# BUZZworthy

Issue 2 · Holiday 2025



# LIGHT, JOY & LOCAL GIFTS

Celebrating our queer-inclusive holiday season

HOW TO ENTERTAIN INCLUSIVELY + more





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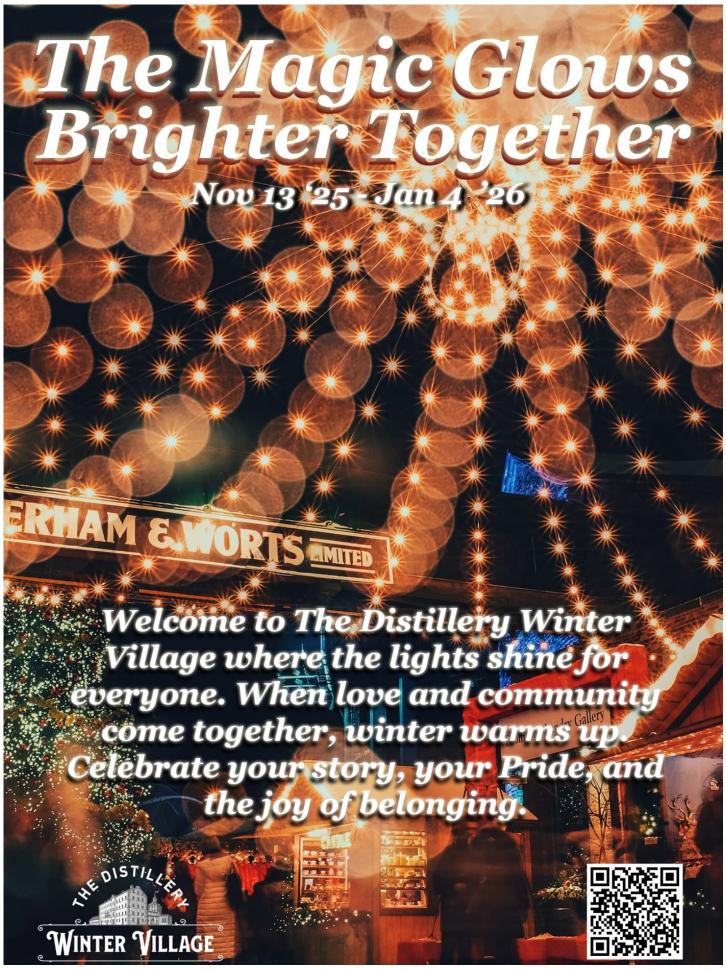


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#### Seasonal Cheer

As the year winds down and the nights grow longer, we find ourselves surrounded by light — from candles in windows to strings of bulbs brightening our streets. That light is more than decoration; it's a reminder of connection, community, and the joy of being together.

This second annual BUZZworthy is a celebration of that spirit. Inside, you'll find inspiration for thoughtful gifts, stories about joy and togetherness, and plenty of reminders of why supporting local businesses matters. Every advertiser, every maker, and every voice in these pages is part of what keeps our community vibrant.

The holidays mean different things to different people, and here at BUZZworthy, we embrace them all. However you celebrate — whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Yule, Diwali, or simply a season of rest — we wish you joy, warmth, and peace.

On behalf of our team, I want to thank you — our readers, advertisers, and supporters — for being part of this journey. You are the reason we get to keep telling stories and shining a light on the people and businesses that make our community extraordinary. From our family to yours: happy holidays, and here's to a bright and hopeful 2026. With gratitude,

Antoine Elhashem Publisher, BUZZworthy Publisher + Creative Director
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Light shows up in winter in a million ways — in the flicker of a candle, a string of bulbs across a balcony, the first spark of a bonfire. It's something we notice without even thinking: it makes the cold feel warmer, the night feel shorter, and the world feel a little kinder.

Across traditions — Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, Kwanzaa, Yule, Eid— people use light to mark celebrations. But this isn't about the rules or history. It's about what light does: it gathers people, sparks conversation, and somehow always manages to carry hope.

#### **Light in Different Lives**

Some people find it in ritual, others in creativity.

- A Christmas tree might be the reason someone finally invites friends over after months of staying in.
- Lighting the menorah might become a quiet moment to check in with family far away.

 A Yule log or a Kwanzaa candle can become a way to pause, reflect, and remember what matters most.

"Light at a time of year when darkness prevails both in the skies and in the world signals the presence of the divine. For 2SLGBTQ+ it means the current attacks on our community are just a moment in our history and will pass. We have overcome and we will overcome because we are created in love and for love. Be the light the world hungers for",

Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo, CM (She/Her)

"Al-Nur – The Light - is one of the 99 Most Beautiful Names of God, traditional Islamic vehicles to intimacy with the Divine. The nightly prayers of Prophet Muhammad, peace & blessings upon him, included him asking: Oh Allah! Grant me Light in my heart.... and Light within myself; increase my Light. I use light imagery in my services physically through candles and lights.







I see our Yalda candles, Diwali Dias and Christmas lights as external reminders of the Light within us."

El-Farouk Khaki (He/Him)

At the beginning of Genesis, the Jewish world reads *God declared, 'Let there be light'* – not merely the physical light of sun and stars, but the spiritual radiance by which darkness is banished.

Mid-October saw a glimmer of light as peace found a way into the Middle East. Just as that light brought order and sanctity to our world, so too the lights of Hanukkah kindle hope and resilience in our lives.

Rabbi Steven Wise, Shaarei-Beth El Congregation in Oakville

These are small gestures, but they ripple outward. Light in winter is about presence: showing up, even in little ways, and noticing when others show up too.

#### **Bringing Light Into Your Season**

You don't need a holiday to light something. You just need the intent. Try:

- Lighting a candle at the table while everyone eats even on a random Tuesday.
- Hanging a few strings of lights outside, just to make the street feel alive.
- Hosting a gathering where everyone contributes a small glowing element: lanterns, fairy lights, or even a candle they can hold.
- Lighting one for someone you miss, someone you love, or something you hope for in the year ahead.

The act of lighting isn't just decoration — it's connection."

#### Why It Matters

Light is simple, and yet it's transformative. Across traditions, across homes, across lives, it reminds us we're not alone. Whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Yule, Aid or your own personal ritual, light is an invitation: come in, feel warmth, be seen, and see others.

Happy Holidays to all those who celebrate, and peace and love to everyone.

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For BUZZworthy readers you can pickup a \$100 certificate for \$90 by ordering via email promo@downtowncamera.com
or shop online at www.downtowncamera.com



Zechariah Hockridge



PHOTOGRAPHY

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Holiday gatherings don't need to be stressful — or expensive. At their best, they're simply about creating a space where people feel welcome. Whether you're hosting a dinner, a casual get-together, or a dance-all-night party, the spirit of the season is about connection.

#### **Setting the Scene**

Every party starts long before the guests arrive. It begins with the hum of music, the glow of light, the quiet satisfaction of preparing a space that says: you're welcome here.

**Think sensory.** Light a few candles or drape string lights across the room. Add something that smells inviting — cinnamon sticks, citrus slices, or even a spritz of your favourite perfume in the air.

Layer your atmosphere. Start with calm music while guests trickle in, then shift the tempo as laughter fills the room. Keep a little space for dancing — even if it's between the couch and the coffee table.

**Create connection points.** A shared activity — decorating cookies, pulling cards from a gratitude deck, or just making a toast — turns a good evening into a memorable one.

#### Let's Have a Kiki

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**Festive Flavours Around the Table**. Think easy dishes and drinks inspired by different cultures:

A warm lentil stew with a squeeze of lemon, a batch of cookies to share, a pot of mulled cider or mint tea — small traditions that travel well between cultures and bring everyone to the same table.

**Sip, Share, Repeat.** Think lighter, party-friendly drink ideas:

A glittery punch bowl, sparkling water with pomegranate seeds, hot cocoa with a twist of chili — festive drinks that work whether you're sipping or celebrating.

Holiday 2025

**Small Plates, Big Joy**. Food brings connection, think of keeping it simple:

Think finger foods and shared bites — dips, spreads, skewers, and sweets. Make it easy for guests to nibble and mingle without fussing over a formal meal (unless you want to throw together a 5 course dinner like this writer likes to do.)

*Traditions with a Twist.* Think bout blending different backgrounds, cultures, or family habits — everyone adds their flavour:

One guest brings a dish from their childhood, another brings their favourite playlist — that's how new traditions start. hot cocoa with a twist of chili — festive drinks that work whether you're sipping or celebrating.

#### **Artist Voices: How We Party**

BUZZworthy reached out to The Q Musicale music festival and asked a few artists from their roster how they'd throw a party and what makes it special

"The best parties always have the right mix of people — I try to balance strong friendships with new connections to really make sparks fly. Having activities is important, but also giving guests free reign to mingle and mix gives everyone room to have fun."

Nuepa (Listen to Nuepa'a latest single "Over+Over", streaming everywhere.)

"My best party? Would be in a big lodge or resort in the woods, with my family, close friends, and musical colleagues, with a roaring fire and lots of music!! The menu might start with oysters and champaign, and move to some less traditional holiday fare. The whole theme would speak to appreciation and gratitude, for community and collaboration. There might even be separate cabins and maybe a studio available."

Elana Harte (Elana recently dropped two singles as part of The Sling Sisters "Nightcap" and "Dreaming", both part of their upcoming album "What I Hope to Find". Available everywhere.)

"The best parties are the parties where the most marginalized feel safe and appreciated. When I organize events, I make sure to always uplift the artists and DJs involved, and provide an environment where people aren't just having fun but are also feeling empowered."

Blxck Cxsper (Cxsper is currently working on a royalty free music platform featuring marginalized voices called the Free Sound Project http://www.freesoundproject.com)







### **BUZZworthy Picks: Music & Movies for the Season**

Whether you're throwing a cozy dinner, a queeras-hell house party, or curling up with something warm, here's a mix of music and movies that keep the energy joyful and inclusive.

#### Music Classic holiday tracks that still sparkle

- "Last Christmas" Wham!
- "All I Want for Christmas Is You" Mariah Carey
- "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" Brenda Lee
- "Santa Tell Me" Ariana Grande Queer holiday gems
- "Holiday" Lil Nas X
- "Make You Mine This Season" Tegan and Sara (from Happiest Season)
- "Christmas Without You" Kat Cunning
- "Chosen Family" Rina Sawayama feat.
   Elton John
- "Fa La La" Todrick Hall

#### Feel-good pop and dance-floor favourites

- A mix of feel-good pop from artists like Lizzo, Robyn, Dua Lipa, Harry Styles, Troye Sivan, and Kim Petras
- "Padam Padam" Kylie Minogue
- "Born This Way" Lady Gaga
- "Dancing Queen" ABBA
- "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" Whitney Houston

#### Playlists to queue up now

- Queer Christmas Gay Times (Apple Music)
- New Queer Holiday Cheer Spotify
- 70 Big Gay Chrisma Songs—Curated by OUT Magazine, on Spotify

#### For winding down late at night

 Choose between Norah Jones, Sade, Sam Smith, Brandi Carlile

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#### Movies Holiday comfort classics

• Some of this writers favourites: Elf, Home Alone, The Holiday, and Love Actually

#### Queer-centred holiday films

- Happiest Season (2020) Kristen Stewart's gueer Christmas staple
- The Christmas Setup (Lifetime, 2020) small-town love story between real-life husbands
- The Holiday Sitter (Hallmark, 2022) Hallmark's first gay-led Christmas movie
- Under the Christmas Tree (Lifetime, 2021)
   sweet ad sapphic
- Round and Round—A Hanukah time-loop comedy with a few queer sparkles
- Friends and Family Christmas (Hallmark, 2023) a soft lesbian holiday romance
- Make the Yuletide Gay (2009) the original queer Christmas rom-com
- The Christmas House & The Christmas
   House 2 holiday films with gay couples at
   the heart

- The Bitch Who Stole Christmas drag, camp, and chaos
- The Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night a queer Muslim short that shines

#### Comfort viewing with queer vibes:

• For me it is The Birdcage, To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything!, Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Julie & Julia, Amélie, Pitch Perfect, Mamma Mia!

#### It's About Connection

The best gatherings aren't about perfection. They're about atmosphere, laughter, and the people you share them with. This season, whether your party is a big night out or a small dinner at home, keep it simple, keep it welcoming, and most of all — make it joyful.

#### **Enjoy the party!**



# for the indulgence seekers



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# For the lover of good food & Drinks



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A delicious box of 6 different nuts by Jewels under the kilt. Wow your friends and family with a selection like their red kilt pictured here . Maple pecan, Chipotle pecan, Cinnamon walnut, pear ginger walnut, chocolate hazelnut and espresso hazelnut.

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Gift cards are available in any amount and can be used across all Gusto 54 restaurants.

www.gusto54.com





Holiday 2025

#### The Story Behind the Ribbon

Think back to a gift that mattered to you. Chances are it wasn't the priciest thing you ever unwrapped. Maybe it was a book with a note scribbled inside, or a mug that only makes sense between you and the person who gave it. What made it special wasn't the object. It was the thought, the intimacy, the "I see you."

That's the heart of gifting.

#### **Beyond the Gift Box**

The most joyful gifts often aren't things at all.

- A friend who cooked dinner when you were too tired to care for yourself.
- A partner who surprised you with a playlist that still lives on your phone years later.
- A child handing you a drawing with more love than skill, but you taped it to the fridge anyway.

These moments remind us that gifts don't have to be expensive, elaborate, or wrapped in glittery paper. They just have to mean something.





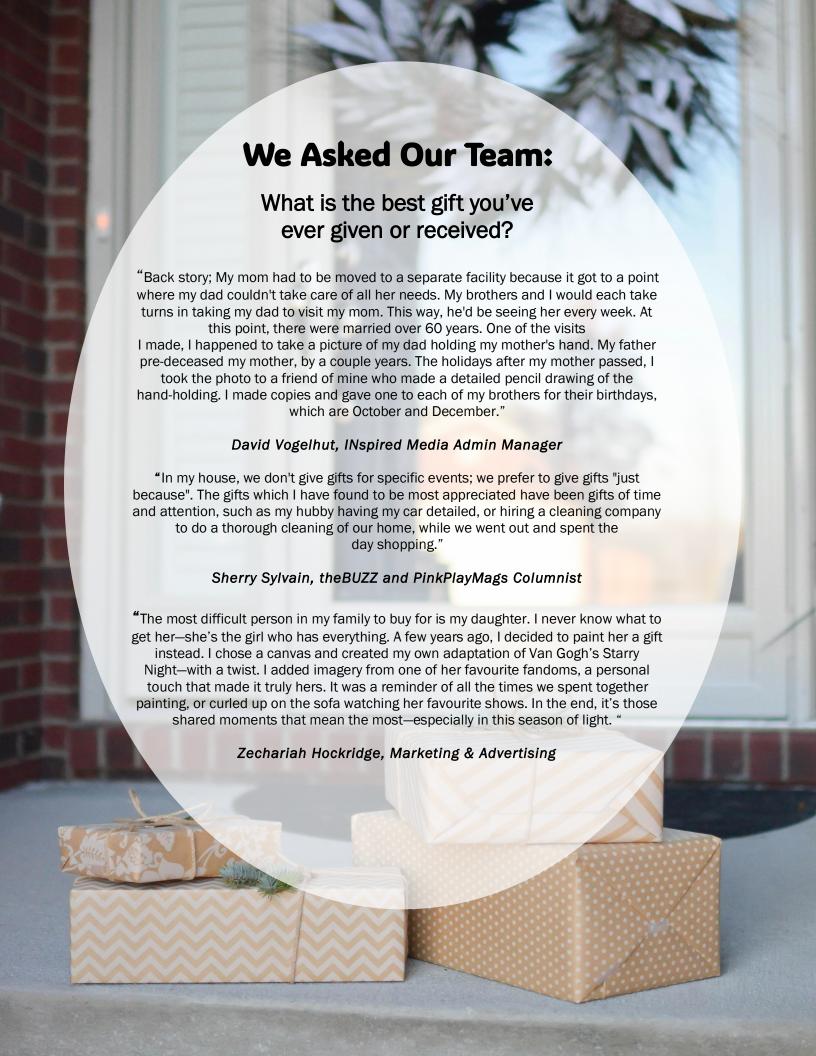
#### **Bringing Joy Back to Gifting**

If shopping feels like a chore, maybe it's time to reset. Here are a few ways to lean into the joy of gifting this year:

- Write it down. A heartfelt card can mean more than anything you buy.
- Share yourself. Bake, craft, record a song, or offer your skills those gifts stay with people.
- Give experiences. Tickets, dinners, or even just a planned day together can outlast any box.
- Don't forget you. Self-gifting isn't selfish. Sometimes the best way to spread joy is to feel it yourself first.

#### It's All About Connection

At its best, gifting isn't about obligation. It's about joy exchanged — the giver's and the receiver's. It's about connection, memory, and the little reminders that someone thought of you. This season, skip the checklist. Give with joy, and let the rest take care of itself.



# For the nomad & wanderer



Town Inn Suites Located in the heart of Toronto's iconic Church-Wellesley Village, Town Inn Suites is your welcoming urban retreat — where comfort meets city buzz. This winter, treat someone special to a stay with up to 25% off spacious suites featuring full kitchens, living areas, and skyline views. Perfect for cozy weekends or vibrant city adventures.

Gift certificates available — the perfect way to share a little Village charm.

www.towninn.com



Tucked away on a quiet, tree-lined street just steps from Bloor-Yonge Station, Victoria's Mansion Guest House offers a charming escape in the heart of Toronto. With cozy rooms featuring private baths, kitchenettes, and modern amenities, it's a stay that feels like home — only better.

Give someone the gift of a downtown getaway with a Victoria's Mansion gift certificate, perfect for a weekend of comfort, culture, and city charm.

www.victoriasmansion.com

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Membership is free and comes with an instant code for a special rate on your next stay. www.frontenacclub.com



### other gift ideas

One Backpack of HOPE This Holiday Season



Your gift provides more than essentials — it's an investment in a young person's future. Each Backpack of HOPE supports youth transitioning out of homelessness with hygiene items, clothing, and tools for daily life. Help turn struggle in strength and hope.



\$50.00 www.durhamyouth.com



This holiday season, help bring comfort, dignity, and hope to vulnerable community members experiencing homelessness/housing precarity and living with HIV/AIDS. Donate

- Home-Starter Box to equip a community member who is transitioning out of homelessness with a set of kitchen basics that transforms an empty space into a home.
- Warmth Kit, filled with clothing and hygiene items, to help those who are homeless or precariously housed stay safe through the winter. one is alone in their journey.







Help your loved ones rediscover the sounds that make life beautiful. Global Hearing Aid Clinic offers personalized hearing, tinnitus, and balance care using state-of-the-art technology and a warm, community-based approach.

Give the gift of better hearing with a Global Hearing gift certificate — available in any amount and perfect for someone who deserves to enjoy every precious moment.

www.globalhearing.ca







Shopping local isn't just about finding a gift — it's about fueling the places and people that make our communities special. This season, skip the cookie-cutter big box stores and choose gifts that keep your neighborhood alive.

#### Why Local Matters

- Every dollar spent local stays in the community.
- You get service with a human touch people who know your name, your order, or your style.
- You're supporting dreams: families, jobs, creativity, and future growth.

#### Local Gift Ideas That Go Beyond the Box

Instead of another mass-produced gadget, try gifts that carry stories, experiences, and connection:

- Staycation at a boutique hotel a night away, even in your own city, can feel like luxury.
- Spa or wellness package massage, facial, float therapy, or a day pass.
- Restaurant gift cards support a neighborhood spot and give the gift of a night out.
- Handmade market finds jewelry, pottery, scarves, candles, and one-of-a-kind treasures.
- Food & drink subscriptions wine clubs, coffee roasters, craft breweries.
- Cooking school lessons a gift that's both fun and skill-building.
- Event tickets theatre, drag shows, concerts, or comedy nights.
- Photography sessions local photographers capturing memories that last.

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"Every candle I pour helps keep a small craft alive. When people choose handmade, they're choosing community, creativity, and care."

Chloe Bennett-Candle Maker, local artisan

"Supporting small businesses isn't just about a sale — it's about helping someone's dream stay lit, one cookie at a time."

Matteo Rossi-Bakery owner, small business

"When customers shop local, it keeps our streets vibrant and our neighbourhood unique. Every purchase truly makes a difference."

Farah Nassar—Boutique Owner, independent retailer

"Running a small business means wearing a hundred hats, but every time someone chooses local, it reminds us why we do it — because we love our community."

Priya Sharma—Florist, neighbourhood shop owner

#### **How to Make the Most Impact**

- Shop craft fairs and holiday markets.
- Follow and share local businesses online visibility matters.
- Mix one local gift into every shopping list.
- Treat yourself locally too self-care supports small businesses as much as gifts do.

#### **Investing in Local Community**

The magic of small business lies in its heartbeat — the people who wake up early, stay up late, and pour themselves into what they create. From bakeries to boutiques, their work adds texture and soul to our cities.

We talk about shopping local as an economic choice, but it's really a human one. It's the difference between a transaction and a relationship, between buying something and belonging somewhere.

Every small purchase from a small business tells someone, "I see you, I value what you do." And in return, you give your community strength. This season, let your gifts be more than objects — let them be investments in the people and places that make your world brighter.



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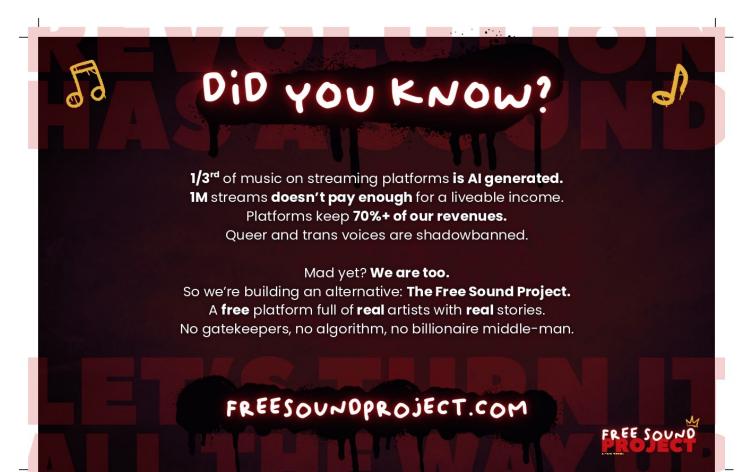
the songs that will make you feel good:

- 1) Make You Feel Good
- 2) Love Letter to Life
- 3) We Are Dancing Together
- 4) This Wonderful World
- 5) Never Giving Up
- 6) Soldiers of Love
- 7) Tell the Stranger (Oloo Lel Ghareeb)
- 8) One Life to Live
- + bonus cover of *My Life* available for free via website

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# BUZZworthy Horoscope: What's in the Stars for 2026

The holiday season is full of sparkle — from candles in windows to countdown clocks on New Year's Eve. But while we're celebrating now, the stars are already pointing to what's ahead. Here's your BUZZworthy horoscope for the festive season of 2025 — and a glimpse of the energy you'll carry into 2026.

#### **Aries (Mar 21 – Apr 19)**

Your energy is contagious this holiday season — expect to be the one pulling people onto the dance floor. In 2026, that spark becomes fuel: long-stalled projects will finally gain momentum, and you'll find yourself leading the charge.

#### Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20)

This winter you're craving cozy comforts: familiar faces, good meals, and soft blankets. But 2026 won't let you stay too comfortable — it's a year that asks you to grow roots deeper in work and relationships, bringing the stability you've been working toward.

#### Gemini (May 21 - Jun 20)

You're everywhere at once this season, chatting, connecting, and making memories. In 2026, those connections start opening doors: collaborations, opportunities, and maybe even a romance you didn't see coming.



#### Cancer (Jun 21 - Jul 22)

You're at your best when surrounded by people you love, and this holiday is no exception. In 2026, the stars ask you to stretch that circle wider — stepping into community roles, friendships, or even career paths that bring you out of your shell.

#### Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22)

This season, you're glowing brighter than any string of lights. In 2026, that glow translates into recognition — career advances, leadership roles, and new audiences who see you for the star you are.

#### **Virgo (Aug 23 - Sep 22)**

The holidays test your perfectionism, but small imperfections are where the best memories live. The year ahead continues that lesson: 2026 asks you to embrace balance, not control, and to celebrate progress over perfection.

#### Libra (Sep 23 – Oct 22)

You're the glue that holds gatherings together this season, smoothing edges and keeping harmony. In 2026, that talent turns inward — the stars push you toward balance in your personal life, and love (in all its forms) takes center stage.

#### Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

This holiday, your magnetism is impossible to miss. In 2026, that intensity will pay off as you focus your passion on projects that matter — a year of depth, creativity, and breakthroughs if you dare to lean in.

#### Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Even in the middle of holiday chaos, you're itching for adventure. The good news: 2026 is your year for travel, discovery, and trying new things. Say yes to spontaneous invites — they'll lead to joy and opportunity.

#### Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

You've worked hard all year, and now it's time to rest and celebrate your wins. In 2026, the stars reward that discipline with growth: career strides, financial gains, and chances to build something lasting.

#### Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Your originality is refreshing in a season built on tradition — don't be afraid to throw your own twist on things. In 2026, innovation is your superpower, bringing fresh projects, new ideas, and chances to inspire others.

#### Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20)

This season, your sensitivity helps you feel the magic in small moments — a hug, a laugh, a candlelit dinner. In 2026, that intuition guides you toward big dreams, and the courage to start turning them into reality.



FIRST SINGLE FROM THE ANTICIPATED "WHAT I HOPE TO FIND" ALBUM



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beings.





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Honouring Inspiring Work in the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community

## NOMINATIONS OPEN

October 1<sup>ST</sup> 2025 to January 30<sup>TH</sup> 2026

**Person of the Year** 

**Youth of the Year** 

**Positive Business of the Year** 

Inspiring Community Organization of the Year

**LUX Award for the Arts** 

Charles Roy Award for Activism in HIV/AIDS

**Innovator of the Year** 

**Lifetime Achievement** 

Canada's Inspiring Person of the Year

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