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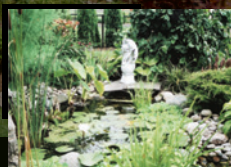


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pretty in pink



From the Publisher

I've wanted to create the theme for the cover of this issue for a very very long time, and I finally had an occasion (thank you Paramount Studios for giving us your blessings to pay homage to this beloved film).

Why *Pretty in Pink*? Because it fits with celebrating the 20th anniversary of our sister publication *The Pink Pages Directory* in July. Why the '80s? Because Toronto's oldest gay and lesbian directory of businesses and services catering to our community, was first published at the end of that tumultuous decade.

In the planning stages for this issue I had a hard time convincing Jeff, our Editor-in-Chief, how an '80s themed issue would be relevant today. He wanted me to sell him on how an era past can be of interest to our readers today.

I am a kid of the '80s and came to Canada at the end of the '80s. My memories growing up are mostly of that time. Though I have to admit, by my nature I would tend to gravitate to a simpler era. They were certainly not simple by any means. It was an era of excess. From entertainment to partying, to drugs, to sex—that decade was loaded! I'm fascinated by the excess we allowed ourselves to partake in as a society. Writing this I'm realizing I may have a love-hate relationship with it, and that does not surprise me.

It is the pop culture part of the '80s though, that I am most attracted and attached to. I would argue that they were a very influential decade, with its culture still resonating now. Many people who made it big back then are still around these days. Madonna is relevant, again. George Michael can still pack a music hall. Boy George is back in the news (albeit for kidnapping and tying up hustlers). Cyndi Lauper is showing us her True Colours. Welcome back Duran Duran and Pet Shop Boys.

The images from the '80s are unforgettable. The leg warmers, the tossed up hair, the heavy make-up and glitter, the over-the-top clothes...the horror! *Flashdance* and *Footloose*, *Dynasty* and *Dallas*, the '80s were full of pop culture references and some of my personal favorite music and movies. Two at the top of my list remain *Pretty in Pink* and *Sixteen Candles* (and *Some Kind of Wonderful*, but I will stop there before I start embarrassing myself). I guess you can't beat movies with an "awkward high school years" theme for a gay boy to relate to.

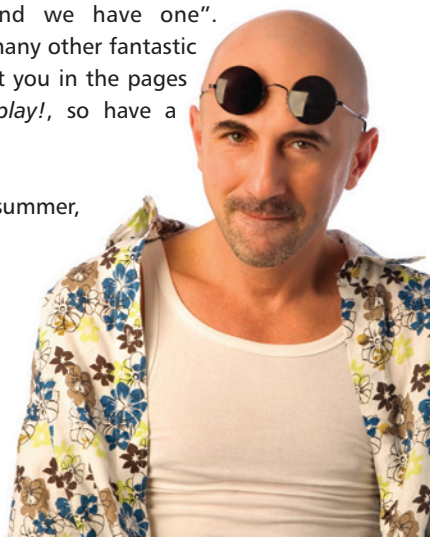
I do hope you enjoy this special issue. Judge for yourself the relevance of the topic and if you think I won my argument with our Editor-in-Chief feel free to write us and let us know (if I didn't...no need to write).

Enough with the kidding and let me tell you we have been planning this issue and working on it for a while. The team of talented editors, writers, illustrators and photographers continue to fill the pages with what we hope to be a fun and informative read. I'm very proud to work with such talented people on every new issue.

I want to take a moment to welcome aboard Deb Pearce and Shaun Proulx who kick off our exciting new and ongoing column "Our Opinion...and we have one". That, plus many other fantastic pieces await you in the pages of *summerplay!*, so have a good read.

Enjoy your summer,

Antoine Elhashem



summerplay!

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In This Issue

13 Lovers in a Dangerous Time
- Scott Dagostino

20 Old School Drag
- Kevin Sheard

24 Summer Survival Guide

29 There's Something About Samaná
- Don Stevens

46 The Touchables
- Josh Levy

Regular features

36 Our Opinion
- Deb Pearce & Shaun Proulx

39 Hot Artist: J. Bone
- Jeff Harrison

53 Summer in the City
- Ricky Boudreau

58 From the Heart & Summer Horoscope
- Judith Crane

62 Looking Back: George Pratt

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From the Editor

I don't have very many fond memories of the '80s, I was living my own nightmareish version of the "awkward high school years." Let me tell you, dressing up like your idols, Duran Duran, in a redneck town, population 1,500, doesn't make you a lot of friends; it does get you labeled a freak and beat up a lot though.

All I could think about was getting out of there, leaving those cretins behind and finally hitting the big city and hanging with the cool kids. After graduating, I headed straight for the Big Smoke and never looked back.

I'd always been open-minded and forward thinking, with a live and let live attitude, but discovering there were not only gay people in Toronto, but an entire village filled with them, sprawling over three square blocks, was fantastically overwhelming! So you can well imagine my first trip to Colby's, which by the time I darkened its doors in the early '90s, was the Sodom and Gomorrah of the promised land. I loved it!

I was a poor struggling student, dreaming of being an actor—yeah, that poor—but I went to Colby's every night of the week trying to soak up all the gayness I'd been missing all my life. Weeknights I had enough money for two beer, which I nursed from the time I arrived, until last call. Weekends I splurged on four, sometimes five beer throughout the night.

A lot of firsts happened in that bar. It was the first time I'd seen guys dancing, never mind with each other. I'll never forget

the first time I discovered the unbelievably studly strippers upstairs. And seeing my first drag queen ever—Michelle Ross—perform, took my breath away! When I wasn't on the dance floor, I always stood on the same step leading up to the top bar, the perfect vantage point for me to watch this gay life swirl by and for me to stare dreamily at my first impossible crush: Calvin, with the long, curly red hair. I thought he was absolutely dreamy!

The more I went and the better I got to know people in my, at the time, shy way, the more I slowly learned the amazing history of this remarkable place, fondly referred to as the Gaybourhood. How it had been forged by not one, but two major crises—the bath house raids of '81 and the soon to follow AIDS epidemic. I learned how this community became their own support and didn't collapse under these tests, but flourished instead.

Toronto became my home the moment I found my people, my community, so I'm thrilled to be raising a glass of pink champagne to the 20th anniversary of one of the pillars of our community, The Pink Pages Directory (and you too Woody's!).

We cover a lot of ground in this issue, so I'll leave you to discover it.

Have a wonderful summer and we'll see you in the fall,

Jeff Harrison



Letter to Editor

I went to bed last night, and my reading material was two back issues of your *Pink Play Mags*. I have to say, I am really impressed with the quality of them. I read a piece about Port Hope (*winterplay!* 2007), and it made me want to go back and relive a lot of memories I have of being there. Which I guess, means the article was successful in hitting the point. And yes, the positive attitude of the magazine is extremely refreshing. Don't lose that ever!!

Scott Young
Toronto



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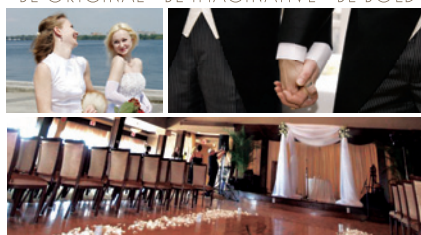


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Lovers in a dangerous time

By Scott Dagostino

For Toronto's gay community, the 1980s were our darkest—and finest—hour

"I wish I'd been born in the '80s," says **Tim McCaskell**, quoting a local high-school student who sighed, "The politics were so much more interesting and the music was so much better." McCaskell doesn't disagree: it's a typical reaction to what he calls, with a grin, "my dinosaur number"—the talk he gives to Toronto—area students on the 1981 bathhouse raids and the beginnings of the AIDS crisis. In a post—"Queer as Folk" culture, it's hard for anyone born after 1980 to see that decade as anything more than a brightly coloured, big-haired, synthesizer-scored time of frivolous excess, but for Toronto gay community, it was a time of dark distress and eventual triumph.

Smalltown Boy

"It was a huge change from Edmonton, let me tell you," says playwright **Brad Fraser**. On his first visit to Charly's, a gay disco above the St. Charles Tavern on Yonge Street, "I almost fainted...it was intoxicating! I had on my jeans and nice new-wave shirt and pointy-toed shows and everyone was in 501s and muscle shirts or no shirts at all, doing poppers on the dance floor." Since those early Yonge Street gay bars stopped serving at midnight, the early '80s were big on after-hours clubs.



Above the Parkside, "Stages was the most amazing club in the world," says Woody's manager **Dean Odorico**, "It was like a New York club in Toronto—state-of-the-art lights and all that." Fraser agrees that it was "the hottest dance club on the planet... They couldn't serve any alcohol so everybody was high." And outside at Church and Alexander, he says, "The entire street corner would be packed with men at one in the morning, standing around smoking and talking."

Do you really want to hurt me?

Another major component of the scene was, of course, the baths. "Why waste all night drinking beer?" laughs McCaskell. But on the night of February 5, 1981, an astonishing 286 men were arrested as 160 Toronto cops raided four bathhouses at once. It was the largest mass arrest in Canada since the October Crisis of 1970 and a young Odorico was working at the Romans bathhouse, watching "stormtroopers kicking doors down and mass arrests." McCaskell says **Gerald Hannon**, fellow member of the pioneering gay newspaper collective *The Body Politic*, called and told him to get down

to the nearby Club Toronto baths. “The paddy wagon was there and the cops were hauling people out,” says McCaskell. “This was before any human rights protections, remember. This middle-aged Portuguese guy said, ‘What’s going to happen to me now? My wife doesn’t know...is my name going to be in the papers?’ I didn’t know what to tell him.”

Rise up

The *Body Politic* members planned a protest right away but, says McCaskell, “we were really worried that no one would show up.” Former *BP* editor **Ed Jackson** jokes, “You’ve always had a smaller group of people who are activists and a larger group who are kind of turned off by it and wish they’d shut up.” But at 11pm that next night, after the bathhouse raids had been front-page news all day, thousands of people poured out onto Yonge Street to protest. “The police were overwhelmed and surprised,” says Odorico, “It wasn’t just a little bunch of fairies, it was a huge and angry mob.” Chanting “Fuck 52!” roughly 3,000 people marched to the police department’s 52 division at Dundas and University. It was surrounded by cops in



The Bathhouse raids

Hit me with your best shot

“Those demos went on until the spring,” says McCaskell, proudest of one crowd of 2000 people who protested police by simply sitting down Gandhi-style in the middle of Yonge Street. In June 1981, police raided two more bathhouses but this time the resulting protest on June 20th went badly. With gays vs. cops, homophobic gangs formed a third flank, armed with sticks with nails in them. “The whole crowd moved at them,” says McCaskell, “The police waded in. They smashed me across the top of the head. I went to hospital.” Despite the violence, Odorico says the protests “showed the establishment and the police that the gay community was a force to be reckoned with,” while Jackson says they “certainly brought more people into an activist frame of mind and a greater sense of being part of a community.”



The Bathhouse riots

Sisters are doing it for themselves

Heroes emerged from this new sense of community. In response to the police raids, the Metropolitan Church's **Rev. Brent Hawkes** staged a 25-day hunger strike, until the City of Toronto agreed to mediate between the police and the gay community. **George Hislop**, co-owner of the Barracks bathhouse, ran for public office in the spring of 1981 as a protest candidate. As such, he did surprisingly well, scoring nearly 10 percent of the total vote. Another protest, the gentle "Gay Freedom Rally" held in Grange Park, behind the AGO, became the first Pride Day, organized in part by future city councilor **Kyle Rae**. In 1983, the Pride party would include the **Parachute Club** performing "Rise Up," their anthem for this new sense of queer energy and optimism that the community was about to need more than ever.

Shake the disease

"It was pretty scary," says Odorico, as the first cases of AIDS were being reported in Canada in February 1982. "It's from poppers," Odorico was told as *The Body Politic* began reporting whatever could be learned. Jackson collected a group



Early Activism

that included activist **Michael Lynch**, the Hassle Free Clinic's **Robert Trow** and social worker **David Kelley**. Using the same decentralized structure that helped organize the bathhouse raid protests, this new "AIDS Committee of Toronto" set up their tiny offices above a Kentucky Fried Chicken on Wellesley Street. The top goal, says Jackson, was "getting safer-sex information out." Glad Day Bookshop owner **John Scythes** says, "For the first few years of AIDS, many gay men simply ignored it," but by the summer of 1985, that was impossible. "I remember when the *Enquirer* read "ROCK HUDSON HAS AIDS" and the first thing I thought was, "He kissed Krystle on *Dynasty!*" laughs Odorico, "But Rock Hudson was important because he was an icon that now had AIDS."

Total eclipse of the heart

By the late '80s, says Fraser, it was "the height of AIDS paranoia in Canada...Everybody was living in total fear. And those men on Alexander Street?" he asks, "I'll bet 90% of them were dead." The playwright ultimately moved back to Alberta for a few years: "Everything that was coming down was so fucking horrifying. I won't lie, it was part of why I left. A lot of people did that, tried to run from it by moving out of the big centres." Odorico credits his friends with keeping him here but says, "I lost count of the number of people I knew that had died. We lost a whole generation of artists, DJs, brilliant people...gone."

What have I done to deserve this?

As the AIDS crisis tore through our community, it threatened to undo decades



The famous "Steps"

of struggle for gay rights. "The acceptance level had gone up, then AIDS knocked it down again," says Odorico. Glad Day founder **Jearld Moldenhauer** had to fight Canada Customs banning *The Joy Of Gay Sex* and the police arresting his staff on obscenity charges. A Western Tech teacher named **Kenn Zeller** was viciously murdered in a High Park, gaybashed by a group of students in 1985. When McCaskell was asked to do some anti-racist work with the class, a student thanked him and said, "But sir, what about the queers? We can still call *them* names, can't we?" Any gay-positive teaching, McCaskell says, faced "huge resistance in the Board, even after the Zeller murder. They were very clear: 'We don't want you teaching our kids this kind of perversion.'" McCaskell eventually filled his book *Race to Equity* with such stories and says, "Nothing was couched in those days—you knew who your friends and enemies were."

Inbetween days

Fortunately for the collective sanity of the people in it, the '80s weren't all angry protests and AIDS vigils. In his exhaustive online memoirs, *Promiscuous Affections: A Life in The Bar, 1969-2000* (rbebout.com), historian **Rick Bébout** notes the saucy comings and goings of Toronto's bar scene ("The Barn became for many of us, myself included, The Bar") and considers the 1984 look of writer **David Vereschagin**: "wire rim

glasses; a loose purple shirt; turquoise pants; canary yellow sneakers. "Representative, maybe, but not for gay dance bars Chaps and Boots, both with a strict "no new wave" dress code." Fraser says, "I remember Chaps barred some gay guys because they were 'too punk'...If you didn't wear your 501s or Calvins or Lacoste golf shirt, you weren't accepted in Toronto."

Causing a commotion

Those rules would soon change: the punks joined a Queen West arts and music scene that had already spawned **Carole Pope** and *Rough Trade*, while 1986 saw the debut of *JDs*, a 'zine co-edited by filmmaker **Bruce LaBruce**, aiming to blend gays and punks into what he called "The New Lavender Panthers." Such a spirit informed activist Michael Lynch when he flew down to Washington on Saturday, October 10, 1987, for the March On Washington for lesbian and gay rights. By this point, AIDS had claimed more than 24,000 people in the US and about 1150 in Canada. A great many people wore T-shirts and buttons reading "Silence = Death," the motto of New York activist group ACT UP. Inspired, Lynch spearheaded the creation of AIDS Action Now! in Toronto. Through mass protests like "die-ins," aggressive posters and community organizing, "AAN was very effective in what it did," says Jackson.



The village early days

Sweet dreams are made of this

AAN was hardly alone in its success. Also in 1987, the Toronto People with AIDS Foundation was formed and ACT unveiled the first Fashion Cares fundraising event. But if there's one thing that everyone remembers about gay Toronto in the '80s, it's the Second Cup "Steps" at Church and Wellesley. Now replaced by a TD Canada Trust, the Steps were "a real gathering point," says McCaskell, "You had people hanging out there all the time—even in the winter." Immortalized in a recurring sketch by "Kid in the Hall" **Scott Thompson**, the Steps defined "that sense of Church and Wellesley being *the* place, *the* corner," says Jackson, but what really sealed the deal for Church Street as Toronto's gay mecca was the opening of Woody's in 1989. Flanked by Maple Leaf Gardens and a row of steakhouses, "People said we'd be closed within six months!" laughs Odorico. Jackson says, "I think Woody's was very responsive to what the community wanted. They took the lead in raising a lot of money for gay and AIDS-related causes. They planted the foundation firmly."



Pride celebrations of the past

he says, "I think we have a much more physically diverse community now." Jackson agrees, warning not to romanticize the past too much: "That gay community excluded a lot of people." Sure, as gay Toronto grappled with police invasions, AIDS and homophobia, we had to stick together or die but now, says Jackson, "there's more people who have differing opinions." This seems

like a natural evolution but McCaskell

worries that "if gay people's lives are now so different from each other, how will you ever get them together when a crisis comes? The 'kids today' have gained a sense of individual possibility at the expense of the community purpose," he says, mourning a time when "that common gayness was enough to hold us together."

"Well," says Jackson,

"even then nothing was simple but it was a pretty exciting time. We were dealing with a lot but I think that we did it very well, actually." All true, even if one can't help but walk by the Sobey's supermarket on Yonge Street and think of Stages.

All touch and no contact

Brad Fraser came back to Toronto to see a community that hadn't survived but *triumphed*. "By 1993, there was a real scene again," he says, "We had raves and sex parties and backrooms." More importantly,

Scott Dagostino is a Toronto-based freelance writer who adores the city that Canada loves to hate. Scott is the new Editor-in-Chief of "the LOCAL BIZ magazine", a new community magazine for the Durham Region from the publishers of Pink Play Mags. Scott is the former managing editor of fab, he also writes for Xtra! and spent his youth working in three of Toronto's best bookstores. He rambles on at www.scottdagostino.com

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Old School Drag

By Kevin Sheard



During the late 1980's patrons at Trax demanded that drag be banned from the bar, both as entertainment and as customers.

This was a wide spread trend at the time, one steadfastly condemned by the entire local gay media. The flamboyant, shrill and attention seeking behaviour of "Screaming Gina," a cross-dressing regular dance club patron, fuelled much of the reaction and public discussion. If you didn't see her in the club, you certainly heard her. For some, she was simply annoying, while others considered her freakish and grotesque. Many directly confronted her and yet she chose to defend her right to scream her tits off, using the gay media to support her cause. As the Trax entertainment manager, I was submerged into the debate and was constantly challenged to find events to satisfy the difficult tastes of the "Marlboro Man" clientele.

George Pratt, once owner of the legendary Colby's (now owner of George's Play), a club which catered to the younger dance crowd, never faced the same predicament. "At Colby's, the drag shows were part of the smoke and mirror routine used to convince the police that there was nothing dirty going on," he recalls. "In the early days, drag was a special occasion, like Halloween or a Saturday night show. The drag shows developed a following of their own and more and more performers came on the scene. Once the bar owners saw that there was money to be made, resistance quickly disappeared."

The late Rusty Ryan, who became a national star by appearing across the country and in the "Outrageous" films, was among the first to appear regularly in Toronto gay clubs. The first time I saw his slick, ribald Vegas style act was at a mainstream night club in Yorkville, where he performed his famous "My Boy Lollipop" routine. Upon giving a lady a lollipop Ryan would ask if she "liked it when men gave her something hard to suck on." He then would caution her not to do so, explaining "that's how I got started."

Pratt remembers, "There were limited gay places to perform in and most of the good entertainers made their money from straight venues." Ryan's banter easily transferred to the gay stages and Rusty became many gay men's first exposure to camp humour.

The grandest drag events were the annual Halloween costume contests, often featuring a first place prize of \$1,000 cash. One year a hearse arrived at Cornelius Bar on Yonge Street transporting a coffin (that was carried up to the second floor) from which Lulu Temple Black emerged and performed as Judy Garland. In 1981, after Diana married Prince Charles, a drag Miss Piggy wore a knock-off wedding dress, complete with a satin train so exaggerated, some bridal attendants with the end of it were still waiting to get into the club as Piggy left to continue her tour. Such moments, left an indelible mark on the community. By 1987, with the introduction of The Imperial Court and the Casey House fund raiser D.Q., drag re-emerged everywhere with a feverish popularity.

Trax then hired a touring night club act, The Imposters, for a weekly Sunday night show, with a budget of \$1,200. However, there were some exacting conditions: The Imposters were exclusive to Trax; each show had to play until the then closing time of 11 p.m. (and not later, when drinks couldn't be served); all performers were required to present at least one new performance number and the late Jackie Loren had to appear in the finale in a brand new costume. The very same



male patrons, all mustached clones, who once shunned drag, now drank all evening waiting for the briefly held thrill of seeing Jackie's anticipated new costume.

These strict terms were responsible for an upswing in sales, which covered the show cost. No one will ever forget Jackie's initial appearance as Cher, with the butterfly wings that opened at the near conclusion of her performance of "The Way of Love." The Imposters also included the late and great Danny Love, always breath-taking as Bette Midler; J.J. Murray whose Dolly Parton costuming was magnificent; and later in the run, Chris Peterson who became renowned for his Lucy impersonation. They never mingled and



THE GREAT IMPOSTERS

drank with the audience before the show, remaining secluded in their dressing room so their first appearance had the wonderful element of surprise.

Michelle Ross, a Colby's headliner, now performing at George's Play, presents a brilliant and compelling illusion as Diana Ross. When Motown recording star, Mary Wilson of "The Supremes" performed at Trax in 1988, Michelle was hired to make a surprise appearance as Diana Ross. So accurate is her illusion, she was able to appear as Diana (unannounced) behind Wilson during a Supremes' medley, all to the shrieking delight of the scandal hungry audience. Wilson immediately caught on and brilliantly quipped, "There she is, in the back, where she belongs."

Drag legend Michelle Du Barry, an original Great Imposter, approaches the illusion differently. Although she comes from a background in community theatre, her emphasis is glamour, the end result is early Hollywood inspired and flawless. Du Barry is so secure in her persona that she is able to present an alter-ego as Anita Moday who mocks glamour, femininity and good taste, firmly anchored in the great clown tradition of Red Skelton.

"Dressing up is now common," Pratt observes. "In the old days only the performers dressed up. Now people, like Enza, have more freedom and can put on a dress to go to work at the bank. Drag is also being used as a pick-up routine. We really have come a long way, especially with the freedom to choose. We don't need a moustache and a plaid shirt to get laid any longer."

Traditional drag was once all smoke and mirrors and the audience wanted to be let in on the joke—the lady is a man! It was a broad slapstick turn that was at the very least, funny, with T.V. icons such as Milton Berle, Flip Wilson, Harvey Korman and even Bugs Bunny frequently engaging in it as an entertaining dramatic ploy. Nowadays, a lot of that tongue-in-cheek mystery seems to have disappeared, with today's drag performers more concerned with perfecting the illusion of becoming a woman, rather than the classic man in a dress.

Kevin Sheard is an arts professional working as a playwright, director, producer, actor and entertainer.

PHOTOS courtesy of Michele Du Barry



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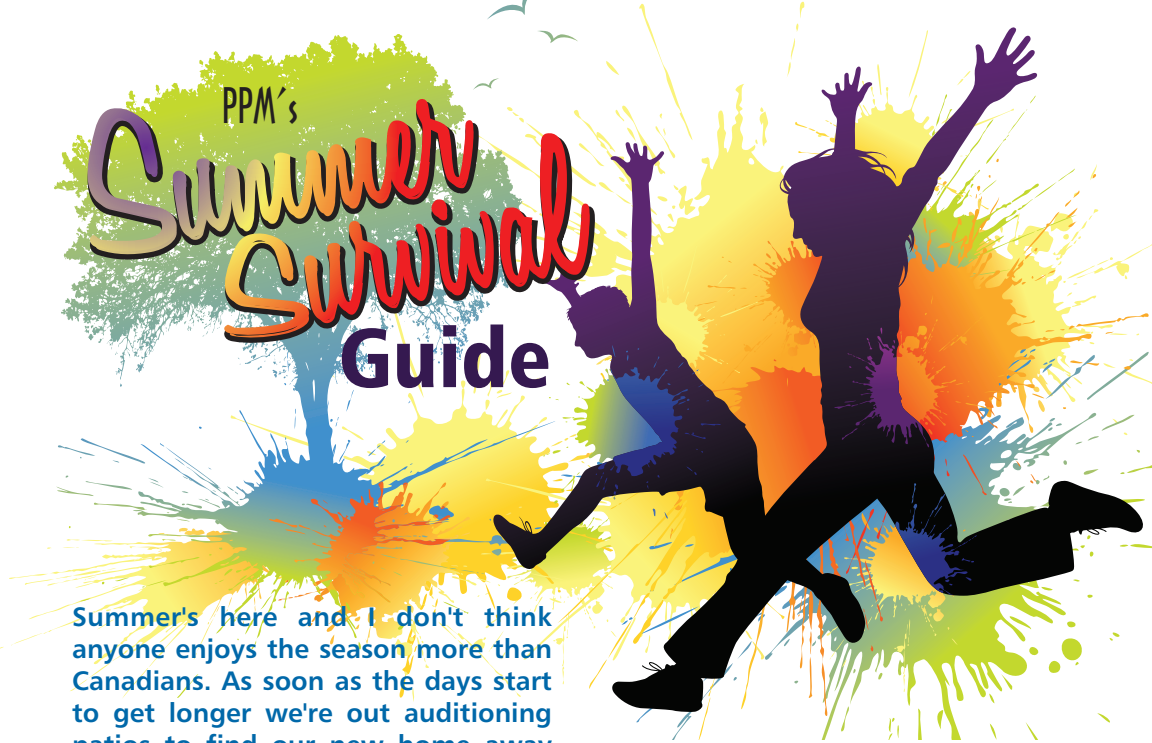
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PPM's Summer Survival Guide

Summer's here and I don't think anyone enjoys the season more than Canadians. As soon as the days start to get longer we're out auditioning patios to find our new home away from home, shopping around for this year's sexy new swimsuit, driving up to the cottage to get it all set up, turning our balconies into little urban oases, and of course, revving up for Pride.

With so much to do and so little time to do it in (summer always seems to be the shortest season, doesn't it?), grab your favourite fruity drink and peruse the official Pink Play Mags Summer Survival Guide. We've got you covered, so you can get the most out the sunny season with a minimal amount of work, because after all, summer is best spent soaking up the rays, while sipping a cocktail with friends.

Summer

It's important to know what you want in a patio. Do you like to see and be seen as you watch the world go by? Or do you prefer an urban retreat in the heart of the city? Maybe a free BBQ and ass-less chaps are more up your alley. Our thriving metropolis is known for its patio culture, so I can guarantee you, no matter what your tastes for outdoor wining and dining, there is at least one public backyard tailored just for you and your crew.

If you keep a couple of things in mind, your patio hopping will be the social hub of your summer. Look for a place with umbrellas or some shade. You'll want to stay the whole day and alcohol is very dehydrating—nothing will ruin your day more than sunburn or sunstroke. And don't forget to give your fair skinned friends a break from the harsh rays. A good view is paramount, whether it's lush greenery or sexy pedestrians, just make sure you're not sitting across from the garbage dumpster. One last thing, the railing seats around the edge are always prime spots, just be sure to watch for run-by thieves; keep any eye on your valuables like purses, cell phones, iPods and cameras.

Pools & Beaches

The first thing you need to know is the Toronto Parks and Recreation Pool Hotline—yes there is a hotline to tell you when your pool opens for the season and what the hours are: 416.338.7665.

The gayest pool in town is the Riverdale Pool, in the lush Riverdale Park, just south of the Danforth on Broadview. It's really quite funny to arrive and see all the families with splashing, screaming kids in the shallow end and then the row upon row of Speedo clad beefcake lounging around the deep end. The other popular pool with the guys and gals is the D.D. Summerville Pool

(1867 Lake Shore Blvd. East), a full-sized Olympic pool, where many a ripped athlete can be found. Whichever your choice, be aware the lifeguards are extremely strict about what you can bring out on deck with you, which is typically little more than your towel, flip-flops, a bottle of water and a book or MP3 player. Food can be tricky and bags are prohibited, but I've gotten away with a small murse that I smuggled grapes in to snack on.

If you'd rather avoid the kids, then the beach is a sure bet. Hanlan's Point, with clothing optional section, and Cherry Beach are the popular choices with the babes and dudes. The secret to getting the most out of the beach, and not on you personally, is an old bed sheet laid down first and then topped with the biggest towel you can stuff in your bag—dollar stores are fantastic for picking these up so you won't be ruining those great deals you scored at Bed, Bath and Beyond. Even better, for a nominal fee you can rent lounge chairs and umbrellas, mere feet away, installation and delivery included.

The beach makes the perfect mini-getaway. You feel like you've left the hubbub of the hectic city behind for a day and all it'll cost you is the price of a ferry ride. It takes less than an hour to be sprawled on the hot sand, listening to the water slap on the shore. If you've been there all day, be sure to leave yourself some time for a quick shower before heading out again; nothing gives you unwanted rash more than sand in the wrong crevasses.

One last piece of advice: avoid the island on long weekends, unless you have infinite patience. The lines are long and full of swarms of families with kids. If you absolutely cannot pass up the gorgeous weather, head a block west to the Second Cup and hire yourself a water taxi—the extra money is well worth avoiding the frustrating wait.

For both excursions bring a lock, and some change: 4 quarters, 2 loonies and a toonie. You have a combo lock for the gym, so carry it around with you all summer; you'll be amazed at how often you need it. Most places will have lockers for you to ditch your stuff in so you don't have to worry about toting it around when you are in the mood to wander off and check out the sights; those that actually require you to throw some coins in the slot to get the key out, have always used some variation on the change I just listed, so

you'll be all set. You'll even be able to lend some to that hot locker neighbour you just cozied up to, 'cuz there ain't no such thing as a change machine around those places.

Getting Out of Town

Everyone wants to get out of town in the summer and it seems everyone and their friend's aunt has a cottage. Gridlock is not fun. Being stuck in endless traffic as you watch your precious time relaxing on the water with a cocktail tick away, is enough to give anyone road rage. Pack a lunch with snacks, that way you can drive straight through, stopping only for washroom breaks. Bring entertainment so you are distracted from the mind-numbing pace you seem to be moving at. Portable DVD players are great to keep backseat drivers and kids chillaxed, but even at a leisurely pace, not a good idea for the front seat. The best road trips though, are the ones with their own soundtrack, so bring your fave tunes and you'll never forget this summer because it'll all come rushing back anytime you year "that" song.

Vary your departure and return. Leave for the cottage Thursday night or ridiculously early Friday Morning—I suggest bribing someone else to drive the first shift by offering to spring for gourmet coffee and chocolate croissants. Come home late Sunday night, or early Monday morning—For those



of you who like to negotiate an extra day off from the office with the boss, ask for the Monday off rather than the Friday and you're likely to see half the traffic during your trips.

Balcony & Backyard Oasis

No car? No friends with a cottage? Looking for a little serenity during the humid weather? Create your own urban oasis on your balcony or in your backyard. Pick up a few planters from your local hardware store and fill them with lots of lush green plants and plenty of flowers to enjoy.

For the really ambitious and creative, nothing says Zen getaway more than a trickling water feature. You can buy ready made ones for under \$100, that are small enough to sit on your patio table, or spend upwards of \$500 or more for the stand alone miniature cascading waterfalls. If you shop around you're sure to find one that suits your tastes and fits your budget. If you've got a DIY streak, or a friend who does, then you can typically pick up all the basic materials you need (tubs, bins, buckets, water pump and stone) to create your own customized fountain.

To complete the look, green Astroturf is cheap, can usually be cut to size at local hardware store and looks like your little outdoor space in the sky has a lawn. Add a favourite wind chime, a few candles, a bright table cloth, et voila! You've got the perfect scene for dinner guests or a quiet retreat for reading.

Pride

Ah Pride—gay Christmas for so many people. Whether this is your first or your hundredth, here's a few pointers to keep in mind so you can get the most out of this festive time of year. Find some shade to relax in for part of the day. Wear sunscreen, and try for water proof. I can't say this enough, I don't know how many Prides I've been to and seen those people with the painful looking lobster skin. Plan your washroom breaks, especially you ladies with tiny bladders. Just because you suddenly have to go doesn't mean you can—port-a-potty line-ups are the worst! On a float or going wild this year? That body paint you've just covered yourself in most likely doesn't contain sunscreen, so watch out! You will still get



burned, and quite badly, depending on how much sun the pigment you're wearing absorbs.

Bring a camera, because this is one of those events you'll want to look back on and reminisce over. If you don't want to risk losing that expensive digital, or subject it to one too many spilled drinks, go for a disposable. They're cheap, often include picture development in the purchase price and take really great pictures in daylight conditions.

Planning ahead of time, especially if you're trying to coordinate with friends or visitors, will allow you to enjoy the actual week more thoroughly. Take a look at the numerous programs put out; make a rough plan of who and what you want to see. Pick a meeting spot at a friend's place, or nearby on one of the side streets away from the main strip—Church Street turns into a bustling, thrilling circus of people, so it's easy to lose your friends and hard to find them. Cell phones are amazing for a quick text or call to rendez-vous at a designated chillaxing spot to regroup for the next whirl of adventure.

No matter what your pleasure this sizzling season, you'll be all set to get out there and maximize your enjoyment.



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There's Something About Samaná

By Don Stevens

"Samaná? Never heard of it. Where is it?"

That's what friends said when I told them my partner and I were traveling to the Dominican Republic's Samaná Peninsula for a winter getaway. We had never heard of it ourselves until we saw a newspaper ad promoting a package deal at a five-star, all-inclusive resort. The price was reasonable, but was it a destination we would enjoy? Some quick Internet research provided the answer: an emphatic "yes!"

The Samaná Peninsula is a narrow finger of land poking into the Atlantic Ocean off the Dominican Republic's northeast coast, roughly halfway between Puerto Plata to the northwest, and Punta Cana to the southeast. Just 40 km long and 15 km wide, the region is blessed with rugged mountain terrain, lush rainforest hillsides and some of the Caribbean's best beaches. Despite its abundant natural scenery, the region remains unscathed by rampant development. There are only a handful of major hotel properties scattered around the peninsula, with no sprawling resorts crowding the beachfronts. The area's premier attraction—humpback whale watching—lures just 45,000 tourists between mid-January and mid-March each year.

Great scenery, beautiful beaches, whales, no crowds—it sounded wonderful. The resort, the Gran Bahia Principe Cayacoa, sounded terrific, too, with two beaches, two pools, a buffet dining room, three restaurants, pool bars, cocktail lounge,

disco, spa and gym. Add to that various water-sports activities and optional tour excursions, the Cayacoa offered everything we wanted. We booked our trip immediately.

When our flight landed at Samaná's El Catey International Airport, the temperature was 24C with partly cloudy skies. We had gone from winter to summer in only four hours!

But the 75-minute bus ride from the airport to the resort gave us a quite a reality check; although Samaná is rich in natural beauty, it's not your typical paradise. Like other parts of the Dominican Republic, there is considerable poverty and a low standard of living.



As our bus lurched eastward along bumpy Highway 5, we were surprised to see scores of dilapidated shacks and tiny makeshift houses, that clearly lacked electricity and probably had no indoor plumbing, juxtaposed with many small, well-kept homes sporting neat grounds, as well as gated neighbourhoods and some impressive, large estates.

The rustic countryside was a welcome diversion. We saw forests of tall, graceful palm trees, rolling hillsides covered in lush green vegetation, and beautiful bougainvillea vines bursting with bright blooms. Hawks soared high above, while countless domestic birds and animals—chickens, donkeys, goats, horses and cows—roamed nearby yards and fields. At one point, our bus had to swerve around a farmer herding two dozen bulls down the highway.

Arriving at the town proper, Highway 5 became the busy main street, Avenue Malecón. Once a quiet fishing village, the launch of whale watching tours in 1985 sparked a boom in local tourism. The bustling town now boasts a population of 13,000, with gift shops, restaurants, bars, a crowded outdoor marketplace, tour offices and even a Scotiabank.

Across the road, a pleasant seaside promenade overlooks a marina that manages a steady traffic of fishing vessels, tour boats and tenders that shuttle passengers back and forth from cruise ships.

Our bus turned off Avenue Malecón and drove up a twisting road to the Gran Bahia Principe Cayacoa, our elegant, 295-room resort perched atop a steep hillside overlooking the town and Samaná Bay. We were impressed. The Cayacoa looked more like an upscale, sophisticated hotel than an all-inclusive resort, but retained a relaxed, casual atmosphere.

Our room was spacious and comfortable, with a big private balcony

offering fabulous panoramic views of the harbour, the Bay, sun-drenched Levantado Island 5 km offshore, two smaller uninhabited islands connected by bridges to the hillside next to the hotel and the lovely main resort beach.



We would have been content to stay at the resort all week, as some guests did, simply strolling the landscaped grounds, sun tanning and swimming, relaxing on our balcony, or just eating and drinking—the top two leisure activities at all-inclusive resorts everywhere.

And we did do all that, but also took walks off the property nearly every day. Yes, it is safe to leave the resort. After seeing rifle-toting tourist police patrolling the beach, we wondered if it was too dangerous to venture beyond the front gate. However, our tour rep told us it's routine for police and security guards in the Dominican Republic to carry firearms, and he insisted we would be fine.

Viewed from the resort, Samaná looks quite pretty. The rolling hills above the harbour are dense with palm trees and lush tropical vegetation. Colourful houses and apartment buildings cling to the steep green slopes. Tourists and locals stroll the wide, curving waterfront park. Boats slip in and out of the marina, while the calm water gently rocks dozens of sailboats and speedboats anchored in the harbour. We heard merengue—immensely popular music

in the Dominican Republic—whenever a breeze blew our way.

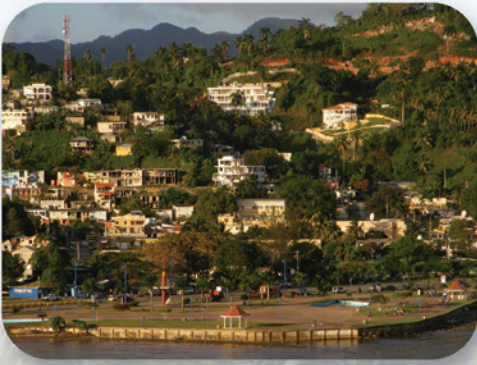
The town looks much different up close. The road from the hotel leads us to Pueblo Principe, a quaint Caribbean-style strip mall on Avenue Malecón. Operated by the Gran Bahia hotel chain, its shops, bars, cafés, casino, and nightly live entertainment cater to hotel guests and other tourists. The Pueblo's pastel-hued buildings and immaculate landscaping remind us of Disney World; so prim and perfect, it feels fake and out of place, particularly since it's surrounded by a gritty, working-class neighbourhood with many buildings in sore need of repainting and repair. But that's a big part of Samaná's charm; it hasn't been artificially "prettied-up" for tourists. It's rugged and it's real, and it's obvious that living conditions are difficult for many of the town's underprivileged residents. One rather cheery area, though, is the wonderful waterfront park. It's a great place to purchase handicrafts created by local artisans, along with typical souvenirs like T-shirts, jewellery, wood carvings, paintings, hand-rolled cigars and delicious Dominican coffee and rum.

But don't get stuck in town because there's so much to see beyond it. There are



many leisure and sports excursions for travelers keen to experience off-resort adventures. Jeep safaris into the rugged mountains visit homes and schools so tourists can experience local culture. Catamarans take snorkelers to reefs off the northeast coast, stopping for swims at remote beaches. Horses take riders through the peninsula's thick jungle interior to Cascada El Limon, a picturesque 60-metre waterfall. Boats cross Samaná Bay to stunning Los Haitises national park, where visitors see lush mangrove forests, dozens of native bird species, scores of tiny, isolated beaches and islands and coastal limestone caves, some of which feature wall carvings and illustrations by the region's Taíno natives.





Beach lovers have plenty of choices, too. Playa Rincon, a spectacular, 3-km-long stretch of soft white sand near the fishing town of Las Galeras, regularly rates among the world's best. Levantado Island also offers tantalizing turquoise waters with more gorgeous white sand just a short shuttle boat ride from the harbour. The cosmopolitan town of Las Terrenas, a vibrant town of 8,500 residents on the north side, boasts the peninsula's widest selection of quality restaurants, shops and bars. Of course, travelers who prefer to explore at their own pace can always rent a 4WD vehicle and see the sights independently.

Then there are the whale watch excursions. Dozens of agencies offer half-day boat trips into the bay, but tours by Whale Samaná, operated by noted Canadian

marine mammal specialist Kim Beddall, are widely regarded as the best. Our tour with Kim was the highlight of our holiday; not only was it a thrill to watch the acrobatic antics of eight different pairs of humpback whales, but also an unforgettable educational experience.

Samaná is certain to gain popularity as word spreads about the region's unrivalled natural attractions. Tourism on the peninsula could explode if the Dominican government pursues plans to build a cruise ship pier in the town, or allows increased resort development and expansion. Visit soon, before it becomes just another mass-market holiday destination.

We keep hearing the siren call of the peninsula ourselves, and are considering a return trip. There's something about Samaná, and we know we'll have to go back.

Don Stevens is a writer and editor who lives in downtown Toronto. He enjoys living in the bustling, big city but expands his horizons by taking holidays to different international destinations each year. His preffered get-away-from-it-all vacations are package trips to all-inclusive resorts in the Caribbean and Central America in winter months, and self-hopping jaunts in Greece, where he loves soaking up the sun and culture on small, scenic isles.

PHOTOS by Don Stevens



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OUR OPINION...

by Deb Pearce & Shaun Proulx

and we have one!



Shaun: It's a debate as old as time: Why dykes and fags are so hesitant to share public spaces. But when I say 'old as time', really I mean it. Like, it harkens back to The Flintstones—Wilma and Betty were NOT welcome at any of the Loyal Order of Water Buffalo meetings. Do you think this is where it's from? Guys just needing their dang space?

Deb: Well sweet Shaun, I'd like to state that this question is extremely binary in regards to gender and I'd like to state that my friends and my world include much more than only two genders. However, I must agree with your example, which has often made me scratch my head as to why an already marginalised group such as us queers, would yet

push the segregation line another degree. That said, when I was coming up through the ranks of dyke-dom, I exclusively went to The Rose Cafe on Parliament Street here in Toronto. I didn't know if there were other bars and frankly, it didn't matter to me. My needs were more than met at that one bar and there were not a lot of men around and when they did show up, they were accompanied by a woman.

Shaun: I'm SO glad you brought up The Rose! It's the root of my feeling that I was an undesirable in the eyes of the lesbian community. Talk about scarring, talk about cognitive! I went to The Rose with a gay friend and his dyke pal—one of my very FIRST gay bar experiences ever—and you would have thought I was Reverend Phelps! Here I was this poor 22-year old kid and the cut eye I got! Child! The attitude! The cold! Totally sincere, it really made me feel there was a strong line drawn in our spaces and it took me a long time to try and be friendly with dykes again. Even years later it would put me off going to a dyke bar.

Deb: That's a terrible experience for anyone to have—especially a young, formative gay lad. I too have felt that kind of isolation in mens bars. And looking back to the early '90s when 'straight' clubs would have a weekly 'gay' night, I suffered physical and mental abuse for attending. Perhaps the perfect balance would be gay bars, lezzie bars, 'mixed' clubs etc.? Although my bar hopping days are few and far between,

In each issue Deb and Shaun are thrown a topic and

pretty in pink

This Issue's Topic:

Gay and Lesbian spaces! Can't we all just get along?

when I actually decide to go out, it usually involves good friends and good music and not necessarily a 'gay' venue.

Shaun: Having said all that, there's the other question: Why do we care? It's kinda nice that we pontificate over this issue as time goes by—I don't know an era of fags or dykes who haven't—but in the end is it all that important? Ideally, for sure it would be nice, but realistically, would it? When I have made it into mixed crowds, and I'm thinking of the old It's A Boy's Life at IT days here in Toronto, or even just the biggest mixed party: Pride, it's a great vibe all round. When I think about what I want when I have time to head to the bars and clubs, unfortunately it's the vibe that can only be had when it's all men. I find that women curb the cruisy factor right off the road—no offence! But know what I mean? You're a horny chick—don't you prefer to be amidst a bunch of sweaty women with no dudely—dudes cramping your style?

Deb: When I go out now, I don't want to just be around any one group of people, including women only spaces, with few exceptions. I want to be around men, women and trans people, in a queer, inclusive space, while having sex with queer minded people. When it comes to the 'prowl', I have picked up in women's bars and queer spaces without interruption. The thing I do love about our community, is when push comes to shove we do come together to fight for our rights, whether it be about homophobia or AIDS. There are times when together we band and separately (with some exceptions) we have sex!!

Shaun: I think this is one of those sweet little mysteries in life that we pass from generation to generation as something to solve. It makes me glad we are both over 40 because I know that when I was younger it was a much bigger deal than it was. Now, it's merely one of those things that makes you say: Hmmmm...

Deb Pearce and Shaun Piroulx are on air hosts at Proud FM 103.9 in the morning 6-10 and in the afternoon 3-7, respectively. They are also fabulously opinionated.



a chance to share, rant and express their thoughts.



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

HOT ARTIST: J. BONE

By Jeff Harison

After not making the cut to get into Sheridan's esteemed Animation program in 1993, J. Bone decided to spend the year in Illustration honing his talent. After seeing the stress filled, sleepless nights of his animation roomies, he was glad he'd been passed over and stuck with his second choice. Past graduation, a few years with Nelvana's location design department taught him a lot of the tricks of the trade and by 1999 he went freelance to pursue his love of drawing and inking comics full-time.

By 2000, after barely surviving on peanut butter and crackers, he met Canadian talent, Darwyn Cooke, and over the course of several years inked his *Spider-Man*, *the New Frontier*, and *The Spirit*.

Pink Play Mags: So what are you currently working on?

J. Bone: Currently I'm drawing covers for the *Super Friends*, with occasional forays into the interiors. I truly love drawing the big DC characters in that fun kid-friendly style. It's probably one of my favourite ongoing jobs. I'm just about finished an issue of the *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* comic book based on the new Cartoon Network series. The style is so exciting that I begged to be on the book.

PPM: Why beefcake and pin-up guys?

J. Bone: Because I'm a homo. [Laughs.] Seriously, I love 50s artwork and the innocence of the tease. Always been a big fan of Betty Page and cheesecake as well as Bob Mizer and the beefcake photographers from that era. I'd like my art to evoke the time period but still have a modern feel to it.

PPM: Who are your biggest artistic influences?

J. Bone: It's a long list, but I'll try to name the major continuing influences: Jack Kirby, John Buscema, Bruce Timm, Darwyn Cooke, Glen Hanson, Tom of Finland. I'm discovering new people all the time, guys whose work inspires me



to try something new. Also, I've got to say that I hang out with a very talented group of comic book artists and illustrators who influence me. They'll dig what I'm drawing, but at the same time can be counted on to give me an honest critique to help clear up a story point or anatomical goof. We call ourselves the "Superman Club!"

PPM: Gay comics and pin-up guys seem to have really exploded on the scene in the last half decade or so. We've had everything from Justin on "Queer as Folk" drawing them, to Patrick Fillion's superheroes creating a modern day raunchy version of Tom of Findland's gigantically endowed men of the '70s. Why do you think there's been such a huge surge in popularity?

J.Bone: I feel it's the increased visibility of gay men in the public eye. As well as the increased acceptability of gay culture, which includes the metrosexuality of the hetero man. We've seen woman in comics drawn as sex objects for years and now the guys are getting their turn in the sun. I see so many covers now that, whether consciously done so by the artist or not, portray the male hero in a sexually provocative manner. Check the newsstand and look specifically for a knee level, looking up shot of your hero character. Alex Ross does it *all* the time!

PPM: Do you think there's something in comics and super heroes that gay kids (and adults) really identify with?

J.Bone: The idea has been explored by much more eloquent people than myself, but it's all the same common ground that helps the gay man identify with being a visible minority, like the X-Men, who are hated for their differences and yet continue to be heroic and save mankind at every opportunity.

PPM: Most of the gay comic guys out there now, seem to be all about the sex; how do you navigate those tricky waters? Sex sells, and yet you are more of a teaser than a shower, why?

J.Bone: My own sense of ethics, I guess. I decided really early on that I wouldn't portray full frontal nudity in my artwork. There's a lot of that type of art (good or bad) all around us and I didn't want to add to the pile (or perhaps get lost in it). I think I can stake a bigger claim by NOT drawing full nudes and focus more on teasing or suggesting sexuality through poses. The reality is almost never as delicious as the fantasy.

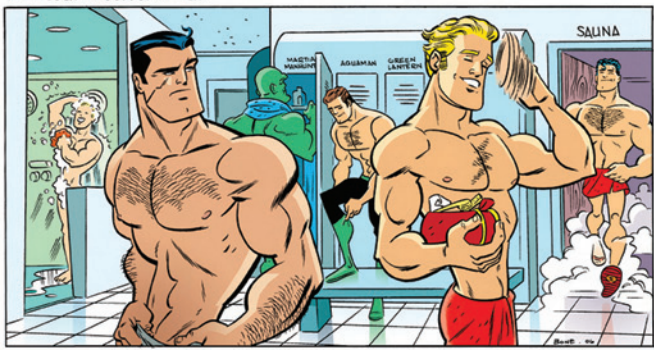
PPM: Let's jump back to your current projects. I know *Jett Vector* is one of them, can you give me any kind of tease about what to expect from that

series? Is that something our readers can expect to see in the near future?

J.Bone: Gee, I really hope so. I've taken on a lot of extra mainstream work lately so that I can fund a few months of personal work, which will include *Jett*. Basically he's a space-cop, a member of the Universal Peacekeepers—or UP-keepers—who patrol the galaxy righting wrongs and catching bad guys. *Jett* will be a male Barbarella in that the pages will be full of beefcake pin-ups and handsome aliens. There is also a ship full of female pirates because I do, after all, still love drawing cheesecake as well!

PPM: You're also getting ready to self-publish a book rammed full of all your beefcake guys, pin-up boys and rough illustrations. What can we expect to

IN THE LOCKER ROOM OF THE JLA.



find inside and can you be brave and give the readers a time when to expect it out?

J.Bone: Ooh...a timeline. I want to say by fall of this year (2009) you will see a collection of Beefcake by me. I'm working this summer, with my helpful and handsome assistant, to first gather up all of my beefcake drawings from years past. Once I've got it in hand I'll sort by theme and start putting together the book(s). It's going to be a big job but I think with a month of solid effort it will come together.

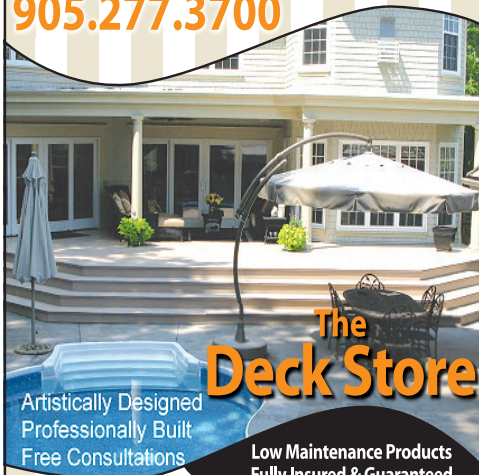
Be sure to check out J.Bone's blogs at www.gobukan.blogspot.com and www.bonesmen.blogspot.com and look for details on how to order your very own copy of *Bone's Men* beefcake book, coming at the end of the summer at www.cafepress.com/gobukan.

Jeff Harrison is the Editor-in-Chief of our *Pink Play Mags*. He is also a Toronto based freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Eye Weekly*, *Gay Guide Toronto.com*, *fab* magazine, *Xtra!*, and *Instinct*. He's decided to stop running around like a maniac meeting deadlines this winter. Instead, he's thinking of dusting off his novel and diving back in. See you in the spring!

ILLUSTRATIONS by J. Bone

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URBAN SPACES

By Manny Machado

Totally Tubular! Reinventing the '80s for Today's Spaces

Like me, does thinking about the '80s revive old memories of big hair and shoulder pads? A simpler time where wireless communication was not part of our daily lives and social networking involved physically gathering with people. Perhaps this is the reason furnishings were so much larger in proportion then than they are today—accommodating for friends and family in a pre-small space world of virtual friends. If you're like me and want to preserve the pleasurable memories of the bygone era without living in a time warp, let me show you how you can infuse your current home with a little inspiration from the decade that introduced us to "Reaganomics" and the Material Girl herself.

Adding an '80s twist to your current home design is not only the "in" thing, but if you're gay and in your 30s, then celebrate surviving coming of age in the decade of overindulgence.

Back in the day, music and fashion unified in the form of Glam Rock and influenced not only how we looked and what we listened to, but also the way we decorated. Exaggerated versions of upscale fashions and décor defined a generation of young adults who looked to popular artists like David Bowie, Adam Ant and Madonna for inspiration. The key to personal expression was individuality and uniqueness, taking chances in order to come up with something that not only paid homage to your personal hero, but that said something about who you were as a person.

Decorating your personal environment meant taking risks, experimenting with bold colors in various shapes like random inlaid geometric forms or highlighting specific areas with undefined swirls and swags; black dominated everything from furniture and

upholstery to accents and accessories. Androgynous clothing and male cosmetics became main-stream. As male fashion changed, so did the choice in colors that represented their looks and New Wave décor became about showcasing color, specifically



the trend of bright pastels. This was the age of Pac Man, arcade games and home computers as clunky, Syntax error avatars of a digital medium that spawned fresh ideas in pop culture, still as iconic today, as they were 25 years ago.

Vintage retailers are a great source for scouting rare gems (remember the Holograms?) from the decade, when many of the surviving artifacts were created in an era where most consumer goods did not require assembly by an Allen key.

Shopping vintage is not only an environmentally responsible course of action, but also an affordable option. Considering the current state of our economy, finding a bargain is both financially and personally satisfying.

Look for items that are made from solid construction materials, like wood, metals and plastics. Reinventing your new finds to fit in with





current décor can be as easy as a new coat of paint, re-upholstering with updated fabric, or adding metal trim in the form of hardware and drawer handles. Furniture was commonly made from popular woods like oak and pine, making the pieces heavy, but also allowing for future owners to modify the appearance and can be easily reinterpreted or re-finished to look like new again. Materials like chrome, glass and tubular metals also defined many of the furniture styles of the '80s.

Modifying the look of metal takes only a steady hand and a can of spray paint, and remember, broken or missing glass can be replaced unless it is integral to the structure or design of the item.

The days of lining your walls with posters of your favorite rock stars and personal heroes may be long gone, but pictures and graphic prints framed and hung in a gallery formation on the

wall is totally rad. Choice images from the '80s are in abundance these days, everything from pop culture, such as the *Flashdance* movie poster, to celebrities like the boys from *Dukes of Hazard*, can make an impressive statement along a bare wall in your home. The outcome will inspire many conversations from families and friends. If you're unsure where to begin your search, then Google "Warhol in the '80s" and you'll find a selection of prints featuring portraits of famous folk like Joan Collins and Jane Fonda, as well as series of painted Time Magazine covers from the era displaying Michael Jackson and Lee Iacocca.

Vintage shopping is decidedly different than antique shopping. With the latter you would try to preserve the piece as a whole in an effort to maintain its value. Many of the vintage pieces were mass-produced, therefore its value lies strictly in the eye of the beholder. Taking ideas from different periods is one of the many design resources that the professionals use when creating successful interiors, mainly because it adds a vitality and richness to the space; the key is to source furnishings that clearly convey the distinctive flavour of the style you are trying to summon.





Personally, my '80s were a time of teenage awkwardness, living most of my days inward. I might've missed a thing or two during the decade, so I take this resurgence in the culture to not only re-experience some of the details, but to remember how far along I've come. Whether you're reliving the styles of the past, or you're enjoying it for the first time, remember to have fun with it, after all personal style and taste is a matter of preference. Vintage shops are not only for walking down memory lane, but they're also a viable source for furniture options that are rich in history and durable enough to stand the test of time. Take a chance, make a statement and put your own stamp on what made the '80s so great, it had to be done all over again!

Manny Machado, after a momentous year as the design chair for Fashion Cares 2008, is thrilled to join Pink Play Mags as the new design columnist. Being an Urban Space Stylist has afforded Manny the opportunity to work on many interiors both locally and abroad, transforming some of the smallest areas into home environments through unique perspectives and solutions that relate to the homeowners lifestyle. Write Manny at urbanspaces@pinkplaymags.com with your own design concerns and questions.

PHOTOGRAPHY Wingo Du

Defining the '80s style

Electric colors: Neon blues, oranges and purples were all the rage in fashion, cosmetics and décor, with influences seen in popular TV shows like *Miami Vice*; on the flip side, soft pastels in salmons and powder blues were predominate on wall colors and textiles, with fashionable patterns like paisley and hound's-tooth.

Geometric shapes appered in prints and upholstery; the patterns were random in that they did not represent a figure or form, but rather free floating as if tossed and recorded in mid air flight.

Heavy voluminous fabrics, such as layered window treatments of drapery and swags were used to infuse the spaces with a sense of richness and importance.

Art Deco was a core inspiration for the furniture in the 80s, the goods were over scaled in size to accommodate for the architectural elements in their design, making overstuffed sofas, bulky coffee tables and four-poster beds hugely popular.

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The Touchables

By Josh Levy

Going through some old boxes recently, I came across a diary that describes the years I was 16 and 17 in extraordinary detail. Flipping through it was a real trip. I grew up a middle class kid in the steel town of Hamilton, Ontario. The diary describes high school life, my coming-out and some early attempts at art and writing, but mostly it tells the story of The Touchables, a gang of boys I ran with in those days; a wolf pack that taught me how to be with men, and how to be a man. And it tells the tale of my deep, unrequited longing for one of them in particular: my first love, whose name was Ben.

I can't recall exactly how The Touchables came together in the beginning. But by grade 10 we were pretty much inseparable. We would march down the halls of Westdale High in a rowdy unit and crash house parties together. To be part of a group of men is a powerful thing. As a gay kid, I had not often felt accepted by other boys, so I placed high value on my membership in the pack.

When I think of The Touchables now, I think of long hikes in the reservoir; bush parties at Princess Point; picking fights in the parking lot at McDonald's; and driving around in my folks' old-school station wagon cruising for fun. I was the first of us to get my license, which secured my position as an invaluable member of the gang. One of them christened that station wagon "The Levy Bus". I remember it always smelled like beer after an unfortunate spill in the back seat. We would drive around town all night long, smoking cigarettes and looking for trouble to the sound of Tragically Hip songs blaring from the radio.

There were seven of us present the night we christened ourselves "The Touchables" (a cheeky reference to the DePalma flick), but in fact the rotating membership was closer to ten or eleven guys. At the core of the pack was me; my younger brother Robi; hip and funny Toma (Thomas with a French pronunciation); sweet goofball Craig; and moody poet Ben.

We sat around talking about “the posse” one night—Ben, Craig and myself. I remember that we all hated the name The Touchables, and so we tossed around ideas for a new moniker. The diary says my suggestion was an awful one: “The Stoned Immaculate,” if you can believe it. My efforts to impose names and rituals and to formalize membership in the pack betrayed my lack of security with my own position in the group. I didn't know it then, but my brother Robi was the key to my membership—a blood tie to the center of things.

In my diary I wrote: “There is no better feeling in the world than when I'm with the guys. The seven of us are like one person, each reflecting different sides of a single personality. When we're together, I feel like I can do anything—like I'm all-powerful. Even when we're just doing nothing (especially when we're just doing nothing)! We've been like this since school started this year, and now I can't imagine life without them.”

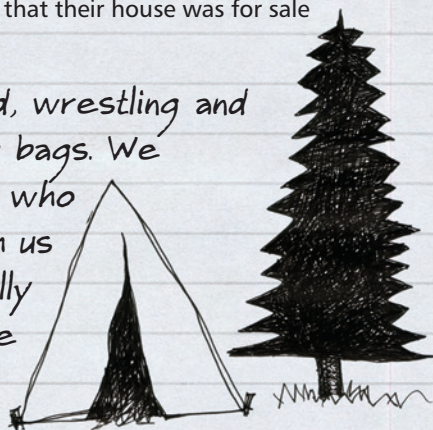
And man, were The Touchables a great-looking bunch of boys! When I look at pictures of us now I can scarcely believe how beautiful we were. No wonder I loved them. But although there was a playful homoeroticism within the pack, what I remember most about The Touchables is a sense of brotherhood and camaraderie that I have never again experienced in quite the same way.

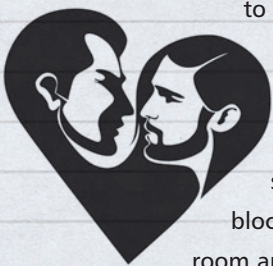
One night we pitched tents in my folks' backyard. It was a typical summer night—we barbequed and got wasted on wine coolers, then went for a long hike in the rez. Ben and I led the way, our arms wrapped around each other. Toma stole a “For Sale” sign and Craig pushed Robi along in a “borrowed” baby carriage. We set off some firecrackers and planted the For Sale sign on the neighbour's lawn (My dad noticed that their house was for sale the next morning and couldn't get over it).

Later in the tent we goofed around, wrestling and steamrolling each other in our sleeping bags. We were so loud we woke up my Mom who came outside in her nightgown to shush us at five o'clock in the morning. Eventually the guys dozed off. I just laid there wide-awake and watched Ben sleep.

Ben had long, dark brown hair that hung just past his ears, framing a square jaw and soulful brown eyes. He was a nerd who had blossomed into stunning youth when he turned fifteen, and yet he remained oblivious to his beauty. His were the kind of looks that made people on the street stop and stare at him.

My love for Ben was a crazy teenaged love, and unrequited at that—Ben was straight through and through. No matter how hard I prayed otherwise, there would always be limits





to our relationship. But, oh! The intensity of my affections was so strong! (I am embarrassed to say that in my diary I drew our initials inside a heart—more than once.)

I slept over at his place as often as he would let me. His bedroom smelled of body odour and Fahrenheit cologne. Covered windows blocked out the sun, and an elaborate disused model train set circled the room and gathered dust, a remnant of a boyhood not yet fully shed.

I fell in love with Ben watching him play the piano. I would sit on his bed for hours listening to him sing me the songs he'd written—such terrible songs! But his tunes sounded so sweet to my ears. I remember endless discussions about our idol Jim Morrison and The Doors. I remember skipping school and going to Toronto to see the Chili Peppers, Pearl Jam and Smashing Pumpkins before they were famous. I remember lying on Ben's bed with our legs all tangled up together. I remember Ben's cheesy poetry, and the way he would talk to me with his head so close to mine I could feel his breath upon my face.

I believe that Ben loved me back, in his way. Nowadays we might call it a “bromance” or a “man-crush”, but back then it was just “best friends”.

Hamilton in the summer is green and yellow and brown, with a sickly-sweet scent hanging in the air. We used to order cabs to my Dad's office then send them to buy us beer. Then we'd carry the two-four to Chedoke Golf Course and get plastered. Sometimes it was so humid it was like wearing a wool sweater. One night we were so hot and drunk we stripped down to our underpants and ran around the green. I remember the whole gang laughing and sweating, our hearts racing, chasing each other in circles.



Somehow Ben and I ended up getting separated from the rest of The Touchables. We were hiding behind a tree. Blood was roaring in my head as we stood there silently; sweat pouring down our faces, arm-in-arm, frozen, grinning; a conspiracy of two within a conspiracy of seven.

Later as we walked home, Ben turned and came towards me. He put his hand on my shoulder and looked me in the eye. At first I thought that this was it—he was going to kiss me. I will never forget the way he looked at that moment, there on the side of Aberdeen Avenue. Ben started to lean towards me. But instead of kissing me, he put his head down on my shoulder, and then he puked all over me.

I helped him home and snuck him into his house. I dragged him upstairs, got him undressed and put him to bed. It was one of the best nights of my life.

Soon thereafter things changed, as they do. An attempted back rub failed miserably and the sleepovers ended. I knew I had pushed things too far. Besides, I started to meet other gay kids. My buddy Matt and I came out together around school. I was beginning to explore the gay world with weekend trips into Toronto to visit Colby's and Bar One. Hamilton and The Touchables suddenly seemed small and dull and of the past.

Eventually I came out to Ben over fries and a Coke at Wendy's. He was cool with it, as were the rest of the gang (largely thanks to the influence of my brother Robi), but things were never the same again. Later that summer Ben had a party. When I found myself alone with him on the porch, he said to me: "I wish I could have loved you the way you needed me to."

The Touchables had one last gift for me. My gay friend Matt and I went to the prom together. The school refused to sell us "couples tickets," but we didn't care—we just went anyway. Still, we didn't dare dance slow with each other.

Then during the last song, I looked up to see Robi grab Ben, throw his arms around him and start to slow dance. Moments later, Craig grabbed Toma and led him out onto the dance floor, too. Soon the whole gang was dancing in same-sex pairs. I laughed, took Matt in my arms and held him close, swaying to the music. By the end of the song we were completely surrounded by same-sex couples. We looked just like everybody else. This was in steel town, 15 years ago.

The Touchables was a tribe of boys who taught each other how to be men.

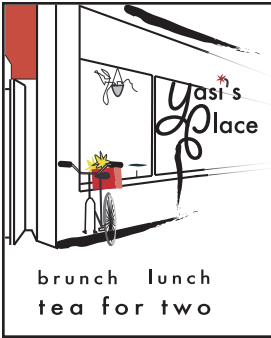
We stayed in touch after high school—Robi, Craig, Ben and me even went to the same university. I continued to love Ben for a time, but without the fiery passion of my teenaged years. Ultimately I came to care for him like a brother, although it was years before I stopped dreaming about him. In a sense, I think that an unrequited love can often remain a perfect love, unsullied by the messy realities and complications of negotiating an actual romance.

I went to Ben's wedding, and then I didn't see him again for many years. He's got two kids now. I met him for dinner recently. He is still as beautiful as ever.

Josh Levy is a writer and filmmaker who splits his time between Toronto and Los Angeles. Join Josh on Facebook or check out his website at www.nemedia.ca.

ILLUSTRATION by Chris Stone





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SUMMER IN THE CITY

By Ricky Boudreau

Hi everybody, I hope you've all had a wonderful '09 thus far. It's great to be in Toronto for the summer, even if it only feels like it's three weeks long; the city is teeming with life from June to the end of August, why not take the time to really enjoy the great weather our thriving metropolis has to offer. What better way to find out what's what and what's great than right here with me! In this issue I have come up with some inexpensive ways to enjoy our city and discover new things. Grab yourself a tasty beverage because I'm sure I've got a few exciting events to tantalize you with, so get out there and enjoy.

Food

Hot and Spicy Food Festival

August 2009 (check website for exact dates)

Harbourfront Centre

235 Queen's Quay West

www.harbourfrontcentre.com

Hotline: 416.973.4000

Free

This annual event features cocktail demos, family cooking classes, the Red Hot Market (which is the best place in the city to discover the most ferocious spices) and the Hot & Spicy Iron Chef competition. There will be more than 30 different cooking demonstrations that take place throughout the weekend. Add a little "BAM" to your life and check this out.

TIP: Seats always fill up fast for the Iron Chef competition, so arrive early.

Taste of the Danforth

August 7-9, 2009

Danforth Ave. from Broadview to Jones

Fri. Aug. 7 6-11pm

Sat. Aug. 8 noon-11pm

Sun. Aug. 9 noon-8pm

www.tasteofthedanforth.com

Free

Who doesn't love them some good Greek? There is a whole festival of Greek right here on the Danforth. If you haven't ever gone...you should really check it out. There will be gaggles of people to watch and tons of food to sample from over 50 restaurants.

TIP: Did you know that our Greektown is the third largest in the world, next to Greece of course and Melbourne?

Tasty Thursdays

July 16 to August 27, 2009

Nathan Phillips Square

100 Queen Street West

Free

Tasty Thursdays is an entertainment series that takes place in the heart of the city. It's the great combo of delicious food and free noon hour concerts that make this such a pleasure. Restaurants from around the city, set up makeshift kitchens in tents and you can sample anything from stir fry to BBQ and fresh salads. Meals are very affordable to help you enjoy your outdoor lunch hour and performances are from well known Toronto musicians. What better way to celebrate summer in the city, great food and great music!

TIP: Great excuse to treat a friend to lunch.



Music

Summer Music in the Garden

June 25 through September 20 Thursday evenings at 7 pm and most Sundays at 4 pm (weather permitting)

Waterfront at 475 Queens Quay West
www.harbourfrontcentre.com
 416-973-4000

Free

Enjoy live, classical music, while swaying to it outside! The Summer Music Garden was inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach and this year's festival showcases over 80 artists in 20 concerts and dance performances.

TIP: *There are no proper seats, so you may want to bring along a blanket and that special someone to enjoy a romantic afternoon or evening.*

Toronto Jazz Festival

June 26 - July 5
 Nathan Phillips Square and various venues
www.torontojazz.com
 (416) 928-2033

Tickets range from free to \$107.

A regular event on our summer roster, the Nathan Phillips Square main-stage will feature a variety of free concerts from talented musicians. There are close 1,500 musicians playing in over 350 concerts—wow!

TIP: *Great music + great weather + great friends = get the party started!*

Pink Martini

June 19, 2009 8PM

Roy Thomson Hall

\$49.50-\$69.50

With a name like Pink Martini, how can you not want to see them? If you like lounge music, then check out this band. Their new album, *Hey Eugene*, has lead singer, China Forbes, singing in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese and Arabic! How's that for multi-cultural? The Portland, Oregon based band was founded in 1994 by Thomas M. Lauderdale, a Harvard graduate and classically trained pianist.

TIP: *Can't make it? Then pick up one of their CD's, like their debut album, *Sympathique* or their latest, *Hey Eugene*.*

Toronto's Hidden Secrets

Laughter and Reflection with Carol Burnett

June 12, 2009 7:30 pm

Massey Hall

\$59.50 - \$89.50

The queen of comedy does what she does best, improv and off the cuff with a live audience.

TIP: *A once in a lifetime opportunity, so go for it!*

CN Tower

301 Front Street West

(416) 868-6937

General Access 9:00am - 11:00pm

Observation Experience

Look Out + Glass Floor

Adult (13-64) \$21.99-\$32.99

Senior (65+) \$19.99-\$32.99

The CN Tower is 553.33 metres or 1815.4 feet tall. It held the title of the world's tallest freestanding structure until the 12th of September, 2007. After holding the record for 31 years, it was surpassed, in height, by the Burj Dubai, which was still under construction. This iconic landmark of the Toronto skyline and of Canada is still attracting more than 2 million international visitors a year. How many citizens of Toronto have actually taken time to discover it themselves? Summer is the perfect time to go with your honey or friends and check out the see through floor.

TIP: *Stay and enjoy dinner at the amazing 360 Restaurant. Reservations are strongly suggested so call ahead...416-362-5411*





Outdoors/Gay

Cedars Campground

May-October

1039 Concession 5 West

905-659-3655

www.cedarscampground.com

Cedars, offers 130 acres of property atop the Niagra Escarpment and is the largest gay campground in North America. They are now under new, gay, ownership as well.

Prices range from \$16 a night to \$1150 for a full seasonal lot.

This all-gay shangri-la boasts swimming, tennis and a fully licensed barn, where a DJ spins every Saturday night and hosts special performances by guest entertainers.

TIP: Only a 45 minute drive from the city. A great weekend getaway like this could be just what the doctor ordered.

Hanlan's Point

Toronto Island Ferry information: 416-392-8193

Need to get away from the city, but on a tight budget? Try Hanlan's Point. A hot lunch spot for when you need to get away and relax for just the afternoon. Complete with a clothing optional area, so don't forget the sunscreen, burnt wienies are no fun!

TIP: This is a great "me day" thing to do...

Toronto's Boardwalk

Along the lakeshore

Always open

Free

Enjoy it any time, all season long, for sunny afternoon biking, blading and tanning, an evening wind down after dinner, or a picturesque moonlit stroll.

TIP: Make it a special day out with friends and bring a picnic basket.

Festivals

World Routes Festival

Canada Day - Labour Day

Harbourfront Centre

235 Queen's Quay West

www.harbourfrontcentre.com

Hotline: 416.973.4000

Free

A fantastic series of 10 eclectic festivals, held each weekend during the summer, from Canada Day through Labour Day. This year you can travel from Nigeria to Taiwan and from Mexico to the Caribbean and South Asia. All events are suitable for all ages.

TIP: World Routes is enjoyed by more than 2 million people each summer, a definite must do for your summer in the city, especially if you can't find the time to get away.



The Distillery Arts Festival

Aug. 1-3; Sept. 4-7

Distillery Historic District

55 Mill St.

www.thedistillerydistrict.com

These weekends feature Canadian Artists who are exhibiting and selling their creations. We are taking about painting, sculpture, stained glass, photography, water colour and fiber art. If your wallet can take it and your walls need a pick-me-up, then come and buy some great Canadian art and support the artists of our country.

TIP: Cobblestone streets, so wear comfy shoes.

Luminato

June 5-14

Toronto Festival of Arts and Creativity

Various venues

www.luminato.com

Luminato should definitely have something for everyone; music, film, dance, theatre, visual arts, lectures and literature. The inaugural event in 2007 attracted more than 1 million people. Pretty amazing for something that was born out of a lunch date between two men, Tony Gaglione and David Pecaut, in 2003. Luminato was created to help bring Toronto, one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, to its true potential.

TIP: Luminato will light up your life and your imagination.

This is Ricky's first published writing gig. Blossoming as a true social butterfly while traveling the world as a professional figure skater for 15 years, he loves the gift of gab and discovering great parties in the city. With a deep love for culture, great food and beauty, Ricky spends his time very creatively as a professional makeup artist for Mac PRO Cosmetics and has helped artists like Deborah Cox and Dame Shirley Bassey look gorgeous. He looks forward to helping you feel better as well as our new listings guru. Heard of a new hot spot? Email him at inthercity@pinkplaymags.com

PHOTOS by Wingo Du



Farmer's Markets

Downtown- Nathan Phillips Square

Wednesdays

June 3 - October 14, 2009

10 am to 2:30 pm

Fresh Wednesdays- Nathan Phillips Square

July 15 to August 26, 2009

Free

Wednesday is hump day and sometimes the weekend still seems so far off, so indulge in some shopping and live music during your lunch break? Grab your eco-friendly bags and head on over to city hall to experience the market. All of your favourite produce at its most flavorful. What better way to prelude Tasty Thursdays, than Fresh Wednesday? So just to be clear, Fresh Wednesdays runs shorter than but is a part of the Farmer's Market.



Central East- Withrow Park

(725 Logan Ave. TTC-Pape station)

Saturdays-9 am-1 pm

May 23 - October 31, 2009

Central West- Trinity Bellwoods Park

(Dundas St. W and Shaw St.) Tuesdays

May 12 - October 22, 2009

3:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Phone: 416-435-8860

Don Valley Brickworks Farmers' Market

Saturday's

May 23 - October 31, 2009

8 am - 1 pm

www.evergreen.ca/rethinkspace/?p=148

Riverdale Farm

201 Winchester St.

The first market will be on Sat. May 5th. The following markets will be held as follows:

Tuesdays

May 12 - October 27, 2009

3 - 7 pm

www.friendsofriverdalefarm.com/market.htm

TIP: Info on other Farmer's Markets can be found at www.farmersmarketsontario.com

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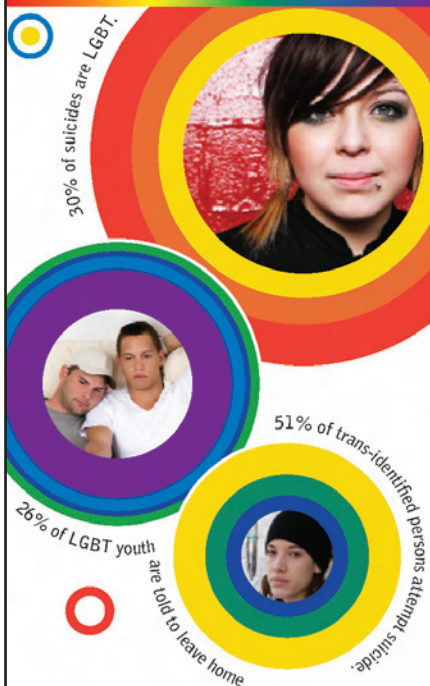
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from the Heart

By Judith Crane

Even though it's a period most noted for blatant excess and narcissism, the "Me Decade" was a time of extraordinary upheaval and change.

It's easy to poke fun at the clothes and the fads of the '80s and miss the fact that it was also the decade of Tiananmen Square, Chernobyl, Live Aid and the end of the cold war; the Middle East was on fire and an alarming number of world leaders were hard core right wing. It was a pressure cooker situation and for the first time since they split the atom, many people were actually afraid.

Many other people were inspired and courageous as well as afraid and they made many good things happen. This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of one of those good things—The Pink Pages Directory.

Now, my first response to the *Pretty in Pink* theme was glib and dismissive. Writing this has forced me to channel my inner Molly.

I remember seeing *Pretty in Pink* in its original theatre release. I owned the sound track on cassette and had a vinyl EP of the Psychedelic Furs. I would like to think that I was too old to appreciate anything about the movie other than James Spader—it was, after all, just another high school movie and there was a glut of the type at the time. But I have to admit that I watched and loved them all. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Fast*

Times at Ridgemont High—Real Genius anyone? Anyone? Bueller?

But all of these movies resonated because adolescent angst was a good metaphor for the times. Who do you turn to when the people you have depended on can't help? How do you maintain your individuality without cutting yourself off from others? What do you do when everything is changing too fast and there are no rules? Who are you and where do you belong? High school is here to answer these questions.

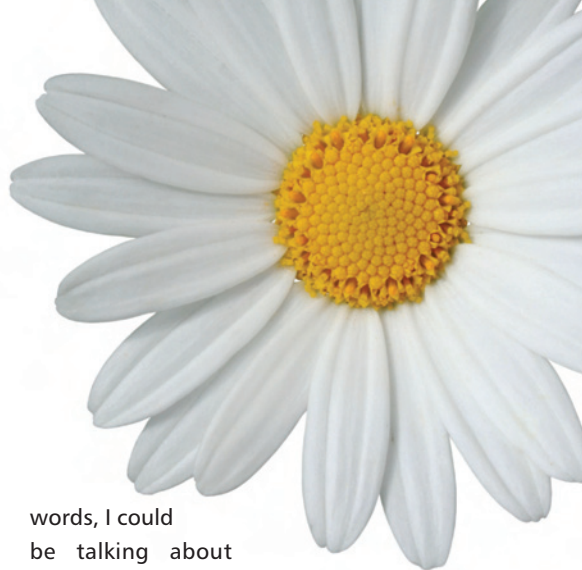
It would be a ridiculous understatement to say that high school sucks for a lot of people. For an equal if not greater number of people it was the best time of their lives. Both are for the same reason—in high school you find out where you belong. A complex set of rules



regarding clothing, money, appearance and friends governs whether you are a winner, a loser, or a wannabe. For good or ill, this is how most of us continue to define ourselves for years after we graduate.

Hopefully at some point life smacks you in the face and you are forced you to reassess who you are. In the big picture, that was the '80s. Sacred cows or taboos, they were all falling by the wayside and the lines that told you where you belonged became blurred. Boundaries were breached. We all looked to pop culture to show us how to be and how to belong and what it showed us was a vision of the high school selves we wanted to be; the selves who got to choose where they belonged; the selves who still had their innocence and confidence. And isn't that really the best thing about *Pretty in Pink*? Our heroine didn't have to take off her glasses, or change her style to suddenly reveal the "true" beauty underneath. It's unimportant whether Andie belonged with Blane or Duckie or neither one. Ultimately she belonged to herself.

Maybe you could care less for the '80s or can't stand *Pretty in Pink*, but there's something I want you to take away from what I've just said, something you can apply to today. If I copied and pasted my third paragraph and changed only the capitalized



words, I could

be talking about

this decade now. High school movies, pop culture spirituality, the clash of right wing ideologies, the credit crunch and about a billion new criteria thrown in to the mix means that we are once more living in a state of chaos: and the greater the chaos, the greater the possibilities.

Remember what Molly and the '80s stood for and take a chance. Re-evaluate who you truly are, not who you think you are, or who you used to be. Sometimes this won't feel so good—change is scary—but do it anyway. Maybe you're not as good as you think you are. Maybe you're not as bad as you think you are. Maybe you really do deserve to get the cute hot guy without having to take off your glasses. Only you can determine who you are and where you belong, and there's no time like the present.



Some of you may know Judith as Gypsy Judy; she is a writer, artist, astrologer, tarot card reader and all around seeker of wisdom and fulfillment. For her, writing is like a good conversation—it has two sides, contains some laughter, maybe some shouting, but mostly offers a chance to get to know one another better. You can write From the Heart with your life concerns, to share thoughts, and for advice at fromtheheart@pinkplaymags.com



Summer Horoscopes

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 19

Remember Grade 10? You sat between Chatty Cathy and the Sparkle Twins and every time they got caught, you got caught, even though you hadn't done anything wrong! Well guess what? If you don't watch your step, you're going to be grounded all summer long.

Taurus: Apr 20 - May 20

You're falling in love again—big surprise there—but don't start picking out china patterns just yet. There will be a few bumps, nothing you can't handle. Be a creative problem solver; find a new way to do things and by Labour Day you'll be home free.

Gemini: May 21 - Jun 20

You might be doing battle with some puritanical folk over the next few weeks. Things look good for you to begin with, but you know how these puritans are. Watch them try to use your own ideas against you. Ignore them; they'll shoot themselves in the foot.

Cancer: Jun 21 - Jul 22

It could be time for that spiritual retreat you've been promising yourself. Spend some quiet, self-reflective time on your own but beware. Not everything is learned in school or in meditation. Sometimes we don't find the wisdom, the wisdom finds us.

Leo: Jul 23 - Aug 22

Summer is your time to shine: warm weather, fewer clothes, showing off that bod. But this year someone from your past shows up with pictures of you before you lost the weight. You'll be further ahead if you understand that they really *are* laughing with you.

Virgo: Aug 23 - Sept 22

You are in a quandary. Someone you love owes you something. Could be money, could be favours, could be just about anything. Part of you wants to let them work it off and part of you doesn't want to admit that you want it back. Maybe even need it back? Ask for it back.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 22

You've got some time this summer to look at all the different areas of your life and decide which ones you still want to belong to. Really; that's a choice—work, lover, family—you can opt out of belonging with or to any of them. Just not all at once please.

Scorpio: Oct 23 - Nov 21

There's a lot going on around you right now and although you are a part of everything, you feel really disconnected from it all. That's okay. You can get by with nodding and smiling for a good long while. You're amongst friends, so sit back, and relax for once.

Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 21

People stare at you. Don't try to pretend that you don't know this. Also, in case you haven't yet learned, this ability to draw the eye wherever you go has an off switch. Locate it and practice using it. This summer you're going to want it.

Capricorn: Dec 24 - Jan 19

Again this summer it's you who always remembers to bring sun screen and insect repellent. It's you who always makes sure the campfire is out and the wet towels hung up. Well at least these days when it's always you picking up the empties, you can cash them in.

Aquarius: Jan 20 - Feb 18

The power to get what you wish for is something we all have. The ability to recognize your wish once it's been granted is rare. Those who can be grateful when their wishes are granted are scarce. This might be a good time to make yourself scarce.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You are burning the proverbial candle at both ends and there appears to be a lit match approaching the middle. You know what they say—be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid. Give it a shot. The alternative is going down in flames.



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LOOKING BACK

By George Pratt

My whole gay business career came out of my being a part of the Cabbage Town Softball League, a group of about 6 slow pitch teams.

In 1981 we hosted what we called the Gay World Series, teams from all over North America came: San Francisco, New York, Milwaukee, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, and we threw a big party—it was a huge coming out for us. We thought we were out then, but that was before Pride Day became as big as it is now.

These teams had been around since the mid '70s, we were like the National Hockey League where Toronto was one of the original six—now there's like 300 of them—so it was a pretty big deal. Last time we hosted the world series here in 2000, we had over 3,000 people come, but that first time was only around 500.

So that was really the first big group organization we had. We had a boat ride and all the teams had to put on a variety show. Everyone was shocked when our act included raunchy sex. All of the other people were doing these nice acts and the Spearhead people came out and shocked everyone! All the business men involved that had put the event together thought our vulgarity had ruined us, but it probably made us. I have a feeling Toronto has always been the dirty hometown.

Once the building that is now the Churwell Centre was built and the condos close by appeared, there was the great gay movement to that part of the neighbourhood and I joined in, opening Colby's alongside Chaps and Comrades.

It was a good move because we were suddenly all in one spot and that corner was sort of a natural because you had the St. Charles and the Parkside

that had been in that neighbourhood since the '60s, so it was more of an expansion of the gay part of town.

Colby's was unique—we had everything. We had the drag queens performing on the main floor, the strippers upstairs, the back rooms—I remember Christopher Peterson came back from wherever she'd been performing in the States and said upon experiencing it, "My God! This place is amazing!" It was a great run, but like everything, you only have a certain life.

The best thing about Colby's was it had a community atmosphere, especially when the AIDS epidemic blew into town. Everybody was scared shitless and we had nowhere to go. Nurses at the hospitals wouldn't even come into see you if you were diagnosed with it. Colby's was like a home base for us. And it was the place that started bringing people together. It was big enough that we had a family that was very supportive and that's where we started doing fundraisers, it gave us a place to come out to ourselves. When June Callwood came forward with the idea of Casey House (an AIDS hospice), that was just miraculous. I think that's where the gay bars and the drag queens came in, that's when the Imperial Court of Toronto was born and DQ became a huge success. The whole community really came together then.





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