

the **RAGE** monthly

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
NOVEMBER 2023

TURN THE PAGE ON HATE!

PLUS:

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JENNIFER COOLIDGE

RISING QUEER POP STAR
CHAPPELL ROAN

ADDISON GRACE
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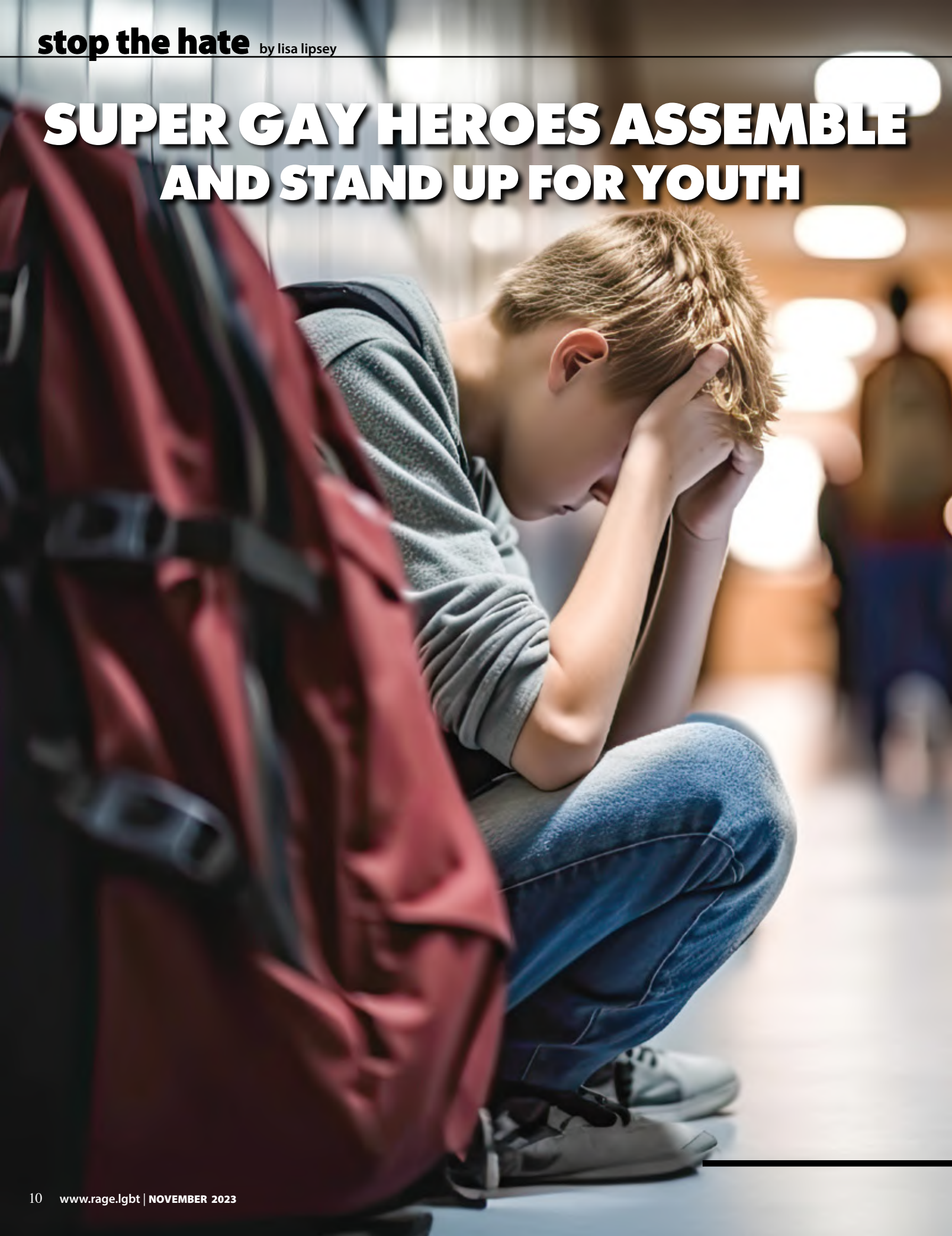
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NORTH PARK

SUPER GAY HEROES ASSEMBLE AND STAND UP FOR YOUTH



Along with all the superhero costumes out there, *The RAGE Monthly* welcomes an everyday hero, **Robert R. DeKoven**, a professor at California Western School of Law. DeKoven has taught legal research and writing to law and paralegal students for more than 18 years. He is passionate about education, privacy and civil rights, and publishes over 50 commentaries annually.

As the Stop the Hate columnist, I preface this piece with a gentle reminder: LGBTQIA/2S youth and young adults need our support. We must ensure the hard-won legal protections noted in DeKoven's piece are not erased. We must show up in support of diversity, equity and inclusion in education. Locally, at our school board meetings, diversity education is being challenged by hate groups, the extreme right and certain church groups.

We need to share our stories! Dig down and ask yourself: Why is a book character that you can relate to so important? Does representation matter? Ask, how can I combat anti-LGBTQ sentiments? How can I stand up for or be a mentor to LGBTQ youth? And if you are moved to answer these questions, e-mail me: lisa@ragemonthly.com

COMMENTARY: IT'S TIME TO REPORT YOUTH BULLYING

by rob dehoven

The RAGE Monthly has done an excellent job of encouraging readers to report hate incidents and hate crimes. But I wanted to share that many hate crimes occur in our K-12 schools. For kids and families seeking support, school websites direct students to agencies where they can file complex complaints, often taking years to resolve. It's ineffective.

California (like Utah) should have a simple three-digit number that immediately connects the student to a Child Welfare Services agent. Why? Often minors need "immediate" help. County child-welfare agencies have the ability to mobilize triage units, consisting of police, social welfare agencies, district attorneys, county counsel and judges.

Often the very best recourse for bullied students, their parents, teachers and friends is to call 1.800.344.6000 (child-abuse reporting hotline).

As school boards across the country continue to purge libraries of LGBT books, remove books that mention LGBT civil rights or leaders or otherwise remove any mention of LGBT inclusion, they need to know there is a high cost to pay.

FIRST, THERE IS THE HUMAN COST.

In mid-August, Salvador Rios, 14-year-old University City boy, took his own life. According to news sources, Salvador came out as gay in the sixth grade at Marston Middle School. Older students targeted him for abuse, yelling homophobic slurs and physically assaulting him. He transferred to Stanley Middle School, where he was apparently thriving, according to family members. Yet, on Tuesday, August 15, someone posted a picture of Rios, made homophobic remarks and disclosed private facts about him that Rios had confided in only a few others. As a result, Rios took his own life. Sal Rios is another in a long line of child suicides resulting from bullying.

SECOND, THERE IS THE FINANCIAL COSTS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND TAXPAYERS.

Recently, a jury awarded \$27 million to the family of a boy. He complained about constant bullying, and then was beaten to death at school. As a result of civil liability statutes, largely enacted at the urging of LGBT legislators, California imposes civil liability on school officials who are deliberately indifferent to the pleas of bullied kids.

And the liability isn't limited to students who are openly gay. A recent case illustrates bullying between students of the same gender

and sexual orientation is actionable. In *Grabowski v. Board of Regents of University of Arizona*, the court ruled federal anti-discrimination law (known as Title IX) protected a "straight" male track student at the University of Arizona. He was subject to "frequent sexual and homophobic bullying" because his teammates perceived him to be "gay."

Michael Grabowski claimed employees of the University of Arizona were "deliberately indifferent" to his pleas for help. When he did complain, the university retaliated against him.

The court held that Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, barring schools receiving federal funds from tolerating "sex" discrimination, and this includes harassment based upon "perceived sexual orientation."

A few years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 —barring sex discrimination in employment — applies to all forms of gender discrimination, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the West, if not the entire country, public schools (K-college) must protect students from bullying because of gender. School employees cannot be willfully blind to the actions of students occurring on campus and off campus.

Juries today find the official knew or "should have known" about the abuse. Schools have an affirmative duty to identify and support those students who are being or have been bullied, harassed, hazed or sexually abused. The reason is simple. Suffering often leads to suicide and other forms of self-destructive behavior. Kids need somewhere safe to turn. Some students don't tell their parents about the bullying, given the threat of humiliation. In LGBTQIA/2S cases, students may fear a parent will kick them out of their home.

While some school leaders are sympathetic to the plight of bullied kids, they can't provide around-the-clock guards for these students. They feel helpless. In too many schools, the failure to conform to traditional gender stereotypes and heterosexual orientation can result in harassment, abuse and bullying. If a school can't provide a safe place, Title IX says school districts must pay or lose access to federal funds.

School boards that refuse to respond or take affirmative steps to support bullied students, or fail to include LGBTQ history, or remove LGBTQ books, are only reinforcing the view that they are being deliberately indifferent to their students of all genders and sexual orientations.

TURNING THE PAGE ON HATE

Not In Our Town! San Diego United Against Hate is a call for local civic action to stop the hate and biases that pose a dangerous threat to the safety and civility of our neighborhoods, towns and cities. The United Against Hate campaign, which emerged from a poster campaign by Northern California Bay Area Cities, has spread to over 200+ communities. San Diego will participate for the second time this year. Inspired by partners throughout California, the San Diego Anti-Hate Coalition and the U.S. Attorney's Office are working to implement a powerful campaign that will empower local residents and communities to stand against racism and alter the course of growing intolerance. When cities and residents work together against hate, we can restore respect, embrace the strength of diversity, and build inclusive and equitable communities for all.

Here in San Diego, they are asking communities to make or download and post a "San Diego United Against Hate" poster and to take the United Against Hate pledge. There is also a sponsored essay, video and art contest. They also have toolkits and ideas for how you can take action individually or as a group.

Check out all the San Diego United Against Hate details at justice.gov/usao-sdca/united-against-hate





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SHED-NANIGANS

GET WILD AT TOOL SHED IN PALM SPRINGS

When you live in paradise, what else could you want? In the words of adult film performer turned disco diva Andrea True: *More, More, More!* Well, there's a desert dive bar designed to satisfy every gritty, grunting desire you can muster, mister.

Tool Shed is the ultimate bear/leather watering hole, and Larry Atello is its emcee of excess. He's a quintessential Palm Springs personality: engaging without being overbearing and generally a hoot and a half. In short, Atello is a desert star and he's shining brightly at Tool Shed.

"I host all the events here," he said. "I'm very blessed. Let me just put that out there. It's like a residency at the Tool Shed, and I live very close to the Tool Shed, so I don't have to travel. I spent a lot of years traveling doing this kind of work."

But now the rest of us schlep to Atello due to the daily draw that Tool Shed commands.

"It's a local bar that just kind of blew up. The bar's got fans. You get people from all over the world coming in here. I had somebody in from Norway on Tuesday night. I'm like, 'Well, you came the furthest. You win.'"

Actually, everyone's a winner on Tuesday nights, because Atello hosts a **musical bingo game** that whips the burly crowd into fits of giddy sing-along ecstasy: "Tool Shed Tunes is huge. I am blown away by at least one song a week; the crowd drives me crazy. It's like watching a concert. Their energy is just breathtaking at times."

Indeed, if you haven't experienced a roomful of lumberjack hotties attempt a falsetto rendition of Minnie Riperton's *Lovin' You*, can you even call yourself gay?

"It's the one night a week everybody gets together," Atello said. "Everybody's just singing and having a great time. Their hands are in

the air. We've had people dancing to the *Time Warp* in the middle of the bar, and I love that we caused that. And it's the one night really where there's no attitude. There's none of that pretension. And then they want to hook up afterwards. You know what I mean? The game is sort of the focus, and I like that. I like that the music is the focus."

But you can also win fabulous prizes at musical bingo (which the locals call "singo"), like dildos and lube and cock rings, oh my! It's one of the two ball-busting bingo events the Tool Shed presents weekly. The other takes place on Saturdays, and every time 0-69 is called, denizens earn discount shots all around!

"0-69's become like this family on Saturdays," Atello said. "You know everybody's name, that whole thing. And they were a very rough crowd to win over on Saturday. And the energy, as you know, is very, very different."

But Atello soothed the savage — and savagely sexy — beasts with his disarming humor and spirited delivery.

"If you had told me 20 years ago that I would be known for hosting bingo, I would've laughed in your face," Atello said. "To me, bingo was always like when I was a kid, my grandparents played bingo. I didn't realize how big it was in the gay bars."

Big is the perfect segue to our next scantily-clad topic. "Underwear night is... let me think. Put this the right way. It's just got a very sexy vibe to it," Atello said. "Thursday, man, it's like people are horned up. They got that look in their eye. They got the gear on. You can see the testosterone in the room, you know what I mean? And I get to do a contest where I pretty much delve into people's sex life and ask ridiculous questions about their sex life and stuff like that. And then they win a prize. We give them a cash prize. It's very interesting. Some of the answers we've gotten I could write a book."

We're ready to read that page-turner!

"It's like a cross between *The Wendy Williams Show* and *Watch What Happens Live* with Andy Cohen, only it's rated X."

Interest piqued! Go on.

"I'm like, 'How did my life get to this point? How do I make a living doing this?' Asking these questions, cut or uncut? It's very funny, and it's funny what people tell you."

Before we overheat, let's step outside to the lascivious lanai. Tool Shed's outdoor area is notoriously friendly, so grab a drink and grab whatever else you like (consensually, stud). But, as Atello clarified, the exterior shenanigans are a relatively new phenomenon.

"Because of COVID, we had the patio because we couldn't serve inside. And so, we set up tables and stuff like most businesses did, and people started to ask, 'Is it going to be a permanent thing? Is it going to be a permanent thing?' And I guess the owners went to the City Council. We started a petition. Everybody signed it, and the wheels started rolling, and that's how it came to be."

Tool Shed timed the unveiling of the **expanded patio** to commemorate Leather Pride, and the engorgement is epically enticing.

"You'll be shocked," Atello said. "It looks amazing."

Summoning his last-call tone of voice, Atello added: "Here's the thing about Tool Shed. If there was a mission statement for this bar... it's that all types are welcome. Everybody's welcome. There's something for everybody here. If you want a hardcore leather night, come on Thursday. If you're a music fan, come on Tuesday. We got bingo for the daytime drinkers on Saturday. There's something every night... **Singlet Saturdays** and **Frisky Fridays**. There's always something happening here."

Waxing fiercely philosophical, Atello concluded, "Because of all the events, the week goes fast. I bartend during the week for a couple of days, and then I put on my event hats, and before I know it, the week is over, and we're starting all over again."

So, what are you waiting for? Mark your calendar, mark your bingo cards, and mark our words: Tool Shed is ready to serve... in every sense of the word.

Tool Shed is located at 600 East Sunny Dunes Road in Palm Springs. pstoolshed.com / 760.320.3299

SATURDAY

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WILLI NINJA THE GODFATHER OF

Vogue

He coached Tyra Banks and Naomi Campbell on the runway. He danced for Janet Jackson. He graced the catwalks of Chanel, Jean Paul Gaultier, Thierry Mugler and Karl Lagerfeld. And he made vogue what it is today.

William Roscoe Leake, otherwise known as Willi Ninja, grew up in Flushing, Queens in the 1960s. Although not much is known about his childhood, he would tell stories of how his mother was lovingly accepting of his sexuality and nurturing of his interest in dance. He never came out to his mother; it was she who approached him, saying that “mothers always know,” and that she would love him no matter what.

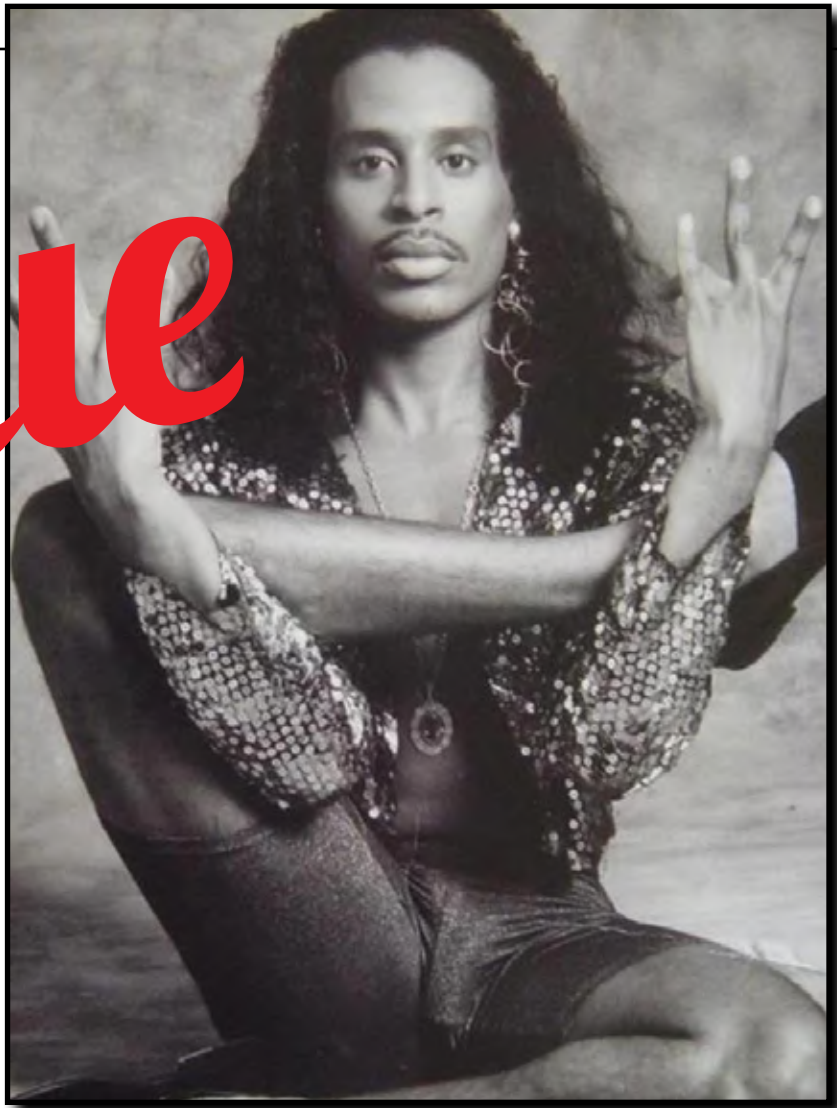
A self-taught dancer, Willi Ninja formed a dance group after moving to Greenwich Village in the 1980s. Dubbed the Video Pretenders, they would stomp into local clubs and perform the choreography from music videos being played on the screens behind them. He soon began voguing at the Christopher Street Pier and Washington Square Park, popular hangouts for queer youth, and making his debut in Harlem’s famous ballroom scene.

Vogue combines high-fashion poses with pantomimic choreography. Similar to hip hop and breakdancing, it emerged from poor, Black, working-class communities as an innovative form of expression that placed an emphasis on crews and unconventional family units. While Willi Ninja did not invent voguing, he did revolutionize it. Finding inspiration all the way from hieroglyphics and martial arts to Fred Astaire and Michael Jackson, he made his stamp on the discipline with his signature contortionist positions and swift angular movements.

It was from fellow voguers in Washington Square Park that Jennie Livingston, director of the 1990 documentary *Paris Is Burning*, first heard his name. *Paris Is Burning* chronicles the ballroom culture of New York City and the Black, Latino, queer and transgender communities breathing life into it.

Together with Sandy Apollonia, formerly of the House of LaBeija, Willi started the House of Ninja in 1982. The name Ninja came from the house’s martial arts influences and the fact that they “seemed to come out of nowhere” in the ballroom scene. As house mother, Willi Ninja taught his children late into the night at the Christopher Street pier. He trained his children to be clean, sharp dancers who could “kill the competition.”

The Harlem ballroom scene was not simply a product of New York’s queer subculture, but a reflection of the gender nonconformity



blossoming inside of it. Much of ballroom was not simply imitating the gender binary but creating a space to dismantle it. Willi, an androgynous and self-described “butch queen,” did not try to “pass” as any gender; he could often be seen sporting a mustache, long hair, makeup, large statement jewelry, and women’s clothing. His very movements blended masculinity and femininity, a fluid presentation of gender directly contradicting society’s reverence for heteronormativity and conventional masculinity.

Willi’s passion for vogue took him on a worldwide journey as he brought the art form to Europe and Japan. He left an indelible mark in his quest to bring vogue to the world, even opening international chapters of the House of Ninja. At home, he dedicated as much time to community engagement as he did to performing, becoming instrumental in bringing the much-needed discussion of HIV/AIDS prevention to the ballroom scene. He was diagnosed with HIV in 2003, and continued to mentor dancers and models until losing his sight and mobility.

Surrounded by the children of his house, Willi Ninja died of AIDS-related heart failure in 2006 at the age of 45. He provided his community with an outlet for radical self-expression until the very end. Today, Willi’s spirit lives on in the ballroom scene as he continues to inspire new generations of performers. The House of Ninja currently has over 200 global members. They continue to perform in chapters around the world while promoting HIV/AIDS awareness in their mother’s name.

CHILLBAR

— PALM SPRINGS —

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BRADY PRINCE
CALAGNA



SAT NOV 4
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MORABITO



THANK YOU FOR BEING YOU, JENNIFER COOLIDGE

There's a lot to love about Jennifer Coolidge. Foremost, she's unabashedly herself, true to her kooky persona both on- and off-screen. Secondly, she's infinitely quotable, just try getting through the Fourth of July without mentioning how it makes you "want a hotdog real bad." I dare you! And now that I think about it, we gays can just use that in everyday conversations. Just sayin'.

Lastly, whenever she's in a movie or TV show, I always worry she's going to be arrested for theft, because she's also a scene stealer. And she most definitely puts the "character" in character actor.

She has been having her well-deserved moment in the past few years, snatching them trophies and making amazing speeches at award shows. Finally, the world knowing what we gays, and the cool kids, have known for decades that she's one-of-a-kind and funny AF. Way to catch up, everyone else on Earth!

At age 62, Coolidge is enjoying the limelight, and we are here for it! So, let's see how she got there. Let me get into my Peter Graves *Biography* mode.



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GETTING PERSONAL

Coolidge was born in Boston, Massachusetts on August 28, 1961, to parents Gretchen and Paul Constant Coolidge. She is one of four siblings in a working-class family, and dreamed of becoming a singer. She attended Norwell High School, the Cambridge School of Weston and Emerson College in Boston, where she earned her bachelor's degree in theatre in 1985. She also attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City and was a member of the Gotham City improv group.

This was good practice for when she switched coasts, as she is also an alum of the improv sketch group **The Groundlings** in Los Angeles. Her charitable work has included a history of supporting AIDS assistance and animal rights, in particular regarding raising awareness about cougars. I kid because I love.

Regarding her love life, Coolidge has told *Variety* that her "weakness in life has always been men." Relatable. Yet, she remains single — what's wrong with straight men? As of last year, she did state about her love life to *Access*, "Well, I was very excited about somebody. I can't say their name, but I found out today he's dead." So, there's that.

But don't cry for her Argentina because she revealed to *Variety* in 2022 that she "got a lot of play" from her first big role in ***American Pie***. "I mean, there would be like 200 people that I would have never have slept with." Work it out!

But for my money, the funniest story about her dating life is when she dated a pair of friends, by telling them she had an identical twin sister while on vacation in Hawaii, as she stated on ***The Kelly Clarkson Show*** in 2021.

"When you come and you're on vacation alone, you can kind of like create anything you want," she said. "I ended up like meeting these two guys that were best friends, and I liked them both. And so, I told them that I had an identical twin. I dated both guys... for two weeks."

I-con-ic. Just like the characters she has created on her resume. Well, would ya look at that? The next section is all about her famous roles! How about that for a segue?

Her first credit on her IMDB page is as Jodi on an episode of **Seinfeld**, circa 1993. But it was her role as Jeanine Stifler, aka Stifler's mom, in 1999's **American Pie** that got the MILF ball rollin'. Coolidge embodied the ultimate cougar, who seduces her son's classmate Finch (Eddie Kaye Thomas) and proved to be cinematic comedy gold in the process. And she reprised the role three times, including the sequels **American Pie 2**, **American Wedding** and **American Reunion**.

The next year she began acting up in writer/director/actor **Christopher Guest's** mockumentaries. First up is my favorite one, **Best in Show**, which chronicles the cutthroat competition at the Mayflower Kennel Club Dog Show in 2000. If they were giving out blue ribbons for the humans in the movie, then Coolidge's Sherri Ann Cabot would have gotten my vote! And she had some stiff competition from the likes of **Eugene Levy**, **Catherine O'Hara**, **Parker Posey**, **Jane Lynch**, **Michael McKean**, **John Michael Higgins** and **Fred Willard**.

Her character has a very Anna Nicole Smith and J. Howard Marshall type of marriage, but they "both love soup and snow peas, we love the outdoors, and talking and not talking. We could not talk or talk forever and still find things to not talk about." She ends up starting up both a relationship with Lynch's Christy Cummings and a dog-centric magazine, **American Bitch**.

You can't make this stuff up! But for the

improvised nature of Guest's filmmaking process for the actors, it means that they can. She was among the cast of **A Mighty Wind** in 2003 that documented — or is the mockumented? — the reunion of a trio of folk music groups for a televised tribute concert, in which she played Amber Cole, one of the non-singing characters.

The Hollywood awards season got the lampoon treatment with 2006's **For Your Consideration**, which saw Coolidge as Whitney Taylor Brown, a movie producer of a potential Oscar contender, *Home for Purim*.

The other role that Coolidge nailed was that of manicurist Paulette Bonafonté in **Legally Blonde** and its sequel **Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde** in 2001 and 2003, respectively. The owner of the Hair Affair is beset by man troubles and is tutored in how to solve them by Elle Woods (**Reese Witherspoon**). She leaves her deadbeat boyfriend and even takes "the dog, dumbass," and then learns how to bend and snap to get the attention of the UPS man (Kyle B. O'Boyle). Good choice, gurl.

Ariana Grande, who does a great Coolidge impression, cast her as Paulette in her video for "thank u, next." And Coolidge has said that the line "You look like the Fourth of July! Makes me want a hot dog real bad" is the quote that she is best remembered for.

I have a sneaking suspicion that a certain catchphrase from Season 2 of **The White Lotus** might beg to differ. Speaking of...



THE BOOB TUBE



Although she lost the part of Lynette Scavo on **Desperate Housewives** to Felicity Huffman in 2006, Coolidge has done just fine for herself on television. She's had a number of one-off appearances on shows such as **Frasier**, **Sex and the City**, **Nip/Tuck** and even **Friends**.

One of her longer TV tenures was on the **Friends** spinoff, **Joey**, where she played **Matt LeBlanc's** agent Bobbie Morganstern from 2004 to 2006. But the less said about **Joey**, the better, as it's considered one of the worst spinoffs in TV history. But that ain't her fault!

She was also a featured player on **The Secret Life of the American Teenager**, which had a premise that strangely harkened back to her *American Pie* days, in that the titular American teenager (**Shailene Woodley**) finds her world upside down after getting pregnant one night at band camp. I'm not making that up!

Next up was her scene-stealing turn as **Sophie Kachinsky** on **2 Broke Girls**, in which Coolidge had the signature catchphrase of "Hey everybody!" She was like the modern equivalent of Duane (Haywood Nelson) on *What's Happening* who would say, "Hey, Hey, Hey!" when entering a room. Well, in my mind she was anyway. And isn't that what's important? Anyhoo, as the Polish owner of the cleaning company Sophie's Choice, she mopped the floor as far as garnering laughs were concerned.

Coolidge got her scary on in Netflix's **The Watcher** portraying real estate agent Karen Calhoun, who sells a married couple (**Bobby Cannavale** and **Naomi Watts**) their dream house, only to have it turn out to be a nightmare, as they have a stalker who leaves them creepy letters. Still, it's

better than having the watcher leave them an endless supply of “Live, Laugh, Love” signs for their walls. Eek!

But Coolidge’s penultimate role on the tube is that of **Tanya McQuoid-Hunt** on the first two seasons of Max’s ***The White Lotus***. The show’s creator **Mike White** wrote the character with Coolidge in mind after the two vacationed together. That must have been a honey of a trip!

Coolidge’s character in the inaugural season is a wealthy and rather fragile woman grieving the death of her mother, among the other dysfunctional guests **Connie Britton**, **Steve Zahn**, **Alexandra Daddario** and hotel manager **Murray Bartlett** at a Maui resort.

She romantically links up with a fellow guest, **Jon Gries**, and we find out in Season 2 that he isn’t all he seems cracked up to be. This time around, the exclusive resort setting is in Sicily and features fellow travelers **Aubrey Plaza**, **Will Sharpe**, **Michael Imperioli**, **F. Murray Abraham** and **Theo James** and his prosthetic penis — I think that would count as a carry-on for the plane ride, if it would fit in the overhead compartment, that is. Little does Tanya know that when she befriends a group of wealthy gay men that she would reach the conclusion that “these gays are trying to murder me!” And who hasn’t been there, am I right?



RENAISSANCE WOMAN

Her role on both seasons of *The White Lotus* garnered Coolidge the accolades and awards that she richly deserves, thus making her a renaissance woman in the process. She was nominated for and won an **Emmy** as Outstanding Supporting Actress in 2022 and 2023, and nabbed the Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series at the **Critic’s Choice Awards** in 2022 and 2023. **The Screen Actors Guild** recognized her with an Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series trophy in 2023, while the **Golden Globes** deemed her with being a Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Limited Series, Anthology Series or Motion Picture Golden Globe in 2023 — try saying that three times fast!

A side benefit of those wins were her acceptance speeches, which were equal parts comedy and drama. During her 2022 Emmy win for Outstanding Supporting Actress, she explained how she’d taken a lavender bath prior to the ceremony, and it made her “swell up” inside her dress, which was making it difficult for her to speak. After going over her allotted thank-you time, she shimmied to the play-off music.

In her 2023 Golden Globes speech, she made White cry as she thanked him for changing her career trajectory by saying, “I had such big dreams and expectations as a younger person, but what happened is they get sort of fizzled by life.”

WHAT’S NEXT

Surprisingly, there are only three upcoming projects with Coolidge attached to them. ***Riff Raff*** is a crime-comedy — you can’t have one without the other, really — that also stars **Brian Cox**, **Gabrielle Union** and **Dustin Hoffman**. It is described as being about “a former criminal’s ordinary life, which is thrown upside down when his old family shows up for a long-awaited reckoning.”

Pierre the Pigeon-Hawk adheres to Coolidge’s mantra of “different is cool,” and goes about embracing the things that set him apart. She is set to lend her voice to the animated project as Auntie Peggy, along with **Snoop Dogg**, **Whoopi Goldberg** and **Jennifer Hudson**.

Now stop me if you’ve heard this one before . . . I feel like I’ve written about it at least once a year for the past three years. The long-awaited sequel, ***Legally Blonde 3***, is really supposed to happen and it’s reported that Coolidge will reprise her role as Paulette. However, the movie is still in the pre-production phase with no firm release date.

CUT. PRINT. THAT’S A WRAP!

In the artifice that is Tinsel Town, Coolidge proves that being yourself pays off in dividends. And there’s a lot of takeaways from her recent resurgence, chief among them that you should never give up on your dreams and be who you are, giving zero fucks if not everybody gets or accepts that. And to that I say, thank you for being you, Jennifer Coolidge. Until next time, that’s all the news that’s fit to print.



Jennifer Coolidge © Hutchinsphoto | Dreamstime.com



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PALM SPRINGS



THE SEASON IS HERE! PRIDE, HOLIDAYS AND FABU HAPPENINGS!

The big event kicking off November is **Greater Palm Springs Pride**, November 1-5. The theme is Drag Now! Drag Forever! Check the website for all the events and activities not to be missed. Headliners include Idina Menzel and Lisa Lisa on Saturday, and 10,000 Maniacs on Sunday. Kylie Sonique Love, *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* Season 6 winner and the first transgender person to come out on any reality-TV show, will be on the stage Sunday afternoon. Thursday night is new Latin Pride Fiesta on Arenas. Friday is Broadway in Drag competition on the main stage near the Hyatt. pspride.org.

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians **Cultural Plaza and Museum** will open Friday, November 3. Featured is the new Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, The Spa at Séc-he celebrating the Tribe's ancient Agua Caliente Hot Mineral Spring, a Gathering Plaza, and an Oasis Trail. aguacaliente-nsn.gov

The Fantasticks will run through November 2 at CV Rep in Cathedral City. cvrep.org

Rent will be on stage at Palm Canyon Theatre through November 12. palmcanyontheatre.net

Kinky Boots will run November 3-26 at Desert Theatreworks, Indio. dtworks.com

Veterans Day in Rancho Mirage will be observed Thursday, November 9 with a special program at Rancho Mirage Amphitheatre. The event will feature stories, memorial remembrance, flag ceremony and pledge, then finish with a Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy kind of show. Registration required for this free public event. desert-theatricals.com

Cathedral City Evening Rotary will present the **16th Annual Fields of Valor** at Patriot Park, November 4-12. Marine Corps' birthday celebration will be November 10. Veterans Day program will be November 11. This weeklong celebration will begin with an Opening Ceremony on Saturday, November 4, recognizing lost veterans from Riverside and San Bernardino counties in the Vietnam War and California fallen soldiers from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. An area will be dedicated to Soldiers of Valor from past wars to honor family and friends. The names of local lost veterans will be recorded and looped on a soundtrack to be played all day, ending with taps at sundown. Veterans' recognitions will close with a ceremony on Sunday, November 12. discovercathedralcity.com



An Evening with Pia Zadora will take place Monday, November 6 at Oscar's Palm Springs. oscarpalmsprings.com

Michael Childers will presents "One Night Only, Las Vegas, The Golden Age 1950-1970," Wednesday, November 8 at McCallum Theatre. This benefits Barbara Sinatra Children's Center. Scheduled to appear include Debby Boone, Jason Graae, Billy Stritch, Nita Whitaker and

Nickerson-Rossi Dance. mccallumtheatre.com

K & E Entertainment will present **Cabaret6: Desert Stars** at Revolution Stage Company, Wednesdays, November 8 to December 13.

The schedule includes "A Tina Turner Tribute with Keisha D and Hearts of Soul," November 8; "Different Drum: The Music of Linda Ronstadt with Francesca Amari," November 15; "1963 with Tod Macofsky," November 22; "Brian Scott-Unexpected," November 29; "Songs of Sarah, A Tribute to Sarah Vaughn with Rose Mallett," December 6; and "Keisha D Sings Ella Fitzgerald, December 13. eventbrite.com/cc/cabaret6-desert-stars-2664529

The 26th annual City of **Palm Springs Veterans Day Parade** will be Saturday afternoon, November 11, along Palm Canyon Drive. A patriotic concert and fireworks finale at Palm Canyon Drive and Amado will follow. The parade will be broadcast live on NBC and KPSE-TV Palm Springs. psveteransday.com

Palm Springs Food & Wine Festival, An International Experience, will run November 11-12 at Palm Springs Stadium Pavilion, featuring 40 chef-owned restaurants and over 50 boutique wineries. palmspringsfoodandwine.org

Local organizations will battle it out to win at the **One-PS Lip Sync Battle** on Sunday, November 12 at Palm Springs Cultural Center. Contestants representing citywide organizations will take to the stage to raise money for PS Parks and Rec Youth Engagement Programs and ONE-PS New Neighborhood Development at this hilarious high-energy event.

Contestants are a who's who of Palm Springs royalty: PS Police, Justin Lawler; PS Fire, Kitty Alvarado; LGBTQ Center, Mike Thompson and Lex Ortega; PS Office of Neighborhoods & Special Programs, Denise Goolsby and Veronica Goedhart; Mizell Senior Center, Charles Huff; PS Programs Compliance, David Recio and Crew; The Art Of Pride, Jamie O'Neil; PS Unified Schools, Carla Culbertson and Jody Diaz; PS Pride, Mitchell Battersby and Rene Pullsman; DAP Health, Andrea Murray. Special guest will be drag king Kit Tapata. Shann Carr will be the emcee. one-ps.org

Sunday Cabaret Series at Arthur Newman Theatre at the Joslyn Center, Palm Desert, will feature songs from Broadway, jazz and standards from the Great American Songbook. The show on Sunday, November 12 will be "Some People's Lives... Songs of Love, Longing and Laughter," with vocalist and pianist Tim Bruneau, vocalist Laura Stave, cellist Teresa DiPietro and flutist Linny Smith. sundaycabaretseries.com



The Friends of the Palm Springs Library will present the first **Palm Springs Speaks** guest for Season 5, featuring animal scientist and autism self-advocate **Temple Gardin**. She will speak Friday, November 17 at Palm Springs Cultural Center. palmspringsspeaks.org

The drive-through holiday light display **Magic of Lights** will return to Empire Polo Club, November 17 through December 31. More than

2 million colorful lights will create a number of festive scenes, such as snowflakes, figures from Twelve Days of Christmas, and a 32-foot-tall animated Barbie wearing her holiday gear. There is also a 200-foot enchanting tunnel of lights, a Jolly Holiday Village, and an out-of-car area, including letter-writing stations and attractions such as singing trees, leaping arches and candy canes all synched to music.

magicoflights.com/coachellavalley

The ninth annual **Cathedral City International Hot Air Balloon Festival**, presented by Agua Caliente Casinos, will be November 17-19. Featuring hot air balloon flights, sunset hot air balloon glows, live music, food trucks, kids zone, tethered balloon rides, vendor market, car show, drone show and more. Locations include

Agua Caliente Casino Rancho Mirage, Cathedral City Amphitheatre Park, Westin Rancho Mirage, Big League Dreams Sports Park and Cathedral City City Hall Festival Lawn. hotairballoonfest.com

McCormick's 75th Palm Springs Classic Car Auction will take place Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 17-19 at Palm Springs Convention Center. This classic car show and auction features 500 cars. Free admission on Friday. Tickets Saturday and Sunday. classic-carauction.com



The City of Palm Desert will celebrate its 50-year anniversary with **The Party in The Park** on Saturday, November 18 with an all-day spectacular at Palm Desert Civic Center Park. Performances will include Rose Royce, Thompson Square, and local desert rock bands Brant Bjork, Fatso Jetson and Unsound. There will be art installations, food trucks, and a beer and wine garden. Admission is free. palmdesert50.com

Coachella Health Festival, an adventure of body, mind and soul, will be Saturday, November 18 at Spotlight 29 Casino, Coachella. There is also a golf and tennis fashion show. marloproductions.com/coachella-health-festival/

Night of a Hundred Helens will happen on Saturday, November 18 at Le Fern at the Caliente Tropics Resort in Palm Springs. Dress like Mrs. Roper and work those kaftans. calientetropics.com

The Desert Winds Symphonic Band and Desert Winds Jazz Band Fall Concert, **Music in Motion**, will be Saturday and Sunday, November 18-19 at the Jewish Community Center, Bochner Auditorium. Dean McDowell is the artistic director. desertwindsfb.org

Modern Men, Coachella Valley Men's Chorus, will present their holiday concert preview, **Comfort and Joy**, on Sunday, November 19 at Hope Lutheran Church in Palm Desert. Michelle Fiore will be the guest soprano. Dr. Stan Hill is artistic director. Julie Adams will be the accompanist. modernmen.org

Old Town Artisan Studios, La Quinta, will host a monthly Open Mix Night the third Monday of each month in their outdoor courtyard. Musicians, poets, comedians, songwriters, storytellers and artists are invited to join for an evening of performances and food trucks.

oldtownartisanstudios.org

A new business, **Play Lounge and Café PS**, is now open on Tahquitz, and features fun, games, food and friends. Matt Irby, owner, offers board games, outdoor games, pool tables, darts, food, beer and wine. playloungeps.com

Weekly Bingo in King's Highway Restaurant and **Trivia in the Amigo Room** with Bella da Ball will continue every Monday at Ace Hotel & Swim Club Palm Springs. acehotel.com/palmsprings

The **Palm Springs Christmas Tree competition**, produced and directed by Metropolitan Fashion Week, will close registration on November 30. For details and registration, email info@lunarps.com. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to support the pediatric program at Eisenhower Health.

Jingle All the Way will kick off at Villagefest in downtown Palm Springs on Thursday, November 30. Pick up free jingle bells at the Villagefest Booth at Tahquitz and Palm Canyon Drive, while supplies last.

Jingle Mingle in the Park will be Friday, December 1, City of Palm Springs Tree lighting at Frances Stevens Park. Dancing Christmas trees, holiday music and caroling.

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus, Indian Wells Theater, will host a holiday fundraiser, **The Gift of Love and Laughter**, featuring Bill Marx, composter and jazz performer (son of Harpo and Susan Marx), and Cash Baxter, director, producer and instructor, on Saturday, December 2. csusb.edu/pdc

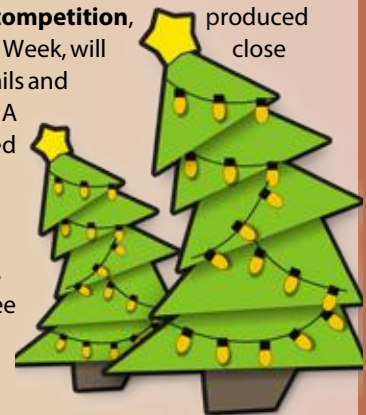
The 31st annual **Palm Springs Festival of Lights Parade** will be Saturday, December 2 along Palm Canyon Drive. The signature holiday event will feature twinkling lights, marching bands, Macy's-style holiday floats and Santa Claus. The parade will be broadcast live on NBC and KPSE-TV Palm Springs. psfestivaloflights.com



admission
Springs Park, bands

include: "Kenny Cetera's Chicago Experience," December 6; "Tribute to Tina Turner by Debby Holiday, January 3; "Space Oddity-David Brighton's Tribute to David Bowie," February 7; "ABBAFab - The #1 ABBA Tribute," March 6; "The Garth Guy Show - The Ultimate Garth Brooks Tribute Show," April 3; "Wanted: The Ultimate Tribute to Bon Jovi," May 1. pschamber.org

Have a great November!



Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce will present **Rock the Park, Tribute Bands: Season Three**. Scheduled for the first Wednesday

of each month with free admission in the new downtown Palm



ONCE UPON A TIME, IN A WORLD WHERE HATE SUPERHEROES EMBARKED ON A JOURNEY TO THEY USED THEIR PLATFORM TO RAISE AWARENESS DIRECTED TOWARDS ANY COMMUNITY OR MINORITY. BOTH MEN WERE GAY, AND THEY KNEW FIRSTHAND THEY WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE ELSE HAD TO GO ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SPEAKING AT RALLIES AND MEETINGS WHO WOULD LISTEN.

THEIR MESSAGE WAS SIMPLE: HATE IS UNACCEPTABLE. THERE ARE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST ANYONE IN DEALING WITH A HATE CRIME. THEY ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO SPEAK UP AND STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT.

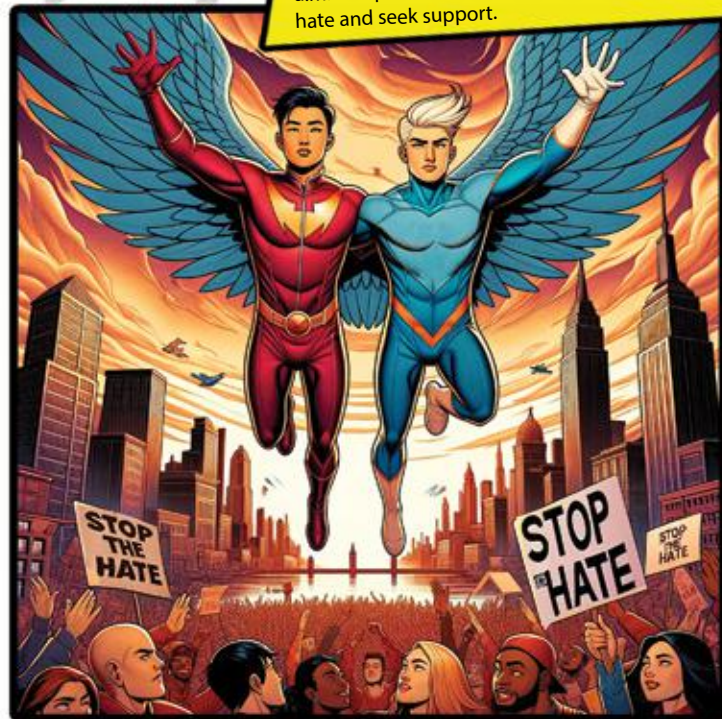
AS THEY TRAVELED FROM PLACE TO PLACE, THEY MET PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HATE AND DISCRIMINATION. THEY LISTENED AND CONNECTED THEM WITH RESOURCES THAT COULD HELP. PASSIONATE ABOUT ENDING HATE AND DISCRIMINATION.

THEIR JOURNEY WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY, BUT THEIR MESSAGE WAS IMPORTANT, AND THEY WERE DETERMINED. THEIR HARD WORK PAID OFF. PEOPLE BEGAN TO LISTEN.

THANKS TO OUR SUPERHEROES' TIRELESS EFFORTS, THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING HATE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE LGBTQ+ MESSAGE WAS HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR, AND IT SPARKED ACTION.

THE PAIR'S JOURNEY MAY HAVE COME TO AN END. THEY WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED AS THE MEN WHO FIGHTED FOR WHAT WAS RIGHT, AND WHO MADE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

Any victim of or witness to a hate incident or crime can report it any time at cavshate.org. You can also call 833.NO.HATE, 24 a.m. to 6 p.m. If outside of those hours, you can leave a message and seek support.



AND DISCRIMINATION WERE RAMPANT, TWO
TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE.
AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING HATE
Y.

AND HOW IT FELT TO BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. THEY
WENT THROUGH WHAT THEY ENDURED. THEY TRAVELED
TO EVENTS, AND SHARED THEIR STORIES WITH ANYONE

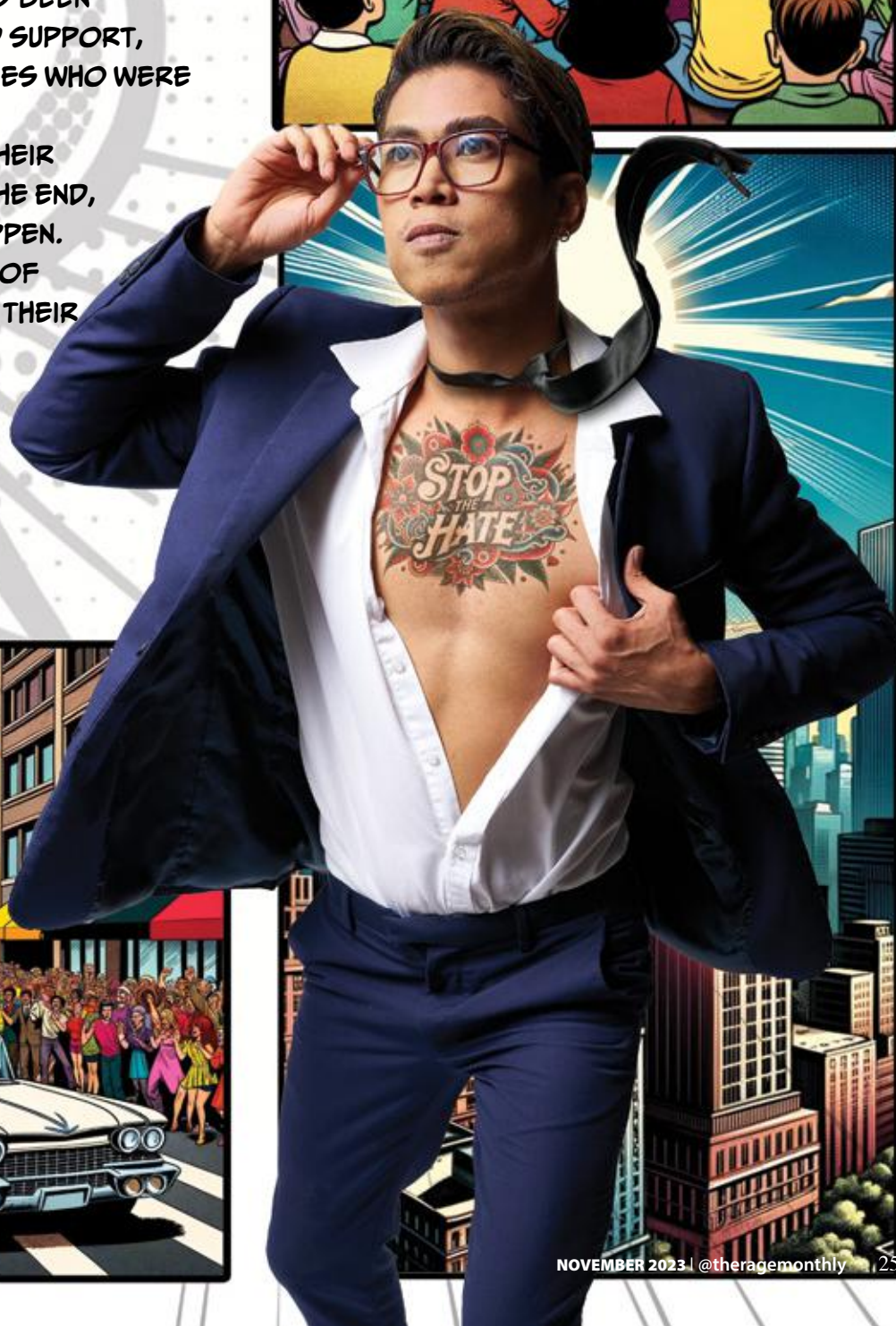
ABLE. THEY WANTED EVERYONE TO KNOW THAT THERE
WAS THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY WHO HAS BEEN A VICTIM OF
HATE OUT AGAINST HATE AND DISCRIMINATION, AND TO

FAB DUO MET MANY PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN
LISTENED TO THEIR STORIES, OFFERED SUPPORT,
COULD HELP. THEY ALSO MET MANY ALLIES WHO WERE
ATION.

THEY NEVER GAVE UP. THEY KNEW THAT THEIR
DETERMINED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IN THE END,
LISTEN, AND CHANGE STARTED TO HAPPEN.
OVER TIME, MORE PEOPLE BECAME AWARE OF
TOWARDS ANY COMMUNITY OR MINORITY. THEIR
STORY INSPIRED OTHERS TO TAKE

AT THE END, BUT THEIR LEGACY LIVES
ON AS SUPERHEROES WHO FOUGHT FOR
THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

Someone in California can report it and receive support
for HATE; 833.866.4283 Monday - Friday from 9
am to 5pm. You can also report it via a voicemail, or you can call 211 to report





BEAU FINET

Where were you born and raised?

Born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin.

Where do you live now?

San Diego, California.

What inspired you to pursue modeling?

This being my first-ever modeling "gig," and having been able to work with *Rage* specifically, my inspiration was to better engage with my local communities, something I've been working on recently in my personal life in order to better connect with the people around me.

What do you like most about modeling?

I see modeling as an opportunity to celebrate body positivity, as well as combat certain personal insecurities in the most raw, head-on fashion. More importantly, if you can pair those personal benefits with a cause as impactful as the Stop the Hate movement, it's an incredibly humbling and fulfilling bonus.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I am an animal lover at my core. Any time I can spend with or around animals is time well spent. I also play tennis, am a film/TV buff, and can usually be found catching up with friends over drinks in the neighborhood.

Who is your favorite superhero, whether real or fictional?

Sir David Attenborough is my personal hero given his lifelong commitment to and respect for animals and the planet. To me, if saving the world is the goal of a superhero, I'd struggle to name anyone more heroic than him.

Stop the Hate is the theme of this photoshoot. Any suggestions on how to overcome hatred?

Hate can too easily stem from other hate. We all struggle with it, but what gives me hope is knowing there is always another option. Hate is not innate. Patience, acceptance, love and perspective are all meaningful alternatives in any situation in life. Cause and effect.

Where can we find you on social media?

@bfinet on Instagram

HARPER RAMIREZ

Where were you born and raised?

Philippines, in an island called Albay where the majestic Mayon Volcano is situated.

Where do you live now?

San Diego

What inspired you to pursue modeling?

My quest for more self-realization and pursuing dreams that I thought was out of reach for someone who look like me.

What do you like most about modeling?

There's this unexplainable rush that I feel whenever I do modeling jobs. It's a feeling that is equally rewarding and incredibly fun at the same time!

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Boxing, yoga, playing basketball, surfing, doing calligraphy, hanging out with friends doing random stuff, going on spontaneous adventures, listening to music, traveling, playing video games, lots!

Who is your favorite superhero, whether real or fictional?

My mom.

Stop the Hate is the theme of this photoshoot. Any suggestions on how to overcome hatred?

By being kind to any one and in the littlest ways you can be. Kindness is free, I suggest it should be sprinkled around.

Where can we find you on social media?

@harperamirez on Instagram

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ADDISON GRACE

WANTS TO NORMALIZE BEING DIFFERENT

It's not often that singer-songwriters get to embark on their second headlining tour before their debut album has fully had a chance to hit the airwaves, but 22-year-old Addison Grace (he/they) is doing just that after releasing their debut, **Diving Lessons**, in September.

Born in Los Angeles but raised in Salt Lake City, Grace initially got their start in music at a young age, and endured singing and dancing lessons at the encouragement of their mother. "I kept wanting to do it even though she would laugh and kind of say that I was the quietest kid on the stage all the time," Grace told *The RAGE Monthly*.

When it came to learning the ukulele, Grace said "I stole my older brother's [ukulele] and started teaching myself through YouTube videos." Playing the music helped Grace deal with autism, noting, "Music was always the one way that made the most sense to me and the way that I could really communicate and be heard and understood."

When it came time to record *Diving Lessons*, Grace recorded a third of the album in Los Angeles with producer Cameron Hale and then flew to London to finish it with producer Cape Town.

"It was just like hanging out with a brother or really good friend," Grace said of Cape Town. "It's what helped me feel so passionate and ready to take a bunch of leaps in my music and sort of settle in my sound a lot. It was the best option for my first album and I would not have done it any differently."

Although it's only Grace's first album, the upcoming tour is actually their second time taking a headline spot. The first go-around, Grace said, was "very exciting but very new... I had to learn how much I was allowed to push my voice and push myself. It was jarring because I never performed shows for that long and I was kind of learning how to take up space on the stage and learn how to be the headliner."

This go-around will be different, since Grace has sorted out the pre-show rituals and learned how much energy to put into which parts of the show. "I feel a lot more prepared and ready," Grace said. "It's already going to be a lot cooler and more diverse on the tech side of things, so I'm excited to go back and be like, 'OK, let's do this

again. This time I have my head on my shoulders and I'm not flailing around singing my songs."

After initially gaining popularity on social media apps like TikTok and YouTube, Grace started learning what it was like to deal with the backlash from the haters. Despite learning how to ignore the comments, Grace also knows there are people out there who need the message they're delivering.

"It's the first wave of people that see your stuff who are the people that actually care," Grace said.

"I tend to be someone who, I guess, is an inspiration for a lot of young queer folk. And a lot of folks that are just like me or who grew up in Utah or have anything similar to my story. Me saying something and me being out there and outspoken and not really shying away from it is 10 times more important than what some Kyle's gonna say in my comments about my teeth or who I'm dating."

In line with being a representation for young queer listeners, Grace hopes the one thing people feel the most from their music is safe.

"I really hope that people just feel seen and feel comfortable whenever they are interacting with my art or my shows or with me in person," Grace said. "I didn't know I was autistic growing up, or that I was queer, or any of that. In a way, those things still affected me, because it wasn't that I wasn't those things, I was just severely confused trying to fit into a little box. And for others, to know that it exists just because there's somebody out there saying that it does makes them feel seen. As long as you're not hurting anybody or yourself, you don't have to apologize for how weird you are. That's the main message I want to push."

Catch Grace's *Diving Lessons* tour at the House of Blues San Diego on **Friday, November 17** and Echoplex in Los Angeles on **Saturday, November 18**. addisongrace.xyz





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DANCERS:

IG LINKS: @MR.CORKSCREW

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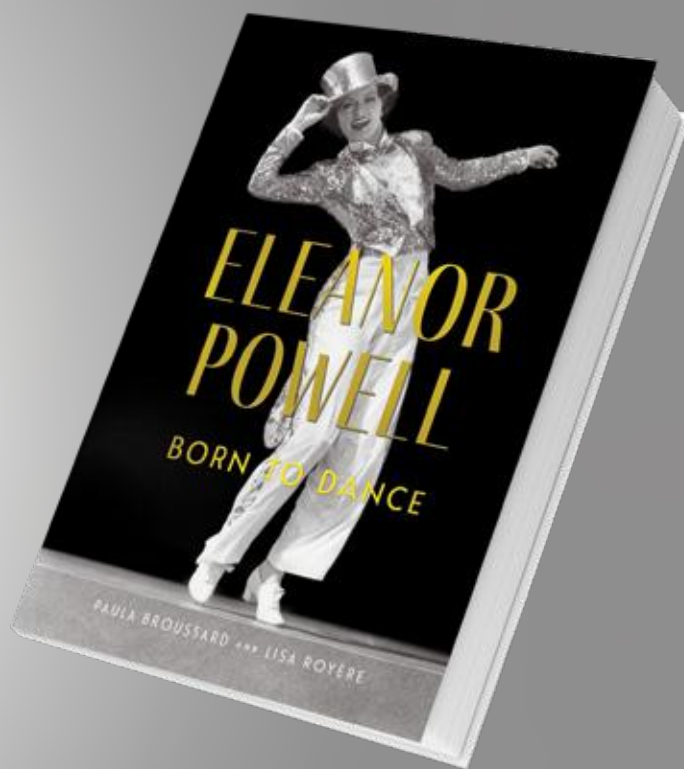
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THE QUEEN OF TAP

ELEANOR POWELL: BORN TO DANCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHORS
PAULA BROUSSARD AND LISA ROYÈRE



The fascinating rhythm of MGM star Eleanor Powell is illustrated in the new book, ***Eleanor Powell: Born to Dance***. Her taps were tops, and it's never been more a pleasure to be thankful for the biography of her life and extraordinary and powerful talents as a dancer.

Thank you tremendously for the book. One thing that struck me is not only is Eleanor Powell the “Queen of Tap,” this woman was quite simply a “Genius of Tap.” What sparked you initially in honoring Powell and bringing her life to such vivid light with your book?

Paula: We both discovered Eleanor Powell in 1974 through the film *That’s Entertainment*. We were so impressed with her and amazed that we had never heard of her before. About a month later, I met and spoke to her briefly at a dance concert appearance, and then Lisa and I found out she was being honored at a local retro movie theatre with a birthday celebration. We both met her there, and she was so warm and full of stories for the audience. We had the idea shortly afterward to put together a “Films of” book, as nothing had been written about her before. We were only 18, and this was as in-depth as we thought we could handle at the time. We felt she deserved something to bring to light her incredible work in films.

Lisa: Even though our initial project never panned out, years later we were still dismayed that she had been largely overlooked, compared to some of her dancing peers. Her legacy in dance and film is too important to be forgotten and needs to be preserved, but we also wanted to tell the story of what an exceptional person she was. This time, we felt that we could tackle the full biography needed to accomplish this.

Mitzi Gaynor once told me in an interview, “Dance is joy.” After reading *Born to Dance*, it’s clearly evident that dancing is also discipline, pain and total dedication. How would you describe Powell and her strengths to someone who hasn’t read your book yet?

Paula: Eleanor’s singular technique is a direct result not only of her talent, but also of her intense dedication and disciplined practice. The great Russian ballerina Galina Ulanova once said, “Talent is work,” and Eleanor’s work ethic is a perfect example of this. The style that emerged from all this

practice is precise and clean, and blends effortlessly with her acrobatics. It was very unique at the time, especially when combined with her joyful presentation.

Lisa: Ellie used to say, “I would rather dance than eat,” and she definitely suffered for her art. But her strengths transcended dance. Her whole journey is so interesting. As a child, she surmounted incredible odds and through single-minded hard work and dedication, became the top in her field. She held the title



of World’s Greatest Feminine Tap Dancer from 1929 onward. Even after she retired from the screen, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to the next phases of her life, and she accomplished so much. Her innovation in creating the first religious television show for children won her five Emmys. Not to mention her comeback at age 48, which is one of the most inspiring stories of all. I think her story would be interesting to anybody.

How would you describe the magic magnetism of Eleanor Powell’s persona

from your research in writing this book?

Paula: Eleanor’s appeal was very much that of the wholesome and approachable girl next door, and her roles reflected that. Audiences loved her natural beauty and the exuberance she exuded through her numbers. She was genuine on screen, and this made her incredible technique even more astounding.

Lisa: Eleanor’s dancing was unique and so technically difficult that she stood out among her contemporaries, but what made her performances so magical was the pure joy she exuded while dancing. Much like Bill Robinson, she incorporated her personality into her numbers — hand gestures, amusing bits and, of course, her 1,000-watt smile.

What MGM musical number has your eyes twirling with the splendor, the supreme skill or vivaciousness of Eleanor Powell? Mine is the one she did in *Ship Ahoy* with Buddy Rich on the ship’s deck in 1942.

Paula: I love the finale number “Broadway Rhythm” from *Broadway Melody of 1936*. It has so much exuberance and truly shows off all her strengths. It shows elements of every aspect of her style, and her signature top hat and tails goes perfectly in this number.

Lisa: I would have to agree with Paula. The number explodes on the screen as the culmination of all the numbers in the film that built up MGM’s presentation of their newest star. And who couldn’t love that fabulous sparkly tux? I also love the “I’ll Take Tallulah” number from

Ship Ahoy where Eleanor shows off her skills as a percussionist with Buddy Rich. Eleanor’s favorite of her films was *Broadway Melody of 1936*, but her favorite number was the finale from *Broadway Melody of 1938*.

Thank you both for tapping away to honor readers with your love for Eleanor Powell with *Born to Dance*.

Paula and Lisa: You’re so welcome! We truly hope that many people will pick up the book and discover Eleanor’s inspiring life as well as her place in film history. It is our pleasure!

"FEMININOMENON!"

THE RISE AND FALL OF A MIDWEST PRINCESS CREATED BY

Chappell Roan

There is something so pop popular and punchy about Chappell Roan. That is as the pop of my bubblegum snaps with her voice, creativity and beats. It's nice to know that her music also has a heart. So, in the midst of entertaining audiences while on her current U.S. tour, she snapped a few answers for *The RAGE Monthly*. Here goes and "Is everything good?" Chappell is definitely an original talent.

Please share your music persona as for some reason, you remind me of Judy Tenuta with your wit, and sometimes your music has a heartbreaking hit of reality. What is your musical message?

I would say my musical persona is just a girl who wants to have fun and dress up and sing loud and be a little bit obnoxious! My musical message is a celebration of who I am. I find freedom within playing and writing music; it's just an expression of my daydreams.

You have a beautiful voice. It hit me specifically on your songs, "Coffee" and "California." What are your feelings about writing those and any backstory on the two songs?

Well, "California" is about literally just wanting my dad to come pick me up from California because I feel like I don't belong there, even though it's where all my dreams are coming true. For "Coffee," the backstory is that I really wanted to see my ex, but I knew that it wasn't an amazing idea to get drinks. We know what happens when we get drinks out late at night with your ex. So, the song is just like "OK, let's meet up in the morning

time and just get coffee and it'll be fine!"

Coffee, tea or me, huh? [laughter] You're so young. That major image of you on the cover of your CD is so well "dramatic" so to say. What is your take on that as I think with all the videos, you are doing more than the "average Joe" knows? Please share a bit about your creative input on your debut album.

I definitely creatively direct the project! I just like to make things dramatic and campy and extra interesting... because, why not? I think it's really fun to be loud, in your face and like an explosion of energy and rhinestones! I have a creative hand in every aspect of my career.

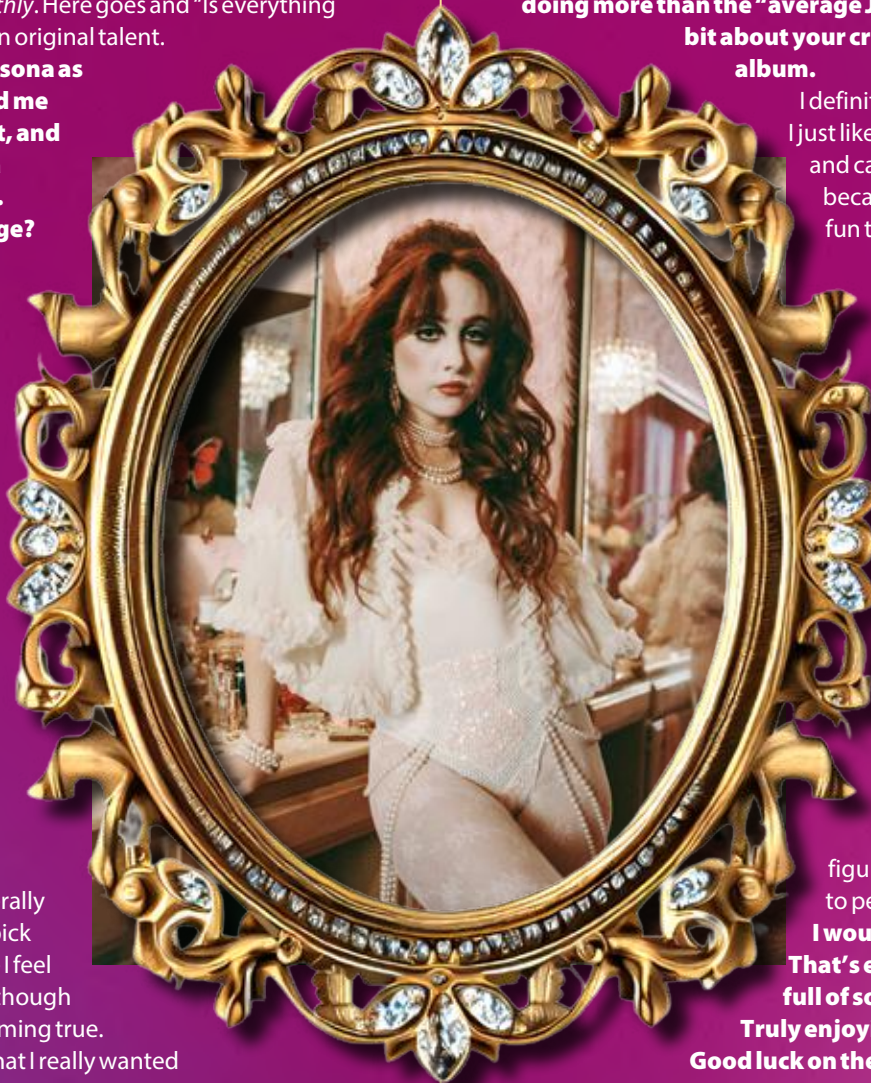
Your super colossus video in my eyes is "Super Graphic Ultra-Modern Girl." It's much too fun on the ears as well and kind of makes you do a Christina Aguilera flashback visually. It's a "what the heck" song. Can I say dance remixes? Just tell me why you did this song? "With a guy like me?"

I just needed an undeniable gay-club song. It took a year to figure out, but it's my favorite song to perform live!

I would say you are a chameleon. That's excellent as your debut is full of so many colors of your talent.

Truly enjoying the music and the visuals. Good luck on the rest of your tour.

Chappell Roan's *Midwest Princess Tour* comes to The Wiltern in Los Angeles on **November 14**, SOMA in San Diego on **February 22, 2024** and Acrisure Arena in Palm Desert on **February 23, 2024**.



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Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa will present a charming and humorous cabaret offering, *Forbidden Broadway*, from **Thursday, November 16 through Saturday, November 18** as part of the Cabaret Series in Samueli Theater. This delightful show will reenact iconic Broadway shows with hilarious satire. Kick back and have a good laugh, while watching favorite Broadway shows reimaged with a comical spark.



From *Frozen* to *Phantom* to *Wicked*, this fall-down funny, satirical roast of over 30 Broadway hits will feature outrageous costumes, silly spoofs of the songs you know by heart and madcap impressions by a stellar cast. Newer spoofs include *Hamilton*, *Dear Evan Hansen* and *Moulin Rouge*. It's never been more fun poking fun at your favorite musicals and stars.

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Forbidden Broadway is the recipient of a Special Tony Award, an Obie Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Drama Desk Award for Best Off-Broadway Musical, and a 2013 Drama Desk Award nomination for its edition, *Forbidden Broadway: Alive and Kicking!*
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MATTHEW BRODERICK TO LEAD STAR-STUDED CAST IN WORLD PREMIERE

La Jolla Playhouse will stage its world premiere of *Babbitt* by Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro (*Memphis*), adapted from the novel by Sinclair Lewis, choreographed by Stephen Buescher, directed by Tony winner **Christopher Ashley** and featuring acclaimed stage and screen star **Matthew Broderick** (*The Producers*, Playhouse-born revival of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) in the title role. The production will run in Mandell Weiss Theatre from **Tuesday, November 7 through Sunday, December 3**.

"The idea of adapting Sinclair Lewis's scintillating novel has been percolating with Joe DiPietro, Matthew Broderick and myself for several years, and I'm delighted to be mounting the world premiere at the Playhouse this season," Ashley said. "Lewis's shrewd political and social satire is still deeply relevant in America 101 years later, and I can't think of a more glorious cast and creative team to bring the production to life on the Weiss stage."

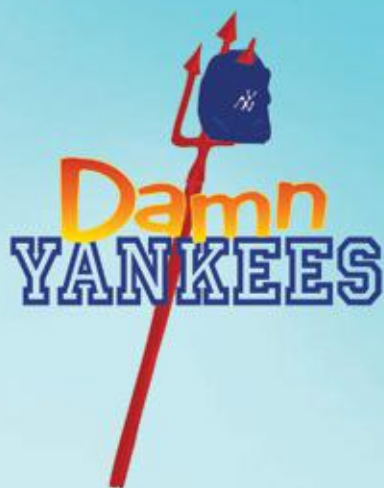
Broderick and DiPietro join forces with the playhouse's Ashley for this unmissable theatrical event. *Babbitt* entered the zeitgeist in 1922 as a novel by satirist Sinclair Lewis, the first American Nobel Laureate. An instant literary classic, *Babbitt* has been a stalwart on "best ever" lists for over 100 years and is now adapted for the stage.

George F. Babbitt is a middle-aged real estate broker in the Midwestern city of Zenith. By day, he has a prosperous, respectable middle-class existence. By night, he's plagued by the thought that he has amounted to nothing. Searching for more to life than his top-of-the-line toaster and hickory golf club — more meaning — Babbitt leaps with abandon into the most spectacular rebellion of his life — one that could end up costing him everything. **lajollaplayhouse.org / 858.550.1070**

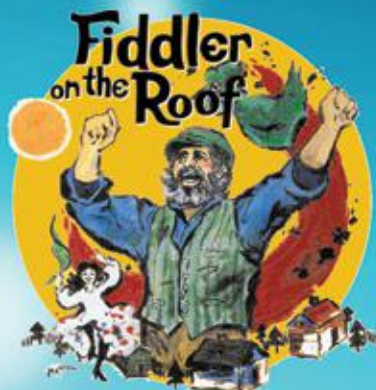
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After the holidays, sit back and relax or dance the night away with Legends of Swing, which features the best swing band in LA performing all the songs you love to dance to. Following that is Britain's Finest, the best Beatles tribute band around.

The aforementioned activities are free to attend; all you need to do is register for free tickets on the website one month prior to each event.

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CYGNET THEATRE HOSTS KATE HAMILL'S WORLD PREMIERE PLAY

The Little Fellow (or The Queen of Tarts Tells All) is a risqué comedic drama written by renowned playwright **Kate Hamill**. This world premiere at Cygnet Theatre in Old Town, directed by **Rob Lutfy**, runs through **Sunday, November 19**.

The play is loosely based on the life and tell-all memoirs of the 19th century's most famous courtesan — Harriette Wilson, also known as *The Little Fellow*. Since the age of 13, Harriet has navigated through the pitiless and glamorous world of the British regency's demi-monde: eventually becoming the "top of the bottom" as the self-styled Queen of Tarts. Her defiance of social conventions and refusal to be a lady have attracted many patrons, including some of the country's most distinguished and high-powered men. But Harriet wants to get out of the "business," and she has a plan. It may threaten her reputation, her business, and ultimately, her life as she confronts the cost of winning in an unjust world.

"Like most playwrights, I have plays 'on my shelf' — earlier plays that haven't yet seen the light of day," Hamill said. "That was the great gift of The Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission — to help me rewrite *The Little Fellow* and bring it to life; without the commission, I doubt I would have re-attacked the piece! *The Little Fellow* was my second full-length play, originally written in 2014 — and when I came to work on it with my friend Robby Lutfy at Cygnet in 2019, I completely revamped and retooled the script.

"This play is based on the true story of the (in)famous-in-her-time Harriette Wilson, the greatest and most unusual courtesan of her day, who brought her wealthy and powerful clients to their knees. I'm excited and grateful to bring this often-forgotten woman's journey to the stage, and re-examine the emotional cost of power dynamics, sex work, and the intersection of gender/class roles — both in Harriette's time and in our own," she said.

"I am excited to return to Cygnet to work on the world premiere of a play I have loved for a long time with an incredible team of artists," director Lutfy said. "Kate Hamill is not just an old friend of mine, but one of the most produced playwrights in the country year after year. *The Little Fellow* is set in the world of London in the 1830s, a world of survival. In a time when vulnerability would get you killed, one had to consume or be consumed. So, what happens when an England's most popular courtesan decides to exploit her clients by exposing them at their most vulnerable? What does it cost to win in a society with extremely regimented rules and proscribed behavior? I'm fascinated by this story's anti-heroine and the parallels to modern women like Stormy Daniels." cygnettheatre.com / 619.337.1525



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NOW SAVING THE UNIVERSE: *CAPTAIN FAGGOTRON!*

The world is one big hot mess right now. Wars, pandemics, government dysfunction, natural disasters and increased animosity toward the LGBTQ community are taking a toll. We could use a hero, but Superman, Flash Gordon and Wonder Woman are apparently otherwise occupied. Who can we turn to in our time of need?

Enter the fantastic Captain Faggotron! The brainchild of German filmmaker Harvey Rabbit, this new superhero for our community will be making his home video debut on November 21 courtesy of TLA Releasing. A low-budget but big-hearted and very creative movie, it wowed audiences this year at LGBTQ film festivals worldwide.

Captain Faggotron Saves the Universe is a campy comedy-fantasy about internalized homophobia, the tyranny of the closet, and fear of a gay planet. Rabbit conceived it as a direct though absurd response to multiple situations: the 2016 shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida; the persecution of homosexuality in Chechnya, Russia; the election of President Donald Trump in the USA; and the violence that unfortunately follows gay and queer people of all genders throughout our lives.

When Father Andrew Gaylord — a closeted Catholic priest — loses his precious ring, he is forced to turn to Captain Faggotron for help. It turns out that the missing ring is no ordinary piece of jewelry. It is the mystical Ring of Oberon, which has the power to turn the entire population of Earth gay. Whereas Father Andrew is horrified at this prospect, his nemesis/sometimes lover Queen Bitch excitedly declares “Soon, the world will be flooded with homosexuals!” Cue the maniacal laughter.

This movie truly has something for everyone: religion, furies, men used as foot rests, sex demons, animated sequences, MAGA hats, full-frontal male and female nudity, a song about Grindr and — naturally, in light of its German setting — sausages. The title character even gets his own theme song and a dance number! As Queen Bitch queries Father Andrew at one point, “Why be normal when you can be extraordinarily fabulous?”

According to the film’s website: “*Captain Faggotron Saves the Universe* follows a tradition deeply rooted in gay/queer history and our ability to survive. Confronting ‘straight’ and heteronormative structures, camp exposes absurdities of the mainstream in a way that allows us to laugh. Humor is a weapon, and camp is a tool of joyful resistance.”

Rabbit, the film’s writer-director, is a transgender artist living in Berlin, Germany. He has a master’s degree in dramaturgy and a master of fine arts in experimental theatre, both from New College

of California. A campaigner for LGBTQ and sex-worker rights, his activism dates back to the mid-1990s. Using spoken word as his medium, Rabbit stormed the stages of Northern California, speaking about feminism, queerness and empowerment.

From 2013 to 2015, he produced, curated and hosted *Variété Ridiculous*, a political cabaret in Berlin focusing on sex-worker rights. Rabbit’s first short film, *Slowdance*, premiered at the 2016 Berlin Porn Film Festival and has been shown in queer film festivals in many parts of Europe, South America, Central America and the USA. In 2017, he produced *We Are the Fucking World*, a short film for Erika Lust. Rabbit’s most recent work, *The Chemo Darkroom* (2018), was selected for the shorts competition in the Berlin Porn Film Festival, Berlin Feminist Film Week, IKFF Hamburg and the 2019 Hacker Porn Film Festival in Rome. *Captain Faggotron Saves the Universe* is his first feature film.

THE SPIRITED TRANSGENDER FILMMAKER RECENTLY SPOKE WITH THE RAGE MONTHLY VIA ZOOM FROM HIS HOME IN BERLIN.

Congratulations on making such a unique, creative film. What has been the response to it so far?

Well, we just won an award! Bishop Black (who plays Queen Bitch) won the Iris Prize in Cardiff, Wales for Best Non-Binary Performance. Mostly, people are loving this film. We’ve played both LGBTQ and international film festivals. Heterosexuals are loving this film, and I didn’t make it for them! I’m here to convert people. [laugh] I don’t mince words.

How and when did you first conceive the story?

After the Pulse shooting in 2016 in Orlando, Florida, I went into a state of shock and didn’t want to leave my apartment. Then one day, the first 12 pages of the script just kind of came out of me.

This is your first feature film, correct?

What were some of the challenges you faced?

Yes. It’s a 72-minute film and the entirety of our budget was 20,000 Euro (about \$21,200 US). We also had two COVID lockdowns in Germany that postponed everything. We shot basically every weekend from July through the end of October, 2021.

Wow, it sounds like a true labor of love.

No, it was a labor of compulsion. [laugh] I HAD to do this movie!





Your movie has a fabulous queer cast! Did you use a formal casting process, or just cast friends or people you knew?

The roles of Captain Faggotron and Queen Bitch were written specifically for the actors, Tchivett and Bishop Black. If they had said no, I couldn't have done it. I knew Rodrigo Garcia Alves (who plays Father Andrew Gaylord) from the community and bumped into him on the street one day. He's from Brazil and I thought, "Hmm, he could play the priest." [laugh] For other roles we had auditions and readings, and everyone did it for no money. Everyone involved was gay, trans or queer, with the exception of a cis-ish member of the core creative team.

Talk to me about the religious content in the movie. Are you or were you Catholic?

I'm Jewish. This is not my baggage. [laugh] I really don't know where Father Gaylord came from. I knew someone Catholic who thought of becoming a priest but he was really closeted. My best friend as a teenager was Catholic. We were really bad. I would spend Saturday nights at her house and we would sneak out to go party. We would get back early Sunday morning and I would sometimes go to church with her family, like two hours later.

I liked the music but was not religious, so hated being there. I wish a Catholic priest would come out publicly. "Just come out," as Harvey Milk said. My movie is a fantasia on religious and gay themes but I would love it if it inspired more openness.

That would be awesome. What's next for you?

I'm looking for funding to write my new script, *Cancer Made Me Trans*. It also has comedy and fantasy elements like *Captain Faggotron*, and I'll leave it at that.

I can't wait! Well, I wish you the best and much continued success.

Thank you so much! tlareleasing.com





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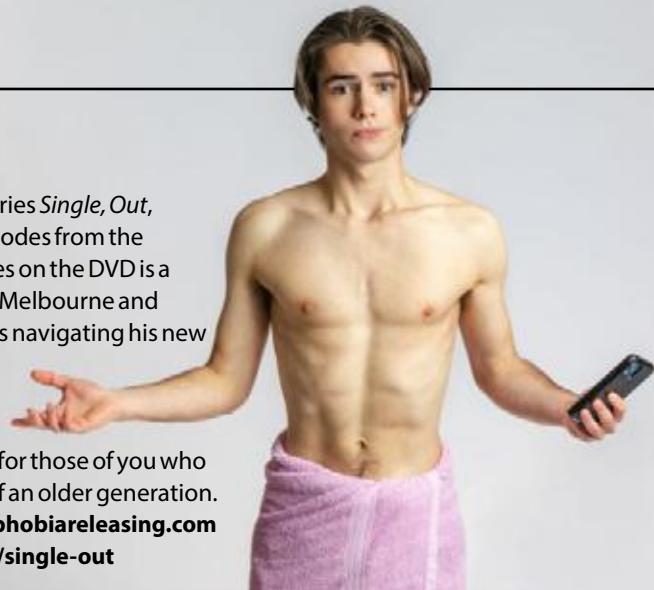
Written by Robert Leleux Directed by Eric Swanson

SINGLE, OUT

Cinephobia Releasing has just released the DVD of the Australian LGBTQ television series *Single, Out*, which was directed by **Lee Galea** (*Monster Pies*). This DVD collection contains all six episodes from the first season. The second season will premiere in the early 2024. One of the bonus features on the DVD is a bloopers reel that is 15 minutes long. This romantic comedy TV series is set in suburban Melbourne and revolves on the lives and loves of Adam (**Will Hutchins**), a cute-as-a-button twink who is navigating his new queer world with the assistance of his friends and family. Adam starts falling for his straight brother's hot friend, heads out to a gay bar for the first time, learns how to flirt, has his first date, and starts pushing queer themes in his artwork. The show is both witty and infectiously gay. Imagine a sweeter, more homosexual version of Dobie Gillis for those of you who

are of an older generation.

cinephobiareleasing.com/film/single-out



BOY CULTURE: GENERATION X

ROMANTIC CLASSIC'S LONG-AWAITED SEQUEL TO BE RELEASED

The follow-up to the groundbreaking drama *Boy Culture* (2006) will be available on TV on-demand platforms beginning **Tuesday, November 7**. Along with the whole original creative team, including director and co-writer **Q. Allan Brocka**, producers Stephen Israel and Philip Pierce, and co-writer Matthew Rettenmund, the actors who played X and Andrew in the movie, **Derek Magyar** and **Darryl Stephens**, are returning in their famous roles in this new TV series.

More than a decade after the events of the film, *Boy Culture: Generation X* finds X and Andrew, the on-again, off-again couple, now both 40, broken up, and tensely sharing a home out of financial necessity. When X attempts to plunge back into his previous job as a sex worker, he's in for a rude awakening — he's no longer the flavor of the month, and the entire industry has been transformed by changing attitudes, online platforms and PrEP. Reluctantly, X turns to a bratty Gen Z twink named Chayce (**Jason Caceres**) to guide him back into the business.

Brocka said the original film, cited among the 200 Best LGBTQ+ Movies of All Time by Rotten Tomatoes, resonated because it showed LGBTQ relationships "in a positive way that embraced our sexuality and sexual experiences. There were not a lot of films doing this unless they focused on our trauma."

Regarding *Boy Culture: Generation X*, he said, "The original focused on taking a risk to find love. Now, X has had love, and something's not quite working, so he's got to refocus on himself — who is he outside of love?"

"I love the character, the writing, the director," Magyar said about returning as X. "We are a family. We had a table read and it was like nothing had changed, except for the fact that we'd gotten a bit older."

With age comes wisdom, giving Magyar a chance to play a more vulnerable anti-hero: "I think X has grown a lot, and still has a lot to learn. I think he is well-intentioned, but I don't think he is the best communicator

and often gets himself in trouble. He goes back to hustling because it's something he knows he is good at, and he wants to show Andrew he can handle taking care of his part of the life that they share — or shared."

"When I heard Derek was coming back, I breathed a huge sigh of relief," Stephens said. "Not only would the fans be able to see us together again after all these years, but my job in telling this story would be exponentially easier."



The dynamic between X and Andrew is relatable because it's built on truth. "We all reach that point in our lives where we are suddenly questioning what we believed was good enough," Stephens said. "And we wonder... is that all there is to love? Because that's what we all deserve, right? To be happy with ourselves?"

Newcomer Jason Caceres, who plays Chayce, was a teen when the first movie released. "I was in high school," he said, "and watched it at a highly inappropriate hour to avoid having any difficult conversations with the people in my life. I remember starving for any content that would help me understand what I was feeling."

Although times have changed, queer youth still need positive and accurate representations, and *Boy Culture: Generation X* does not hold back in providing either. Matthew Rettenmund, author of the novel on which the films are based, said he believes that along with aging among gay men, the new film "is even more diverse, and also talks a lot more about race, age-gap issues, the status of safer sex, bisexuality, social media image-making, cosplay. There is something startling and thought-provoking at every turn."

"I hope viewers will take away a deeper understanding of the ways that sex, love and money impact their own lives. X's profession as an older sex worker allows us to experience, both comedically and dramatically, a rather extreme version of these forces," producer Pierce said. dekkoo.com





BEYOND THE AGGRESSIVES: 25 YEARS LATER

Immersive and sensorial, *Beyond The Aggressives: 25 Years Later* revisits four of the original subjects from **Daniel Peddle's** groundbreaking 2005 film *The Aggressives*, a seminal documentary centering masculine-presenting people of color assigned female at birth.

The now iconic Kisha, Trevon, Octavio and Chin are back, sharing an array of their triumphs and challenges, including pursuing dreams in the arts, surviving the experience of being held in ICE detention, reuniting with estranged children, deciding whether to start families of their own, and seeking gender-affirming healthcare.

Through the voices of today's queer BIPOC, who felt represented and inspired, the new film also delves into how much the language, culture and visibility of the transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming

community has evolved, and grapples with the many complexities of gender identity, expectations and expression. All combined, these intimate stories and diverse testimonials reveal compelling insights into the queer experience and paint a deeply moving portrait of four trailblazing heroes.

"As a queer child growing up in rural North Carolina, I always felt like an outsider in my own community. It was through art that I found a way to connect with those around me. I would sketch and photograph my neighbors, cast them in my short films," Peddle said.

"When I moved to NYC in the '90s to attend graduate film school at NYU, I turned to the streets to find talent for my student films. A friend in fashion saw my eye for discovery and hooked me up with a side job at a modeling agency as a scout. I would go in every Friday and give them a stack of Polaroids and they would give me some cash. I spent a lot of time exploring the city and I kept running into this beautiful "dude" who I was sure could be a model. I scouted this person several times before they finally called me back. It turned out this person was Kisha Batista. We became fast friends and Kisha became one of the first androgynous models in the industry," Peddle said.

"I remember the first day I started filming *The Aggressives*. I was hanging out with Kisha and a bunch of her friends on the West Side Highway. They kept referring to themselves as 'AG' or 'Aggressive.' When I asked what an AG was, I got the most fascinating responses. I had this aha moment as the sun set. The Universe said, 'You must make a film about this!'"

PROVOCATIVE LGBTQ DRAMA EXPLORES DESIRE, POWER AND TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

Breaking Glass Pictures recently announced the release of *Girls on Film*, a daring and compelling LGBTQ drama from writer-director **Robin Bain** (*Girl Lost*, *Girl Lost: A Hollywood Story*), premiering on Video on Demand (VOD) on **Tuesday, November 7**.

Girls on Film fearlessly explores the complexities of desire, power and toxic relationships. Thought provoking and exhilarating, it's an intimate, compelling and daring look at the transformative impact of encounters that shape our lives forever.

In *Girls on Film*, Jenna Thayer, aka Rain, is an aspiring nurse struggling to put herself through school by filming erotic content for an adult website. When Rain's landlord discovers her illicit occupation, she faces eviction until a chance encounter leads her to a luxurious, desert mansion owned by a glamorous young heiress, Blake. Immediately intrigued by Rain, Blake invites her to move into the estate—a move that will be life-altering for both young women.

Bonding over their broken pasts, Blake looks to further integrate herself into Rain's world by suggesting that she join Rain's live streams, proposing that the two women create sensual, girl-on-girl content. Desire soon sparks an intimate romance between them until Rain's uncertain feelings about their relationship triggers Blake's demons from her past. When the disturbed heiress' erratic behavior turns dark, Rain and Blake find themselves trapped in a painful and toxic downward spiral.

"Working with Robin Bain is an absolute pleasure and we are thrilled to collaborate with her for the second time on her new movie, *Girls on Film*. Her unique vision and storytelling prowess shine through in this captivating and daring film," said Rich Wolff, CEO of Breaking Glass Pictures. "*Girls on Film* fearlessly explores the complexities of desire, power and toxic relationships, making it a thought-provoking and exhilarating cinematic experience. Robin's ability to delve into provocative themes with depth and sensitivity sets her apart as a talented writer and director. We are excited to bring this audacious film to our audience, knowing it will leave a lasting impression."

Bain said, "Along the journey of life, we will inevitably encounter situations and people who will turn our world upside down and alter the trajectory of our existence forever. With *Girls on Film*, I wanted to explore the notion that everyone we meet, every experience we have, whether good or bad, happens for a reason and teaches us important life lessons that shape our persona to the core."

breakingglasspictures.com

Beyond The Aggressives: 25 Years Later in theatres on **Friday, November 17** (Transgender Awareness Week) and will premiere next spring on streaming and on demand.



A HOLIDAY I DO

CHARMING, LGBTQ HOLIDAY ROM COM
MAKES WORLD PREMIERE

We're approaching the holidays, and lesbian streaming service Tello Films is once again making the Yuletide truly gay!

Watch for the endearing queer holiday rom com *A Holiday I Do*, which has its world premiere on **Friday, November 10**. It stars **Lindsay Hicks** (*Her Story*, *The Bigger Picture*, *VSBK*) and **Rivkah Reyes** (*School of Rock*, *A Picture Perfect Holiday*) with **Marsha Warfield** (*9-1-1*, *Stand Out: An LGBTQ+ Celebration*, *Night Court*) and **Jill Larson** (*All My Children*).

Frazzled, single mom Jane (Hicks) is raising a 10-year-old and managing her family's horse farm following the loss of her father, and she's been holding it all together with a little moral support from her mom (Larson) and their festive neighbors. But when she agrees to be the best (wo)man in the elaborate, Yuletide wedding of her BFF ex-husband, she finds herself navigating an emotionally charged holiday, a bridezilla fiancée, a raging blizzard, and a surprise visit from a no-nonsense banker (Warfield).

Things become even more complicated and hectic when an unexpected romance sparks between her and the wedding planner, Sue (Reyes). As the big day looms, Jane's going to need a Christmas miracle to not only clean up the mess she's made, but to also rescue her family's farm before it's too late.

With an uplifting message for those in the LGBTQ community who might not feel welcomed by family and friends this holiday season, 10% percent of the producer's proceeds from the film will support The Trevor Project, a nonprofit that provides mental health and suicide-prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth. tellofilms.com



BAD TOGETHER

THE DRAMA OF GAY FRIENDSHIP IS EXPLORED IN DEKKOO'S NEW FILM

In his newest movie, *Bad Together*, director **Jono Mitchell** explores the development of a friendship between two seemingly opposite gay friends. The film will be available on TV on-demand on **Tuesday, December 5** via Dekkoo Films.

Over four years, Robbie (played by **Andrés Erickson**) and Cameron (played by **Queer Niro**) learn to accept and love one another and themselves. "I really wanted to explore the idea that a lot of the expectations we hold for ourselves, and others can lead to sadness and conflict," filmmaker Jono Mitchell said. "Fundamentally you can connect with a person on the most basic level, but ultimately that connection still needs to be built on mutual expectation."

The story begins with Robbie, newly dumped, and in such deep need for companionship that he's willing to embrace the company of anyone who extends a hand. Enter Cameron, the life of the party who appears to revel in the admiration he receives from others. However, behind the happy-go-lucky exterior is a man who constantly craves validation and is struggling with finding a clear sense of purpose in his life.

Robbie and Cameron are desperate to connect with one another but have different ways of achieving the bond. They each offer their own version of love and affection, and as they chase the ideal of what each deems to be true friendship, they create a relationship that may not be healthy for either one of them.

Mitchell said he was inspired to write the story based on a similar friendship he experienced a few years ago. "I have an incredible friend who changed my life. He is so special to me, but circumstances within our current stages of life drove us apart," he recalled. "When everything changed, I had to accept the version of friendship that I idealized didn't exist anymore. What we became is just as special, but I think I'll always grieve for what we had."

Mitchell discovered the performers who portray Robbie and Cameron in Atlanta, Georgia, where *Bad Together* was shot. Erickson was not subjected to an audition since Mitchell was already aware with his work, and he was given the part of Robbie without hesitation.

Erickson said he finds many parallels between himself and the character he portrays: "Robbie is a caring guy, but like me he has a tendency to overanalyze, and I think we both like to talk things out as opposed to allowing bad feelings to fester."

As for his choice of Queer Niro in the role of Cameron, Mitchell said, "When you're casting a character who may behave in unlikable ways, it's important to find an actor who will naturally highlight some of the character's more likable attributes. Queer Niro's charm makes it believable that someone like Robbie would look past Cameron's mistakes and embrace him as a friend."

"Cameron is me, just dialed up some notches," Queer Niro said, acknowledging that he played the scenes how he would handle the scenarios in real life. "Cameron is an endearing guy who longs to make something of his life but fears the possible consequences that come from change." He hopes viewers will consider Cameron's conundrum when deciding whether they are Team Robbie or Team Cameron. "Obviously, Team Cameron is the correct answer," he laughed.

True to character, Erickson takes a more neutral stance. "I hope people are reminded to take care of their friendships. People are complicated and they change and letting go can be necessary. It's sad, but that doesn't always mean it's a bad thing."

He also commended Mitchell on a script that focuses on queer friendship: "It's not something we see a lot of in queer cinema. There's often a tendency to focus on the romantic aspects, when in real life things are much more complex and nuanced." dekkoo.com



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