yes, I'm just that egotistical.....as any good super villain should be." Clearly he enjoys pulling the strings and is currently beginning work on a sequel to *Queeroes*. "I've got a few scenes worked out—new Queeroes will be on the scene."

Bereznai says, "that was one of the cool things about finally doing *Queeroes* was that I finally got a chance to write and be published in the gay scifi genre. That sci-fi writing aspect of myself has been there for many, many years." He credits his time as a news writer with honing his writing skills and acknowledges the support from his family who encouraged him from his first writing at age 13. "It makes a huge difference having your family behind you."

Perhaps a geeky youth experience allows us to go against the tide and become true to ourselves ahead of the curve. A lot of creativity can come from that. As for any role he has in the chic-geek movement, Bereznai simply says "it's kind of nice to be a part of it."



Janet Collins was also born, like Steven, "in a galaxy far, far away," however, the one known as Windsor, Ontario. She made her escape early and washed up on the shores of Ashbridge's Bay. Lacking of any super powers herself, she lives with a little pug whom possesses many, foremost among them—mind control of humans...

PHOTOGRAPHY courtesy of Steven Bereznai





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# GROWING UP GEEK

by Manny Machado

When did we stop having fun with our living spaces? Remember back in the day, when plastering our bedroom walls with images of our heroes and idols seemed like the natural thing to do? We didn't even think twice about displaying the objects that inspired us or made us laugh. Our bedrooms were the biggest representation of the people we were becoming. Fastforward to the present and we don't have time to play anymore. Life gets in the way of the things we loved, and we are told to put our toys away in favour of something more serious, such as a career. For many, the idea of growing up a geek spawns images of underachieving fan boys (or girls) living at home under a pile of comics, posters and memorabilia. In fact, the opposite is true. These very same "quiet types" are the ones leading the entertainment industry today with amazing sci-fi movies such as Avatar, and charging ahead with exciting technologies such as Apple's new iPad.



With little effort or money, customizing a multifunctional space for display, inspiration and retreat is only a well-planned budget away. Personalizing your room goes beyond just decorating it with a few trinkets and toys. It means you can immerse yourself in an environment that lets your creativity run free. Secondary rooms, dens, or offices are pretty much standard in most new condos or town homes. Viewed as too small to be of much use, in reality they can be transformed into your favourite room in the entire home.

Develop the room so you can spend time getting back to your roots. Make all your mementos and memorabilia accessible, without resorting to storage in unsightly boxes or crates in the corner of the room. Proper storage, colour and comfort are the building blocks to creating your own personal geek lair.

My first suggestion is to look at what you have instead of what you don't. Smaller rooms mean less floor space; however, they do offer up tonnes of wall space. Prioritize what needs to be on the floor and build everything else onto the walls.

If you are truly 'geeking out' your room, then a proper sound system is a must. Be sure you account for where the components should go and remember, most wires and cords can be hidden inside the walls. An audio-visual customization consultation can help you work out the details if you're unsure about how to build your dream system. Taking time to carefully review your options not only helps you build the room to your liking, it will add value to your home should you decide to sell.





Storage is the key element of any hard-working room, and permanent wall cabinetry is the way to make it happen. Choose a system that will help you maximize the amount of wall storage you can get in a smaller space. Ikea has two of my favorite economy storage systems: Besta and Effektive. Both series offer easy-to-mount wall cabinets in a variety of sizes, with door options to really create an expensive custom look. If you're concerned about the systems taking over the room, then coordinate the colours of the cabinetry with the wall colour; this makes them 'disappear.' Mirrored and glass doors will also make the cabinetry appear lighter, while leaving some of the cabinets open will allow you to feature your collections.

Lighting is a very important factor when displaying objects, and it should be the light that is seen, not the source. However, if the thought of wiring and electrical outlets seems daunting and expensive, here's my tip: battery-operated stick-on LED light fixtures, available at most hardware stores or Dollaramas.

Take the lead from your collections—whatever items you wish to feature should be the focal point in your room. This is key when deciding the colour scheme. An example: if your favorite treasures consist of multicoloured figurines or toys, I suggest painting the primary wall in neutral tones like whites, creams or light grays. This will ensure that your pops of colour in the room will



come from the items you are displaying. Adding a bold hue to the wall behind the shelves or cabinets is commonly referred to as creating a colour block, which will frame your collections by unifying them within the scheme.

If what inspires you can't be shelved, consider custom- or ready-made frames for posters or art. Shadow boxes are the perfect vessel for smaller objects that might get lost or displaced. Art stores like Deserres have great decorative resources and ideas, including my favorite wall accessory—graphic and print decals. They are easy to put up and they say to the world, "I don't take myself too seriously!"

Take advantage of whatever little space you have to fulfill your particular needs. The effort you put into making time for yourself will be worth every minute and every dollar you spend. Sometimes, the best moments are those that bring a smile to our face when no one else is watching. In the immortal words of Mr. Stan Lee, "Fear not, true believers!" It's time to let your inner geek inspire you to dedicate a space in your home to your hobbies or interests.

Manny Machado's devotion to Wonder Woman started with the very first wonder whirl on tv and continues to inspire his creativity and professional life even today. Having the power to dream, means having the power to create. Manny's unique perspective allows him to transform even the most impossible spaces into something clients are proud to call their home.

PHOTOGRAPHY Robert Foster

#### Will Freeman

william@kromerradio.com Kromer Radio Custom Department 420 Bathurst St. (south of College) Toronto, ON M5T 2S6 416-920-6700

#### 1. What components do you suggest for someone with limited space?

I suggest mid-size in-wall speakers that are hidden away from view and don't detract from the décor of the space. Avoid tiny speakers, as they don't work quite as efficiently due to their not being able to push enough air through to produce the mid-frequency tones. Another viable option is a set of in-ceiling speakers, which look like pot lights.

#### 2. How much should someone expect to pay for a basic system?

A decent-quality sound system will cost \$1,000 and up. That includes the 6 components for the limited sub-satellite system (center speaker, left and right speakers, rear left and right speakers, and a sub-woofer). A more comprehensive system that includes a surround sound receiver with additional speakers and a Blu-Ray player starts at \$1,500.

#### 3. At what point in the renovation should the audio/visual installation be planned?

The audio-visual components consultation should occur as soon as the room goes into the planning stage—at the same stage as the electrical for the room. The best time is right before the drywall goes up. The installation is handled in two stages. The first is wire planning: the systems use low voltage but it's always best to coordinate with all other electrical. The second stage is putting in the final equipment.

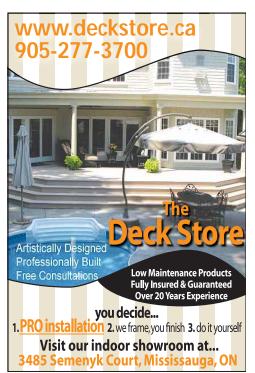
#### 4. What are the benefits of having a properly customized system vs. a store-bought system?

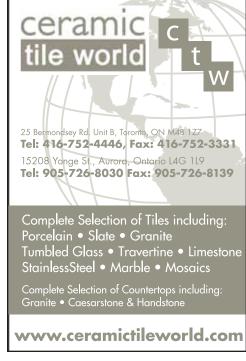
Your system will be much more user-friendly, it will be customized to your needs and requirements, and it will better fit the décor and layout of the space. One of the more popular components is a hidden speaker that disappears into the walls with a skim coat of dry wall. They are treated like any other surface of the wall, able to be painted or even to have wallpaper adhered over them. The manufacturer offers a 10 year warranty on them that will even cover wall repair should they need to be accessed.

#### 5. Once the system is installed, is upgrading an option?

If the proper wiring is in place, then any system can be upgraded. From a basic system to a more expensive one, it's imperative to get the electrical done right from the start.

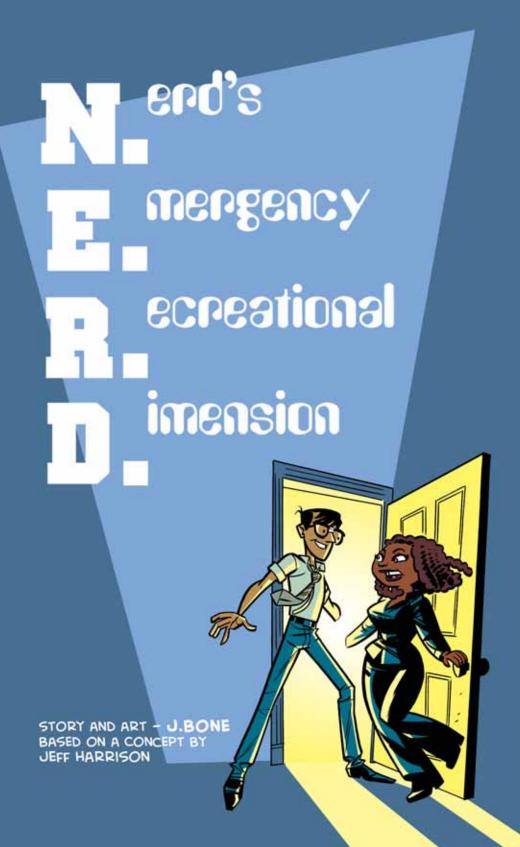




























































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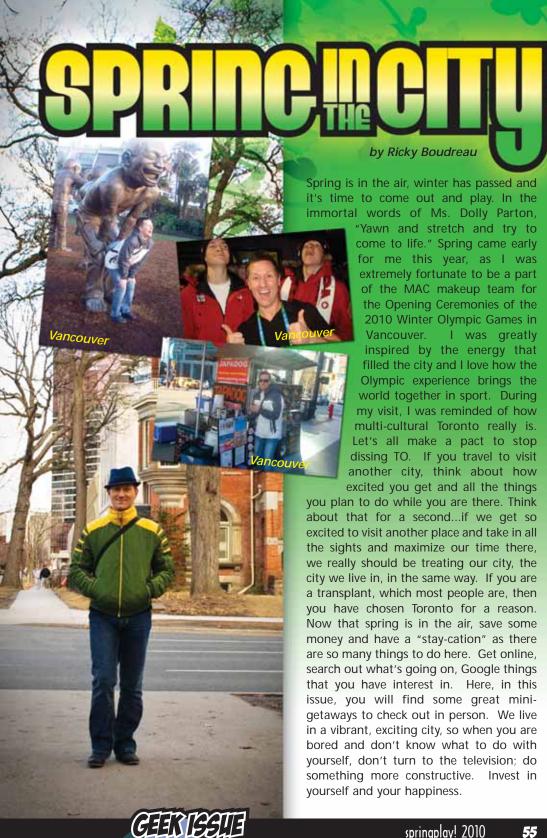
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The Official Directory of the Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.









#### Science and Geek Stuff

#### Harry Potter: The Exhibition

April 9 to August 22 Ontario Science Centre 10am-5pm daily 770 Don Mills Rd. 416.696,1000

www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

Tickets \$27.50 includes general admission

If you love the Harry Potter series then this is right up your "Diagon Alley." Wouldn't it be fun to try on the Sorting Hat™? Or pull a Mandrake from its pot in the Herbology vignette? You can even play a game of Quidditch™ while you're at it. You will also be visiting the Gryffindor™ common room (be sure to learn the password), the Great Hall and Hagrid's hut for perhaps a spot of tea. Parking is an additional \$8.

Tip: Cameras are not allowed and don't forget your wand.

#### Explore the Universe with Hubble

To May 8

Ontario Science Centre 770 Don Mills Rd. 416.696.1000 www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

Tickets \$12

With this experience you will be a part of the seventh awe inspiring film from the award winning IMAX Space Team, remember, IMAX films were invented right here in Canada. The film is narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio and it offers us a fantastic look at the Hubble Space Telescope and the impact of it on the way we live.

Tip: Make it a double feature on a Friday night.

#### A Must Mention

Free Fridays Ontario Science Centre 770 Don Mills Rd. 416.696.1000

www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

The Ontario Science Centre started something new this past fall. Secondary school students can come and visit for free, on Fridays, after 2pm. That's pretty awesome! It will continue until the end of June, 2010. This is a commitment to making the amazing experiences, available to everyone. Bravo to you OSC. I think more attractions and places of learning should all follow suit so no one is left out. This does not include the Omnimax theatre or special

exhibitions. It is also not valid during statutory holidays. Tip: Valid student identification is needed for entrance.



#### **TCAF (Toronto Comic Arts Festival)**

May 8 to 9

Sat 9am – 5pm; Sun 12pm – 5pm Toronto Reference Library 789 Yonge Street torontocomics.com

Free

The Toronto Comic Arts Festival is a unique expo featuring two full days of comics-related events, including readings, presentations, panel discussions, gallery shows and a large exhibition area featuring publishers and comic authors and artists.

Tip: Most artists will be happy to sign anything you purchase from them.

#### Arts and Culture

#### Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs

To May 2 Art Gallery of Ontario 317 Dundas Street West 416.979.6648 www.ago.net

Tickets \$34.50 - \$16.50

King Tut's exhibit is making its only Canadian stop at the Art Gallery of Ontario. See over 130 pieces—some never seen before—from the boy king's tomb and ancient sites of some of the most important Egyptian rulers of the time.

Tip: You can pre-register for tickets at www.kingtut.org; catch him before he disappears.



#### Rembrandt / Freud: Etchings from Life

To May 23 Art Gallery of Ontario 317 Dundas Street West 416.979.6648 www.ago.net

Tickets \$18

If you are an art aficionado then this is a must see. It's an exhibition of etchings, done by no other then Rembrandt and Freud. Both had a great ability to capture the persona of their sitter in portrait. This is the first comparison exhibition of its kind and the first time in a Canadian art museum.

Tip: Hit up Google and do a little research before, so you are more familiar with these two greats.

#### **Tour Guys Walking Tours**

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These Tour Guys offer FREE public downtown walking tours. You can stroll through downtown while a local comedian and a professional guide, entertain and educate you. You may learn about the history of Chinatown or what makes Kensington Market so cool.

Tip: Wear comfy walking shoes.

#### Live Performances

#### Frankenstein

April 29 to May 29 The Canadian Stage Company Bluma Appel Theatre 26 Berkeley Street 416.368.3110 www.canstage.com Tickets \$20 - \$92

This is a Canadian "monster hit," coming to us from Edmonton. It has had a successful run in Western Canada and is a great musical adaptation of Mary Shelley's classic novel. Frankenstein is about the universal quest for love and acceptance as well as the consequences of interfering with nature.

Tip: Rent Young Frankenstein before going and enjoy the genius of Madeline Kahn.





#### Idomeneo

May 9 to 29 Canadian Opera Company Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts 145 Queen Street West www.coc.ca

#### Tickets start at \$62

Idomeneo, is the King of Crete, and is sailing home after his victory in the Trojan war. Neptune, God of the Sea, saves him from death and in return, he vows to sacrifice the first person he meets on shore. The incredible music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart comes alive in this performance and is some of the most heartfelt, ever written for the human voice.

Tip: The performance is approximately 3 hours and 10 minutes long with one intermission, so plan your bathroom break accordingly.

#### Sears Stars on Ice

Friday, April 30 7:30 pm Air Canada Centre 50 Bay Street www.starsonice.ca www.theaircanadacentre.com

#### Tickets start at \$25

Stars on Ice was founded in 1986 by skating icon and Olympic Gold Medalist Scott Hamilton and originated in the United States. In 1991, Stars on Ice began to tour Canada. They have performed over 200 shows, across North America in over two decades. The Sears Stars on Ice Presented by Samsung Tour includes amazingly talented cast members like: four-time World Champion & four-time Canadian National Champion Kurt Browning; World Silver Medalist, six-time Canadian National Champion and 2010 Olympic Team Member, Joannie Rochette: and Olympic Medalist, World Champion and three-time Canadian National Champion, Jeffrey Buttle. A must see for those of us into figure skating.

Tip: Dress in layers and this time, don't leave your camera at home.

#### Food and Festivals

#### **Supperworks**

The Beach 1745 Queen St. E 416.690.3535

Mon to Fri 9am - 6pm; Sat 9am - 1pm

www.supperworks.com

This has to be one of the coolest things I've heard of in a while. For those of us who are super busy and who may not even be that great in the kitchen or even like to cook, look out cause here comes Supperworks. They offer 14 entrees per month. Everything is washed and pre chopped for you, simply assemble, pack, take home and then freeze! Ready made meals you pop into the oven and voila, bon appetite! Entrees serve 4-6 people, they will even split them up into 2-3 serving portions as well. Each serving works out to under \$5 each. If you can't make it to a location to do it your self, place your order and they will make everything for you and all you have to do is pick them up!

Tip: This sounds like the best baby shower gift ever, scoring you brownie points...big time.

#### Zelda's

692 Yonge St. 416.922.2526 www.zeldas.ca

Come on in and check out the new Zelda's, now located on Yonge Street at Isabella. The menu still has some of your old favourites with some new additions. They boast a year round patio as well as a stage with a stripper pole, not that any of the Drag Queens will be stripping—that will ruin a meal! If comfort food is what you want, then Zelda's s one

Tip: Go on a Friday night and enjoy your meal while the fabulous Miss Conception performs.

#### The Reservoir Lounge

52 Wellington St. 416.955.0887

place to check out.

www.reservoirlounge.com

Mon. FREE; Tue to Thu \$5; Fri to Sat \$7 before 9, \$10 after; Sun \$5

The Reservoir Lounge is a great spot to hook up with friends and co-workers, for after-work cocktails. They host a live house band, and each night features someone different. Celebrity artists have been discovered here, like Michael Buble. They love showcasing, emerging talent, in a very relaxing environment. It has great charm and you don't feel like you're in Toronto.

Tip: A great place to start off your evening and maybe finish it as well.

#### **Camros Organic Eatery**

25 Hayden St. 416.960.0723

www.camroseatery.com

Camros Organic Eatery is an amazing place to stop in and pick up a very healthy and satisfying lunch. This family owned and operated restaurant was basically born out of wanting pesticide free food. They came up with delicious, Persian dishes to serve, using produce from Ontario Farmers. It won the *Eye Weekly*, Reader's Choice Award for best organic restaurant, in 2009.

Tip: Make someone's day by treating them to lunch!



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 sand Dame Shirley Bassey look gorgeous. Heard of a new hot spot? Email him as inthecity@pinkplaymags.com

PHOTOGRAPHY by Robert Foster











## from the Heart

by Shelley A. Harrison

Over winter, nature goes dormant leaving a stark colourless landscape. We can feel the same over these cold months: unmotivated, reclusive, dulled. Let's face it, winter is long in this part of the hemisphere and our reserves of sun radiance from the summer only hold out so long! As life stirs again with the spring, energy wakes up, and colours emerge when the first flowers show their faces. We relax and get motivated again. Spring is also the time for cleaning up and clearing out. Whatever has accumulated within us in the dull of winter, needs to be removed. Just as we rake the dead leaves off our gardens in the spring to make way for new growth, we need to clear out our inner debris for new personal growth.

So let's tend to your inner landscape and get you ready for the sun. Inside your body, there are seven beautiful flowers that bloom...or not. Planted in a neat row along your spine, they reach from the floor of your pelvis to the top of your head. These blossoms are your seven chakras, spinning wheels of light in your energy body that pull energetic nourishment into your spine, your psyche, and your spirit.

In the Eastern mystical traditions, the chakras have always been symbolically depicted as beautiful lotus flowers of different colours and with a particular number of petals. Each lotus flower also entrains a particular range of frequencies into our aura to nourish the corresponding area of our body, mind, and spirit. Like a flower, if the lotuses are well tended by the gardener, they bloom, and the area of our life and body they affect, radiate health.

Going over your chakra system is like doing a good weeding, watering, and mulching. It's the perfect way to get ready for great things to bloom this season. So let's take a trip to your personal florist's shop.

#### 1st Chakra-Root

This energy gateway in your pelvic floor anchors your energy to the ground, like a tree with roots. It blossoms with four petals in a poinsettia red and connects you to the element of earth. When your garden is growing here you feel safe, secure, and stable. You will have lots of physical energy, and can provide for the basic necessities in life. Survival issues, fear, and feeling ungrounded are the results of a weak, damaged or blocked first chakra. Put some fertilizer on this flower by doing some vigorous exercise—cardio with sweat preferred—cleaning up your finances by getting taxes and bookkeeping done, or making a sound plan to tackle debt. Getting outside into nature and hanging with her low, slow, grounding vibe is also the perfect elixir for the root chakra.

#### 2nd Chakra-Pelvis

Tiger-lily orange, this chakra feeds energy into your pelvis, opening just above the pubic bone. It has six petals, and contains the element of water. It generates the energy of our sexuality and sensuality, creativity, playfulness, and good feelings about yourself, leading to self-love. Shame is what wilts its beauty. Moving emotions and creative energy is the best way to water it. Can you make time for creative expression through art, cooking, writing, or playing? Talking about your feelings with someone who cares, and changing negative self-talk to loving acknowledgement will help this flower open up.

#### 3rd Chakra-Solar Plexus

Dandelion yellow with ten petals, the 3rd chakra, which rests over your stomach area, is fire energy. When it radiates you will feel a strong sense of self, self-respect and self-confidence. You know who you are and you aren't afraid to put yourself out there. When it clouds over you will lack the self-esteem that gives you the energy to act. Shine the sun on this flower by taking a risk. Do something you have been avoiding out of fear.



The empowerment you build by tackling it will make this centre shine.

#### 4th Chakra-Heart

This lotus flower has twelve petals and vibrates emerald green over your heart. Here is where we feel love and connection with each other and all sentient beings, including animals and nature. If the bud is closed up we have hardened our heart for some reason. To open it up again, try sitting every night before bed and making prayers of gratitude, recognizing everything in your life that is good. Working to forgive past hurts is also necessary to cultivate this part of your garden.

#### 5th Chakra-Throat

Here we find a sixteen petalled flower of delphinium blue located in your throat. The energies of communication, truthfulness, and creative expression through your vocation flow through this centre. When you feel unable to speak your needs, speak your truth, or deliver your gifts through your work, you get shut down here. Getting some talk time with a personal coach to map out your career goals and desires is a smart way to declare your truth and get back in the blue.

#### 6th Chakra-Forehead

Between the eyebrows, in a deep indigo blue vibration, this chakra is usually depicted as having only two petals, but in reality if viewed in your actual auric body, it has 96 little vortexes swirling within the greater chakra. Now we're bloomin'! Deep insight, connection to the mystery of life, and imagination emanate from your brow. When the veil of mystery becomes a cloak of illusion, you are not seeing things as they are and live life according to false perception. Ecstatic spiritual experiences get this flower grooving. Meditate, dance, go to an uplifting ritual or religious service, or stand awestruck at the beauty of nature. Only you know what does it for you, so make time for it.

#### 7th Chakra-Crown

Unfolding out the top of your head, face open to the heavens, is a pure white lotus of a thousand petals. If you feel like you have a sense of the big picture of your life—your purpose and place within the greater patterns—this plant is well rooted. Negative beliefs about life that run your stories are the expression of distortion in this centre. A mantra to strengthen your connection

here: "Be still and know that I am god." A prayer that will allow higher powers to flow through you from above: "I open myself to divine guidance. I surrender myself to become as a channel for grace, healing, and service as the divine (or put your own word in here) directs my life."

This is just a little taste of the power that comes from understanding and working with your chakras. To go even deeper pick up a book or guided CD on the subject, or do some work with a Reiki practitioner or Energy Healer. Think flower power! Notice that the lotuses ascent up your spine in a rainbow bridge of light: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, white. And we know how much we love the rainbow in this community. As you unify yourself from within, you will bring ever more unity and harmony to the world around you. Enjoy your Spring in full colour!

Shelley A. Harrison is an
Energy Healer in Ottawa.
She graduated from the
Barbara Brennan School of
Healing 4-year professional
training and has been
working in private practice for
10 years. She visits Toronto
regularly to see clients and
visit her brother, Jeff, the
editor of this magazine. You
can write Shelley at
fromtheheart@inspiredcreative.ca



## spring horoscopes

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

This is a dynamic and exciting period in which you're surrounded by new opportunities and possibilities of all kinds, personally as well as professionally. You're redefining who you are, where you want to be in this world, and taking stock of your tangible assets as well as your unique talents and abilities. Enjoy!

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

At this time it's perfectly called for to put yourself and your needs first. Use this cycle to put yourself out there as an individual and get clear on the kind of life you truly want, and what kind of steps you need to take in order to get there.

Gemini: May 21 - Jun 20

Just before your birthday you'll need to rest and recuperate before this next new year of life comes around. There is a lovely combination of confusion and inspiration these days when it comes to your career and what you want it to look like. Just go with your intuition and you'll be fine.

Cancer: Jun 21 - Jul 22

You're in quite the social state of mind these days and there is an emphasis on some kind of organizational involvement. It's all about groups rather than you as an individual. Your career is undergoing major changes that are exciting and revolutionary—welcome the transformation because there is nothing to fear!

Leo: Jul 23 - Aug 22

Right now you are really "out there" in the world and focusing a lot of your time and energy on career matters. Mars continues to propel you forward in life, giving you the drive and energy you need to evolve personally and professionally. Just take care of your finances before venturing off into something new.

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

This is an ideal time to travel, learn something new, and put some more focus on your spiritual life. Learning what the higher meaning of your life is will bring you much success and contentment. Take care not to allow a turbulent relationship to throw you off course.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

Those of you born on or around October 1 have more than your fair share of pressure lately, but the universe never gives us anything we can't handle and ultimately grow from. Although it feels like an "all or nothing" time, you're simply experiencing the highs and lows of life in order to reach a more balanced state.

by Lawrence Grecco

Scorpio: Oct 23 - Nov21

You're being asked to spend a lot of time and energy on your closest relationships—your significant other, best friend, or business partner needs you to step back and really put them first right now. Career matters get energized after months of delays and setbacks, so enjoy the fruits of your labor and move forward!

Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 21

Your optimistic nature receives an energizing boost from Mars this Spring, inspiring you to put some more time and energy into your spiritual and/or educational life. Practical matters are also highlighted right now, and it's the perfect time to begin a sensible new health regimen.

Capricorn: Dec 24 - Jan 19

Those of you born on or around December 27 are undergoing a series of profound life transformations right now. Creativity is at an all time high and you're just teetering on the edge of a major development with regard to your career and overall direction in life. Be sure to take some time to relax and have fun, life can't be all work and no play.

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

You're keeping yourself just under the radar—shying away from social affairs. You're much more content to spend time alone at home or with a select few that you feel safe and comfortable with. Your relationship life gets an exciting jolt of energy so be sure to enjoy the new possibilities!

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

A sibling needs you, so do your best to give him or her your time and assistance. Any creative writing projects you are involved with receive a lot of help from the powers that be. Mars energizes you physically and encourages you to approach your daily routine with new vigor.

Lawrence Grecco is a professional astrologer and Zen Life Coach in New York City. He is also a student at the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary and a member of the board of directors of the National Council of Geocosmic Research, NYC chapter. He is available for personal or telephone readings'. Visit his web site at www.zenrising.com.



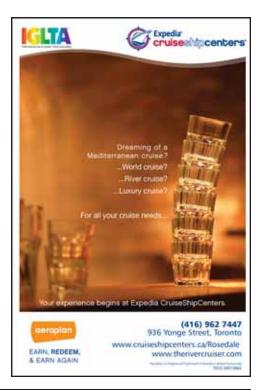


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MY FIRST EVER MEMORIES OF VIDEO GAMES ARE BRIEF FLASHES OF ARCADE OUTLETS BACK IN MY HOMETOWN OF MONTREAL. I REMEMBER STARING AT THE GIANT MACHINES. FULL OF LIGHTS AND BEEPING SOUNDS. AS I CLUTCHED IN MY HAND A FEW QUARTERS MORE PRECIOUS TO ME THAN DIAMONDS. GALAGA. PAC-MAN SPACE AND INVADERS BECKONED TO ME. IT'S AS IF THE MACHINES SPOKE LANGUAGE I COULD UNDERSTAND. I WAS HAPPIER THAN A HOBBIT AT A FOOT-FETISH CONVENTION.

Years later it was the clunky cube of the Colecovision, where I would eagerly play Dungeons & Dragons, then a succession of consoles and cartridges followed as my parents caved in to my begging for the latest in gaming technology.

It was the Nintendo 64 that changed everything with the advent of Role-Playing Games. Suddenly, I had found my one true gaming love. I could play wizards and warriors, casting devastating spells and killing monsters, as I watched my characters evolve and grow through the levels. I was hooked!

I didn't know that this love would one day save my sanity.

I was diagnosed with HIV in 1999. At the time, I was lucky to have a strong immune system so the medications didn't need to come into play for several years. Unfortunately, the disease progressed and in 2005 I was faced with a tough choice: take the meds or risk dying.

So I started a Kaletra/Truvada combo as an aggressive attempt to get my immune system

back from the brink. I don't know if you have an idea, but Kaletra gives you the runs like crazy, and Truvada really messes with your head. In my case, Truvada triggered major anxiety, insomnia and Agoraphobia. I was trapped in my house, afraid of underwear accidents, panic attacks and the outside world. My employer had no choice but to put me on disability.

It was then that I discovered World of Warcraft—WoW, as it's better known. It combined not only my love of sword and sorcery, but it offered a social outlet, as it's one of the world's most popular online games. I joined a group of LGBT players and spent many sleepless nights exploring the wonders of Azeroth with my new friends.

The kind people of my Guild kept me aloft through some dark times, as I waded through depression and sickness. One moment shines in my mind: New Year's Eve 2006. Alone and wretchedly ill in my apartment, I danced in pixel form with fellow Guildmates in the pirate town of Booty Bay, music blaring from my radio. I had four people I had never met call me on the phone that night to wish me Happy New Year. I didn't feel lonely one bit.

Today my meds have no serious side effects, but I still play WoW. I have met people in-game that have become real-life friends and with them, I have beaten my med-induced fear of people and the outside world. All from inside a video game.

Sébastien Goulet is an avid gamer, forum lurker, blogger for positivelite.com and Stonewall Café and has over 25 years of experience as a Nerd (complete with high-school beatings). Former Guild Leader of one of World of Warcraft's biggest LGBT Guilds, Game Master of countless Dungeons & Dragons campaigns and expert of all things gadgety, he brings his unique view of life on the Geek side.





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