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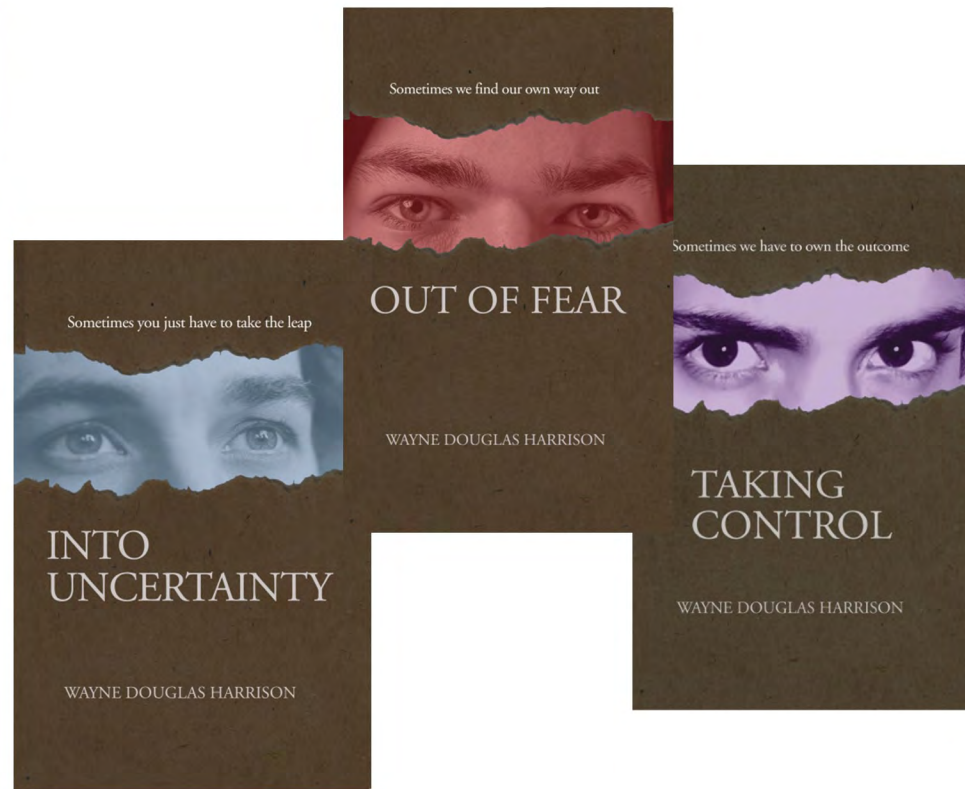
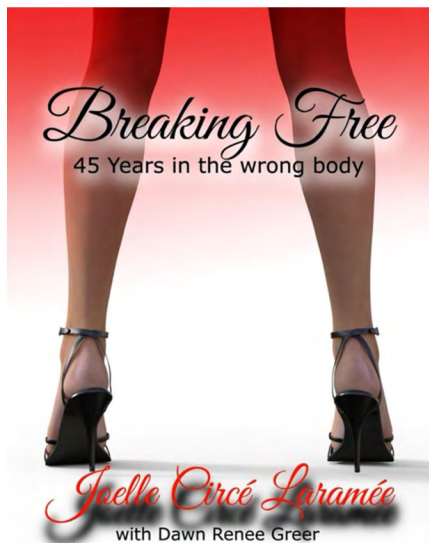
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The Editor

Greetings and Salutations,

Here at theBUZZ we aim to provide a good mix of known celebrity interviews, while maintaining our focus of giving space to emerging local talents. In this issue, our two feature articles do just that.

In our main feature we are introduced to **Fay and Fluffy**, whom many in the Toronto area might already be aware of from their *Drag Queen Storytime* events. Now they are headed for television, with a scripted series based on the success of these events. Melissa MacMullin had an opportunity to chat with each of them, along with representatives from the production company to find out more about how these two lovable characters are about to transform mainstream TV.

Our second feature is so amazingly inspirational, as it follows the dreams and passions of three wonderful women who envisioned an opportunity to tell an untold story. **Nupur Chitalia, Catherine Hernandez, and Aviva Armour-Ostroff** have all fulfilled their goals by completing compelling independent films. Aaron Rothermund reached out to ask each of them to share their challenges, struggles, and accomplishments as young female filmmakers.

In our columns, our guest Wigged Out writer is **Beth**, a former contestant on *Canada's Drag Race*, who opens up about embracing her two-spiritness. Our She Beat columnist Cat Grant caught up with author, **Marci Warhaft**, as she discusses self-esteem and body image concerns. Boyd Kodak connected with gender fluid vocal shapeshifter and multi-instrumental sorcerer, **Alanna Sterling**, and Jon Pressick spoke with **Mandy Goodhandy**, who recently opened *Mandy's Bistro* on Danforth Avenue. Finally, Rolyn Chambers takes a hard look at the discrimination and racism that still exists for Black drag queens, as we acknowledge February as *Black History Month*. Be sure to also check out our [online event listings](#) as Toronto continues to reopen once again for live events.

Hoping you're embracing winter, while awaiting our spring issue!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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The Fabulous Show with Fay and Fluffy

Sparkling Their Way into Our Hearts and Homes

By Mellisa MacMullin

Fabulous, dragulous and FUN-damental, *The Fabulous Show with Fay and Fluffy*, caters to the enthusiastic curiosity of kids, and aims to teach them about inclusivity.

Whoever said, “all that glitters is not gold” were clearly not referring to Fay and Fluffy. With their prideful hearts of gold, and glittering personalities, these two are as authentic and genuine as they come. Infectiously bubbly, **Fay Slift** (JP Kane) and **Fluffy Soufflé** (Kaleb Robertson), are a beloved over-the-top colourful, cartoon-like pair who have been sharing their love of literacy with kids since 2015. They are now set to make their television debut.

Inspiring young minds and encouraging messages of kindness, acceptance, and self-love, *Fay and Fluffy’s Drag Queen Storytime* originated in Toronto, however they later branched out to read for children at various venues through-out other parts of Ontario. Recently, their efforts of entertaining and educating the local masses were brought to the attention of Emmy-nominated and award-winning twin sisters, **Rennata and Georgina Lopez** of

Lopii Productions. “Our post-production supervisor and friend had told us about Fay and Fluffy and their *Drag Queen Storytime*. We thought, this is fantastic. These two are creating magic in their community, so we set up a meeting with them. We both felt it was about time that content like this was made into a television show,” Rennata explained.

Cultural Producer, trans rights and body positivity advocate, **Kaleb Robertson** (he/him) is behind Fluffy Soufflé (they/them), while educator and school teacher **JP Kane** (he/him) is known as Fay Slift (she/her). They were not expecting this type of exposure opportunity for years to come, if ever. “We just loved what we were doing and were honoured and excited about every venue we got to read at. I had dreams of doing a live show, sort of a *Pee Wee’s Playhouse* meets *Mr. Dressup* in a cabaret for families. We had no expectations when we met with **Lopii Productions** for the first time, but that meeting turned into a great working relationship that developed into the show.” Robertson (Fluffy) shared.

Robertson (Fluffy) explained how Fay and Fluffy came to be; “Both of us have long histories of working with children, Fay as a kindergarten teacher and me as a ‘manny’ who at one time had a home daycare. We had started bringing kids and drag together. Fay by having



her students perform with her, and me by DJ-ing kids parties in drag and doing family events at the *Gladstone Hotel*. *Drag Story Hour* originated in the United States by **Michelle Tea**, parent, author, and activist. When Fay saw it, she proposed we do one in Toronto, so our first reading was at the *Yorkdale Library* for Pride 2015 in partnership with *Glad Day Bookshop*. We were hooked and began an ongoing relationship with *The 519* which continues to this day.”

Lopii Productions, founded in 2018, primarily focuses on children’s television portraying reality in a way every child feels included and reflected in the content they produce. The shared passion of diverse representation in the media matched well with that of Kane (Fay) and Robertson’s (Fluffy) positive messaging of inclusivity. **WildBrain**, the network behind *Family Channel* and *Family Jr.* caught wind of the collaboration and was just as thrilled as everyone else involved. “We came up with this ambitious show idea and we were really lucky that *WildBrain* was just as excited and enthusiastic. We didn’t imagine a mainstream channel would jump on a project like this, so we were grateful that they also saw the need for this show to be on a channel that everyone can see,” said Rennata. “We tried putting together *Sesame Street* on a smaller scale - the Church Street edition. [laughs]” Georgina chimed in.

The Fabulous Show with Fay and Fluffy is premiering on *Family Jr.* Sunday, February 20th at 7:00 pm EST. The cabaret-style series consists of 26 episodes at 11 minutes each, and is slated to air for the next five years. “We hope that children will see themselves and their families reflected in our show. Whether they or their families are a part of the LGBTQI+ community or not, we want all kids to feel empowered, celebrated, and accepted. We hope that they learn the power in their voice, and how to care about people in their communities as well as for the world they live in,” Robertson (Fluffy) shared in a heartwarming statement.



Each episode will feature Fay and Fluffy reading from a book, but will also include animated segments, live music, dancing, puppet friends, and special guests such as **Esther the Wonder Pig**, Canadian comedian **Elvira Kurt**, and **Splash ‘n’ Boots**. “There’s an overall message/theme about fitting in and including everybody. There will be a lot of LGBTQ+ authors and books included. It was important to us that the books being read were diverse. We wanted to make sure that everyone was being represented,” said Georgina.

Topics brought to light on the show will encourage children to ask questions and give answers honestly in a space where they feel comfortable, safe, seen, and celebrated. Each episode is filmed in front of a live audience consisting of real children with no acting experience, along with their parents and caregivers. “We have an episode based on *Pride*, an episode that talks about different families and how they’re made up, and we talk about chosen families and ones which have same-sex couples. Other episodes will have more generic preschool messaging like being kind, supporting others, and learning in different ways. It’s a good mix,” shared Georgina.

“Kids love Fay and Fluffy and genuinely want to be around them. They have a great way of getting kids to open up about their feelings. We have episodes which talk about feeling frustrated, what to do if you’re feeling scared, acts of kindness, fitting in, and how to be a good friend. Every episode has a moment of conversation where we allow the kids to talk about their perspective on the topic,” expressed Rennata.

Robertson (Fluffy) shared his hope and vision for the show. “Our aspirations are for families to be able to sit and enjoy the show together as entertainment for both kids and adults. We want to spread the message of kindness, caring for others, and the joy in books. We want the ‘lessons’ of each episode to be taught by engaging with the kids we had on the show, the brilliant



special guests we're excited for people to meet, and the conversations we have with our puppet friends."

Rennata relayed how the initial leg of their journey spear-heading a production company had made a unique impact almost immediately. "Our first show was called *My Home My Life*, and is about the way kids live authentically. We met with different families in different homes, from apartment buildings, to basement units. People who live together in a blended family with their aunts and uncles, and/or grandparents. Kids with two dads or two moms, and kids whose parents were living in separate homes. We turned the lens so kids could tell their story from their perspective. We learned a lot about disabilities, and kids who have special needs, such as epilepsy, ADHD, and autism to name a few. There was a lot of diversity in that series as well."



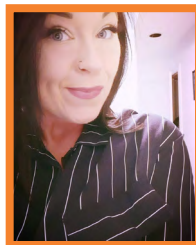
"Rennata and I have both been in the kids television industry for fifteen years now. We are in a position here where we can teach children about the world that we want to live in, and children have a lot to teach us in return," added Georgina. "It's about creating content that you want the next generation to be watching. We were inspired by the content that we saw in our childhood, but we never really saw kids like us on television, and we wanted to create content that was reflective of the way kids actually are. Kids media has always been a little bit more ahead in Canada in terms of diversity and representation, but there's still a lot to be improved," Rennata added.



"WildBrain's goal is to make this a Canadian classic like *Mr. Dressup* or something like that - icons that Canadian families watch and love. Our distribution team, *Sinking Ship Entertainment*, is working on getting it out internationally. There's already interest coming from the United States, Australia, and other countries. We're hoping to make it bigger and better," Georgina confided.

The Fabulous Show with Fay and Fluffy is making history as it is the first of its kind, but what everyone involved is really hoping and striving for, is that it will not be the last. Now's the time to open eyes, open hearts, and open minds through empathy, love, and positive LGBTQ+ and cultural representation - with a dose of silliness and a touch of glitter!

Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose.



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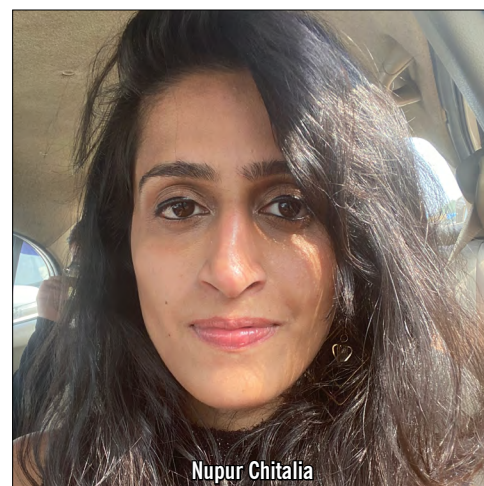
The Future of Film is Female *Tales of Untold Stories*

By Aaron Rothermund

Filmmaking is a way to mirror the human experience, showcasing our joy, despair, triumphs, and struggles. This is why it's so important to hear and see stories from a diverse group of individuals.

experience has been in branded content, she has been pushing herself forward creating short films including, *Pride Not Prejudice*, showcasing candid interviews with members of the LGBTQIP2SAA community, and, *Transcendence*, based on the real story of Shanathi and Vaishnavi cultivating their own gender identity in a heteronormative world.

"I wanted to become a storyteller, who could evoke such strong emotions in the audience, that could bring about a positive change through visual media," Chitalia tells me.



Nupur Chitalia

We're spotlighting three emerging local female talents, who are creating an inspirational path forward for others who might also feel that their voices have not yet been represented.

Nupur Chitalia has directed two productions (*Pride Not Prejudice*, *Transcendence*) that are centered around the LGBTQIP2SAA community, and cultivating gender identity in a heteronormative world. **Catherine Hernandez** adapted her debut novel, *Scarborough*, into a brilliant film that had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2021, and **Aviva Armour-Ostroff** has been the driving force behind *The Lab Cab Festival* for the past 13 years and has also produced and co-directed the film adaptation of Michael Healy's legendary play, *The Drawer Boy*. These are their stories.

Nupur Chitalia moved from Raipur, India to Toronto, Canada to pursue her passion for filmmaking. While most of Chitalia's



Scarborough

Her favourite discoveries are, "the moments when you get delightfully surprised about how far your imagination can take you, and how those possibilities can be limitless."

Chitalia collaborated with Writer/ Director, **Pascale Potvin** on the psychological thriller, *Baby Fever*. The production had a crew of mostly female, and/or, queer individuals working together to tell the story of Lila, a pregnant woman attempting to fit the role of 'perfect mother' demanded by her new, family-focused community.

Over the past two years these two relentless filmmakers worked to lengthen the script, self-fund the project, and organize the way they were going to complete principal photography in an impressive seven-day timeline. As the film deals with mental health, ectopic pregnancies, and various forms of abuse, the directors wanted to be sensitive to detailed blocking and intimacy rehearsals.

"I had lots of intense moments of self-reflection especially on the qualities and skills I needed to be a better co-director and a filmmaker," Chitalia shares.

Check out the trailer for *Baby Fever*, and show some love on the post-production fundraising campaign [here](#), also to Chitalia's production company, [Nucraft Productions](#).

Catherine Hernandez was named one of '17 Writers to Watch' by CBC Books, and her novel *Scarborough* was a finalist for the *Toronto Book Award*, the *Edmund White Award* for Debut Fiction, and the *Trillium Book Award*. She has also been nominated by the *Toronto Film Critics Association* for the prestigious [Rogers Best Canadian Film Award](#).

"When I started to receive offers to option the film, I knew I wanted to take on the adaptation. *Scarborough* was just so precious to me, and I didn't want it disrespected. The goal

was to make sure the spirit of a community was going to be captured in film. We were all working together to make that happen, and we had creative freedom on how to get that task done," Hernandez confides.

Hernandez, in association with *Compy Films*, *Telefilm Canada*, and the *Reel Asian Film Festival* adapted *Scarborough* into a brilliant film, which premiered at the *Toronto International Film Festival* in 2021. The film follows three young children as they attend a literacy program in the Galloway community, as seen through the eyes of a compassionate frontline worker struggling with the bureaucracy of the job regulations.

Allowing the actors to improvise freely made them like collaborators and take ownership of the dialogue in the film. Catherine tells me, "My goal is to get to the place where the dialogue sounds just as natural as what I'm seeing in a



Catherine Hernandez

documentary film. That requires a lot of practice with listening and letting characters speak for themselves.”

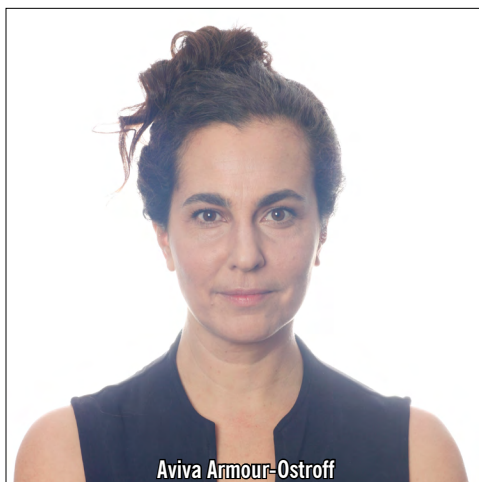
Check out Hernandez’s [website](#), to get updated info on when/where to watch, *Scarborough*. In the meantime absorb her [TEDx Toronto Talk](#) about allyship, as explored in her latest novel, *Crosshairs*.

Aviva Armour-Ostroff is known for producing and directing *The Lab Cab Festival* for thirteen years, and producing and co-directing the film adaptation of Michael Healy’s legendary play, *The Drawer Boy*. Armour-Ostroff currently stars in *Lune*, which she also co-wrote, co-produced, and co-directed based on her relationship with mental health.

“I have mostly found support and acceptance in my community. That’s not to say I didn’t experience my share of rejection, but I do recognize I was dealt a great hand in the friends’ department. That is my community,” Aviva Armour-Ostroff tells me through email.

Lune follows a light-skinned Jewish woman named Miriam as she confronts her daughter’s Black boyfriend during a manic episode. Co-directors Arturo Perez Torres and Armour-Ostroff deftly navigate mental health issues, religious conflicts, and racial politics in this hard-hitting drama set in Toronto, 1994. *Lune* won the *Audience Award for Narrative Feature* at Cinequest 2021, and the 2021 *Micki Moore Award*, which was the first time the award was given to a Canadian director.

As for making *Lune*, Armour-Ostroff says “The triumph for me is that I only once lost my shit in a gross way, and I thought I’d be more of a mess. The crew I had was incredible. Mostly women, mostly people of colour, all team players. I wrote this



Aviva Armour-Ostroff

story as a play when I was 17. So, it’s literally been thirty years of stewing and cooking and baking. It’s challenging to watch the film because I have four inner critics yelling- writer, director, actor and editor (well, co editor). I have the least experience as a writer, and that’s where I am most judgmental when watching the film. I see/know where I want the script to be stronger.”

Both of Armour-Ostroff’s films were funded by the *Canada Council for the Arts*, the *Toronto Arts Council*, and the *Ontario Arts Council*, but she still had to struggle to get the projects started. On financial freedom she told me, “No one has handed me cash to simply exist as an artist, I have had to do a lot of “pro bono” work before finding support. I think Canada is wonderful in that we have grants, yet we are behind the times in how little we support our artists beyond a project.”

Armour-Ostroff’s theatre company ARC recently produced a short film called *You’re Invited*, which will be released this year. Check out [ARC Stage](#) for updated information on where to find it.

What we all can learn from these filmmakers is that each person experiences life through the lens of their own truth, which influences the way they create and what they produce. To make a profession out of art requires one to be self-ruling in their affairs, specialized in the medium, or willing to learn. Something these three individuals have achieved wonderfully!

Aaron Rothermund is a freelance writer, theatre creator, and filmmaker. Aaron has worked on articles for The Courier, Culture Days, theBUZZ, and PinkPlayMags.



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WIGGED OUT

EMBRACING MY TWO-SPIRITNESS

BY BETH



I have been doing drag for nearly eight years now, unless you ask my mother, who would say I have been doing it since I was two. To say I was the black sheep in the family is an understatement. I grew up with three brothers who all played sports, where as I played dress up and dolls. I was obsessed with the *Wizard of Oz* and was even Dorothy for Halloween when I was four or five. My mom was always supportive of my, what some might call, odd behaviour for a little boy. She even had a pair of my very own ruby slippers made to go with my costume. Its wild to think that it took becoming someone else to allow me to become fully myself.

I've known of the term Two-Spirit since middle school where I learned lots more about my indigenous side, but I never fully understood it till a little later in life. When I was younger, I was speaking with an elder who looked at me and said, "Rolland, when I look at you, I don't see a male or female, I see a fully balanced human being." This confused the hell out of me for the longest time, but it also always stuck with me.

I always had this feminine energy in me that frankly, scared the crap out of me. I was always so ashamed to let it out and confused why I couldn't be like other boys. You can only ignore who you are for so long until it starts to take a toll on your spirit. It can also affect your relationships, not only with other people but yourself as well. Once I was fully able to accept myself and my queerness, I was able to explore a world that would not only change my life, but save it. I was able to find people who celebrated me for being me, and suddenly the people who couldn't didn't matter to me anymore.

When I discovered drag, I finally found a way to express this feminine energy that wanted out so bad for so long. I had this confidence on the stage that I never had in my life before, and I felt unstoppable. It took me a while to learn how to carry that confidence I had in drag into my day-to-day life. Don't get me wrong, I definitely have days, in and out of drag, that I don't necessarily feel the most confident. But eventually I was able to learn that I am the same person on stage that I am off the stage. I am the same person in heels or sneakers. I am the same person with a full face of makeup or a scruffy neck beard. I am not a male or a female, I am a fully balanced human being.

Beth is a campy but sexy lady who is always serving body, face and heart! Originally from Nelson, BC, but currently surviving in the overly priced city of Vancouver!



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SHE BEAT Marci Warhaft

BY CAT GRANT

Tackling Body Image and Self-Esteem Concerns



body. I started obsessing over every calorie I consumed and every ounce I weighed. "Billy's death gave birth to my eating disorder," she confides.

Believing her brother deserved to be alive more than herself, Marci felt she needed to earn her existence by being *perfect*, and to her at that time, perfect meant skinny. "My eating disorder destroyed my self-worth and set me up to be extra vulnerable to the multitude of major challenges that life would continue to throw at me throughout my life," she continues.

Marci's body image and eating disorder issues continued well into her 30s, and despite becoming a wife and a mom to two sons, her eating disorder continued to wreak havoc. "I got to a point where although I had pretty much given up on myself, I knew that my children deserved a mother who was healthy and happy."

While not easy, Marci joined a treatment program through a local hospital. "It was the right program at the right time and it completely changed my life. Today, I am incredibly grateful to enjoy a healthy relationship with food and with my body."

Marci soon became frustrated with the messages her kids were being taught at school about health.

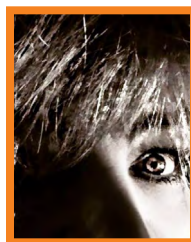
Too much of a focus was being put on weight in relation to being fit, and I knew that was a slippery slope to be sending kids on. I hated the idea of other kids suffering the way I had, and didn't want other parents to feel as powerless as my mom did as she watched me self-destruct," she shares.

Compelled to do something about it, Marci created an interactive workshop called *Fit vs Fiction* for students from first grade to twelfth, and another for parents and teachers. "The workshop uses pictures, stories, and activities to help kids grow up with the self-esteem they deserve in our image obsessed society," she explains.

Marci then wrote, *The Body Image Survival Guide for Parents: Helping Toddlers, Tweens and Teens Thrive*. And is currently working on her memoir, *The Good Stripper: A Soccer Mom's Memoir of Lies, Loss and Lapdances*.

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



As a young girl born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, author **Marci Warhaft** loved to write, sing, dance, and was a good athlete as well. Encouraged by her mother to express her emotions, Marci would dance and write about it.

"She taught me that my opinions mattered and that I had every right to share them," she explains. As a child of divorce with an absent father, Marci's older brother Billy became her male role model. She describes him as the invisible armour that she wore out into the world making her feel protected. "He was incredibly warm and loving and I could not have been prouder to be his little sister," she remembers.

Tragically at the tender age of 21, Billy died from a hereditary liver disease. At 17, Marci felt a part of her had died with him. "The moment right before I was told he had passed away, was the last moment I would feel safe for decades. With the world feeling so out of control and no longer making sense to me, I turned to the one thing I thought I could control, which was my



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Black Queens On The Scene That Lipstick Covered Mirror is Cracked



Chantay it's February, *Black History Month*. Dating back to 1915, the month didn't become official in Canada until 1995. Since then, a new generation of Canadians have been born, many who were raised on the TV franchise known as *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and subsequently, *Canada's Drag Race*, which had its inaugural season 25 years after this important declaration. While much has improved for Black people in Canada, sadly that lipstick covered mirror is still cracked.

"The world of Drag Race is a white industry. Period," points out *Anastarzia Anagway*, who was one of three Black queens on Season One of *Canada's Drag Race*. "When Black queens step into this white industry we have to work ten times as hard as our white sisters to get half the recognition. The season that *Shay Couleé* won, a white girl had way more followers. The Black girls of each season are always the least followed."

It's not just the queens who's race plays a part in their Drag Race journey. It's also judges like Season One's *Jeffrey Boyer-Chapman* who was forced to leave the show. Speaking to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Bowyer-Chapman explained how he was told by a white, gay, male show-runner that he needed to play the role of the "sassy" judge. Sassy is akin to being called an "angry black woman."

This made his infamous, "use [your time] better, maybe," confrontation with *Jimbo* seem harsh when it was simply a critique. Fans (mostly white) created a Change.org petition to have Bowyer-Chapman fired. The petition failed, but the moment started a campaign of online bullying. "My inbox was flooded with a lot of blatant racism," he said. "Their public profiles read 'Black Lives Matter,' but their DMs were all about how my Black life didn't matter."

Tynomi Banks teamed up with *Black Lives Matter Toronto* by releasing a line of shirts and hoodies and has said, "I've been sitting on my Blackness and making choices to stay away from negativity. Instead, I have tried to use my voice to talk about the BLM movement and amplify other voices."

When applying to perform to a casino, Season Two's *Océane Aqua-Black*'s drag collective was told that they didn't want 'any big queens or Black queens.' "They wouldn't even see me," Black said. "It was offensive."

As Season Two's *Kimora Amour* experienced, racism can even come from their sister queens. In a November 2021 Instagram post she called out the racist attitude of Ottawa's *Yaya Torres*, a regular performer at *The Lookout Bar and Nightclub*. Torres would often joke that she couldn't see Black queens in the dark, mocked Black queens who had names with African roots, and even introduced Black queens by doing fake African chants. The Lookout Bar fired Torres shortly after.

This is just a short list of some long held racist reflections that Black drag queens in general, and Black Drag Race queens in Canada in particular, see today and everyday. This Black History Month, and every other month, needs that cracked lipstick covered mirror to sashay away.

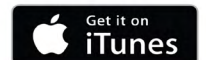
Jamaican-born Rolyn Chambers grew up in the suburbs of Mississauga, before attending Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD). In 2001, he began his Deep Dish column with fab Magazine. Deep Dish has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. IG @rahrhrolyn



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A KODAK MOMENT

Alanna Sterling

BY BOYD KODAK



part, but I'm gonna throw you a curveball. Finally getting a proper diagnosis and going on medication for ADHD has been THE most exciting event for me. I can't even begin to describe how emotionally crippled and mentally drained I've been for countless years.

BK - What are you looking forward to next year?

AS - I'm in the process of creating my first full-length album, *Mind/Matter* - a manifesto to mental health and overcoming adversity. After starting my album project in 2019, I had to put it on pause countless times due to mental health, physical health, and the pandemic. I've been in and out of the hospital so many times since we started, and even underwent two major surgeries on my left arm. As you can imagine, that made it pretty hard to record an instrument based album. After months of hard work, and my health finally taking a turn for the better, we are in the finishing stages of making this album a reality.

BK - Where can we see your work?

AS - You can find my music on [YouTube](#), [Spotify](#), and [Apple Music](#). I also stream regularly on [Twitch](#).

BK - Future plans?

AS - I've been focusing on my day-to-day life, finding joy and contentment, and making small progress every day while trying to spread kindness and inspire others.

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

AS - To quote the lyrics of my song, *You're Alive*: "You've made it this far, you can make it through anything. You're alive, breathing. You're alive, and that's worth something."

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

AS - ...Twitch TV. When I started streaming in March 2018, I had no idea how integral this platform would become for me as a career musician and as a person. I've grown a fanbase of nearly 50k people, and get to perform music and create art on livestream in front of thousands of people around the world each week - and get paid to do so.

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



Alanna Sterling is a talented gender fluid (they/she/he) vocal shapeshifter and multi-instrumental sorcerer, as well as a Twitch Partner ([Mermaid Unicorn](#)), and mental health advocate.

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

Alanna Sterling - The pandemic and the state of lockdown has taken such a toll on my career, as well as my mental and physical health. When out of lockdown, I've been doing as many live gigs as possible, because I feel so alive when I'm performing. In lockdown, I've been prioritizing my mental health for the first time in my life. I recently started therapy for ADHD. I've been working through my troubles and making huge progress!

BK - What has been the most exciting event for you?

AS - As a musician I feel like I should say that performing in front of thousands of people live or online was the coolest

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MANDY'S BISTRO

Photo: Mitchel Raphael

With the closure of her venerable **Club120** back in 2020, the city lost a cultural institution. But now Mandy is back, once again teaming up with chef **Richard Henry** (restaurateur and chef from *120 Diner*) to offer a new space that is, in her own words, "a safe and welcoming space, for everyone."

"It was almost one year to the day that I decided to make a go of a new venue," recalls Goodhandy. "It was not my plan to try and open a new place so soon. In fact, I was going to wait about three more years to open a small live entertainment lounge. Not necessarily in Toronto either. Richard contacted me about a place he was looking at opening. He wanted to know if I was interested in getting involved in another place so soon. I only agreed because of the location and the potential of what this space could be turned into and the many possibilities it could provide."

Unfortunately, shortly after launching *Mandy's Bistro*, COVID again surged, and to protect their clientele, Goodhandy and Henry scaled back operations by postponing live entertainment. This situation is a blow to all businesses, and the fact that Mandy's Bistro team have taken this step despite just opening, demonstrates their dedication to their clientele and the community.

However, rest assured, when it is safe to do so, fans can look forward to enjoying a wide variety of great performers, as they revel in the fantastic food. The menu is broken down into four categories – starters, salads, main, and sweet. Main items include standard pub fare like burger and chicken waffle sandwiches, to the more specialty items like Gorgonzola and Spinach Ravioli, Beef Bourguignon, and Lobster Mac & Cheese.

Expect to see many local singers, musicians, storytellers, and comedians along with your brunch or dinner in a setting that is ideal for intimate conversation, networking, and even small meetings. For the more adventurous types, Mandy promises some nights that are a throwback to her pansexual foray that was *Goodhandy's/Club 120*.

Follow the [Mandy's Bistro Facebook page](#) for updates. Check out their website for [event listings](#) and [food menu](#) options.

Jon Pressick is a writer who focuses on sex and sexuality. View his work at [sexinwords.ca](#)



Just in the nick of time, a new food and music venue has arrived in Toronto's Danforth Village neighbourhood to help us all out of the doldrums of another pandemic winter. And leave it to the irrepressible **Mandy Goodhandy**—cherished artist, advocate and entertainer—to give us much to cheer about in this new year.

Mandy's Bistro, the hopping new spot at 123 Danforth Avenue steps from the Broadview subway station, is Goodhandy's latest restaur-tainment venture. This new hotspot is a must-visit for brunch and dinner fun, and late evening entertainment.



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As Ontario continues to ease up on restrictions and regulations, allowing more events and activities to take place in person, we have begun to update our event listings accordingly.

We are now back to providing a wide array of happenings throughout Toronto, the GTA, and beyond, and are hoping our regular events print section will return shortly.

In the meantime please continue to check our combined online listing of both in person and virtual events www.thebuzzmag.ca/events.

Let's all stay safely connected.

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