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The Editor

Greetings and salutations!

I seriously can't believe we're into the last year of the second decade of the new millennium, and coming up upon the year 2020. Seems so futuristic! Time doesn't stand still, but it can often be recreated by way of a reboot or reunion. That's exactly what's happening here in this issue.

For our cover feature we have **Nik Dodani** who won over viewers with his role as Pat Patel in 90s classic reboot of **Murphy Brown**. He tells us how that all happened, as well as chatting about all the other work he's up to, that includes a trio of exciting projects. He's currently starring in both the *Atypical* series on Netflix and the theatrical release of *Escape Room*, and he is in the beginning stages of writing his first feature screenplay. Not bad for someone who was born in the 90s!

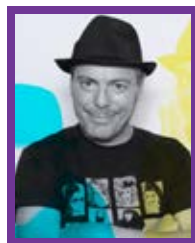
Our second feature is on **Mel B**, famously known as one of the 90's **Spice Girls**, who are doing a few upcoming reunion concert dates in the UK and Ireland. She's just released her new book, *Brutally Honest*, which is an open letter to her fans, family, and friends.

Once again, our regular columnists have come up with some exciting works that include interviews and reviews of stuff you might not be aware of...but should. As always, we begin with our guest *Wigged Out* columnist, written by **Aura Nova**, who explains how drag represents different things to different people. **Cat Grant** chatted with **Tracey Erin Smith**, founder of *SOULA Theatre*, about how she brings people's stories to the stage. **Boyd Kodak** caught up with **Chanty Marostica**, a trailblazing trans comedian and activist, who has achieved several "firsts" for breaking down barriers. It appears that **Paul Bellini** had a bit of fun at the **San Francisco SketchFest**. Read his first hand report, white towel and all. For our *Beyond The Village* feature, **Raymond Helkio** ventured over to Kensington Market and caught some amateur stripping at **Round Venue**. It's quite the party with prizes to be won, and it's open for all to participate.

Be sure to always check out our back side, where you'll find an eclectic mix of events that may not be on your gaydar, all compiled by **Sherry Sylvain**. As always, you wouldn't be reading this if it wasn't for the design work of Mychol Scully.

Thanks for picking us up. Enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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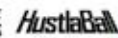
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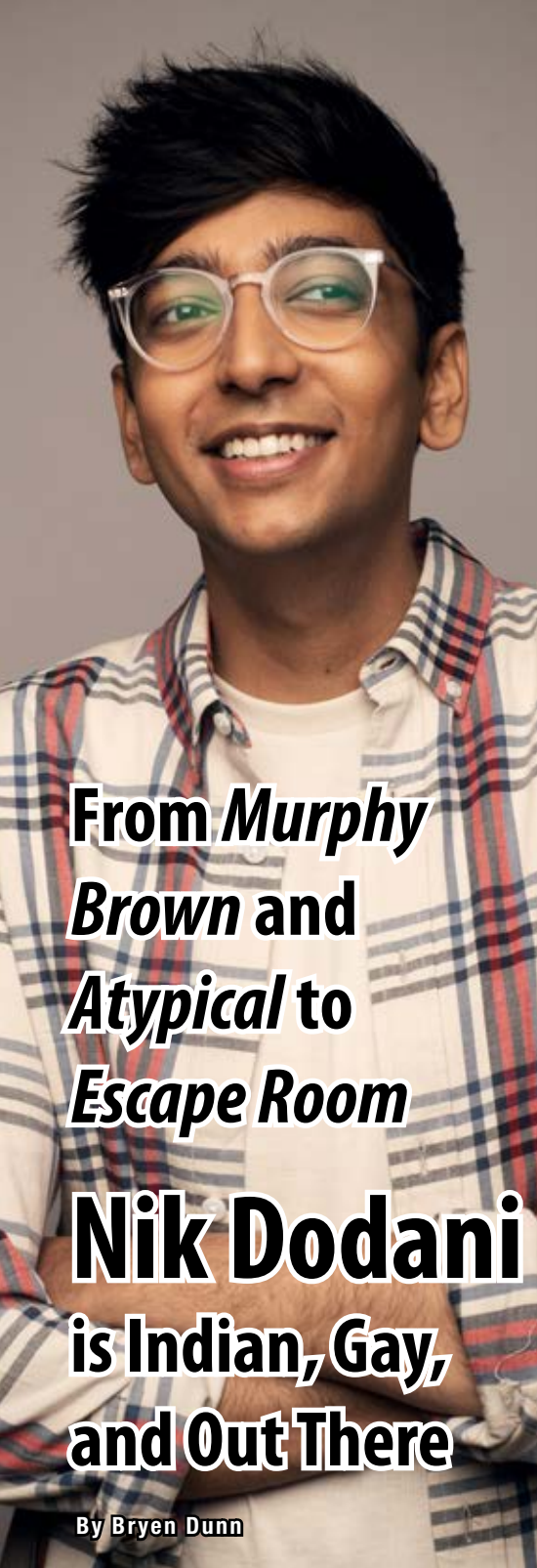


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From *Murphy Brown* and *Atypical* to *Escape Room* **Nik Dodani** is Indian, Gay, and Out There

By Bryen Dunn

Actor, comedian, and recovering activist, Nik Dodani, is shaking things up in Hollywood, as an out gay Indian-American.

He recently completed the limited-run series of *Murphy Brown* (additional episodes are still in negotiations), has a recurring role in the Netflix series, *Atypical*, starred in the recent theatrical release of *Escape Room*, and just locked in a deal to begin writing his first feature screenplay. Not bad for someone who just turned 24.

Born in Dallas, Texas, and raised in Scottsdale, Arizona, Dodani currently resides in Los Angeles, where he's challenging stereotypes within the changing landscape of tinsel town. By far, one of the more exciting things to happen to him last year was landing the role of Pat Patel, on CBS's primetime reboot of *Murphy Brown*. Even he was quite surprised when he was given the role.

"It was a fairly straight forward audition process with (series creator) Diane English back in February (2018). They said thank you, have a nice day, and I thought that was it," he states. Then about a week later he got a call back to do a 30-minute work session with Diane, with another thank you, have a nice day departure. A few weeks later, his manager told him he was a top choice for the role, Candice Bergen had okayed everything, and when CBS gave their final approval, shooting began in May.

He explains, "The character role was very broadly written, open to being either male or female, and a millennial of any ethnicity. Once I got the role, Diane formed the character around me, and the writers worked around that." Pat Patel is the Social Media Director, who is tasked with bringing *Murphy Brown* and her anchor team into the 21st century. The show is also very political, something Dodani is well versed in personally, having studied politics at *Occidental College*. He was also the producer of *MoveOn.org* during the 2016 presidential election, where he organized a political comedy tour called *Laughter Trumps Hate*. He's also done work with Alicia Key's HIV/AIDS initiative.

Today, his activism work has diminished as his career has flourished, and his free time becomes more limited. "I now consider myself a recovering activist," he laughs. "I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I feel that being my gay Indian self, openly and publicly, is political enough." Dodani's role as Pat is the first time he's portrayed a gay character on screen. His previous roles had him playing straight characters, such as Blake, the *bro-buddy* to the questioning main character, in *Alex Strangelove*.



Nik Dodani as Pat Patel on *Murphy Brown* Courtesy of CBS

"I've been wanting to play a gay role for a while. I told my manager and I auditioned for a bunch," he admits. So when he was made aware that Pat was to be gay, it meant that much more to him. "I had notes to present to Diane to suggest making him gay, but it wasn't necessary as that was already her vision," he states. He also pointed out that if ever there were ever any points of conflict, the writers were open to feedback, and some changes were made to the script to be more aligned with his own voice.

Pat casually comes out as gay in episode seven with no surrounding drama. However, for him personally things were slightly different. "My personal coming out story had a range of experiences. With my family it was sort of apathetic, based more on ignorance than homophobia. Gay wasn't on their radar or talked about, but after several years of training them I've brought them to the light side," he smirks, and adds, "As a gay person you actually have to come out all the time."

Despite his character being a social media guru, he himself feels that, "Twitter is the most evil platform out there especially since the 2016 election," but warns, "to be wary of all social media." He mentioned how it can be distorted by individuals being caught up in sharing, and trying to put their best face forward, which is not real life. He then confides, "There are many benefits to connecting and sharing parts of our lives with people, but overall I'm

pretty skeptical." His only current social media platform is his Instagram account (@nikdodani).

Dodani earned his reigns on stage in the world of comedy at some of the most iconic stages in Los Angeles, including *The Hollywood Improv*, *The Laugh Factory*, and *The Comedy Store*. He's also appeared on screen in *Idiot'sitter*, *Kevin From Work*, and *The Player*, and made his late-night comedy debut this past fall on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. So in these days of intense scrutiny and social media trolls, where does that leave comedians for material to use? "It's kind of the wild west out there, but I'd say just don't be an asshole or idiot; no rape, sexist, or racist jokes; punch up, don't punch down; and don't take criticism too seriously," is the advice he offers.

Other than *Murphy Brown*, Dodani has been kept busy with his recurring character role of Zahid, on Netflix's, *Atypical*, which is going into production on its third season this spring. He also starred in *Escape Room*, the psychological thriller released in theatres last month, and has a role in the forthcoming independent production of *Dark Was The Night*, with Marisa Tomei and Charlie Plummer.

He's also had roles in several television series, including *The Comeback*, *Selfie*, and *The Player*, as well as on the big screen in *The Good Neighbor*.



Nik Dodani as Zahid in *Atypical* Courtesy of CBS

His next major project, however, is his first opportunity to write a feature length screenplay for “*Blue Boy*”, based on author Rakesh Satyal’s debut novel released in 2009. It’s a coming of age story of 12-year-old Indian-American Kiran Sharma as he attempts to gain popularity through his school’s annual talent show. The *Lambda Literary Award*-winning novel takes place against the backdrop of the early ‘90s, and tackles adolescence, family drama, and grade school politics. The novel also won the *Prose/Poetry Award* from the *Association of Asian American Studies*.

With all the similarities to his own life, Dodani was surprised he hadn’t heard of the book until a chance meeting with the author at a podcast recording. “Rakesh and I were both guests on the podcast show, *Queering Desi*, produced by *Brown Girl Magazine*,” he recalls. “While listening to on his interview, I was shocked that I had never heard of this gay Indian book by a gay indian author, and even more surprised that none of my friends or family sent me that book,” he laughs. He bought the book the next day, read it immediately, and contacted Rakesh (via Instagram), and asked if he ever considered it being written as a screenplay. The pair eventually met up in New York City, and over a couple drinks, had agreed to go ahead with this project.

While the book’s character is quite similar to Dodani and resonates in many aspects, he admits, “It’s different enough that I don’t get lost in it, and can look at it from an

outsider’s perspective.” While still in the infancy stages, he is quite excited to see this production come to fruition, and states, “I guess this is one of the positive aspects of social media.” referring to his Instagram connection between the two.

In closing Dodani wants everyone to know that *Murphy Brown* is NOT cancelled (as of the time of printing). “That was fake news. CBS released a schedule, but didn’t include the show by accident. Some news outlets then took that mishap as it being cancelled and reported on it, especially the right wing media. As of now the team is still in talks, and Diane is still optimistic for a return,” he concludes.

Here’s hoping! www.nikdodani.com

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community. He has written travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



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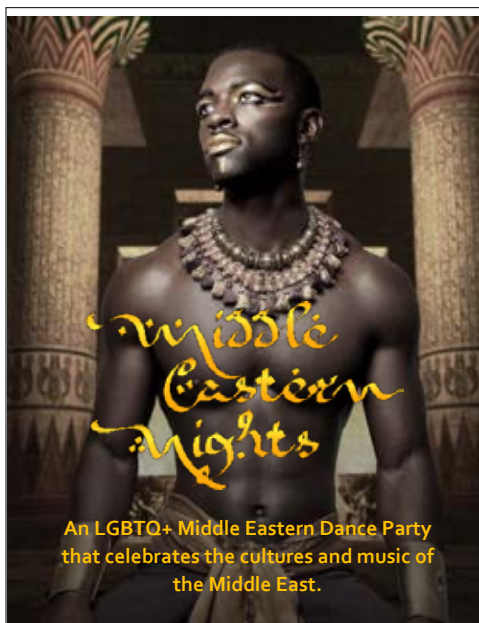
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A photograph of Mel B sitting on a plush yellow sofa. She is wearing a light pink, long-sleeved robe with a thick white feathered trim over a white lace-trimmed top. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression, her hand resting on her head. The background features gold sequined curtains and a glimpse of a window.

Mel B

on Sex, Drugs, Abuse & Her Epic Healing Journey

Melanie Brown (aka Mel B) has reigned supreme as the spiciest of her band mates since bursting onto the entertainment scene as Scary Spice in 1996 with the group's #1 hit Wannabe. What few knew was the house of horrors that existed behind closed doors that Melanie's oldest daughter, nineteen-year-old Phoenix, and Melanie's mother, Andrea, both attest to in great and excruciating detail in Melanie's recently released memoir.

Brutally Honest recalls everything from growing up of mixed-race heritage during a time when it was anything but the norm, to Spice Girls fame, drugs, bisexuality, and a ten year marriage that she claims was so abusive that it drove her to attempt suicide in 2014. Along with promoting her book, she does work with UK's Women's Aid, is busy with her three daughters, and is preparing to hit the road in 2019 with the Spice Girls.

Allison Kugel: What did the Spice Girls fame and hysteria of the 1990s feel like at the nucleus of it, from the inside looking out?

Mel B: It was tiring, but we really didn't care because it was five girls together who all had each other, living our dream life. We were living in England, struggling financially, not having much to eat, convincing people to let us borrow their recording studios so that we could sit down and write and [record] our music. There was a phase of a couple of years where it was really, really tough. When we got to release our first single, *Wannabe*, and we signed with a record company and got *Simon Fuller* involved to manage us, it was really good, happy times that all five of us had dreamt of, and we were actually living that life. We were traveling the world, singing,

performing, dancing, writing music and making a movie. It was a really beautiful few years. Of course, we were tired, because we didn't allow ourselves any time off. But we were in control of what we did and when we did it, and we knew that we had to soar through life like a big tornado and strike while the iron was hot.

Allison Kugel: What was the hardest part, not just to write, but to keep in the final draft of the book?

Mel B: Everything that is out there now is pretty salacious, and I know it seems so random about the sex and the drugs. The physical and emotional abuse had already kind of been out there, whether it be just a journalist presuming or whether it be my ex getting a story out there somehow. I just wanted to make sure that I clarified and made my puzzle understandable. When you read my book, you do understand that certain things were due to coping mechanisms, which are very common with somebody that's in an abusive relationship. The book addresses things like why it took me so long to leave. It's because you're trapped, and you don't have friends and family because you've been isolated due to how your abuser does things. That's why in the back of my book, I put the 15 warning signs of what an abusive relationship looks like. Sometimes we don't know until it is too late, and you're heavily in it. In my book, I address an array of points and situations that hopefully make the reader understand everything that I've been through. There are certain things I did leave out due to legal reasons. I didn't want it to be a legal war. I wanted my book to be more of an education and insight into what it looks like to be in an abusive relationship.

Allison Kugel: Are you clean and sober today?

Mel B: Yeah. I haven't taken a drug since the day I left him (ex-husband, *Stephen Belafonte*). What you'll find in these abusive relationships is that the abuser is the one that provides you with all your alcohol and all your drugs. I've never had an addictive personality. I'm addicted to loving life, but that's about it.

Allison Kugel: What can you share about the upcoming Spice Girls tour?

Mel B: We put six shows up for grabs and we ended up doing thirteen because they sold out. We're going to be talking about staging, choreography and our dancers. It will be all of us on tour, but without Victoria. She sends all of us her blessing, but she has always been adamant that performing is not really her thing. She's busy with her family and her fashion empire. I still have hope that at some point she joins us, but as of right now she's not.

Allison Kugel: Who will Scary Spice be as you head out on the road in 2019?

Mel B: I'm still the same. A little more educated and more aware, and I would say more honest which could be misinterpreted as being even more brash and even more loud (laughs).

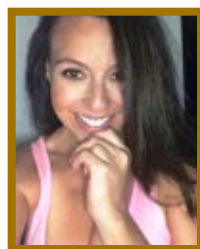


Brutally Honest by Melanie Brown with Louise Gannon is available in bookstores and at Amazon.com. Download the audible version of Melanie's book exclusively at Audible.com.

The Spice Girls tour the UK in 2019. No North American dates announced as yet. www.thespicegirls.com

Photo courtesy of Melanie Brown/Hardie Grant Publishing

Allison Kugel is a syndicated entertainment columnist, and author of the book, *Journaling Fame: A memoir of a life unhinged and on the record* is available on Amazon. Follow her on Instagram @theallisonkugel and at www.allisonkugel.com



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WIGGED OUT

JUDGING DRAG WITHOUT DEFINITION

BY AURA NOVA

Early media portrayals of a drag queen often called on an image of a seven-foot man in a sequin frock, with a bright pink beehive, and some feathery neon lashes.

This style is obviously a classic, but usually these were unforgiving caricatures with 5 o'clock shadows, likely praying on straight male characters. For many gay youth, that's our first vision into the art of drag, but any research shows that drag has always been a credible art form. Both Queens and Kings alike pour lots of passion and effort into it.

In this current generation, there's more representation than ever within the world of drag. There's room at the table for all gender expressions. There's also no limit as to what can be created. Some use their art to portray supermodels, create concepts as genderless aliens, perform in live bands, and of course many are still continuing the long standing tradition of turning out a good ole lipsync.

What makes for good drag? Is there right or wrong drag? What's the ultimate goal of drag in society? Though everyone seems to have one, there is no clear rubric on the judgement of drag. Many will say that you achieve good drag through pads, nails, big hair, and rhinestones - the whole old-school shebang.

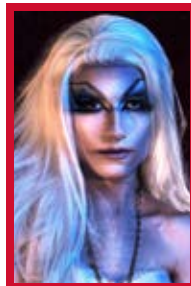
Boiling drag down to what can be bought is a terribly privileged way to look at an art form that started as a rebellion by gay and trans impoverished youth. I often find the drag I personally enjoy most comes down to the evident effort/passion that went into whatever I'm watching. It could be anything from a glitzy Marilyn impersonation, to a barefoot and bearded performer covered in fake dog poop. As long as you can tell they prepared for this, they care about this, and they're sharing a part of themselves with you.

I want to end this with a quote from my local sis, *Tash Riot*, "Drag, more than anything, is queer art. It's a place to be strange and odd. To spoil and ruin society's programming. It does not correspond to rules or established ideas. The point is that it's scary. The point is that it's different. The point is that it expresses what you otherwise are told to suppress, and that it goes against exactly what you're raised being told to do. It defies gender. It defies sexuality. It defies age.



It defies anything that you've been told you have to be, and anything you've been told you should not be. This is why drag is powerful. So why would you want it to be anything less than limitless?"

Aura Nova is a pale apparition that haunts and terrorizes queer bars across Toronto with glitter and grime. Her drag family The Diet Ghosts' monthly party at The Beaver combines theatre, performance art, horror and camp in various immersive worlds. Catch this month's edition, "Follies" on February 22! (@dietghosts on Instagram)



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Tracey Erin Smith Bringing Stories to Stage

Actor, writer, producer, and instructor, Tracey Erin Smith, is the Artistic Director of the award-winning *SOULO Theatre*, a space where stories are told. Born and raised in Toronto, Tracey has lived in Montreal and Vancouver, and taught and performed in the United States, Israel and England.

Growing up she had a creative influence, as her mother was also an actor, who now plays and teaches the ukulele. "She's the funniest person I know," Tracey said. Performing since a child, Tracey inherited her mother's sense of comedy. She laughs, and jokes, "I did a diaper commercial when I was six-months old. My first and only, (so far!) nude role."

After studying theatre at a High School for the Performing Arts, then later attending McGill University, and a conservatory in Vancouver, Tracey taught at the *Stratford Festival*, *Canadian Stage*, and *The Second City*.

In her twenties Tracey wanted more control over what she was saying on stage, so she decided to create her own solo shows. "Directing evolved out of helping thousands of people write and perform their own solo shows based on their lives, including clergy, lawyers, drag queens and kings, transgender people, people of colour, Indigenous people, doctors, strippers, and actors. I help people every step of the way, so it's more than directing, it's co-creating, being a cheerleader, a loving ass-kicker, and ultimately a kind friend who speaks the truth in order to help you do your best."

Continuing the desire to have the freedom to do exactly what she wanted with her life and career, Tracey founded *SOULO Theatre*. "Half of me wanted to be a triple-threat on Broadway, and half of me wanted to be a Rabbi. *SOULO Theatre* is the love child of those two passions," she says.



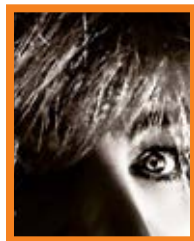
Photo: Sky Alter

This tour-de-force believes that listening to the stories of others, and teaching others how to listen is valuable. "When a human being feels heard it is a game changer," Tracey elaborates. "It leads to greater self-esteem and confidence, they feel loved and seen, and when someone is no longer invisible they feel more powerful and have more agency to go do whatever they want to do. *SOULO Theatre* is like a gateway drug to your life goals, because once you face your fear of speaking your truth and being seen, everything else feels easy, or at least, easier."

One of her latest endeavours was her own solo show *THIN PLACES*, (a fundraiser for Toronto's *Fringe Festival*), about her recent trips to Israel, Palestine, and a maximum level security men's prison in California. Not one to sit idle, she says, "I'm creating another show with the 50-person *Vox Choir* for June." On top of all this she's found the time to create a *SOULO Festival* in Toronto, New York City, and England!

Current Workshops include, *Dude For A Day* and *Project Drag Queen*. Tracey's Winter/Spring theatre class includes a ten-session course that guides you through the process of creating a 10-minute solo show, including a final onstage performance. All levels of experience welcome. Feb. 17 to April 21, 2019. Visit www.soulo.ca for more information or to sign up.

Cat Grant (OCAD) is a multidisciplinary fine artist, with a focus on photography, multimedia portraiture, and illustrating children's books. She's also a published poet, and senior reporter for *On the Couch* LGBTQ TV show. Facebook @grantedarts





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GUY IN A TOWEL DOES SAN FRANCISCO SKETCHFEST



Recently, author Paul Myers (brother of comedian Mike Myers) published an authorized biography of *The Kids in the Hall: One Dumb Guy*.

Last week, organizers of the *San Francisco SketchFest* invited the author, the full troupe, and myself to attend the event, held at the legendary *Castro Theatre*. My job, as usual, was simple. I had to stand in the lobby wearing only a white towel (yes, it's a bathhouse reference) and pose for selfies with the fans. Later, I joined the guys onstage for the Q&A. When someone asked what was under the towel, I boldly blurted out "Balls!" Thank God no one asked me to elaborate.

Afterwards, I got dressed, and spent the next two days hanging out. I was delighted that both **Margaret Cho** and **David Cross** remembered meeting me back in the 90s when I worked as a writer on *The Kids in the Hall*. But it was an even bigger thrill meeting **James Adomian**, the gay comedian

who rose to fame two years ago with a hilarious Bernie Sanders impression. Adomian hosted a dinner at *The House of Nanking* (best Chinese food ever) that featured such up-and-coming gay comedians as **Anthony Desamito**, who is gluten-free. We laughed every time our waitress, an older Cantonese lady wearing a parka, would bring a platter of something sizzling and delicious to the table and then loudly announce to Anthony, "No appetizer for you!"

It became our battle cry for the rest of the night. Afterwards, we pondered the age-old question - when will the world welcome its first gay male comedy superstar? Lesbians have Ellen De-generes and Wanda Sykes. Where is the male equivalent? Where is the gay George Carlin, the gay Chris Rock? Was he possibly already sitting with us? Then a platter of five-spiced pork chops hit the table and we forgot all about it.

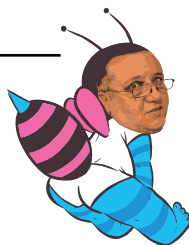
Afterwards, I tagged along as **Scott Thompson** ran to the *Brava Theatre* to be a guest on **Cameron Esposito's** podcast, *Queery*, which was made even funnier by the fact that Fest organizers put them on chairs so high up that their legs dangled. Thompson and Esposito agreed on every-thing except for the concept of casting, i.e., only a real transperson should ever play a transperson in a movie, for instance. Cameron felt 'lived experience' mattered, whereas Scott felt an actor's research and imagination is more significant. It might have come to blows, except their legs were dangling.

I consider myself lucky to have fallen in with a group of comedians. We make each other laugh, and we have adventures, and we get hired to entertain people all over the map. But there are those moments, when I'm in front of an audience, wearing only a white towel, that I cannot help but remember the Daffy Duck cartoon where Daffy is forced to be the hands on a giant's wrist watch. Looking into the camera, he shrugs and says, "Huh, it's a living."

The Kids in the Hall: One Dumb Guy
(House of Anansi Press)
www.houseofanansi.com

San Francisco SketchFest
www.sfsketchfest.com

Paul Bellini is an award-winning television comedy writer (*Kids in the Hall*, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*). He also teaches comedy writing at George Brown College in Toronto.



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A KODAK MOMENT

Chanty Marostica

BY BOYD KODAK

Chanty Marostica is known for their unique brand of high-energy physical comedy, and breaking barriers.

Boyd Kodak - What have you been doing over the last year?

Chanty Marostica - This has been a pretty huge year for me! I came out as Trans, won a *Canadian Comedy Award*, and recorded my debut album, "The CHANTY Show", that went on to hit #1 on the iTunes Charts! I taped a set at *Just For Laughs Australia* at The Sydney Opera House, and I won Sirius XM's "Top Comic" competition. Not only that... I was the first out Trans Person to do all of those things!

BK - Amazing! During that time, which was the one most exciting event for you?

CM - Recording my album for sure. My debut album is my love note to myself. I address my transition at every stage, ALWAYS in my comedy, making myself visible and making the pain and the joy that comes with transitioning not only accessible, but also FUNNY. This is hugely important to me. I never had anyone to look up to, or even the language to understand what transness was, so being vocal and visible is my main priority.... but, I've been doing comedy for well over 10 years, and my album is also my jokes, my identity as a "lesbian", and me saying goodbye to my birth name. It's time to move on and rebuild, but it was an emotional experience to put it all out there one last time!

BK - Good job. What are you looking forward to over the next year?

CM - I'm looking forward to my TOP SURGERY! Also I'm excited to just take over the world. I've worked so hard to be the comic I am today, and coming-out was not only so important for my health and happiness, but important also to change the landscape of the Canadian comedy scene. Making space for queer people and for my trans-family is not only my mission, it's my right, my privilege, and my duty.

BK - Where can we see your work?

CM - You can watch me on Season 2 of CBC's "Workin' Moms". Or download my album "The CHANTY Show" on iTunes, or you can catch me live every Monday at *Pegasus on Church*, where I host "QAPD Collective" the Nations first and only LGBTQ+ community Open-Mic!



BK - Future plans?

CM - I'd love to keep expanding my production company, "Queer and Present Danger", until it's profitable for all the acts in the queer comedy scene. I'd also like to be the first out Trans person to accomplish every milestone in Comedy. I'm on my way there, so onward and upward!

BK - Any message you would like to put out there?

CM - Trans is beautiful. We are such a wonderful community of people. If you ever doubt how wonderful you are... trust me. You're something truly remarkable.

BK - Finish this sentence for us - The last thing I do before I go to sleep is...

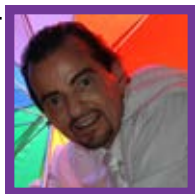
CM - HAVE TOO MUCH FOMO TO SLEEP

BK - Haha, thanks and wishing you all the best.

Follow Chanty - Twitter/Instagram @ChantyMarostica

Editor's Note: Chanty might be on the verge of setting another milestone after being nominated for "Comedy Album of the Year", at the 2019 Juno Awards, taking place March 17th, 2019 in London, Ontario. www.junoawards.ca

Boyd Kodak is an award-winning trans activist, musician, writer, filmmaker, curator, and festival/entertainment director.





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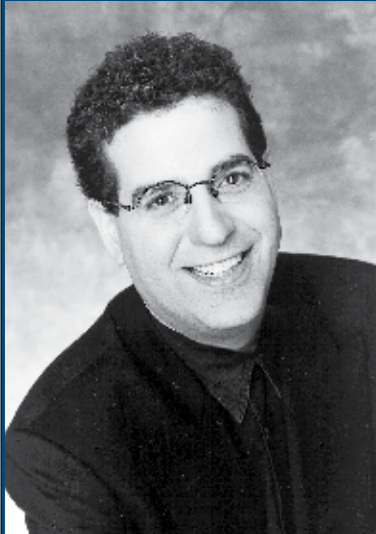
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ROUND VENUE

AMATEUR STRIPPERS, PROFESSIONAL DRAG QUEENS, AND DIRTY DANCING



Photo of Brock Hessel during Amateur Stripper Night at Round.

Jacklynne Hyde, there is no shortage of fun, ferocity and the wildly strange. For those who find stripping too intimidating, the interpretation is wide open with an emphasis on the ridiculous, so experience doesn't matter as much as ensuring your act adheres to the given theme. Three-time veteran, Brock Hessel, has placed both first and second place, as well as coming in second with a team comprised of Jord Camp and Tyger Willy.

Having outgrown their previous event space at The Beaver, Amateur Strip Night moved into Round Venue because of its larger capacity for both the stage and audience, which is clearly working for what Adam refers to as an, "insanely receptive and positive audience." He adds that he loves seeing the "huge hodgepodge of queer freaks, exhibitionists, and drag artists progress into amazing performers who regularly book gigs throughout the city." Brock's experience clearly echoes this, "When I signed up for the very first Amateur Strip Night, it didn't seem like there were many open stages in Toronto for emerging drag/performance/burlesque artists (this has changed now with events like Kings and Classics). I took it as an opportunity to experiment and test out some of the skills I've learned while hanging out and working with Toronto's craftiest queens and performance artists."

Cash for the winner and shoulda been winner, and prizes for Dishonourable Mentions. Dancing throughout the evening. Audience members can imbibe in local brew favourites that range from the more popular Muskoka, Steamwhistle and Mill Street, to the bolder offerings of Black Oak and Collective Arts, both of which are on tap for a mere \$7. You can skip the bottled water when sparkling is only \$3, and energy drinks are \$4. For those flush with cash, Zubrowska vodka straight-up or cocktails like Firestarter or Lemon Banger will help you ease into the action and become one with the Kensington Market night owls. See you on the dancefloor!

Round Venue - 152a Augusta Avenue, Toronto
roundvenue.com

You don't have to leave your house to get a taste of Round Venue, but you should. Tune-in to No Man's Land, Thursday nights on CIUT 89.5FM from 6-8PM, as Richard "Medicinemán" Martin spins live from Round Venue. Considered to be Canada's premier global groove DJ, Medicinemán spins a mix that ranges from Indo-Arabic-Dub to Afro-Gypsy-Electonica, which is why according to Medicinemán, his radio show "is considered by many to be the top world fusion radio show in Canada", and for good reason. The smooth beats are perfect for unwinding from a crazy day, or as a pre-cursor to your night night out.

Located in the heart of Kensington Market, Round Venue gives space to eclectic LGBT events as well, like FIT NYE, Y2GAY, SINES OF LIFE, and of course their outrageous Amateur Strip Night Judged by Drag Queens, which is about as queer as queer can get. Organizer, Adam Cowan, said, "I felt the best people to judge performers are the naturally shady bitches with heart," and with queens like Allysín Chaynes and

Raymond Helkio is an author, director and filmmaker. He graduated from the Ontario College of Art & Design University and is co-founder of The Reading Salon.
www.raymondhelkio.com
www.thereadingsalon.ca






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By Sherry Sylvain

BUZZ Local Picks

The Rhubarb Festival

February 13 to 23

A hotbed of experimentation, with artists exploring new possibilities in theatre, dance, music, and performance art; the place to see the most adventurous ideas in performance.

Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St., Toronto
www.buddiesinbadtimes.com

Spring Fishing & Boat Show

February 15 to 18

Over 200,000 square feet of outdoor gear, entertainment and excitement, including the area's largest selection of quality gear for fishing, hunting, boating and marine.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.springfishingandboatshow.com

GTA Home and Reno Show

Feb 15 to 18

Innovative products and great advice from real pros. Looking to scratch a few things off your to-do list? Not to worry, all the advice and inspiration you need are waiting for you at the show.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.gtahomeandrenoshow.com

TICOT Drag Brunch

Sundays – Feb. 17; Mar 10&17; Apr 14 – 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A FUNdraising drag brunch, the second and third Sunday of each month with special guest hosts and a bevy of beautiful entertainments. All proceeds go to the charities of The Imperial Court.

Church Street Garage, 477 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Jock Night

Thursdays from 8:00 p.m. - Male Only Event

Hosted by Flash, sponsored by Jockstrap Central, emceed by "Everyone's Second Favourite Drag Queen" Morgan James. Hot, sexy dancers from 8 p.m. - Prizes and Surprises from 10 p.m.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto
www.flashonchurch.com



Back Room Comedy

February 21; March 21 – 8:30 p.m.

East Toronto's new Queer Comedy Showcase; the third Thursday of every month for Toronto's best LGBTQ comedians in a stand up comedy show that welcomes everyone.

WAYLA, 996 Queen St. E., Toronto
www.waylabar.ca

Toronto Woodworking Show

February 22 to 24 – from 10:00 a.m.

The show features woodworking tools and machinery, ongoing seminars and demonstrations, a carving competition, and a woodworking competition.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.woodshows.com

The Outdoor Adventure Show

February 22 to 24 – from 10:00 a.m.

Seminar Theatres, Special Guest Appearances, International Travel Theatre, The Best of Canada Adventures Stage, Junior Outdoor Adventurers, Climbing Wall, White Water Demo, and more.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.outdooradventureshow.ca/toronto

Amadeus Live

February 21 & 22 – 7:30 p.m.

Experience the return of the multi-Academy Award winning 1984 motion picture on a vast HD screen, while Mozart's most celebrated works are performed live in-sync by a full orchestra and choir.

Sony Centre for the Performing Arts, 1 Front St. E., Toronto
www.sonycentre.ca





BUZZPICKS

Fetish

February 23 – from 9:30 p.m.

Dress in your kinky finest and indulge your lusts for leather, latex, uniforms, role play, etc. Expect an evening of dancing and surprise performances. Bring your toys and play in the monitored Dungeon.

The Phoenix Concert Theatre, 410 Sherbourne St., Toronto
www.northbound.com

Toronto Spring Camping & RV Show

February 28 to March 3 – from 10:00 a.m.

This exciting one-of-a-kind show will showcase the largest display of RVs from respected Ontario retailers of every model and type of RV, and for every budget.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.torontospringcampingrvshow.com

Free From & Allergy Friendly Expo

March 2 & 3 – from 10:00 a.m.

Find brand new exciting choices for delicious food, drink, natural skin care, home products, and health solutions to help improve the 'free from' life you choose to live.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.freefromexpo.ca

Regal Beagle Bingo

March 3; April 7 – 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Drink purchase gets you one bingo card, capped at four cards per patron. There's also a raffle sale. Proceeds from this event go to charities of The Imperial Court of Toronto.

The Black Eagle Toronto, 457 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

Motorama Custom Car & Motorsports Expo

March 8 to 10 – from 10:00 a.m.

The fifth annual Expo will fill more than 330,000 square feet of the International Centre. And the new Rust-Oleum Stage and adjacent Celebrity Autograph Booth will be busy with various activities.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.motoramashow.com



Celebrate Toronto's 185th Anniversary Festival

March 9 & 10 – from 11:00 a.m.

Shop from local vendors, feast upon the diverse cuisines from Toronto-based Food Trucks. Live music, DJ skate parties, and interactive activities honouring Toronto's 185th Anniversary.

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto
www.celebratetoronto.ca

Toronto Sportsmen's Show

March 13 to 17 – from 10:00 a.m.

With over 350,000 square-feet of exhibit space, all under one roof, the show attracts over 300 exhibitors displaying a diverse range of products and services all promoting the great outdoors.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.torontosportshow.ca

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back—In Concert

March 20 to 23 – 7:30 p.m.

The battle for the galaxy intensifies in this thrilling fifth episode of the unfolding saga, with the score played in sync by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto
www.tso.ca

Abilities Expo

April 5 to 7 – from 11:00 a.m.

The go-to source for people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, and healthcare professionals. The event opens your eyes to new technologies, possibilities, solutions, and opportunities.

The International Centre, 6900 Airport Rd., Mississauga
www.abilities.com/toronto

Torque: Animal Triste

April 11 to 13

A study of the nature and posture of humanity – poor and perishable one day, free and triumphant the next. Though human beings know that life is finite, they deny their mortality.

Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W., Toronto
www.harbourfrontcentre.com

Orchestra Toronto: Watershed

April 14 – 3:00 p.m.

As Earth Day approaches, Orchestra Toronto meditates on Earth's waters with music inspired by rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Toronto Centre For The Arts, 5040 Yonge St., Toronto
www.ticketmaster.com

BUZZPICKS

BUZZ Road Trips

Josh Groban

February 15 & 16 – 9:00 p.m.

He has thrilled fans across the globe with his multi-platinum albums, live performances, film and television appearances. A Grammy-nominated entertainer known for several hit songs.

Fallsview Casino, 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls
www.fallsviewcasinoresort.com

I Tenori

February 20 to 24 – two shows daily

Discover Luca Vissani, Gianluca Paganelli and Dionigi D'Ostuni, with special guests, as they perform their renditions of *Bésame Mucho*, *Nessun Dorma*, *Amazing Grace*, *Hallelujah* and *Unchained Melody*.

Fallsview Casino, 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls
www.fallsviewcasinoresort.com

Older & Bolder

March 4, April 1 – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

A new and ongoing group at The Gilbert Centre in Barrie. First Monday of every month, social drop-in for older LGBTQ adults.

80 Bradford Street, Unit 345, Barrie,
www.gilbertcentre.ca

Creedence Clearwater Revisited

March 9 – 8:00 p.m.

Creedence Clearwater Revival founding members Stu Cook and Doug “Cosmo” Clifford perform such hits as “Proud Mary”, “Fortunate Son”, “Born on the Bayou”, and “Bad Moon Rising”.

Casino Rama Resort, 5899 Rama Rd., Orillia
www.casinorama.com

Jeff Dunham Passively Aggressive Tour

March 13 – 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Award-winning ventriloquist and comedian, Jeff Dunham, and his beloved cast of puppet characters, Achmed the Dead Terrorist, Bubba J, José Jalapeño on a Stick, Melvin the Superhero Guy, and Walter.

The Aud, 400 East Ave., Kitchener
www.kitchener.ca

Spoons

March 22 – 7:30 p.m.

Formed in 1980, a young band from Burlington would soon make “Spoons” a household word with such hits as, “Nova Heart”, “Romantic Traffic”, “Old Emotions”, and “Tell No Lies”.

Maxwell's Concerts & Events, 35 University Ave. E., Waterloo
www.ticketscene.ca/maxwells

PFLAG Canada, Durham Region 2019 Gala

Sat, March 23, 5:30 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

Annual fundraising gala. This year it's time to do the time warp again with a Rocky Horror themed party for all.

Garnet B. Rickard Recreation Complex
2440 Durham Regional Hwy 2, Bowmanville
www.pflagdurhamregion.com/gala

Paula Abdul: Straight Up Paula

March 30 – 8:00 p.m.

The 80s pop sensation, and later American Idol judge, performs her hits, including “Straight Up”, “Opposites Attract”, and “Cold Hearted”.

Casino Rama Resort, 5899 Rama Rd., Orillia
www.casinorama.com



Craftadian Spring Market – Hamilton

April 6 – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Featuring a curated selection of 75 quality artisans, artists and designers. Featuring music, food trucks, DIY workshops, and much more. Admission \$5 / Free Parking Children 16 and under free.

McMaster Innovation Park, 175 Longwood Rd. S., Hamilton
www.craftadian.ca

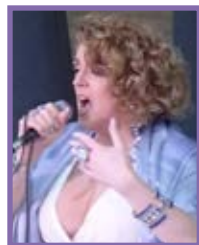
Cabaret

April 11 to 14

Follow Sally Bowles as she navigates the nightclub underworld of Berlin on the edge of fascism. Be drawn into the excesses and decadence of a time where everything was possible – until it wasn't.

Newmarket Theatre, 505 Pickering Cres., Newmarket
www.wavestagetheatre.com/cabaret

Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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