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The Editor

Greetings and Salutations,

While the world may seem all too (sur)real right now, we here at theBUZZ are all about remaining positive. One thing that unites people is music, and our two main features are about musicians who are generating positive vibes through their work.

Our main feature is on legendary queer songstress, **Lorraine Segato**, former lead vocalist with 1980s Toronto outfit, **The Parachute Club**. She has continued working within the music industry, along with film projects, and her never ending dedication toward advocacy for the homeless and disadvantaged. She's currently working on a one woman autobiographical theatre play, and a cabaret-style music series that she intends to tour across the country with other female musicians. For fans of her music, she's promising new material of her own in the near future as well.

Our second feature is on Toronto musical project, **rVerse**, a dynamic mix of four individuals who are creating a buzz worldwide with their message of inclusiveness and positivity. Their sound is addictive, with catchy hooks, melodic rhythms, and uplifting vocals. The foursome is all about promoting their unique brand of authenticity through self-acceptance, and perhaps most importantly, their love for K-pop! This eventually garnered their biggest fan base hailing from South Korea, which then led them to doing a month-long tour there.

Our guest Wiggled Out columnist in this issue is **Courtney Conquers**, a cis-gendered female who has found a place for herself within the local drag community, and is paving the way by creating safe spaces for all. Our regular columnists once again bring us exclusive stories on local talent. Cat Grant chatted with freelance writer, editor, and novelist, **Jules Torti**, who has just released her latest book, a memoir of her interesting life. Boyd Kodak caught up with long time sex-worker/dominatrix, **Terri-Jean Bedford**, to chat about her advocacy work that will soon be told through a theatrical production. Paul Bellini recollects the outstanding work of long time theatre icon **Sky Gilbert**, who continues to write controversial thought provoking pieces. Finally, Raymond Helkio popped into retro arcade/bar, **Zed*80**, to check out their monthly queer night.

Sherry has moved the BUZZ Picks on-line. For the most current virtual events, see our website www.thebuzzmag.ca/ events. As always, kudos to our designer, Mychol Scully, for making us all look so beautiful!

Thanks for picking us up. Enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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Lorraine Segato

Still Rising With A 2020 Vision



By Bryen Dunn

Canadian singer-songwriter and social justice activist **Lorraine Segato** rose to prominence in the early 1980s when she co-founded **The Parachute Club**, and scored an unexpected hit with the song, *Rise Up*.

That song from their self-titled Daniel Lanois produced first album went on to win *Single of the Year* at the 1984 Juno Awards, while the group won a Juno for *Most Promising Group* that year, and *Group of the Year* the following.

“We want freedom to love who we please”

Lyrics from *Rise Up*

Nearly four decades later, her message remains as strong as ever, both politically, and as an anthem for empowerment, equality, and justice for all. Segato herself has also continued with her work as both a solo musician and dedicated activist throughout the years, and was involved in the production of recent remixes of *Rise Up*, and is currently working on several different projects that will soon come to fruition. *TheBUZZ* had an opportunity to chat with her to discuss these new works, along with her opinion on the current state of the music industry, advocacy for the homelessness, and what inspires her most.

There have been a couple recent *Rise Up* remixes, including an Anniversary Mix, Diesel Mix, and Country Redux Mix. “The new versions are charity singles for four organizations that are encouraging and training youth activists,” she explains. “It’s interesting to see how the song has sustained over these many years, and in many ways it seems it’s almost more relevant today than it was 37 years ago. Is it because history repeats or because some things have never really changed? It’s hard to know why the circle has come around, but the song represented a zeitgeist moment in time when the voices from the margins needed to be heard. Recently I’ve had many people reminding me that it is still representative of so many contemporary causes, which today also includes climate justice.”

Segato has been involved in some form of activism for several years now, creating the *Lowdown Tracks* documentary on Toronto homelessness, and the *QSW – Rebel Zone* film project that was based on Toronto’s Queen Street West music scene during the 1980s, and the recent follow up multi-media exhibition. “My idea for the *Rebel Zone Art & Multi-Media Exhibit*, was that I wanted to connect the kind of activism and art that was happening in the early 80’s with the kind of change that was happening in lower-income neighbourhoods. With the exhibit I wanted to draw a parallel with the revitalization of Regent Park, and bring downtown Toronto into where the youth of today are actually creating fascinating new art and music culture that reflects their own present day issues and concerns.”

With the film *Lowdown Tracks*, she wanted to tackle the way people saw homelessness. “I believe we all have creativity and talent within us, and it just has to be nurtured. The homeless buskers in the film had such deeply powerful and traumatic stories to tell, and we created an environment where they could use their songs to tell the story of how their music is for healing. As a result we were able to find some housing for some of them, and also pay them to perform when we showed the film at festivals. More importantly we were able to record their songs and give them CDs to sell. These are the kinds of projects that teach me how art can help change a life.” The film has been identified as a highly effective call to action, addressing mental health stigma and issues of homelessness in Canada. It is being shown in town halls, churches, and event spaces to bring awareness to the homeless situation, and is available to screen for free or very little charge.

In terms of current projects, *Wild Women (Don’t Get The Blues)* is a cabaret style show that she first developed back in 2014/15 while acting as Regent Park’s honorary Artist in Residence. Her vision is to take the show on a cross Canada tour with an all-female line-up singing classic Canadian songs. “I’m looking at the fall season for a series of shows on the west coast, followed by various towns in Ontario. The show will include spoken word, theatrical monologue, and music built around the idea of themes,” she divulges.

She’s also working on a semi-autobiographical theatrical play titled, *Get Off My Dress*. “I’ve been working on and off for several years on the creation of my one woman show, and have already work-shopped several monologues with private invite audiences. I’m planning to put on the full show workshop in the fall of 2020, most likely beginning in Calgary, with Toronto the beginning of 2021,” she discloses. “These are the kind of projects with many logistics and advance organization that typically take me months, and sometimes years, to put into place in terms of how I see them working.”



She had this comment on the music industry of today, "The music business has changed with the advent of streaming. Honestly the whole idea that people expect to consume but not to pay for their music is really disappointing. When you take into account how many of our memories and important events are connected to the music we listen to, I would think that an artists' work is worth more than the few cents a song generates on a streaming service. I guess what has changed for the better is that there are more young women artists such as Billie Eilish, who are strong and aware that they stand for something."

Her last solo album, *Invincible Decency*, was released in 2015 and featured many former Parachute Club members. She now confirms new music is on the horizon as well. "I'm presently working on new song material for a project that includes cover songs from the mid-seventies made famous by male rock singers, that I am re-interpreting and subverting with my queer girl lens." In terms of artists that she's currently enjoying, she says, "I find St. Vincent's work fascinating and also Alabama Shakes. I love women who play guitars."

Fans will have an opportunity to see Segato perform live when she takes the stage at the 10th Anniversary

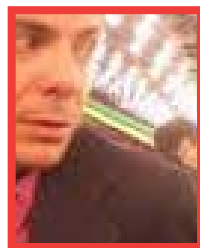
of the INSPIRE Awards. So what does she personally find inspiring today? "People who are deeply kind and authentically real about what they are here to do as humans. I value honesty and those that are generously spirited. All for one, and one for all. Seeing myself as part of a community is what keeps me having hope for positive changes for our future."

We are all looking forward to seeing Segato's 2020 vision rise up to reality!

For event news and tickets, visit the INSPIRE Awards website.

www.lorrainesegato.com, www.inspireawards.ca

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





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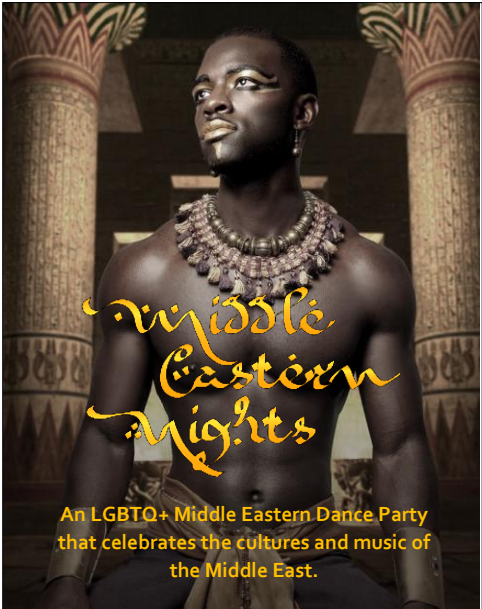
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***r/Verse* is engineering a new kind of pop band. The foursome, comprised of Zak, Monroe, Dizz and Khadija, first performed together on a stage for a production of *High School Musical* back in 2008.**

It was a defining moment for them, and the inspiration they needed to join forces in pursuit of their dreams of forming a pop group, but with a noticeable twist. Instead of appealing to fans through show-personship alone, *r/Verse* is decidedly about promoting their unique brand of authenticity through self-acceptance, and perhaps most importantly, their love for K-pop!

Having entertained crowds at events like *Pride Toronto* and Toronto Raptors games, they were set to perform at the now-postponed INSPIRE Awards on May 29, 2020 here in the city. Their sound is addictive. Catchy hooks, melodic rhythms, and uplifting vocals led by singer Monroe, a proud card-carrying K-pop fan herself. In one of their *r/Verse Reacts* YouTube fan videos, Monroe lightheartedly champions the genre, “Do your friends judge you because you watch or listen to K-pop? Then they are not your genuine friends to begin with. Your friends should support and love you no matter what you do!”

Her comment is more than just a stance on a style of music, Monroe is highlighting a core value of the group, the promotion of self-acceptance and authenticity that comes from finding value in oneself. While this may sound like a tall order to fill, their first album, *Glad To Meet You 2.0*, which was independently released in 2017, is proof they are on the right track. Having amassed over 325,000 YouTube subscribers from their music and *r/Verse Reacts* videos, they are gearing up for the launch of their second LP, *Poison Ivy*.

Korea, K-pop and Authenticity

The plan had always been for them to go to Los Angeles where they would launch the group, until one of their producers came up with a more insightful idea - go to where the fans are. According to Zak, “Once our producer showed us the analytic numbers that our biggest demographic was in South Korea, we were like okay, I guess we’re going there! When we got out there, we were recognized on the streets every single day, and it was a humbling experience because we really had no idea that anyone outside of our own city knew who we were.”

Booking a one month-long trip in South Korea, the epicentre of K-pop, the group performed as much as they could, but it was their living situation that really bonded them, which Zak explains as “a life-changing experience, not only for us individually, but as a group. When you travel to a foreign country where you don’t speak the language, and with the four



of us living in the same apartment 24-hours a day, there's a bond created that's even stronger than the one we already had."

Representing The Under-represented

Along their journey, the group's decision to champion self-acceptance and authenticity has proven to be the right choice, because the reception has been incredible. As Khadija attests, "Just being ourselves, not hiding anything, not changing anything, and not being ashamed, but just putting ourselves out there and creating the best art that we can. The more we've done that, the more we've seen people being receptive to it. We want people to see the representation in us and know that they can live their dreams too. We want to help mould the world into a better, happier place to live."

They've gone so far as to work their philosophies into a tagline for the group, *representing the under-represented*, a phrase intended to celebrate what makes each of them unique. The group's founder Dizz explains, "Within the four of us there are certain demographics that you don't normally see in the mainstream media. We're seeing more of it now, but it's not as common and especially not all in one unified group. So for us it's really important that the more representation that we can offer to audiences, the more fans can look at us and see themselves, or a representation of themselves, and feel they have a place in this world. That they have value

and something to offer." Zak sees their impact through the types of fans they're attracting, "We've noticed that while the shows were always well received, it was the diversity of that reception which was so broad, from seniors to little kids, and I think it's because they saw themselves in us."

So what's next for rVerse? The first single off their second album will be coming out soon, shepherded by a popular Korean K-pop producer. There are plans in the works for a North American tour, but as of press time no official dates have been set. In the meantime, look for them on YouTube and Spotify, and follow along on their social media channels.

Don't miss their performance at the 10th Annual INSPIRE Awards. For updated event news and tickets, visit the INSPIRE Awards website at inspireawards.ca.

To learn more about rVerse see their website rVerseLive.com

Raymond Helkio is an author, director filmmaker, and graduate of Ontario College of Art & Design. He currently lives in both Toronto and New York. His most recent play, LEDUC, is now available in paperback. www.raymondhelkio.com





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WIGGED OUT

BY COURTNEY CONQUERS

SAFE AND SEXY

HOW DRAG CREATES SPACE FOR ALL



When I started drag five years ago, I was a minority both onstage and in the audience. I am a queer, cisgender woman, and when I perform in drag I am also female presenting.

Women have always participated in all drag, but the concept of women being drag queens was often deemed confusing, or simply fake. There were so few female drag queens with similar identities to myself that I initially called myself a cosplayer who was paying tribute to the drag artists I liked. I didn't consider myself an artist because I didn't think I was allowed to do the kind of drag that resonated with me.

This imbalance in presence and representation caused me to face misogyny and harassment on countless occasions; my work was discredited, I was told that gay bars aren't for me (even though I'm queer), and I've been barred from multiple drag competitions because, only traditional drag queens were allowed to compete. For the most part, drag artists have remained women's biggest allies in trying to get traction in our own drag careers. Thankfully, knowledgeable and supportive drag artists took care of my misinformation and internalized misogyny pretty quickly, and I built a drag career armed with confidence and fact, despite frequent backlash.

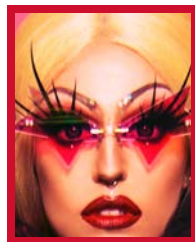
Since the days when I'd get nervous just to attend a show in drag, lest I be made to feel unwelcome or unsafe, the landscape of drag and its audience has evolved beautifully, both locally and worldwide. Show casts and audiences alike are more diverse and inclusive, and drag is appearing in more spaces and contexts than ever. As drag becomes more acceptable to, recognized by, and impactful on mainstream

culture, the people who participate and support it grow and change.

Now, drag brunches at places like *Glad Day Bookshop* introduce queerness to families, and *Drag Queen Story Time* events let children learn and meet new kinds of people in a space that's safe and comfortable. Parents take their teens to see *RuPaul's Drag Race* tours dressed in their own drag, sober friends enjoy drag bingo in restaurants where they feel less pressured to drink, and young queer women meet new partners or bring their moms to see their favourite local performers in the crowds at *Woody's* or *Crews and Tango*. Last year, I guest judged while Rebel Gen, a group of trans and non-binary gender performers, won *The Empire's Ball*, one of Toronto's biggest drag competitions.

Drag still has its dive bar grit and grassroots political authenticity too, and it's certainly not all for kids, but diversification launches it into new spheres. The drag artists who built me up while I fought for space, safety, and validity as a queer fem continue to brighten horizons for people as they break into more public, private, social, and corporate spaces than ever. I do my best to return the favour, by turning the young queer women who approach me with an interest in drag, towards those artists' spaces and influences whenever I can!

Courtney Conquers is a drag performer, writer, and videographer best known for her work as part of the queer media group *Drag Coven*. She has a Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies from Carleton University in Canada and is an outspoken advocate for diversity and inclusion in drag and queer spaces.



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SHE BEAT

Jules Torti

Writing About Life

BY CAT GRANT



Writer Jules Torti's was born on the fringe of Mount Pleasant, Ontario, three corn fields behind the *Sunset Drive-In Theatre*.

"I was born at the Brantford General Hospital, not actually in a corn field, but I grew up playing 1,567 hours of Hide N' Seek in those rows of corn," she explains. Her latest book, *Free to a Good Home: With Room for Improvement* (Caitlin Press), is a memoir of her life.

Growing up in the country demanded creativity, and her mother taught her to be both creative and curious. "She didn't care what we did for a career, but stated, 'Just don't be boring.'" Reading was a passion, and Jules feels lucky having been able to attend a creative writing immersion program in elementary school. She wrote her autobiography in grade three, had her first published column at ten, and has never stopped writing and taking courses at different learning institutions.

After volunteering in Costa Rica and a bohemian experience in Vancouver, that she says didn't involve much work or a formal education, Jules decided on a career in massage therapy. However, she never stopped writing. Jules explains, "I had landed a weekly column with *The Dunnville Chronicle* writing about the massage industry, and was also contributing regularly to *Massage Therapy Canada* magazine."

Fast forward to 2006 after taking classes in Toronto and British Columbia. "It was Joe Wiebe's *Writing for Magazines* class that directly led me to writing book reviews for the *Vancouver Sun*," Jules said. If she hadn't become a writer, Jules told me she would probably be in Africa with the chimpanzees. "I was able to weasel my way into a few volunteer gigs with the *Jane Goodall Institute* in Uganda, and a chimp sanctuary in the Congo." She continues, "Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey will always be larger than life to me, and their selfless devotion to primate conservation is unmatched."

Jules writes fast and furious. "I love the invisible force of the *National Novel Writing Month* competition (held annually in November), and writing extremely." Jules explains, "I sit on a very non-ergonomic but super cool industrial bar stool at the kitchen island." This despite the fact of having a proper desk with an ergonomic chair in her 'office' space. "The lighting is less than desirable in the kitchen, because we switched out the bulbs in our pendant lights to the oh-so-ambient, but impractical Edison bulbs."

She also writes constantly, and all over the place, even on scraps of paper or birch bark if need be. When there's a lull, she pitches stories to magazines. "I move from writing a speculative article on where Harry and Megs might live in Canada for realtor.ca's blog *Living Room*, and creating web content on YETI coolers for *Small Batch Dispatch*, to an article on small town Chinese restaurants for *Live Small Town* magazine, and a feature on incorporating heirlooms into your cottage for *Cottage Life*. Oh—and, in between, I'm writing content for the next issue of *Harrowsmith* magazine as the Editor-in-Chief."

Free to a Good Home is evidence of Torti's life-long commitment to feeling at home where it mattered most: within herself.

www.caitlin-press.com/our-books/free-to-a-good-home

Find out more about Jules here:

www.julestorti.wordpress.com.

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.

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SKY GILBERT

YOU CAN'T STOP A WRITER FROM WRITING

Ever since I first came to Toronto in 1978, I'd been hearing about Sky Gilbert. It seemed like every second play performed back then was written by Gilbert. The man was a workaholic, with over 40 produced shows, not to mention the novels, the poetry, and the articles. He's also a tenured professor at the *University of Guelph*. Yet somehow, he's one of the youngest looking 67-year-olds around.

We met for coffee. I had just finished reading *Ejaculations from the Charm Factory*, a 2000 autobiography detailing his rise in the theatre world. "I've been doing this since my 20s, putting work out there that is controversial even in my own community." The book ends with the first time he left *Buddies in Bad Times Theatre*, as Artistic Director. Soon after that, he started his teaching gig, but he had never stopped producing shows. Gilbert's most recent play, *A Nice Day in the Park*, dealt with the fallout after he and *Buddies* last parted ways in November 2018.

When an article he wrote offended someone, the theatre canceled his upcoming show. Stung by the brutality of the decision, Gilbert felt it was time to leave for good. "I got tired of running theatre companies. Now, I produce the plays myself, one by one. I put up some money, I get the box office, and put on the play." Almost like how he first started.

To many people, Gilbert is a provocateur, challenging his audience to confront some hard truths. "Catharsis is about pushing buttons. It allows you to see inside yourself. That's why button pushing is important. It sounds like it's a calculated effect on my behalf, but I never know in advance what parts of my work will ultimately shock people." He brings the same thing to the classroom. "A lot of my students are complacent, and my job is to rock them out of that."

And of course we talked about Pete Buttigieg. "I thought it was interesting that Joe Biden's first critique of Buttigieg was basically homophobic, citing him for putting decorative lights under a bridge," instead of doing manly political things, one

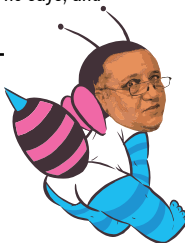


presumes. Gilbert remains ever vigilant when it comes to homophobia. "There are a lot of prudes out there," he reminds me.

But he is above all else a writer. "You can't stop a writer from writing," he proudly declares. *A Nice Day in the Park* is just one of his many current projects. His new book, *Shakespeare: Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*, will be published in the fall of 2020 by *Guernica Editions*. He is also working on a project called *Kink*, which examines gay men's S&M practices in the wake of Bruce McArthur. "And the one I'm most excited about is a modern comedy of manners called, *The Supposes*, which I'm hoping someone will produce."

Finally, he rolls up his sleeve and shows me a tattoo. It reads Poetry Must Be Free. "That's what I believe," he says, and who could ever doubt it?

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





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Terri-Jean Bedford Canada's Dominatrix

Terri-Jean Bedford is probably Canada's most famous dominatrix. She rose from a childhood and youth of poverty to open two widely publicized elaborate dominatrix houses. She was convicted for operating the first one. In 2013 the Supreme Court of Canada, in *Bedford Versus Canada*, struck down Canadian prostitution laws. The case was the basis for recent positive events in the debate and struggle for fair laws.

Today she is in declining health, and has retired from the industry, but has kept herself busy by writing books, painting, and archiving her papers. Her writings and books are being produced as a play about her work, and are to be published world-wide.

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

Terri-Jean Bedford - Family and friend matters, regaining some of my health and some advocacy work for sex work law reform. I have also been painting these last few years. My paintings are sometimes sold.

BK - That's good, you know I love your paintings. During that time, which was the most exciting event for you?

TJB - One of two things: production of the play about my life, and publication of my memoirs *Dominatrix on Trial*.

BK - Nice, what are you looking forward to next year?

TJB - Publishing my other books and more activism.

BK - Where can we see your work?

TJB - My website: terrijeanbedford.com. You can buy my first book, *Dominatrix on Trial* from Riverdale Avenue Books in New York as of April.

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

TJB - Look at the excellent website for the *Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform*. It shows why the current law



was ruled unconstitutional in February 2020, and should be repealed. The laws against confinement, assault, illegal immigration, and so forth should be enforced. That would address the worst aspects of the sex trade. Women should have control over their own bodies. Consenting adults should be free in private. All who are interested in reform of the sex trade laws should advocate in whatever way they reasonably can for repeal of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*.

BK - That's great, finish this sentence for us. I lose control when...

TJB - I have a naked, able-bodied man restrained. I like to find out where he is ticklish, where it hurts him most to be pinched, and what other weaknesses he has. Then I let loose.

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





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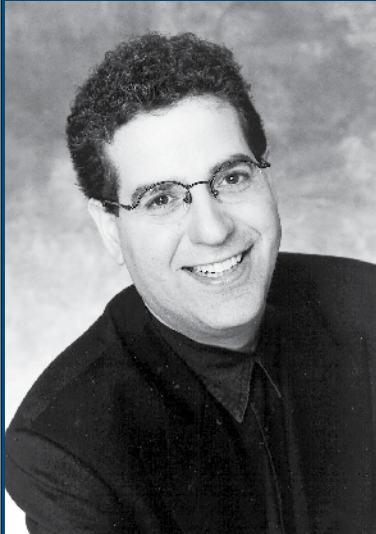
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ZED*80

QUEER ARCADE

Just steps from *The Danforth Music Hall* is Toronto's newest old school arcade, **ZED*80**, a small but fierce addition to Greektown. In just a year the place has become a hot spot for people seeking to indulge in the nostalgia of their youth, alongside a whole new generation of gamers who are gravitating towards the ingeniously simple games from the 80s and 90s.

As the precursor to today's overly complex video experiences, the games originally made by companies like Atari and Nintendo were the foundation of what is now an almost four billion-dollar industry in Canada. Tetris, Asteroids, Ms. Pac-Man, Super Mario Bros, and Q*bert all represented serious advancements in programming technology, without which today's virtual reality would never have come to be. A \$5 cover gets you unlimited access to all these games, which helps to soften those inevitable "game over" moments.

Queer Arcade is ZED*80's monthly event catering to *gaymers*, that attracts gorgeous queer geeks and their admirers. During the last *Queer Arcade* nearly forty games bleeped and blooped, while resident queer **DJ Fawn Big Canoe** spun retro classics, and cult classic *Pretty In Pink* played on the overhead screens. Add in \$5 craft pints and a comfort food menu that ranges from burgers and fries to corn dogs and nachos, and you feel like you're in some sort of time warp. It's a party atmosphere for a 19+ crowd, with the exception of weekends when children can play if they are accompanied by adults.

Brock Dishart brought the idea for *Queer Arcade* to owner **Nathan Hunter**, and says, "He was open to a lot of different ideas for what we could do to make the space more accessible and inclusive, so I came to him with the idea of a queer monthly party. There are queer events in the east end of the city, but not that many when compared to the west end. I wanted to create a queer event in the east end where locals don't have to travel across the city. We want to create a safe, inclusive community here in the east."

And with the full support of Nathan, they did just that. "I put him in touch with **DJ Fawn Big Canoe**, whom I'd worked with



on a number of queer-themed events, and made it clear that they had my full support with any logistical help that they needed."

Nathan's interest in supporting the creation of safe spaces comes from his experiences as a kid. "When I was growing up, I was always keenly aware that I was 'the outsider', and that experience left a permanent mark on me. As such, the most important element of every project that I've taken on is that I build spaces where not only everyone can feel comfortable in, but that my staff are trained and aware to treat everyone equally. I've always viewed the work I do as building social communities and spaces, and much less about hawking booze and food."

ZED*80

Queer Arcade happens on the first Saturday every month.
185 Danforth Avenue, Toronto
www.zedeighty.com

Raymond Helkio is an author, director filmmaker, and graduate of Ontario College of Art & Design. He currently lives in both Toronto and New York. His most recent play, *LEDUC*, is now available in paperback.
www.raymondhelkio.com



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In response to COVID-19 and the closure of venues due to restrictions on social gatherings, all events, festivals, and other group activities have either been cancelled or postponed for the immediate future.

In the meantime there have been several creative virtual events taking place online.

Please check our listing of events that are happening from a screen near you - www.thebuzzmag.ca/events

Our regular events print section will return as soon as venues start reopening.

Let's all stay safely connected.



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