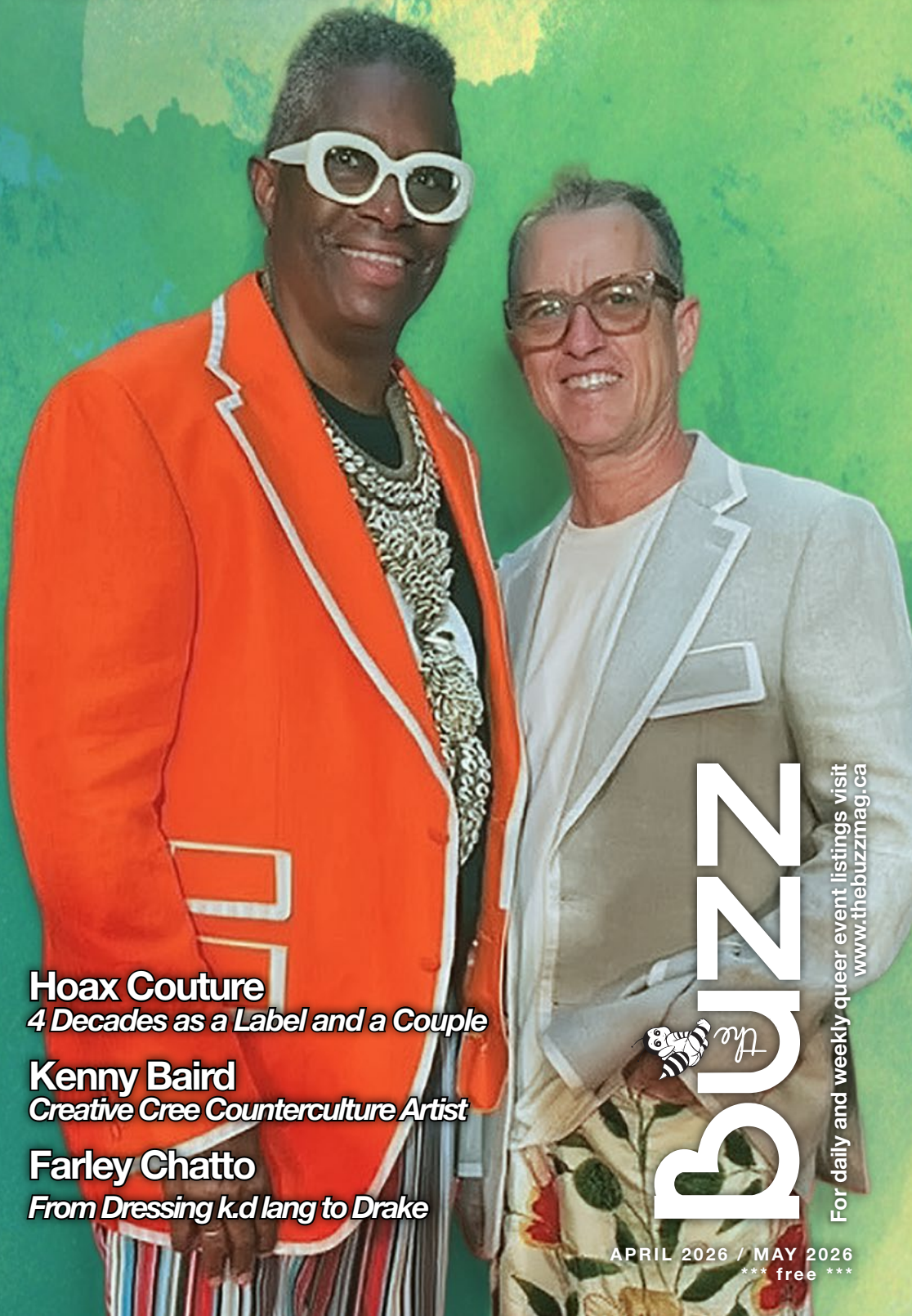


Sanjina Wins with Sobriety · Kijiji and Me · David's Disco · Kelly Clipperton



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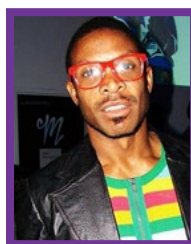
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Hello Friends!

As we stumble, tumble, slip and skip out of the doldrums of Winter and enter into what will hopefully be a Spring filled with new inspirations, theBUZZ is here to journey with you. Sometimes life is not what we might expect, but it is indeed, as they say, what we make of it. In this issue, we feature four unique individuals who have made their lives what it is, on their own terms. From the power couple of Chris Tyrell and Jim Searle who are going on forty years as a couple and as fashion design partners responsible for creating Hoax Couture – one of Toronto's most iconic fashion bands, to the counterculture, deconstructive, punk art sensibilities of Kenny Baird, to the fantastical fur fashions created for stars like Drake by Farley Chatto. This issue is about fashion, art, design, and the queer sensibilities that inspired it. Sometimes we learn from others, and sometimes others from us. Learn from these creatives, each with their own different and inspiring paths to their success. Beyond The Village illuminates, Pink Light Studio, a new multi-functional event space in Toronto, A Kodak Moment shares the spotlight with visual and recording artist Kelly Clipperton, and Deep Dish gives you the glittery goods from the third annual David's Disco gala fundraiser for Casey House. Also joining us this issue is guest columnist Sanjina DaBish Queen who shares her journey from competing on Canada's Drag Race to being complete in her new home of Hollywood. I encourage you stumble, tumble, slip, and skip through our pages, while continuing along your own inspiring journey, this Spring and beyond.

Rolyn Chambers
Interim Editor




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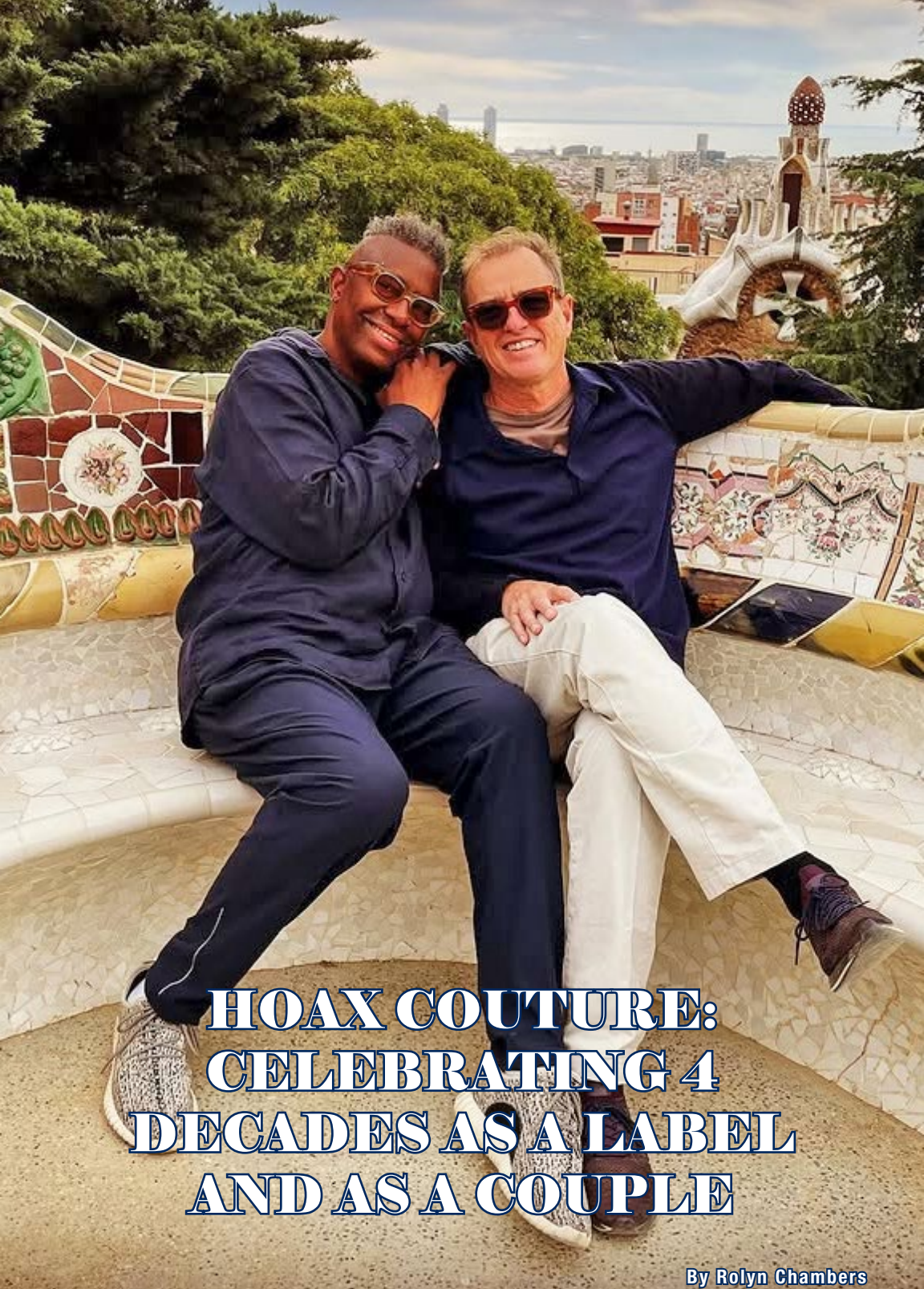
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HOAX COUTURE: CELEBRATING 4 DECADES AS A LABEL AND AS A COUPLE

By Rolyn Chambers

“See these?” fashion designer Chris Tyrell points accusingly at my jeans. “I hate them.”

And so begins a heated debate on something as innocent as denim. Tyrell glares accusingly at my Parasuco jeans while his partner in life and business, Jim Searle smirks at his side. I have a feeling Searle has heard this rant before. Together, the pair form 40-year-old design house, [Hoax Couture](#).

With Toronto’s Own Fashion Week returning this May, I decide to revisit the design duo who caught my attention while I was student at art school many moons ago. Among their list of credits, in 1987 Hoax Couture were handpicked to be one of twenty design labels (many now defunct) that participated in the very first Fashion Cares, a gala AIDS fundraising event which ran for 25 years. As I sit to chat with them about their career and life together, I also unfortunately learn the hard way that Tyrell is an anti-jean elitist.

“I find jeans very boring. Everybody wears them,” Tyrell says dryly. I defend my choice to this man whom I’ve shared many dazzling nights out with, stating that jeans are a staple. “Give me a fucking break,” he shoots back. “I never talk to guys wearing jeans.” But guys can look hot in jeans I argue. “I just know the type of headspace that goes along with it,” Tyrell says, challenging my reasoning for wearing them. “You didn’t want to think about what you were really going to do today to look good. Isn’t that really the truth?” Before going back to viciously pinning a dress he adds, “Jeans are just an easy cop-out. Jeans are killing fashion.”

Hoax Couture’s by appointment showroom, on the third floor of 515 Queen Street West, is often a hive of activity. It is here they do custom tailoring and designing for select clients and prepare outfits for various charities and functions that they are involved with.

“We were nominated for a Dora award last year for a dance piece we did at the Harbourfront Dance Theatre,” Searle says, updating me on their recent activities.

Searle is usually busy using the computer to meticulously lay out custom patterns, while calmly taking phone calls and assisting clients. Tyrell meanwhile instructs assistants on which projects to finish up, while quickly and expertly cutting and laying out fabrics. One of their more popular patterns is called The Carrie Dress, named for Sarah Jessica Parker’s clothes horse character Carrie

Bradshaw from *Sex and The City*. Its pink and cream silks flow gracefully from a gathered waist and is something Bradshaw, Parker and most Toronto women would love to slip into.

Hoax Couture has always had a keen sense of what people want. Their genesis as a couple and as design team occurred at roughly the same time more than 40 years ago. Searle, the younger the two (they refused to divulge their ages) was introduced to Tyrell by his old girlfriend. Working as a bored architect in Toronto, Searle would see Tyrell, who was finishing a law degree at the University of Ottawa, every few weeks. Tyrell was “busy” in his single days before he met Searle (this was pre-AIDS when people had no idea of the crisis that would soon arise.) Once Tyrell moved to Toronto the two were inseparable.

After more than 40 years the two are still each other’s best friends.

“I totally adore him,” Tyrell says. “And I know he adores me.” Because of this, working together and being a couple for over four decades has not been a problem. “At least once a month I say, ‘Fuck I cannot believe I still even like you,’” Tyrell laughs while looking at Searle.



In the early stages of their relationship, the pair began to embark on creative weekend projects. Tyrell, whose parents were tailors, “could sew before [he] could walk.” Searle, meanwhile, began altering vintage clothing finds while attending Carleton University. This interest in fashion led them to start designing and producing simple T-shirt dresses and jackets that they sold on sidewalks in front of Toronto’s now defunct Bamboo Club. But this wasn’t enough to satisfy their passion. On one of their many trips to Paris, they saw an ad in *Passion*, an English language newspaper once published by clothing store Roots. The ad was for a show called The Festival of Canadian Fashion and it was looking for designers. Already bored with what would have been lucrative careers as a lawyer and architect and looking for something that they could do together, they sent in the application along with some drawings. They were accepted and given a booth at the festival. The collection was such a success that Holt Renfrew bought their entire first line.

Though the festival was shelved after two years, it was the launching pad for some historic Toronto fashion labels like Comrags and Babel (the latter created by Searle, Tyrell and three others.) With too many cooks in the kitchen Babel was put on the back burner while Searle and Tyrell went on to start their own short-lived line called Tintin, named after the French comic, before giving birth, as a couple, to Hoax Couture. It was a painless delivery.

The label’s name came from a tongue in cheek play on Haute Couture, a term used mainly by media types, like Jeanne Beker, that described early 1980s fashion coming out of Europe. This was fitting since their first collection, made of furniture fabrics, was being compared to designers like Jean Paul Gaultier and Vivienne Westwood. Quite a feat for self-taught designers who had to learn the business, and technical aspects, of the fashion industry very quickly. Their immediate and positive reception brought them to the attention of Phillip Ing, the Executive Director of Special Events at MAC Cosmetics, who was then an independent show producer. They were invited to the first Fashion Cares.

As Fashion Cares grew over 25 years, and attracted more international and celebrity attention, they only missed one. A storm in Madagascar trapped them from making it back to Toronto. Recalling their Fashion Cares years, a few moments stand out in their memory. For their very first show they created tailored funky suits over which they placed prosthetic tits and asses. One year they sent philanthropist Salah Bachir (or as they affectionately call him “Pasha Bachir”) down the runway dressed as a bride.



With Victoria Beckham in 2020

Bachir was their very first investor and is their number one client, among an impressive roster of buyers which include not only celebrities, and Toronto’s elite but politicians like former Federal Defence Minister Bill Graham.

In 1983, when Fashion Cares was held inside the 90-foot-high atrium of BCE Place, Tyrell and Searle constructed a dress that would be in proportion to its surroundings. They set to work on a 12-foot dress that would be worn by a woman on stilts. Phillip Ing suggested that the model, Susie Horton, be held up instead by a Russian acrobat as there were already Russian acrobats in the show that year.

“Susie had to practice yelling, “Go”, “Left”, “Right”, “Stop” and “Really stop”, in Russian since the acrobat couldn’t speak English, and couldn’t see from underneath the dress,” recalls Searle.

When the big night came, Horton posed on the catwalk, grabbed onto a bar, and was lifted into the air. As she got taller and taller, the dress got bigger and bigger; the acrobat snuck underneath the dress from behind. With her feet on his shoulders, Horton let go of the bars and began “walking” down the runway as if she had grown enormous legs. It came off flawlessly and was incredibly dramatic.

The opening of their Hoax Couture store in Yorkville in 1997 signaled a new era for the business, now 11 years old at that point. At that time, they also stopped selling their



Hoax Couture creation for Cadbury Chocolate Couture Collection

line to other stores, which they had done for almost ten years, choosing to concentrate on custom orders. When the late singer Prince paid the store a visit, his bodyguards blocked off the entire store so that the Hoax staff couldn’t even assist him. “He’s lucky I wasn’t there,” Tyrell says. “I would have thrown him out. Who the fuck is he?” Prince bought nothing.

Prince may have left empty handed but at one time Hoax Couture was sold in stores all over the world with 75% of their orders placed at Paris trade shows. Inspired by John Paul Gaultier and older designers like Madeleine Vionnet, Charles James and Madam Grey, Hoax was and is still famous for their longer men’s jackets. I still have and occasionally wear my black knee-length formal jacket that I bought as a reward or completing my first year of art school more than 25 years ago.

“We derived details from historical fashions,” Searle explains. “In the 17th to early 20th centuries men’s jackets were often knee-length or longer.” The pair bring differing tastes to the label. Tyrell, born in Jamaica and raised in New York, is more daring. He used to wear platform shoes and have dreadlocks down to his waist. Winnipeg born Searle (who oddly took up taxidermy as a child) is much more conservative. Hoax is their brand of fusion.

Adding to the drama they brought to Fashion Cares, Hoax Couture have also showed daring designs at Cadbury Chocolate Couture Collection and Cashmere (yes, the bathroom tissue) Couture fashion shows, to name a few. Outside of the fantastical, they also began designing more womenswear, opening their studio more than twenty years ago. At that time, they had built up an impressive bridal line.

“It’s for people who don’t want the traditional poofy princess wedding dresses,” Tyrell explains. “More fashion, more glamour and sophistication.”

One might think that after being together for more than 40 years, Tyrell and Searle would don matching custom Hoax Couture tuxedos and strut down the marriage runway. But Searle says comfortably, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” They have no plans to marry and have never even exchanged rings. “We know we were it forever. We don’t need any of the little signifiers. We keep the romance alive by trying not to be boring- lots of travel, and lots of communication.”

As couple who support one another the two have long felt that fashion and arts in Canada has not been properly supported by the government, or by the public. Because of this, they do not see Toronto ever getting the type of attention the four major fashion centres do.



Hoax Couture creation for Cashmere Collection



"That's why designers Dean and Dan (of DSquared2) picked up their drag queen shoes and headed over to Italy."

One reason for this is that the four major fashion hubs all have a history. Paris is where the shows began. New York took over after the First World War. Milan is important because of its fabrics, and London makes the list because of its reputation as an international destination, blending many differing cultural styles. Another reason is that the Canadian market is just too small. Selling in New York is the equivalent of selling to all of Canada.

"The real problem is the consumers," Tyrell declares boldly. "Canadians are cheap, and they aren't all that fashionable."

Hoax Couture, however, made a conscious decision to stay in Canada because Tyrell and Searle love Toronto and enjoy being the type of designers that they are.

"We didn't want to be Armani," Tyrell says. "We didn't want to be dealing with a factory full of people. The custom business we have is what inspires us."

Though we won't see them at this year's Toronto's Own Fashion Week, they aren't concerned about whether the Hoax Couture line, or name continues after they are gone. "I know if Jim drops dead, I'll stop designing immediately," Tyrell says without a second thought. "I won't do this without him." Searle agrees, adding, "It's our thing. We are Hoax." Surprised, I asked these men who have been



so important to the Canadian fashion scene for so long for what they would do instead.

"Who knows," Tyrell shrugs. "I'll be a crack whore. I still have good legs." But he certainly won't be standing on the corner in a pair of jeans.

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, which ran for a full decade, allowing him to interview everyone from clubbers and promoters, to celebrities and politicians. Deep Dish has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. Chambers is also the author of, The Boy Who Brought Down A Bathhouse, self-published by himself via YumEee! Communications. IG @rahraholyn






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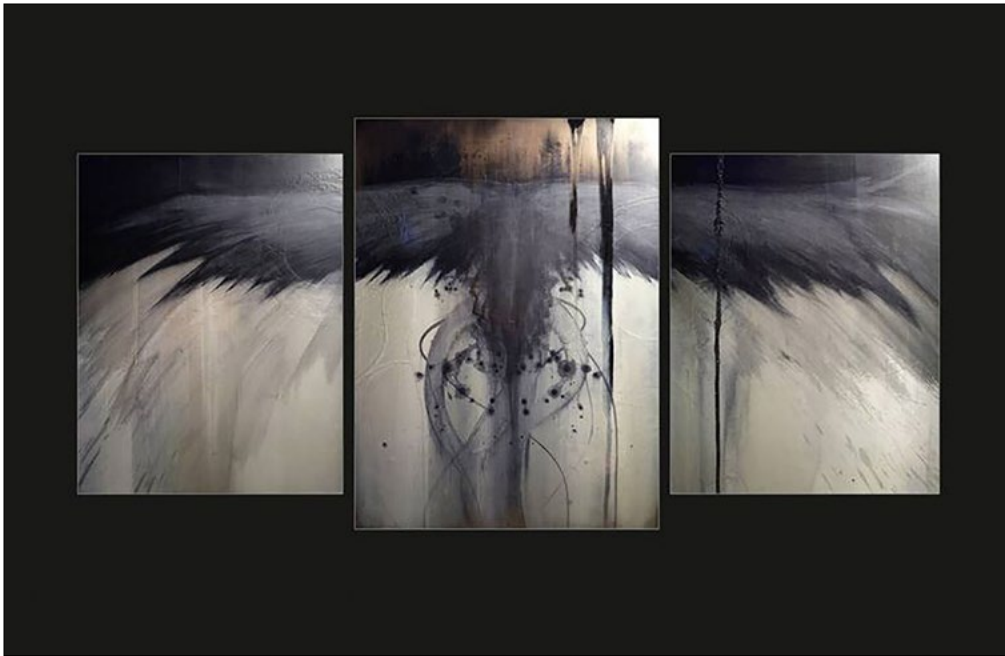
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Kenny Baird

Creative Cree Counterculture Artist

By Robert Ridgway



Triptych 2 Painting by Kenny Baird

Kenny Baird is the deconstructive creator of some of the most startling visual art, props, and costumes.

All three styles once came into play inside of Toronto's infamous, and short lived, Circa Nightclub. He is a man who prefers monologues to simple answers. His mind races, veers off topic, and often has to be prodded back into the confines of the questions asked. This is typical Baird, and pretty much sums up his career, and to an extent his life.

Practicing a radical form of mixed media art, Baird's style is difficult to describe accurately. His drastic departure from the norms, as well as his aversion to both specialization and exclusivity of art, have made him stand out. It got him noticed. Over the course of his career Baird has art directed magazines, music videos, and a nightclub or two. He's worked with design teams on impressive projects like the Maritime Hotel in New York, the Drake Hotel in Toronto, and even costuming for film and television.

EARLY KENNY

Growing up as a child of mixed Cree and white ancestry in rural Canada, his fascination turned to the worlds he viewed on TV.

"As a kid, I was always drawing and painting," he recalls. "It was a way to get people to notice me."

In the 1970s Baird began to get noticed beginning his career by shocking people. Hired by Greg Couillard, owner of The Parrot restaurant in the then desolate Queen Street West neighborhood of Toronto, Baird was brought in to scare off the hippie clientele with his punk rock sensibilities. The restaurant quickly became a centre for the emerging punk art counterculture that was sweeping the city, attracting such personalities as pop artist Andy Warhol, and local artist collective, General Idea.

"Felix A.A. Bronson and Jorge Zontal [of General Idea] would come in to eat [at The Parrot]." Baird recalls. "Jorge always wanted to take my picture. Actually, he really wanted to get me to take my clothes off." Baird obliged.

From this innocent photo session Baird began doing regular work for Art Metropole's File Magazine. While immersing himself in the burgeoning art world, he began working with various artists and musicians such as, The Talking Heads and William S. Burroughs. During all this, Baird was still working at The Parrot and it was here that he met Tom Gluth. Gluth came on board as a guest chef with the objective of opening a similar style restaurant in New York. Baird moved to the Big Apple to help out. Soon after however, Gluth contracted what was then called Gay Related Immune Disease (GRID), now known as AIDS.



Area Nightclub, credit: Newsday / David L. Pokress

"He was case number 135 and died within three weeks of being diagnosed."

NEW YORK KENNY

While in New York, Baird's artistic versatility caught the eye of Canadian Paul LeBlanc who was designing wigs for the principal characters in the film *Amadeus*. As his assistant their designs went on to win the first ever Academy Award for Hair and Makeup.

"Paul never mentioned my name, a thank you, or anything," Baird points out. "That was the first taste I had of being taken advantage of, or at least not being included in something I felt I should have gotten recognition for."

With a bitter taste in his mouth, he decided to pack up his bags and head for Berlin. But fate intervened. Before he left, Baird was introduced to Swi Wasserstein, an investor in a club that was about to open called Area. Area was a new concept in nightlife. It wasn't about rock'n'roll, disco, or any other kind of music. It was about theme-based art installations and performance art. Each theme lasted six weeks, at which point the club was entirely redesigned and rebuilt from wall to wall to suit the incoming concept. Baird was asked to delay his trip and help create some of the displays for the opening.

After his week of assisting, he left Area and New York behind. At least for the next two years. In 1984 he returned to New York to find Area had become a huge success. Baird wanted back in.

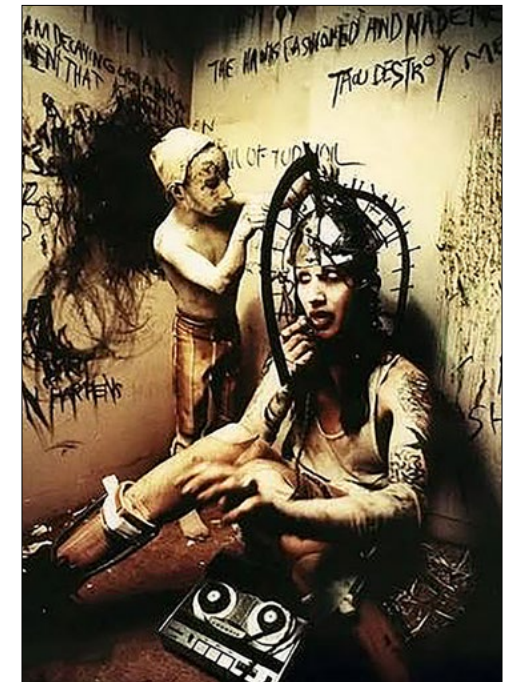
"I managed to crawl my way to the top of Area when I got back," Baird says proudly. "I took on the role of being coordinator and art director and helped to design shows by creating an in-house art workshop. You know I'm a Virgo, I organize shit."

The tidy Baird also had his wild side. This was New York in the early 80s after all.

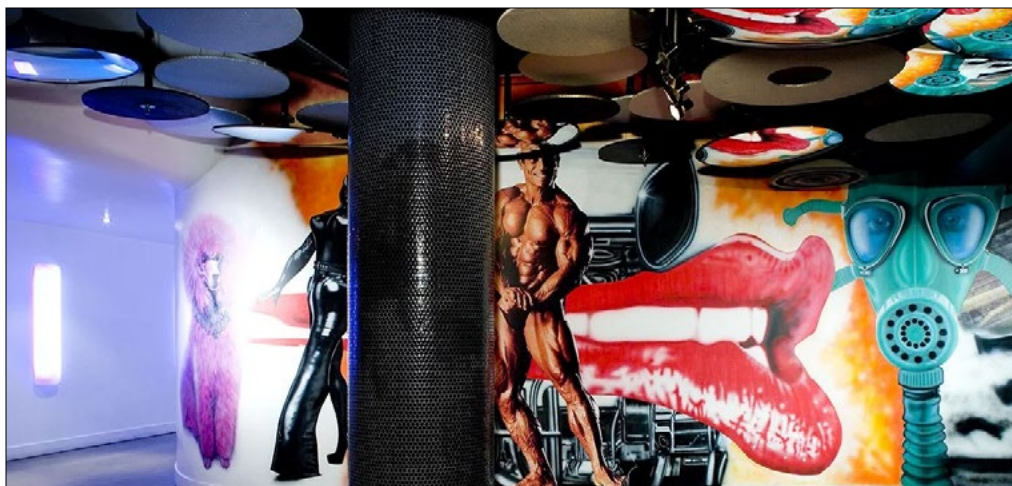
"I was living in an industrial artist neighborhood with my friend Jennifer Good, Jean Michel Basquiat's girlfriend. There was a lot of drugs, a lot of cocaine, and a lot of sexual activity. And of course, the AIDS crisis looming over us and taking people out."

Of the most memorable times that Baird can recall from Area, his favourites revolve around the times the police were called in.

"One of the themes was 'War.' I hired Kembra Fowler, the lead singer of The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black to get a bunch of people to dress in army fatigues and march through the club carrying toy guns. They would walk through the club, out the back door and then run around to the front entrance and march through again. Some neighbors saw people running around carrying guns and thought it was a terrorist attack. They called the cops who hauled in the NYC attack squad, with helicopters, you know full force. They made them [Kembra and the fake army] come out and throw down their plastic machine guns and take off their masks before the attack squad killed us all."



Marilyn Manson props by Baird



Circa

Not surprisingly there were a few times when the authorities did in fact shut down Area down. During a sex theme party there were people having sex in the swimming pool. In another part of the club artist “Karen Finley was in a Peep Show booth shoving candied yams up her ass,” Baird says with a grin. “Harry Kipper [who later married Bette Midler] was crawling around in a rabbit costume with a carrot shoved up his hole. It was too much for some appalled yuppie who had accidentally walked into the club not realizing what he should expect and subsequently the vice squad was called in.”

Like all good things Area came to an end in 1986 and most people who were centered in this creative hub moved onto other careers. It was time for something new. For Baird, it meant switching to costume design. His first job was working on the Saturday morning children's program, Pee Wee's Playhouse. The surreal set and twisted costumes were an appropriate beginning to Baird's career in film and television. In this new medium he was also fortunate to have worked with influential Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini, as well as visual artists Andy Warhol and Basquiat. He would later add music videos for several high-profile musicians to his portfolio. Among them, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie, Lisa Marie Presley, Sarah McLaughlin, Tricky, Robert Plant, Perry Farrell, David Grey, Barry Adamson, Moist, The Crystal Method, The Crash Test Dummies, Wendy Lands, System Of A Down, Nine Inch Nails, Jimmy Page, The Backstreet Boy, and Marilyn Manson. It's impossible to imagine a Manson video without the destroyed, post-industrial environments and menacing mechanical apparatuses, which Baird created for them.

Kenny credits his love of “the architecture of decay,” to the early punk scene. What came out of it for him was “an

appreciation of a different kind of beauty – that of really distorted, really ugly things.” He drew inspiration from the ruins of our current industrial society.

TORONTO KENNY

After all his work in film and a few intermittent design jobs, Baird came full circle when he began working as Art Director for Toronto's short lived, but infamous, Circa Nightclub.

“Oddly enough I had left New York to get away from the political climate and bitching about the place [New York] that I love so much. I figured I'd take a break and come to Toronto and low and behold Peter Gaten [the infamous New York club king] was there opening a nightclub.”

The two coincidentally went to the same high school in Cornwall Ontario. Years later their paths crossed for the first time in New York when Baird did some design work for Gaten's most unusual nightclub at the time, Club USA, which had a two-story slide inside. But Circa, which took almost two years to open because of Gaten's notorious past having been kicked out of the US on charges of tax evasion, brought them together once again.

Gaten was actually charged with (but acquitted of) many offences, including drug trafficking within his four clubs. It was a time when New York politicians had set their sights on what it deemed to be its problematic nightlife scene. Gaten, who owned the three biggest clubs in the city was their major target. It did not help that his major promoter Michael Alig, was found guilty of murdering drug dealer, Andre “Angel” Melendez. This sensational saga would later be made into a movie called, *Party Monster* starring Macaulay Culkin as Alig and Dylan McDermott as Gaten.



Circa

When the club finally did open in 2007, it, for a time, redefined what a club could be. Taking inspiration from Area nightclub which Baird formerly worked at, Circa was an art and installation first space. It changed its theme every six to eight weeks, which required the entire four-storey environment be redesigned from top to bottom. A huge, and expensive, undertaking. But the concept of a 1990s big club in the 2000s Toronto was not feasible, and Circa would close less than three years later in 2010.

Fast forward to Toronto today. Baird has remained in Toronto and has won several awards over his career including, Hnatyshyn REVEAL Indigenous Art Awards, Club World Awards for best club design for Circa, and a JUNO award for Best Album cover for Blue Rodeo's “Lost Together.” His collections can also be viewed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the US Department of Foreign Affairs, and The Smithsonian Institute.

Baird would later team up with his artist sister, Rebecca Baird, for an art installation in Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) called, All My Relations. Another collaborative creation of this brother and sister duo which is currently available for all in the Toronto area (or visitors to it) is a self-guided audio tour of Queen West. Part of Museum of Toronto's Sidewalk Stories program (museuoftoronto.com/collection/punk-creed-cree-metis-on-queen-west-digital-walking-tour/), this unique storytelling tour explores the counterculture of Queen West from 1977 to 1983, seen through the eyes of these two Cree Métis artists. It delves into the history of this tumultuous and flourishing vanguard arts hub as told by the Baird siblings. While walking at your own pace you will hear their contributions to punk, queer, street and magazine subcultures, ground-shifting local music, and



Blue Rodeo album art by Baird

thought-provoking art installations. The Bairds weave you through this radical time, allowing you insight into the many illustrious arts allies and locales they frequented, such as The Cameron House, Toxic Plan 9, Art Metropole, and more.

It is interesting that though much of the work Baird created for various legendary clubs, which are notoriously short lived, are no longer present, it is this current oral history (an indigenous tradition captured in modern digital format) that sheds light on more than his personal past. It is snapshot of Toronto. A Toronto that inspired and shaped the creative journey that Baird was to embark on. A Toronto that Baird would return to.

Robert Ridgway is a multidisciplinary sculptor and installation artist based in Toronto. His practice is socially informed and politically motivated. Through the use of allegorical installations, he uses his art practice to take aim at the social inequities of our society.



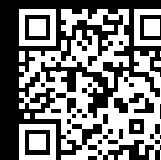


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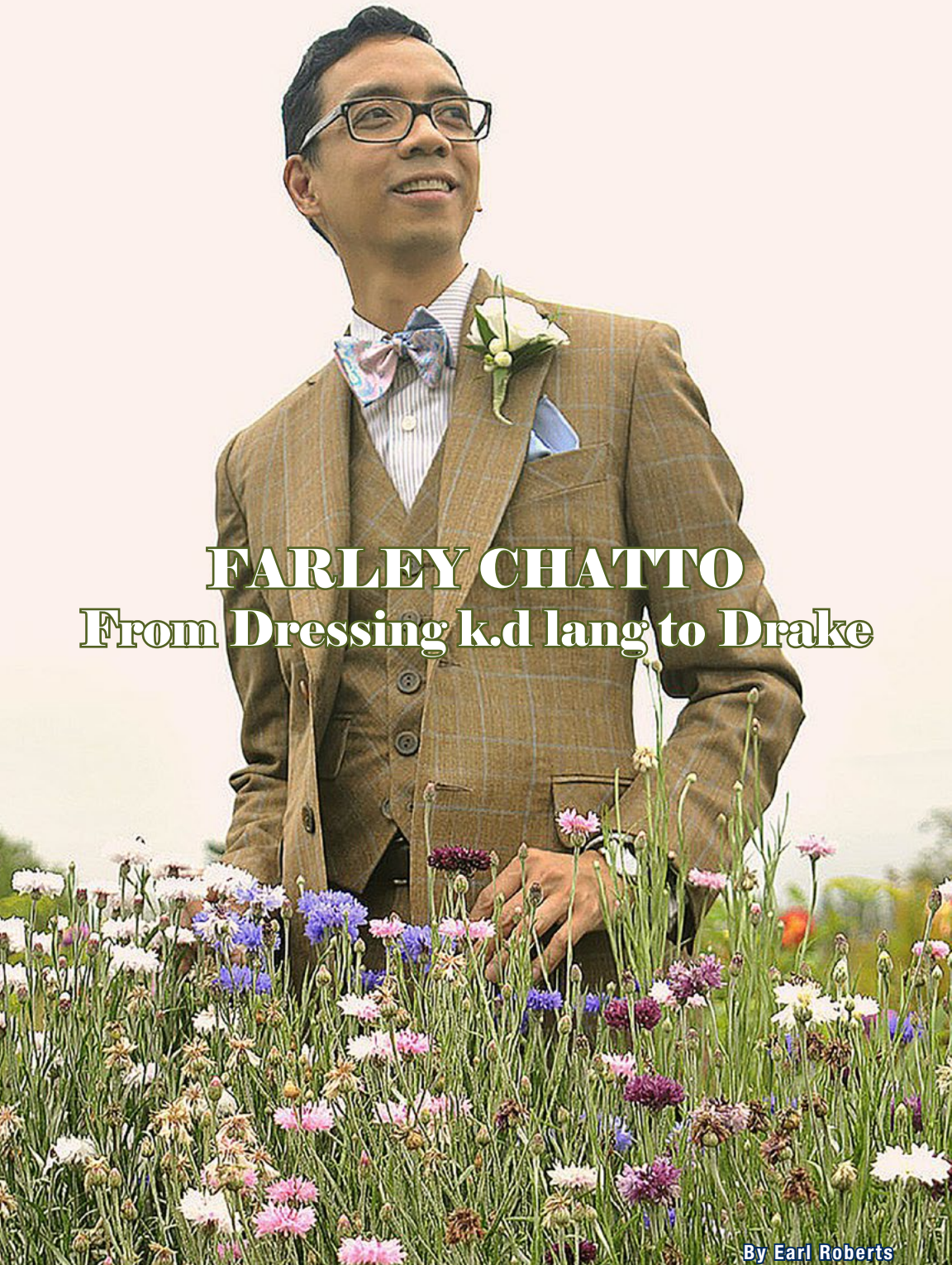
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FARLEY CHATTO

From Dressing k.d lang to Drake

By Earl Roberts

Imagine designing an outfit for a famous, yet difficult singer who just happened to be one of the star performers for 1998's Fashion Cares Beautiful World Tour in Vancouver.

It's very old news, yet fashion designer Farley Chatto is hesitant to divulge the details. With a bit of prodding however he reveals how this lesbian icon acted like anything but a star.

"She ended up not coming in for her fitting," he recalls. "She was drunk that night. Showtime came and she was really strange. She missed her cue, and she almost fell off the runway." What wasn't funny was that Miss k.d. lang – yes "Little Miss Chatelaine" herself – ended up wearing someone else's outfit on stage, not the one that Chatto had designed specifically for her. "Then I never got the outfit back, and I didn't even get a thank-you. She took the outfit and ran."

With [Toronto's Own Fashion Week](#) coming up this May I decide to reconnect with Chatto. The last time I visited his impeccably organized downtown studio, he was busy chatting on the phone with a member of Fashion Cares' intelligencia, Phillip Ing. Now 56, the petite, yet larger than life, Chatto has been designing clothes for 39 years. Trained in the highly regarded fashion program at Ryerson

Polytechnic (now TMU - Toronto Metropolitan University), he is usually a one-man operation, occasionally assisted by assistants and interns.

Originally from Regina, Saskatchewan, Chatto escaped to Toronto in 1987, at the age of 17. As a first-generation Filipino-Canadian, he was strongly inspired by the avant-garde designs of Christian Lacroix – which is surprising since Chatto was considered a very "preppy nerd" known affectionately to his friends in high school as, "The Polo Child" for always wearing Polo by Ralph Lauren.



(A Farley Chatto design- credit: farleychatto.com)



(A Farley Chatto design- credit: farleychatto.com)

Being involved with Fashion Cares back in the day elevated Chatto's profile and allowed him, at that time, the opportunity to dress the likes of Sir Elton John and [actor] Richard Gere. "He tends to be a bit on the demanding side" Chatto said of Gere at the time. "[Celebrities] like everything free. It's all about promotion. If you can take the hit and swallow the cost, it will come back to you."

And it has indeed come back to him. Since that less than stellar experience with lang, Chatto has gone on to create outfits for much bigger and much more receptive stars, like Chris Noth, Duran Duran, Measha Breuggergosman, Eve, Natalie Imbruglia, and rapper Drake. When the Toronto native was in town to celebrate his birthday, Drake hit up Chatto for a unique outfit, made of fur. For Chatto, a long-time designer specializing in luxury fur, and a designer-

in residence at Four Seasons Fur, it was a welcome experience.

“He’s a regular client, we do a lot of work with him,” Chatto revealed.

Taking around one week to create each coat, his fur collection ranges in price from \$4,000 to \$20,000. By working exclusively with Origin Assured (OA) furs, Chatto not only has clients who seek out his luxury designs in Canada, but Hong Kong, London and the Middle East. For the “Gods Plan” rapper, Chatto selected a silver fox fur and Russian broadtail and chinchilla. Drake bought them both and even wore them when he hosted Saturday Night Live.

Chatto’s long established menswear line also has a long list of fashion forward clients who crave his custom designs. His popularity is a result of what he describes as “radical conformist designs,” a tagline that is used since the 1980s. The conformist quality is evident in his use of classical cuts, silhouettes and fits. The radical part comes through in his subtle details that make wearer know that they are special, that they are unique. He tends to mix the feminine with the masculine. Known for detailed embroidery and beadwork, bright linings, extra pockets, and contrasting collars, a Chatto design will get you noticed.

“Men now understand it is okay to represent a softer side of themselves.”

Over the years Chatto has resisted the urge to mass market his line. He enjoys creating custom-made pieces for his clients who tend to be professional men between 35 and 55. “I have many loyal fans that have a fairly good Farley Chatto wardrobe. They work my clothes into their existing wardrobe, and they whore me out like the good Johns they are, when people ask who they’re wearing.”

As well as managing his [Farley Chatto](#) line for almost four decades, the happily married Chatto curated several seasons of the White Cashmere Collection and the Cadbury Chocolate Couture Collection. Both highly anticipated fashion arts marketing events, the former challenged designers to create avante garde runway looks out of bathroom tissue while the latter paired fashion designers with chocolatiers to create runway outfits and garments crafted from real chocolate, cocoa, and wrappers. Chatto has also carved out time to instruct future designers at his alma mater, TMU. Since 2014 he has been an instructor in the School of Fashion, teaching courses focusing on menswear and fur design. And occasionally, he’ll even premier new collections at Toronto’s Own Fashion Week, last showing in 2020.



(credit SNL) DRAKE in a Chatto fur

Chatto’s reputation as a much sought after custom designer have kept him in business for 38 years. And though he worries about the future of fashion for new designers, because of the globalization of fast-fashion, he remains optimistic.

“Students give me a new outlook on life, and they give me new faith,” Chatto said of teaching. “As I challenge them, they challenge me to challenge my design aesthetic and push it even further.”

Earl Roberts is lover of fashion who quietly stalks the front rows of Toronto fashion shows searching for the best of the buzz.






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WIGGED OUT

BY SANJINA DABISH QUEEN

Sanjina Wins With Sobriety



Being on *Canada's Drag Race* Season 5 was one of the most surreal and affirming experiences of my life. There's something powerful about stepping into a space where you are celebrated every single day, not just for what you do, but for who you are. As a trans woman, as a Fijian baddie, and as an artist, that kind of environment is rare. And when you finally get it, you realize just how transformative it can be.

I had felt a glimpse of that before when I competed on *Call Me Mother* (another reality TV drag competition.) That experience gave me a break from reality, a world where drag was the focus, where creativity was everything, and where I could exist fully as myself. But *Drag Race* was on another level. It felt like being in a bubble where all that mattered was your artistry, your presence, and your story.

One of the most special parts of my journey was competing alongside my drag mother, Virgo Queen. That wasn't just coincidence, that was manifestation. I had said it out loud years before that I would be on Season 5, and that I would do it with Virgo. And it happened. Being able to share that moment with her meant everything to me. It was bigger than competition, it was family, legacy, and proof that speaking your dreams into existence is real.

Although my time on the show was short, I don't see it as an ending. I see it as unfinished business. At the time, I

was coming from a lifestyle that didn't fully support my growth. I was partying heavily, drinking, and using a lot of cocaine, and I was still navigating a lot within myself. That energy followed me into the competition, and I felt it impact my journey. But growth doesn't stop when the cameras do.

Whether you're cisgender or transgender, womanhood is a journey of self-discovery and growth. I was born and raised in Surrey, British Columbia. Without a large queer community in my hometown, I never had the chance to explore my identity as a young person. Even though I was outed as a teenager. In the eighth grade, a family friend started a rumour at my school, telling other students that I was gay. Despite this causing endless bullying, I never denied the accusations, and I identified as a gay man for years before coming out as transgender around age 30.

My realization about my true identity came while I was a contestant on *Call Me Mother*. While reading a book about Hinduism and attempting to reconnect with the religion I was raised in, I had an awakening. In Hinduism, being queer is a very big, powerful thing. Trans women especially were known to be Demi-Gods. It suddenly dawned on me that I've been a woman all my life. My soul was a woman, and I felt like I came into my truth in that moment and finally realized who I was.

Today, I'm sober and I've stepped into a clearer, stronger version of myself. I'm also embracing my transition more fully, being on hormone therapy and truly aligning with who I am meant to be. I feel grounded, focused, and powerful in a way I've never experienced before.

I've already gone through many journeys, but when I say I'm not done, I mean it. I'm coming back as Sanjina 2.0. Elevated, evolved, and ready.

Sanjina DaBish Queen is Toronto's Sweetheart and the Bollywood Queen of Canada. A proud Fijian trans woman, who rose to national fame on *Canada's Drag Race* Season 5 and continues to use her platform to uplift and represent her community.



HER SPACE

Kijiji and Me

BY AMY PEARL


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millennial lesbians loved so much back in the early 2000s. She's probably wearing skinny jeans. She might have on a plaid shirt thrown loosely over a white tank top. If we meet in her house, she will have on Birkenstocks or Crocs. I also think she has at least two tattoos.

I set off with my friend – always travel to a seller's home with a companion for security reasons – plus furniture is heavy! Up her steps we prance. Chris greets us, in a red plaid shirt over not a white, but dark blue shirt. Skinny jeans hang well over her stocky frame. Blue Crocs over bright blue socks cradle her feet. She's sporting dark brown Bieber-locks, but I'm not able to tell if she has any tattoos. So far Chris is what I expect.

I flirt, asking what she does for a living.

"I was working as an accounts manager," she says. I'm surprised, assuming she worked more with her hands. But she's just left her job and is on her way to Vancouver in the hopes of pursuing her true passion, house-flipping. This makes more sense.

Though she is flying off within the week, maybe we can still have a long-distance relationship. In any case, I want that ottoman to stay in Toronto with me. Maybe we can share custody. It's smaller than I thought and ask to get it for less. I'm all about the deal. It works. I get it for \$50. Hagglng and schmoozing are second nature to me. I also score her Instagram and e-mail.

As Chris helps shove it into my trunk, her left sleeve rolls up revealing two small tattoos. I smile, knowing I've made a new friend who I already feel like I've known for ages. Who needs Bumble when Kijiji offers the same thing, plus something to rest my feet on?

I'm a girl on the go. What am I using to furnish my abode? No Ikea, no Facebook Marketplace, no Walmart. I get online and cruise the goods on Kijiji. Little did I know I could also use this wild website to not only spruce up my apartment but freshen up my love life. Or at least add to my friend group.

"Hi," I gush into the receiver to the seller on the other end. "I'm looking at your beautiful, brown leather ottoman that's going to jazz up my room." As soon as I hear the voice my mind goes into overdrive. This baddie is a lesbian. I can work this. I begin plotting how to use my feminine wiles to get this \$100 furniture accessory for \$50, and maybe make a new friend.

"So, what's your name?" Chris (very androgenous) she answers. From listening to her I'm going to give my interpretation of what they look like. Drum roll please. Based on her slightly butch voice, she has either short black or brown hair, maybe spikey, maybe with frosted blonde tips. Or maybe that Bieber combover thing that

Amy Pearl is a straight, long-time ally of Toronto's queer community. As an avid writer of pop culture and a former rapper who has performed throughout Toronto and New York as Miss Butter. She has been embraced by all scenes, from late-night queer after-parties to Church Street hangouts.



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Is David's Disco this generation's Fashion Cares?



No, the two are completely different beasts. But David's Disco, within three short years is quickly making a name for itself among Toronto's gala event world and fundraising circles. The difference is in their names. While the beast that was Fashion Cares raised money for AIDS charities through an extravagant night of fashion presentation, David's Disco does the same, but through a glittering night of disco expression.

Honorary co-chairs Sir Elton John and David Furnish alongside new co-chair fashion legend Jeanne Beker and philanthropist Paul M. Austin helped shape this year's annual event, inspired by the life of David Shannon, a passionate activist and journalist who passed away at Casey House in 2018.

Casey House, founded by activist June Callwood 38 years ago, is a specialty hospital in Toronto, provides groundbreaking care to people living with and at risk of HIV. Offer a growing mix of inpatient, outpatient and community-based services it is Canada's first and only hospital of this kind. On October 25, 1991, the late Princess Diana

visited Casey House. She made international headline during this visit because people were shocked to see photos of her hugging and holding the hands with residents without gloves. She did this because of her well-known compassion, but this act challenged the stigma and public hysteria surrounding the transmission of AIDS at the time.

At \$250 a ticket, the open bar event, held at The Concert Hall at Yonge and Bloor raises critical funds for Casey House AIDS hospice. Last year the event raised \$545 000. It's an incredible amount for a one-night event that also relies on the generous donations of sponsors like design firm, Yabu Pushelberg, who spared no expense in turning the space into shiny silver fantasy land, and a team of passionate volunteers, who ensured guests enjoyed the night.

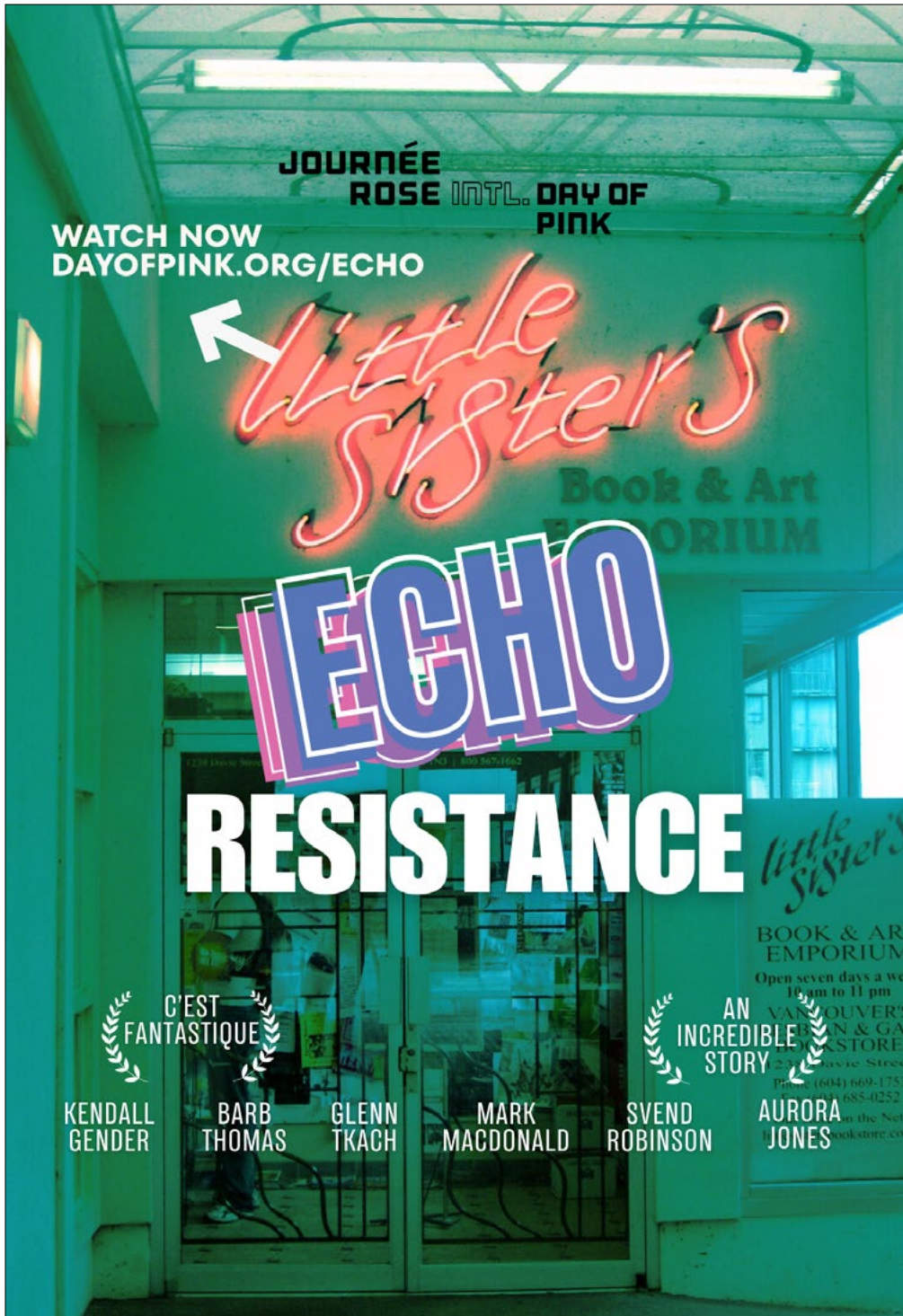
This year was my first time attending and it took me back to the glory days of Fashion Cares. I danced through the two-floor event, bumping into many people that I haven't been around in years like Jeannie Beker, Bill Coulter, David Dixon, Elio Iannucci, and Glenn Dixon. This year was their



best turnout and included an impressive selection of silent auction goods and interactive activations on the second floor. The huge dance floor overflowing with beautiful people thankfully dressed in theme, was overseen by DJ Phill and his gaggle of delicious disco go-go dudes. Performances by Canada's Drag Race host Brooke Lynn Hytes and Kylie Sonique Love of Rupaul's Drag Race were electrifying, but it was the surprise three song set by Canadian dance music diva Simone Denny that took the event to another level. The space came together, and it was a like the legendary Studio 54, where tonight, everyone was a superstar, and everyone fashionably cared.

Jamaican-born Rolyn Chambers grew up in the suburbs of Mississauga, before attending *Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD University)*. In 2001, he began his *Deep Dish* column with *fab Magazine*, which ran for a full decade, allowing him to interview everyone from clubbers and promoters, to celebrities and politicians. *Deep Dish* has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. Chambers is also the author of, *The Boy Who Brought Down A Bathhouse*, available on Amazon. IG @rahhrolynn







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Kelly Clipperton

Photo: Jennifer Rowsom



2024 and a two-week run at Factory Theatre in March 2025. The show is currently being developed into a film and I've been writing a new album, my first in 12 years, expected in the spring of 2026.

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

KC - Being on stage performing every night for the first time in decades was a real thrill. It's like I never stopped, and the nightly responses, both tearful and full of laughter, fueled me.

BK - That sounds amazing. What are you looking forward to next year?

CK - With the album coming out in April I'm excited about the possibility of performing live again as a musician.

BK - That's really a great feeling. Where can we see your work?

CK - www.kellyclipperton.ca

BK - Future plans?

CK - I feel I've turned the switch back on creatively. If the film plans pan out, I imagine that once I've launched the album, I'll be focusing on that.

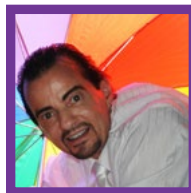
BK - Best of luck with both. Finish this sentence for us. My five favourite albums right now are...

CK - Pet Shop Boys - Actually Agnes - Magic Still Exists
Siouxie & The Banshees - Peepshow
Jesse Ware - That! Feels Good
The Vaccines - What Did You Expect?...

I AM YOUR DISTRACTION is the album title. It drops April 24th. Kelly and band will be playing their first live show in 12 years at The Drake Underground on May 21st at 7pm.

Tickets at www.KellyClipperton.ca

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



Toronto based Renaissance Man **Kelly Clipperton** returns to Toronto stages with a sold out cabaret and a new album release!

Kelly Clipperton has built a unique career in the performing, recording and visual arts in Toronto for 40 years. Since graduating from York University's BFA program in Theatre, he has worked as a producer, songwriter, playwright, singer, designer, actor, stylist, photographer, filmmaker and former PSW.

Kelly's work has landed him on the covers of [NOW](#), [eye](#), [Xtra!](#), [Capital Xtra!](#), [The Toronto Star](#), [The Globe and Mail](#), [Boom](#), [Prairie Dog](#), [Windsor Star](#), [Fab](#), and [Out](#).

His band Kelly & The Kellygirls released seven recordings between 2004 and 2014, toured Canada, UK and The United States and achieved indie chart success with the singles [Catherine Deneuve and the Deus Ex Machina](#), [Better Times](#), and [Vodka + Cynicism](#).

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

Kelly Clipperton - My one-man-lady-cabaret show "*Let's Assume I Know Nothing And Move Forward From There*", received praise and ovation at two sold out nights in May



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PINK LIGHT STAGE



When one is producing an entertainment event in Toronto, one would think finding a great venue would be simple. The problem is finding a venue that is moderately sized, licensed for alcohol sales, accessible, and affordable. Or that was the problem, until now. Now, you can look at Pink Light Stage.

In 2009, after searching unsuccessfully for over three years for the community she needed so desperately, Robyn Kay decided to move from New York City to Toronto, to create it. By starting Robyn Kay Studio in 2013, she began teaching Meisner Technique Acting classes that are transformational in igniting instincts and raising the stakes for actors, and truly anyone with a heart. Her class teaches each student to put a voice to the deepest truth of self and find strength in vulnerability, taking risks and giving up being liked in favour of finding where one absolutely belongs. Because a performance space was needed to bring these private moments into the public eye, she started Pink Light Stage in 2018.

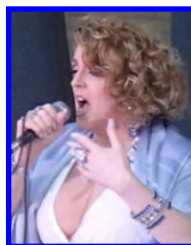
Pink Light Stage is a boutique theatre space on Bathurst Street, just north of Queen Street West, in downtown Toronto. Named the Pink Light for unconditional love, this space consists of zero judgement; they are queer-friendly, fully accessible, and welcoming to all artists, weirdos and cool creatives alike. A creative space for full expression of the deepest truth, for classes, art exhibits, acoustic music, meetings and gatherings, meditations and poetry readings, or a plethora of other creative endeavours you may want to contribute to the world. Toronto is a cold city, and Pink

Light Stage invites you to come bathe in their pink light for warmth, acceptance, and the encouragement to take risks in art, life, and love.

Pink Light Stage is a modular 45-seat performance space catering to the needs of your performance or meeting. A barebones black box theatre, seats and stage location can be moved around the space to create the performance space of your dreams. A Yamaha upright piano, two microphones, two 8-inch Yorkville speakers, and an 8-channel board, completes the space. It is a fully accessible, with a fully licensed bar and cafe available upon demand. Snacks and drinks can be tailored to your desires. Despite the capacity, the space and neighbourhood however are not appropriate to significantly amplified music. Raves? Not suggested. Everything else is in the pink.

202 Bathurst St, Toronto, ON M6K 1Y1
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 416-312-9188 (texting is best)

Events Editor, 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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By Sherry Sylvain

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Grammy Award-winning composer Eric Whitacre's *The Sacred Veil* is a deeply personal meditation on love, loss, and healing. Written with poet Charles Anthony Silvestri, it tells the true story of Silvestri's wife, Julie, who passed away from ovarian cancer at 36.

Metropolitan United Church • 31 Bond St., Toronto
www.tmchoir.org/event/the-sacred-veil/

Danilo Perez, John Patitucci, and Brian Blade

April 25 • 8PM

The rhythm section of Wayne Shorter's legendary quartet kick off the night and then join a Toronto big band featuring Canadian saxophone icon Jane Bunnett and award-winning vocalist April May Webb for the premiere of Pérez's new work, *The Panáfrica Suite: Echoes from the Isthmus*.

Koerner Hall • 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto
www.rcmusic.com/

The Magnificent Mazowsze

April 29 • 8PM

Founded in 1948, Mazowsze has become one of the largest and most celebrated ensembles of its kind in the world, performing music, dance, and tradition that brings Poland's cultural heritage vividly to life.

Meridian Hall • 1 Front St., Toronto
www.ticketmaster.ca/

Snow White On Ice

May 9 • 11AM

A live, theatrical ice-skating production, featuring, in some productions, Olympic Champion Eric Radford, combining skating, aerial acts, and visual storytelling.

Meridian Hall • 1 Front St., Toronto
www.ticketmaster.ca/



Dragonette with Tiny Sun

May 14 • 7PM

Pop singer-songwriter Dragonette, film composer Jonathan Goldsmith, and The Henrys frontman Don Rooke put their distinctive musical backgrounds together to form a genre-blurring trio united by the playful constraint of crafting songs under two minutes.

Koerner Hall • 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto
www.rcmusic.com/

Thee Phantom & The Illharmonic Orchestra

May 15 • 8PM

When was the last time you witnessed; strings, horns and piano at a Hip-Hop concert? Add to that, a party-rocking DJ, a soul-stirring female vocalist and a fire-breathing MC and that is still but a fraction of what you'll see when you catch Thee Phantom & The Illharmonic Orchestra in action!

Roy Thomson Hall • 60 Simcoe St., Toronto
roythomsonhall.mhrth.com/tickets/the-illharmonic-orchestra/



Evgeny Kissin

May 27 • 8PM

Evgeny Kissin's musicality, the depth and poetic quality of his interpretations, and his extraordinary virtuosity have earned him the veneration and admiration deserved only by one of the most gifted classical pianists of his generation.

Roy Thomson Hall • 60 Simcoe St., Toronto
roythomsonhall.mhrth.com/tickets/evgeny-kissin/



An Evening of Hope and Harmony

May 26 • 6PM

A gala inspired by Hope and Harmony - an evening filled with inspiration, celebration and joyful connection with others who share the same belief in providing hope and help to those living with kidney disease.

Palais Royale Ballroom • 1601 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Toronto
kidney.akaraisin.com/ui/ongala26/tickets

Taylor Swift Video Tribute Night

May 30 • 7PM

Please note this is a spectacular audio/video tribute theme show, with no artist participation or live music component. All audio and video parts are licensed and legal for public presentation. All ages. No cover.

The Cat's Cradle • 1245 St. Clair Ave W., Toronto
www.eventbrite.ca/e/taylor-swift-video-tribute-night-in-toronto-the-life-of-a-showgirl-tickets-1830994887999



Resurrection: Mahler 2

June 6 • 7:30PM

To close the season, Orchestra Toronto performs one of the most ambitious and transcendent works in the orchestral repertoire: Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*, the "Resurrection."

Meridian Arts Centre • George Weston Theatre, 5040 Yonge St., Toronto
www.ticketmaster.ca

ROAD TRIPS

Sister Act

April 16 to 19 • evenings and matinees

When disco diva Deloris Van Cartier witnesses a crime, she hides in the last place anyone would look — a convent. Disguised as a nun, she shakes things up with her powerhouse voice and unstoppable energy, turning a struggling choir into a sensation.

The Rose Theatre • 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton
tickets.brampton.ca/Online

Karaoke

Thursdays • 8PM to midnight

No cover. Whether you're an award winning vocalist, a show-tune aficionado, or just enjoy a great time, with great music, and great friends, this karaoke night is for you!

Club 717 • 717 Wilson Rd. S., Oshawa
www.club717.com/





BUZZPICKS

By Sherry Sylvain

Spiritual Circle

Last Sunday of each month • 2PM to 4PM

Discover a warm, grounding space where spirituality, community, and personal exploration come together. Our monthly Spiritual Circle invites people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences to gather, reflect, and explore their faith in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Club 717 • 717 Wilson Rd. S., Oshawa

www.club717.com/



Etsy Waterloo Spring Market

April 25 • 10AM to 4PM

You'll find home decor, pottery, jewellery, clothing, food, art, things for your four-legged friends, bath and body products, and more.

RIM Park • 2001 University Ave. E., Waterloo

www.etsywaterlooregion.com/

Step Afrika

April 30 • 8PM

The first professional dance company dedicated to the tradition of stepping, a percussive and highly energetic art form created by African American fraternities and sororities. Step Afrika! brings the stage to life with rhythm and storytelling.

Centre In The Square • 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener

centreinthesquare.com

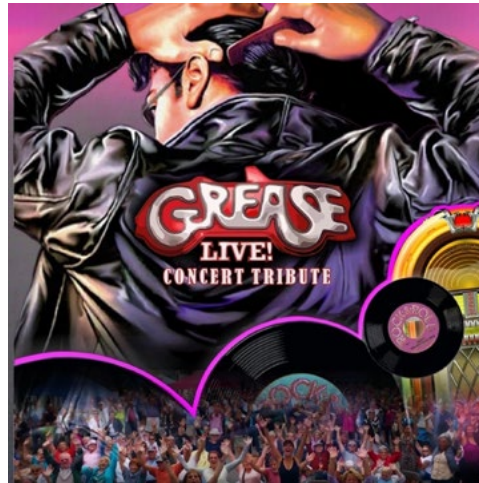
Reel Thursdays

May 14 • 7PM

With its fierce intelligence and thoughtful take on masculinity and race, Youngblood is a far cry from most sports movies. Conditioned by his father Blane (Blair Underwood) to match any slight with a greater show of aggression, Dean Youngblood (Ashton James) is a player whose potential for greatness is stymied by his volatility.

Living Arts Centre • 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga

www.ticketmaster.ca/



Grease and The Music of The 50s and 60s

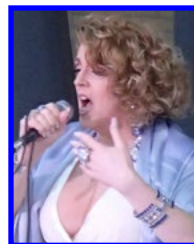
May 23 • 7:30PM

An all-Canadian live concert production featuring talented singers, actors, and comedians performing hit songs from the film "Grease" alongside classic rock and roll tunes. This energetic show features multimedia video and covers hits like "Summer Nights," "Greased Lightnin'," and "Born to Hand Jive," evoking a nostalgic era of soda pop and drive-ins.

Pickering Casino Resort • 888 Durham Live Ave., Pickering

www.ticketmaster.ca/

Events Editor, 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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