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RuPaul's Drag Race: Season 11 Tour

Asia O'Hara and Plastique Tiara

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Greetings and Salutations!

Welcome to our big summer Pride issue! We're proud to feature writer/director, **Lauren Morelli**, on our cover. Not only was she the brains behind one of the first Netflix series to create a real BUZZ, **Orange Is The New Black**, but now she's taking on the leadership role for the new **Tales Of The City** mini-series recently premiered on Netflix this month just in time for Pride season. The show features one of the most diverse cast ever assembled on screen, including trans actress Jen Richards and trans-nonbinary actor Garcia, RuPaul's Drag Race legends, Bob The Drag Queen and Katya, Canadian icons Paul Gross and Ellen Page, and even a cameo appearance from Molly Ringwald. As well, the entire writing team is composed of queer-identifying individuals!

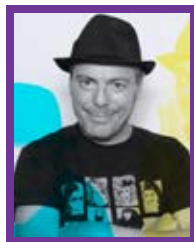
Our second feature is equally as exciting, as our writer Joey Viola caught up with both **Asia O'Hara** and **Plastique Tiara**, who will be here in Toronto performing in July as part of **RuPaul's Drag Race: Season 11 Tour**. Find out about their show experiences, memorable moments, thoughts on returning as *All Stars*, and what fans might expect here on the tour stop.

As well, our guest Wigged Out columnist is **Betty Bangles**, who hails all the way from South Africa, where she gives us the scoop on what's going on in the drag scene locally. Our regular columnists have compiled an outstanding list of queer individuals, stories, and venues for your reading pleasure. Cat Grant speaks with musical duo, **Old Soul Rebel**, about their upcoming new album and their recent appearance on CTV's, *The Launch*. Boyd Kodak chats with the one and only **Mandy Goodhandy**, who not only released a memoir and CD this year, but has now turned these into a full on musical. Paul Bellini looks back at the experience of performing at *Pride Toronto* back in the 80s with his punk band, **Mouth Congress**, and Raymond Helkio spotlights the cool queer community space known as, **Unit 2**, in Toronto's west end.

As always, be sure to check out our back side of BUZZpicks, where you'll find an eclectic mix of events from Toronto and beyond, all compiled by our Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain. Finally, 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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Tales of the City, Today

Going Behind the Scenes with Lauren Morelli



By Bryen Dunn

Based on author Armistead Maupin's best-selling novel, *Tales of the City*, a television adaptation was created which was considered quite groundbreaking when it originally aired on PBS back in 1993.

However, the station decided not to continue broadcasting the subsequent series, after receiving some negative feedback about the show depicting LGBT characters so prominently on screen. Showtime stepped up and adapted his next two novels, *More Tales of the City*, and,

Further Tales of the City, which aired in 1998 and 2001 respectively. The novels themselves were based around a recurring newspaper column that Maupin penned for the *San Francisco Chronicle* back in 1976, that reflected upon his personal experiences from within a new generation of "out" gays who were becoming more visible at that time.

Fast forward a quarter century later, and things have become even steamier in the new Netflix production of *Tales of the City* out this month, which Maupin helped Executive Produce. "I couldn't be more excited about this brand-new incarnation of *Tales*," said Maupin in a released statement. "It's set in present-day San Francisco with all the joys and complications that might suggest for



the residents of 28 Barbary Lane. Mrs. Madrigal's tenants, both old and new, will be entangled in delicious new adventures and ever-expanding possibilities for love."

The 10-part series begins with Mary Ann Singleton (**Laura Linney**) returning to San Francisco, after a two decades absence, where she's reunited with landlady Anna Madrigal (**Olympia Dukakis**), and her ex-husband, Brian Hawkins (**Paul Gross**). These three characters from the original series will be joined by a cast of new additions, who are more representative of today's diverse world of sexuality, culture, gender. Trans actress **Jen Richards** plays young Anna in a wonderful flashback episode that provides some untold background about Anna's past, and trans-nonbinary actor **Garcia** plays Jake Rodríguez, Anna's caregiver. As well, RuPaul's Drag Race Season 8 winner, Bob the Drag Queen (**Caldwell Tidicue**), has a regular role as Ida Best, the bar owner of a feminist burlesque club. Also, watch for Season 7 RuPaul contestant, Katya (**Brian Joseph McCook**), in a couple bar scenes, and keep your eyes open for **Molly Ringwald**, who mysteriously appears in a couple episodes.

Original series producer **Alan Poul** returns as Producing Director/Executive Producer, alongside Showrunner/Executive Producer, and writer **Lauren Morelli**, who was the former Co-Executive Producer and writer for *Orange Is the New Black*. theBUZZ had an opportunity to chat with Morelli to find out more about how she got involved with the production, and what it was like working with this awesome crew both on screen and behind the scenes.

"I got a random call from a producer I had worked with previously. The creative team had been developing the series for a couple years, and they were having a hard time nailing down the character of Shawna (**Ellen Page**), to make sure this young queer female voice was feeling authentic, relevant, and current. I had never heard of the series, but said I would do my best", she states. "I worked on her voice, and eventually wrote a draft of the pilot, which Netflix picked up as a series and asked me to

showrun it. So it went from consulting on one voice, to it becoming my entire life for the last couple of years."

While this current series isn't based on a previously written novel, Morelli knew she still had to honour everything *Tales* has always been, while realizing the reason to do an updated version was to make sure it reflects the world we all live in today. "We were lucky to be gifted the rich, amazing characters, and inherit all their history from the novels. Armistead was involved and incredibly supportive throughout. If he wasn't happy, then we failed," she states. "We weren't there to reinvent it, but to help it move again. He was very involved and so generous with trusting me."

The show definitely accomplishes that goal, while at the same time recognizing how we were able to get to where we are at today. "I'm excited about the inter-generational composition, as it's something we come up against all the time. We need to honour and respect those who came before us. For me personally, a perfect example is with myself and Armistead. I get to tell these stories on a global scale, because Armistead started telling them before I was literally born. It's important to acknowledge the past," she states.

The show is exceptionally queer, both on-screen and off, with all writers coming from diverse queer backgrounds. "Part of the reason why I wanted an entire queer writer's room was to have the opportunity to make sure the room represented a range of individuals, so that we could pull from real life lived experiences, and put that on screen. It provided for such a rich, authentic story telling opportunity for the cast as well. In the end we were able to tell stories that haven't been told before, and to feel more representational by digging into the incredibly talented range of queer experiences that exist in 2019."

She hopes viewers will treat it as a book, curl up and watch the chapters unfold. "In the end I wanted this to be a joyful escape for viewers, an opportunity to show a range of queer characters experiencing love and joy, and



friendship and family. Queer identities are part of it, but that's not all that defines them."

Morelli was recently in Toronto for the *Tales of the City* premiere at Inside Out, and admitted she's been here a few times previously, as her wife, Samira Wiley, is an actor on *The Handmaid's Tale*, currently being shot here. She actually met Wiley while both were working on the set of

Orange is the New Black. Morelli described working on that show as an eye-opening experience. "The array of skin colour and the range of bodies were unlike anything I'd seen on television before. I knew that we were attempting to give a voice to the miles that fall in between black and white, gay and straight, good and bad. That is: giving a voice to most humans."

With *Tales*, she took that learned experience and was able to present it under her own direction this time. As this is a limited series, Morelli wanted to make sure it ends as a stand alone season, but admitted there are "a couple of surprises" that could leave it open for more *Tales* to be told. She also divulged that she's working on a new Netflix show, but wasn't able to provide any additional information due to contract stipulations.

Be sure to add *Tales of the City* to your summer binge watching list, and also keep an eye out for Lauren Morelli, as she continues to challenge our perceived norms of society.

www.netflix.com/talesofthecity

All photos courtesy of Netflix.

Trivia Tales and Tidbits

Barbary Lane is based on the real Macondray Lane on Russian Hill, in San Francisco, however the actual house is a set in New York City.

Socialite and activist Pat Montandon, author Michelle Tea, and actors Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor were all inspirations for characters in the *Tales* series.

Anna Madrigal's name is actually an anagram for, *a man and a girl*, and her character is considered a pioneering portrayal of a trans-woman in literature and on screen.

Maupin based the character of Michael "Mouse" Tolliver on his own experiences as a gay man in San Francisco.

The musical version *Tales of the City* had its world premiere at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco in June, 2011.

Maupin is the author of several novels, including the nine-volume *Tales of the City* series, and his memoir, *Logical Family*. Netflix also has a documentary called, *The Untold Tales of Armistead Maupin*.

In 2012, the San Francisco Travel Association presented the Silver Cable Car Award to Maupin, which is presented annually to an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to San Francisco's visitor industry. There are self-guided *Tales* walking tours for visitors to the city www.toursofthetale.com

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



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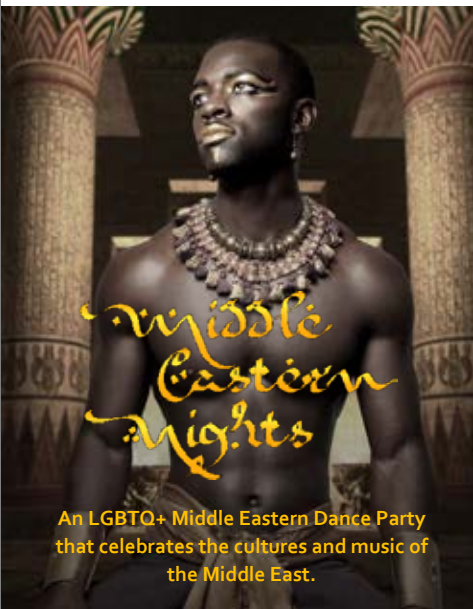
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RuPaul's Drag Race: Season 11 Tour Plastique Tiara and Asia O'Hara

By Joey Viola

In what has been one of the most talked about seasons in *RuPaul's Drag Race* herstory, Season 11 has brought the gags, the gigs, and a healthy serving of Canadian Drag from Torontonians superstar, Brooke Lynn Hytes. As *Drag Race* has morphed into a pop culture phenomenon, several contestants from every season have been able to sashay their way down the runway of opportunity.

I caught up with Season 10 alumni and hostess of *RuPaul's Drag Race: Season 11 Tour*, Asia O'Hara, as well as Season 11's, Plastique Tiara, to see how the show has changed them, and what fans can expect when the tour touches down here in Toronto next month.

Season 10's O'Hara placed fourth on her season, but has won other major competitions like *Miss Gay America* in 2016. "Drag Race and Miss Gay America are so different," Asia says, "and by that, I mean different forms of stressful. I think with Drag Race you can't really prepare as well as you can with Gay America. I definitely learned and grew a lot more from both competitions." Plastique says, "Drag Race challenged me in becoming more accepting of who I am. My Drag mom, Alyssa Edwards, has definitely influenced me and my drag, I'm always in awe of her, she's just such a personality."

From performing at their local drag bars to hitting stages literally across the globe, both Asia and Plastique have made major strides in their careers, despite not winning the coveted *Drag Race* crown. They also have some memorable moments to share.

"We filmed so long ago now," Asia states, "it's hard to remember, but I think just being able to create a family I never thought I'd get was the highlight of my season for me." Plastique recalls some special memories of her own: "My moment with Ru was pretty special, and I still can't get over that six-way lip sync!"

Epic, to say the least, but how do *Drag Race* contestants persevere through crazy moments like six-way lip syncs? "I'm



not overly competitive,” Plastique shares, “so the aspect of needing to send people home, and not having their dream, is a tough one to watch live. I think you need to find confidence, if you just have more confidence, you’ll be fine, because you now have a whole new support system. It’s very encouraging.”

Now that these two Queens are on a world tour together, I asked them which city is their favourite and which would be their dream location to perform in. “Life has been everything I could have imagined. I get to do my art for a living, and how many people are lucky enough to say that? I’m currently on tour now so it’s so hard to pick just one city. Performing in Asia was mind-blowing, though,” Asia explains. “I would also really love to go to Brazil,” she continues, “maybe it’s because of the men.” And who could blame her?

Plastique, on the other hand, has a hard time deciding which city is her favourite: “That’s a tough one! Each one has such a different energy, but I’d definitely love to perform in Vietnam, almost in a full circle type way.”

It would seem there’s nothing left for these two successful Queens to cross off their Drag bucket list, but would either of them consider returning to *RuPaul’s Drag Race* should they get the calls to be on the upcoming season of *All-Stars*? “Never say never is my motto,” Asia states, “I think I would have a different mindset going in, so my strategies may be different.” Plastique adds, “I think I would have more confidence if I were to do it. I was 21 when we shot Season 11, so maybe I’d have a more clear thought process. And tons of corsets, of course!”

Even if they don’t make it to *All-Stars*, we haven’t seen the last of these two Queens. With *RuPaul’s Drag Race: Season 11 Tour* coming to Toronto on July 15 at *The Danforth Music Hall*, the venue will definitely be star-studded and Asia cannot

wait! “I love spending time with my sisters,” she says, “We all live in different areas, so whenever any of us are together it’s a kiki. I’m looking forward to coming to Toronto, too, I would love to try some maple candies.” Plastique also shares her excitement for Canadian sweets: “I’ve never been, so it will be very exciting!” She exclaims. “I can’t wait to try a beaver tail!”

The *Season 11 Tour* promises an explosion of entertainment, featuring the entire cast! “I’ve always loved being a host, so during the Season 11 Tour I’ll be hosting,” says Asia, “Then on the WTW tour, I’ll be doing a myriad of things. Something you won’t want to miss! I can’t tell you anything else, otherwise it wouldn’t be special!”

“My role on the tour,” Plastique states, “is to share my three P’s, which are Polished, Persistent, and P***y! I can’t say anything about surprises, but I’m excited to meet the fans and spend time with my cysters!”

Catch RuPaul’s Drag Race: Season 11 Tour on July 14 at The Danforth Music Hall, and RuPaul’s Drag Race: Werq The World Tour on October 17 at the Sony Centre.

Photos courtesy of Brian Voss. www.vossevents.com

Joey Viola is the Co-Founder of MoJo Toronto and an LGBTQ community leader who utilizes his passion and flair for the art of writing by bringing a fresh perspective in reviewing entertainment and advocating for equality, tolerance, and social/political justice.





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WIGGED OUT

BY BETTY BANGLES

SOUTH AFRICAN BEATS

Hello Canada!

Warm greetings from sunny South Africa, a country where freedom of speech comes with a textbook of rules.

Drag in South Africa has been somewhat complicated over the years, but it's sure as hell growing, and getting better.

Thinking back to the former Stardust and Heartland club days, drag queens were running the show and were admired. For some reason that changed, and the art of drag was almost frowned upon by gay men, but in the last couple of years my faith in the drag community has been restored.

DRAG IS BACK!!! There are drag shows around every corner, and I think it's mostly because *RuPaul's Drag Race* pushed drag into the mainstream. In Johannesburg, drag is growing fast, but there's not yet a sense of "sisterhood" like you get in Cape Town. Those queens have a bond like I have never seen before.

For the past eight years, Kat Gilardi hosted **Divas One Night Only** in Cape Town. This is a charity fundraiser where seasoned and emerging queens come together for a massive show in a 600-seat venue. It was backstage at this show last year where I saw how the Cape Town queens support each other. It was beautiful to see how Manilla Von Teez (SA's Got Talent runner-up) helped a first time performing queen with her makeup, before even starting on her own. That's how it should be. We are so quick to judge and make fun of new queens that we forget we were them at one stage. On August 3rd I will travel down to Cape Town to join my CPT sisters on stage again.

Beefcakes is also a big reason for the popularity of drag shows. With branches in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, it offers a variety of drag shows. On Friday nights I do my one woMAN show at Beefcakes Pretoria, and on Saturdays I perform in the group, MenOpause. Apart from Beefcakes, there is also **Gate 69** in Cape Town where Cathy Specific & the Trolley Dollies entertain you with their hilariously dirty cabarets.

We recently had our very first **Drag Brunch** which was a huge success. Hosted by LouLou Blu and myself at the very trendy Trouve, we're hoping to make it a regular Sunday morning outing. May was the annual **Pink Loerie Mardi Gras**, when every pink feather in SA flocks down to the coastal town of Knysna for four days of party and being fabulous. I have



been performing at this festival for the past 10 years and it's always a blast.

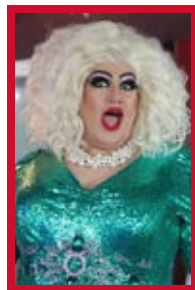
I'm so excited for **World Pride** in New York this month! Being the good gay that I am I've already booked six Broadway shows, so I'm as excited as a twink at a daddy daycare. But I'm most excited about July 3rd when I will be making my New York City debut at The Stonewall Inn! It still feels surreal thinking of performing at the place where everything started. I cannot wait, and I hope to see you there!

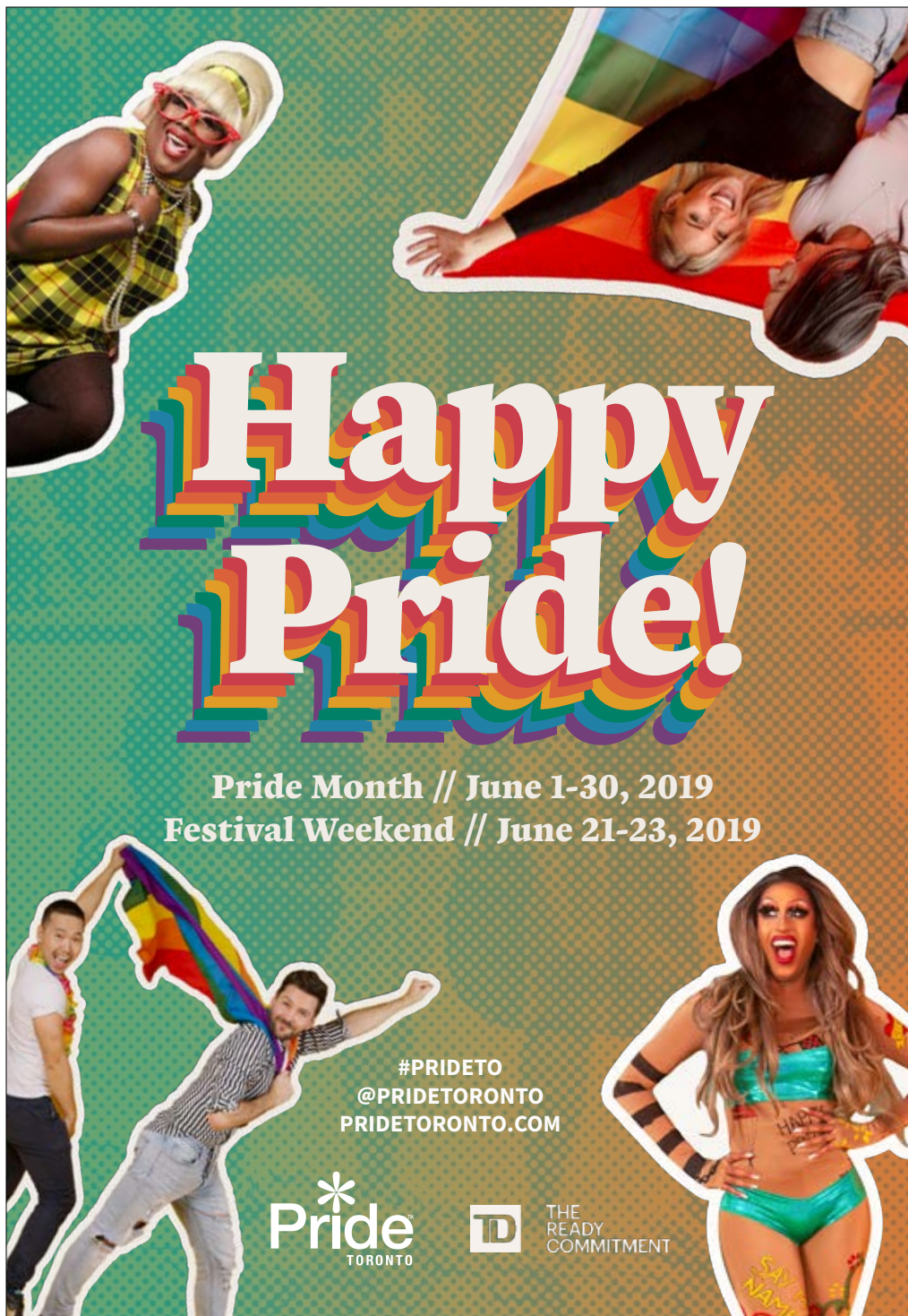
Well, that's it from me darlings. I hope I get the chance to visit Canada one day, but until then roll in some glitter and keep shining!!! (Disclaimer: That shit does not come off!)

With her OTT personality, Betty Bangles has been entertaining people for over 16 years, including a resident performer at Beefcakes events, the annual Pink Loerie Mardi Gras, and Divas One Night Only. She is also a co-host of The Casper Radio Show with Casper de Vries on CliffCentral.com, and has her own reality television show.

Instagram: @bettybangles

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Old School Rebel

Chelsea D.E. Johnson was born on Whigby island, WA, raised in Sydney NS, and has been living in East Vancouver for 15 years now. Lola Whyte was born First Nations, Cree and Kainai, and later adopted and raised in Edmonton Alberta. Coming from two different backgrounds, music has brought them together.

Chelsea has creativity running on both sides, “My mother sang in a number of groups, and we even had a family choir.” Her father was a musician/producer also managed bands. “The first time I stepped foot in a studio was my dad’s.” While the biological father Lola never met was a guitarist, she admires her adoptive parents, calling them *intellectually creative*. “Both my mother and father are/were very funny inquisitive and imaginative individuals.”

Brought together by their love of music and a very last minute thrown together tour, the pair had such fun together that they decided to form a group calling themselves, **Old Soul Rebel**. They now write their own songs, and the style is Soul mixed with some bad ass Rock n Roll. When I inquire about their name, Lola replies, “Who knows. I feel like it was in a pinch.”

The duo were recently featured on CTV’s **The Launch**, after the casting agent for the show discovered them while listening to an interview they did on Pacific Sound Radio. They did amazing during the shoot, while under great duress as Lola’s father was gravely ill and dying. Strong and beautiful, their voices carried emotion and melody like pros. The show must go on, and it did, as their performance came in second, only a breathe away from releasing their own version of a chosen song.

So, what did they take away from that experience?

Lola racks off a few items. “Not being there for my father’s passing was really sad. That Max from the Arkells is really cute. That being treated like a rock star is fun. That the Canadian music scene is filled with a lot of awfully nice people. That relaxing your jaw when you sing is really important. That shiny vinyl boots with heels are ugly. That I developed an acute fondness and almost love for a lot of the



people working for or on that show. That Chelsea and I are blessed.”

They also have some solid advice for young musicians out there...

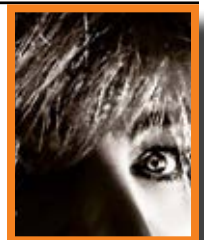
Lola: “Don’t do drugs or drink heavily. Practice. Work hard. Be curious. Keep good company. Have a spiritual outlook that makes you ask what you can do for the world and not just what it can do for you.”

Chelsea: “Make it work! There’s a certain kind of person who’s meant for not only the stage, but has a business mind, who can be personable, who can travel and live out of a suitcase, perform and really give themselves to an audience, and who is fuelled by artistic expression! If you are one of them, then you better work! The payoff is everything you’ve dreamed of, I promise!”

The pair have a Canadian tour, festival dates, and hope to release an album soon. Stay tuned!

Oldsoulrebel.squarespace.com, Facebook: Old Soul Rebel, Instagram: @oldsoulrebelmusic

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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BUMBLE-INI

MOUTH CONGRESS

BY PAUL BELLINI



I was a rocker in my youth. Scott Thompson and I had a band called Mouth Congress.

We mostly played at The Rivoli, but in 1988, we performed at the Toronto Pride March. We were awarded a spot at 11 AM. So, that morning, we packed our gear and set up on a tiny stage in the Beer Store parking lot across from the 519. In hindsight, punk music isn't a morning thing, though I thoroughly enjoyed the sign language guy at the side of the stage translating our obscene lyrics.

In 1990, we did it again, only this time our stage was in front of DeGroot's, the overpriced butcher shop. We expanded the band, with five musicians, two back-up singers, and three dancing boys. A mad queen danced in front of the stage, waving a calla lily at us. At the show's climax, we wrapped Thompson in green chiffon. It went better than I thought, considering one of our musicians fell asleep at the keyboards.

In 1994, we played Pride again, this time without Scott Thompson, so I renamed the band **The Bellini Club**. There was no audience because our time slot was during the Parade. The stage this time was right on the street, at the intersection of Church and Wood, so there was no backstage area. I was forced to change into my costume in a Port-A-Potty. It also didn't help that some well-meaning activist group asked if they could address the crowd before our show. They were angry about the rise of gay bashings. "Nine bashings a day!" they repeatedly screamed, bringing the crowd into a deep funk. Then I heard the host say, "And now please welcome Paul Bellini." Talk about a horrible warm-up act.

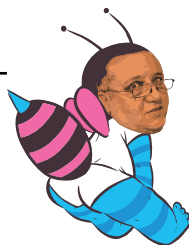
I gave it one last kick at the can in 1998. I had a new band and was working on some new songs so I put together a big Vegas style show with wild costumes, like my sunflower shirt or my custom-made white platform shoes. We rehearsed the set until it was a tight 30 minutes, as instructed. Just before we went on, we were informed by the hideous stage manager that if we went just one second over 30 minutes she would shut the power. Nice thing to say to someone who is about to perform a show. I was so upset I screamed out my songs and spit out my monologues. Luckily, we played our last note at 29:44, which made her happy, and she even offered us a nice compliment, but the damage had been done.

Ultimately, I gave up on playing Pride shows because it was always a no-win situation. It's a lot of work for very little money or appreciation, our time slots were always stupid, and the disorganization was legendary. But all things considered, playing an outdoor gig on a beautiful summer's day in downtown Toronto to hundreds of shirtless guys is nothing but a thrill.

Listen to Mouth Congress
www.mouthcongress.bandcamp.com

Support the Mouth Congress movie
<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/mouthcongress/mouth-congress>

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

Mandy Goodhandy

BY BOYD KODAK

Mandy Goodhandy is Canada's first trans woman stand-up comedian, and in 2016 was the first trans woman singer to perform at the Toronto Jazz Festival.

In 2018 she released a book and a music CD titled, "Just Call Me Lady", and the audio version was just recently launched as well, narrated by herself. Mandy also co-owns and operates 120 Diner and Club120, with her business partner Todd Klinck, and the pair were the Toronto Pride Parade Grand Marshalls in 2010. Earlier this month, "Just Call Me Lady: The Musical" was presented at Club 120 as an official Pride Toronto affiliated event.

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

Mandy Goodhandy - I keep busy every day working on the promotion and marketing for both our venues. Also, I have been performing and appearing at many events, including my official CD launch and concert of "Just Call me Lady" at Toronto's Jazz Bistro, a book launch for "Just Call Me Lady" at Glad Day Bookshop and 120 Diner, participating at Glad Day's annual Naked Heart festival, an LGBTQ festival of words, and also appearances at both Absolute Comedy Club and Comedy Bar.

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

MG - In November I got to celebrate my 65th with my friends, family, and music lovers at 120 Diner. It was a very special concert for me as it was not just a celebration of songs from my album, it was an opportunity to show people that we all have to keep celebrating our lives and our individual talents, no matter how far along in life we get. In fact, we should be celebrating more each year that passes, and share our memories and experiences at all times. That was the most exciting thing for me so far.

BK - Wise words. What are you looking forward to over for the next year?

MG - Participating in many more events in and around this wonderful city, including another spoken word style appearance at Glad Day appropriately named "Across Generations", and anything else that comes up that will help spread trans, queer, and non-binary awareness.

BK - Where can we see you work?



MG - I present my own monthly comedy show "Make Me Laugh" at 120 Diner, with my co-host Jordan Parks. It happens the third Saturday each month and features many levels of comics, making for a variety of laughs. Thanks to our live music coordinator Ori Dagan we started our new #120LateNight at 120 Diner. This show includes some of Toronto's best talent. Plus I have the honour of hosting and performing on the show each week. It is live streamed on our FB page every Wednesday night.

BK - Highly recommended, they are great shows. Future plans?

MG - Keep singing, dancing and speaking until even more ground is broken and bridges mended for trans folk. That is not just my mission, it is also my responsibility.

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

MG - Listen to each other and you will never stop learning.

BK - Finish the following for us. I couldn't live without ...

MG - family, friends or music.

www.120diner.com, www.club120.ca

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





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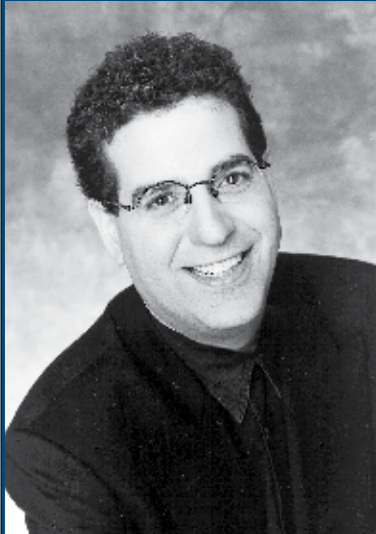
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UNIT 2



Billed as a “do it together” space, **Unit 2** is a space for Queer/Trans, 2 Spirit and/or Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, and their friends. Dedicated to building community and building bridges, this radical art space has taken Bloordale Village by storm. Co-creators Rose and Toyin first had the idea when they were living in a Roncesvalles Avenue building. A friend, who also lived in the same building, told them about an available space and they jumped at the chance. “We just threw ourselves into it,” Rose stated. The response from the community continues to be encouraging with so many people telling them how thankful they are for the space, and that they “feel very safe here”.

What do you know now, that you wish somebody had told you before starting Unit 2?

That you need an administrator! We kind of just took on the work and weren’t properly organized until Daniel got involved about two years ago. He’s also an artist, landscaper, and can generally do just about anything. He helped us transform Unit 2 into a more organized space, plus we stopped losing money.

What has been the most rewarding part of this project for you?

To see the amazing different types of folks who come through and make stuff usually out of nothing or with the intention of good and responsible partying and events.

The most challenging?

I think living in the space where there’s no sound separation has been hard! But mostly I think what’s challenging is doing all the things; Unit 2, our electronic band LAL, the community work, plus our own personal lives. This year we are trying to shift that, so we can focus more on music, so it means just asking for more help.

Can you share a favourite memory from Unit 2?

Definitely the shows that two siblings/musicians Max and Eyeda throw are fantastic, with dope music, good vibes and amazing people. Most of Unit 2’s events are like that, really amazing particularly when it’s by Queer, 2-Spirit and Trans folks, which are most of the shows. The Bricks and Glitter Festival which is an alternative queer festival that Unit 2 helped start, is also amazing. Last we had so many new folks take up space and built something more grassroots and accessible.

What’s your dream for Unit 2?

I’d love for us not to live here and then run the space with a bigger group of folks and perhaps get some solid funding one day. I want to get an RV and travel for about two years, so if we can help set it up and then get others to run and share the wonder of it all, that would be amazing! Toronto is losing so many DIY spaces, clubs and concert spaces that I would hate to see Unit 2 close, but at the same time, something new will sprout from the ground and grow, like we did.

Unit 2, 163 Sterling Road, Toronto www.unit2.club

LAL’s forthcoming album from Coax Records is due out in May. www.lalforest.com

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

Toronto True Crime Film Festival

June 14 & 15

A 2-day film festival dedicated to true crime on the big screen and beyond. Join them for the second annual festival. 15% of all ticket sales will be donated to charity. Revue Cinema, 400 Roncesvalles Ave., Toronto
www.torontotruecrimefilmfestival.com

Beyond The Rainbow

June 15; 7:30 p.m.

Forte - Toronto Gay Men's Chorus take you on a musical journey that embodies the past 50 years of the LGBT community; the obstacles it has faced, and the strides it has made. MacMillan Theatre, 80 Queens Park, Toronto
www.fortechorus.com



Switch: The Village

June 18 to 20; 9:00 p.m.; \$21.00

Starting at Buddies, you are invited on a performance travelling through the village, accompanied by portable projections, song and soundscape, poetry, shadow puppetry, dance, and storytelling. Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St., Toronto
www.buddiesinbadtimes.com

Meet & Greet Starry Night

June 20; 11:59 p.m.

Get up close and personal with Vanessa Vanjie Mateo, A'keria Chanel Davenport, and Silky Nutmeg Ganache. Enjoy the complimentary wine, sparkling water and canapés. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St., Toronto
www.the519.org

Brother: Sparkle Party • Pride Edition

June 21; 10:00 p.m.

A costume party and a celebration of creativity. The theme is a Sparkle Party; cover yourself in Diamonds, Crystals, Rhinestones, Sparkles and everything that shimmers for a fabulous night of fun. Coda, 794 Bathurst St., Toronto
www.codatoronto.com

Pitbull Pride Weekend

June 21 & 22

At the Opera House on Friday, June 21. All Star Pride at the Phoenix on Saturday, June 22. Expect world class DJ's, international porn stars, drag queens, and a ton of surprises. Two different venues over two days
www.pitbullevents.com

TD Toronto Jazz Festival

June 21 – 30

A destination event, not just for music lovers but for some of the greatest jazz celebrities in the world, reinforcing its reputation as a leader in artistic excellence and outstanding production standards. The 50th anniversary includes over 175 free performances. Bloor Street @ Yonge, and Cumberland Ave, will both be closed to accommodate outdoor stages on opening weekend. Over 175 free performances. Concerts by Diana Ross, Nora Jones, Shad, and more!
www.torontojazz.com

Pride Festival

June 21 to 23

The biggest festival in Canada, and one of the largest LGBTQ2+ festivals in the world. Includes street festival with vendors, beer gardens, free shows on various public stages, and the parade. Over 215 LGBTQ2+ artists, 15 Headliners, 26 Party Collectives, 5 Stages, 26 Pride Month Events, 40+ Community Events, 200+ Parade Entries, and 140+ StreetFair Booths and Activations. Various venues throughout Toronto
www.pridetoronto.com

Pride on the Water Sip & Sail Cruise

June 21; 6:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.

The unmatched ambiance of Toronto's harbour and magnificent views of the city's iconic skyline. Choose from a menu of delicious appetizers and specialty cocktails. 19+ event. Mariposa Cruises, 207 Queens Quay W., Toronto
www.mariposacruises.com

As If Fridays

Every Friday from 11:00 p.m.

Church Street's weekly dance party featuring all the best new and old skool dance, top 40, hip-hop, remixes and mashups, and drag performances. The Drink, 459 Church St., Toronto
www.drinkatthedrink.com



BUZZPICKS



Lipstick Jungle

June 22; 1:00 p.m. to midnight

Take it to the dancefloor and get carried away: Lipstick Jungle is turning Barbara Hall Park into a lush party oasis. Swing into action with the wildest DJs on the decks. All Ages. Free admission.

Barbara Hall Park, 519 Church St., Toronto
www.greenspaceto.org

Rangeela presents: MAHAL

June 22; 10:00 p.m.

Rangeela Resident DJ Aman will reign over the beats - from the hottest hits, to the most decadent classics, while an opulent ensemble of performers dazzle the stage with a midnight performance.

The Opera House, 735 Queen St. E., Toronto
www.facebook.com/RangeelaTO/

Tree House Party XI

June 23; 1:00 p.m.

Celebrate Pride at a massive new location as the annual Tree House Party moves west to the iconic CNE Bandshell amphitheatre, Toronto's Art Deco jewel, surrounded by greenery on the grounds of the Exhibition Place. The Bandshell, CNE Grounds, 210 Prince's Blvd., Toronto
www.greenspaceto.org

PRIDE DAY Cruisin'

June 23; 1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; \$51.50

A four hour harbour cruise on Pride Day, away from the overwhelming crowds, on a new boat with three levels, and an open party deck. Cash bar and light menu.

Pier 31, 333 Lakeshore Blvd. E., Toronto
www.facebook.com/events/828039784228545

The Rainbow Lounge

June 27; 8:00 p.m.

Sing with a community of Toronto's most revered artists, a spectacular sing-along evening around the piano. Queer classics, costumes and outrageous surprises. A fundraiser for Rainbow Railroad.

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

Flamingo Market - Pride Edition Launch

June 30; 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Featuring, promoting and fostering the diverse small business and artisan talent that the LGBTQ2SIA+ community has to offer. FREE admission all inclusive, child friendly market.

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

Toronto Fringe Festival

July 3 to 14

Toronto Fringe was founded by a cluster of local indie artists in 1989 to offer the "fringes" of the performing arts community a platform to create art at a grassroots level. Toronto Fringe, 688 Richmond St. W., Toronto
www.fringetoronto.com

Annual ICP Ball

July 6; 7:00 p.m.

ICPs Rebekka Blake and Billy Blake cordially invite you to The Annual ICP Ball. Performances will feature past and present ICPs and invited guests. All proceeds to the charities of The Imperial Court of Toronto.

The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com

RuPaul's Drag Race: Season 11 Tour

July 14; 6:00 p.m.

The cast of season 11 of RuPaul's Drag Race. All Ages Event.

VIP Meet & Greet Doors - 6:00pm

Regular Doors - 7:00pm.

Danforth Music Hall, 147 Danforth Ave., Toronto
www.thedanforth.com

Northbound Leather's Kinky Cruise

July 20; 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

11 Years of kinky pleasures in the summer air, sailing along the lake with the beautiful Toronto skyline in the back drop. B.B.Q. - Hors d'oeuvres - Floating Dungeon - DJ.

Obsession III, 249 Queens Quay W., Toronto
www.northbound.com

Toronto Food Truck Festival

August 2 to 5

Serving up some real must-eats. Entertain yourself with some of Toronto's best local talent, participate in the eating challenges and enjoy a cold beer. Admission is free.

Woodbine Park, 1695 Queen St. E., Toronto
www.canadianfoodtruckfestivals.com/toronto



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BUZZ Road Trips

The Great Canadian Karaoke Challenge

Fridays through July 26

Two vocalists chosen per night to come back on July 19 for the semi-finals, and the final sing off July 26th. The top three vocalists make their way to the Ontario Regional Finals.

The Bell Tower, 575 Central Ave., Fort Erie
www.thebelltowercommunity.com

Older & Bolder: LGBTQ+ Adult Drop-In

The last Tuesday of each month through October; 7:00 p.m.

A social safe space for individuals from the LGBTQ+ community and allies. Join for coffee and conversation.

Hosted in partnership with the Gilbert Centre.
Midland Public Library, 320 King St., Midland
www.midlandlibrary.com

Paris Night Market

June 29; 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

An evening to kick back and enjoy handmade market vendors, live music, amazing street food, beer gardens, and so much more. They are preparing to bring you a night you will not forget.

Paris Fair Grounds, 139 Silver St., Paris
www.allcanadianevents.com



Milton Rib & Craft Beer Fest

July 5 to 7

Ribs and other BBQ, 35+ craft beers and beverages, live music, games, cooking lessons, kid zone and face painting. New this year is the craft beer lounge. Free admission.

Milton Fair Grounds, 136 Robert St., Milton
www.northernheatribseries.ca

Great Canadian Butter Tart Fest

July 7; 11:00 to 4:00 p.m.

This event features some of the most prestigious bakers from Ontario, as well as some of the greatest artisans for this indoor event. After having a tasting of your favourites, cast your vote for the winner.

Gale Centre, 5152 Thorold Stone Rd., Niagara Falls
www.allcanadianevents.com

Comic Sans Waterloo

June 19, July 17; 8:00 p.m.

Stand-up comedy sans misogyny, sans rape jokes, sans harm. Comic Sans is a monthly comedy event that showcases the unique voices of queer/BIPOC/marginalized performers. Patent Social, 17 Erb St., Waterloo
www.patentsocial.ca

Roxodus Music Fest

July 11 to 14

Anticipated to become Canada's biggest summer rock music festival. Aerosmith, Kid Rock, Nickelback, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Alice Cooper, Peter Dinklage, Cheap Trick, and more. Edenvale Airport, Stayner
www.roxodus.com

Peterborough Bondage Expo: Shibari in the Patch

July 13; 4:00 p.m.

The region's largest performance and vendor expo celebrating BDSM and the fetish lifestyle, with a Main Stage, Presenters, Vendors, Interactive Dungeon, Education, Workshops, DJ, Food and Drink.

Personal Touch Banquet Hall, 1135 Lansdowne St. W., Peterborough
www.personaltouchbanquethall.com

Imperial Court of the Waterfall Empire Coronation Weekend

August 1 to 4

The annual Coronation Ball and associated weekend of events that is the high point of the fundraising efforts of this community organization. Events each day at various venues. Various Venues in downtown Hamilton
www.facebook.com/groups/10543610502

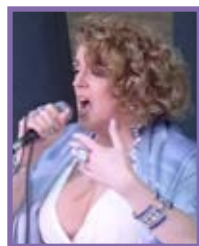
Pickering Food Truck Festival

August 9 to 11

Bring your friends and family for some unbelievable food. This event transforms the park to a foodie haven, jam-packed with a children's village, beer garden and live entertainment stage. Free admission.

Esplanade Park, 1 The Esplanade, Pickering
www.canadianfoodtruckfestivals.com/pickering

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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