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The Editor

Greetings and Salutations,

Fall is a great time to curl up inside with a good book, listen to your favourite podcast, stream a flick, or binge watch a series. Top of anyone's list should be anything by, **John Waters**, whom we spotlight as our main cover feature, with a retrospective look at the collective works behind this mastermind of mayhem. Now dubbing himself as the "filth elder" in his latest book, *Mr. Know-It-All*, the seventy-something teenager continues to remain prominent in society, despite his refusal to adhere to the lure of social media. Have a read through to find out something you may not have known about him, what he has planned for the future, and his general views of life.

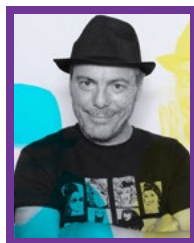
Our second feature is with **Nikki Blonsky**, who rose to fame playing the lead role of Tracy Turnblad in the 2007 film, *Hairspray*, a remake of the John Waters classic that was released in 1988. Writer **Aaron Rothermund** chatted with Blonsky to see what the screen and stage darling has been up to since, and what her aspirations for the future are. Earlier this year, she publicly came out as gay, which will undoubtedly factor into her forthcoming biography she's in the process of writing. She also has her own podcast, *Nikki Nights*, that premiered with her first featured guest, **Rikki Lake**, who played Tracy Turnblad in the original John Waters film!

Our guest *Wigged Out* columnist in this issue is **Alma B Itches**, who created her own event, *HYPER DRAG*, to ensure everyone has their chance to perform no matter who they identify. Cat Grant chatted with artist **Julie Armstrong**, who creates wonderful pieces of artwork from natural and recycled materials. Boyd Kodak caught up with **Am Taylor**, a singer/guitarist who is releasing a new album that also includes a collaboration with punk icon, **Jayne County**. Paul Bellini reflects back on **Paul Lynde** who will soon be the spotlight of a new biopic with **Billy Eichner** taking on the lead role. We have a special Beyond The Village column called **East End Explorations**, that takes a look at the following community organizations and businesses in the east end of Toronto – **Danforth East Community Association**, **East End Pride**, **East Enders Against Racism**, and **Daydream Adventures**.

Our popular [BUZZpicks](#) events listings are now virtual, meticulously chosen by our Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain, and as always, a big thank you to our designer, Mychol Scully, for making us all look so damn fabulous!

Thanks for picking us up. Stay safe, and enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT JOHN WATERS

By Bryen Dunn

Filmmaker, writer, and pop culturalist, John Waters, has been called many derogatory terms over his half-century career in the entertainment industry, with many being self-described. Terms like “duke of dirt,” “people’s pervert,” “pope of trash,” “prince of puke,” “sultan of sleaze”, and more recently, “filth elder.”

Now in his 70s, and with shock value diminishing with the advent of social media platforms, is there anything else he can offer to society? The answer is most likely yes according to his publicist, who only shared that, “John is overwhelmingly busy with deadlines currently.” Waters also did admit in a recent interview with director, Jim Jarmusch, that he is working on another novel.

His most recent book, *Mr. Know-It-All* (2019), was released last year to critical acclaim, and is basically his

take on the world, and everyday living. No one knows more about everything, especially everything rude, clever, and offensively compelling, than John Waters. In the opening he writes, “The worst thing that can happen to a creative person has happened to me. I am accepted.” Quite the opposite from one of his earlier works, *Crackpot* (1986), where he wrote, “I’ve always wanted to sell out, but no one wanted to buy me.”

Mr. Know-It-All has cameos from **Divine**, **Mink Stole**, **Johnny Depp**, **Kathleen Turner**, **Patricia Hearst**, and **Tracey Ullman**, and is illustrated with unseen photos from his personal collection. Earlier this year, he received a *Grammy Award* nomination for a spoken word version of the book. In the last chapter of the book, he thanks his parents for giving him the opportunity to rebel against society, upon which he was able to build his career. [Read this excerpt if you dare.](#) Another of his books definitely worth the read is, *Carsick* (2014), which he wrote while hitchhiking across the United States in 2012, from Baltimore to San Francisco to see what would happen, “if I give up control”

Of course Waters is most well known for his notorious early film works that are now considered camp relics by some, and of course, total trash by others. *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, and *Polyester* stand out

among the best/worse for their depiction of dullness. Once he found individuals to work with, and manipulate, he often used these same individuals in several features. Some of the more recognizable names include *Mink Stole*, *Cookie Mueller*, *Edith Massey*, and of course Ms. Filth herself, the great drag superstar, **Divine**, whom he was childhood friends with growing up in the Baltimore suburb of Lutherville.

Always happy to remain on the fringe of society, it came as a bit of shock value to even himself when his 1988 film, *Hairspray*, suddenly became a success at the box office, with **Ricki Lake** playing the lead role of *Tracy Turnblad*. The script was later turned into a musical production in 2002, and a film was then made of the musical in 2007, which catapulted **Nikki Blonsky** to fame in the lead role. Waters made a cameo appearance in the film as “the flasher”, which also starred **John Travolta** and **Queen Latifah**, and was shot in Toronto. Other notable films of his include, *Cry Baby*, *Cecil B. Demented*, *Pecker*, and *Serial Mom*. The last feature film he made, his 16th, was the 2004 comedy *A Dirty Shame*, starring **Tracey Ullman** as a raging sex addict.

Waters was born, raised, and has lived most of his life in and around Baltimore, Maryland. It’s no wonder that many of his films and books make reference to the *Charm City*, and as a result of this there has been keen interest from fans worldwide to visit and experience the quirky side of this city. A retrospective exhibition of Waters’ acclaimed artwork, *Indecent Exposure*, was presented at the *Baltimore Museum of Art* last year, that included more than 160 sculptures, photos, films, and sound works produced over the past 25 years. The *American Visionary Art Museum* also has a permanent larger-than-life statue of **Divine** outside its entrance.

If you are planning a visit, here are a few notable places that Waters has frequented. Dining and drinking haunts include *Rocket to Venus*, *Papermoon Diner*, *Holiday House*, *Club Charles*, and the *Shamrock Inn*. For something with a bit of a Canadian connection, be sure to stop by *Bookmakers* in Federal Hill for the infamous Drag Bunch shows, and you might just catch a glimpse of Toronto’s very own Queen of the North, **Brooke Lynn Hytes**, who relocated there a few years back.

If you want to pick up one of his books, be sure to stop by *Atomic Books*, where he also still regularly picks up his fan mail from. If you’re in the mood for a movie, check out what’s playing at *The Senator Theatre*, an Art Deco landmark where Waters has premiered most of his films. Also, worth the half-hour trek outside the city is a visit to *Prospect Hill Cemetery* in Towson, the resting place of **Glenn Milstead**, otherwise known as, **Divine**.





to the event due to a recent separation from *Burger Records*, who had previously lent their name to the festival, but have now been dropped amid allegations of inappropriate conduct during previous events. Both this event and *Camp John Waters* are produced by [Total Trash Productions](#).

His spoken-word shows, *This Filthy World*, and *A John Waters Christmas*, have wowed audiences everywhere, and plans are well underway to continue these in 2021. *This Filthy World* was also released as a 2006 [documentary](#), and his Christmas show, which launched in 1996 at the *Castro Theater* in San Francisco, now tours cities across North America. As well, Waters usually throws a fun and intimate birthday party for himself each April (b. April 22, 1946), which didn't happen this year, but is already planned for April 23, 2021 at [Sony Hall](#) in New York City.

While we wait for the world to return to some form of normalcy that we've been accustomed to, Waters continues to make his mark on the 2020 that we're currently living in. He's been chosen as the *Yves Saint Laurent* menswear model for their winter campaign. Captured by photographer **David Sims**, Waters is wearing a black double-breasted jacket, polka dot shirt, black pants, tie, and sun shades in his hand. Waters can also be heard in the background of Canada's queer cowboy, **Orville Peck's** recent video, that also includes vocals from none other than, **Shania Twain**.

There are many places on the web to find out what Mr. Waters is up to, but don't look for any social media updates, as he's not there. He was quoted in a [Vulture](#) interview stating, "I'm not giving away all my jokes for free! What would I put in my books? I don't get why anybody's on there. That's free material. I wouldn't have anything left to write or talk about."

So if you're wanting to hear directly from John, mark your calendars and get out to one of his many in person appearances that he has planned for next year. Until then, watch his movies and read his books!

www.dreamlandnews.com

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



Beyond making movies and writing books, he keeps busy with many other projects, from releasing [CDs](#), to creating [artwork](#) that he's been exhibiting at galleries across the country. *Camp John Waters* is described as an adult summer camp in Kent, Connecticut where one can relive your filthy childhood while participating alongside other trashy campers in a variety of campy activities. It's currently scheduled for the weekend of September 10 to 13, 2021, with guest counsellors, **Kathleen Turner**, **Patricia Hearst**, and **Mink Stole**.

The annual *Burger Bugaloo* music festival hosted by Waters himself, is now rescheduled to take place July 10 and 11, 2021 at Mosswood Park in Oakland, California. The line up includes a mix of new and established artists that includes, *Bikini Kill*, *Circle Jerks*, and *Pansy Division*, among others. There's a pending name change

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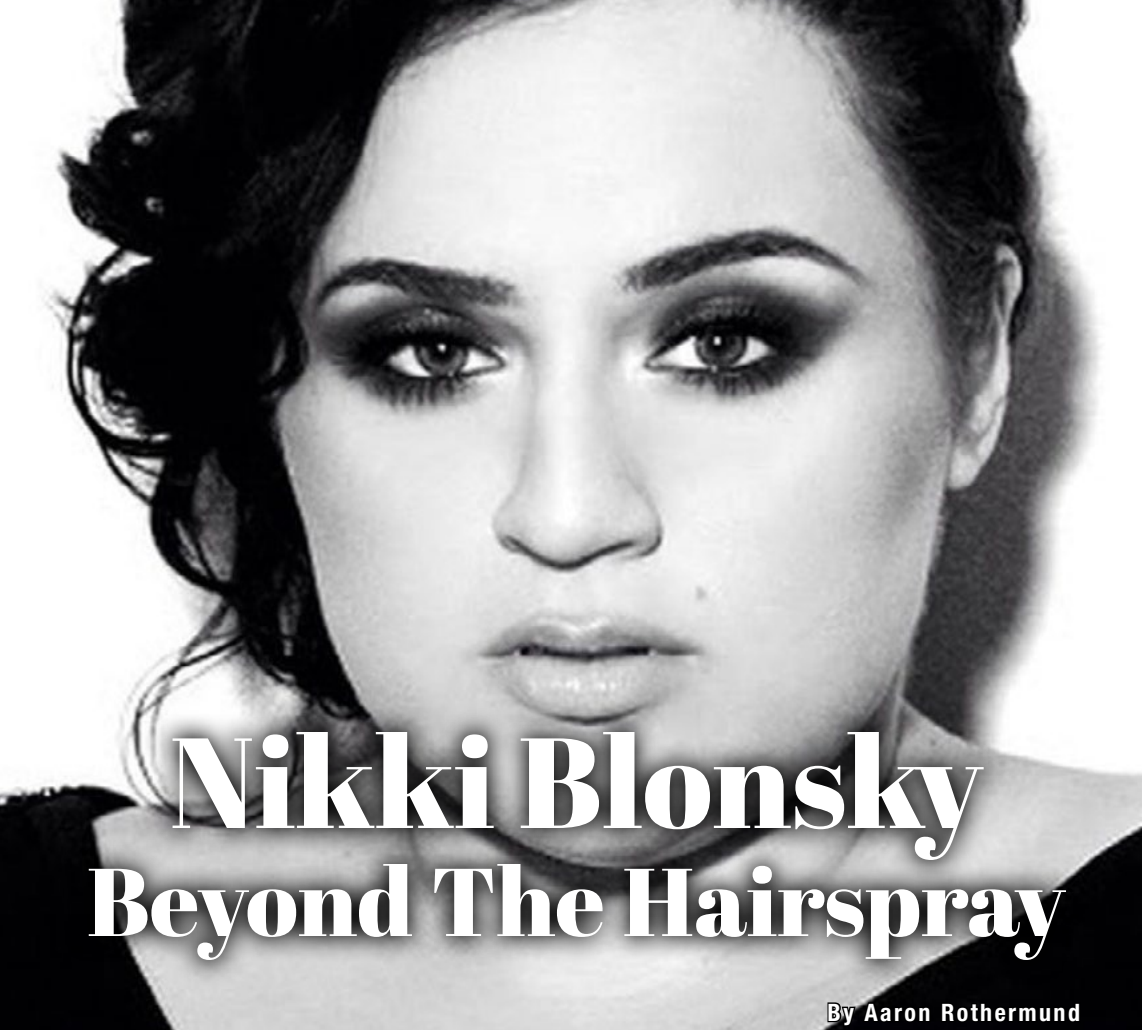
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Nikki Blonsky Beyond The Hairspray

By Aaron Rothermund

New York born triple-threat, Nikki Blonsky, performed in an impressive amount of theatre productions before launching into stardom at the early age of seventeen. The audition process for Tracy Turnblad in the remake of the classic John Waters' film, *Hairspray*, famously spanned over six months in which Nikki fought for her place in the new Adam Shankman flick.

"I was fortunate to have played wonderful characters in high-school productions with great teachers that encouraged me. I was ready when the opportunity came, and I got it," she divulged.

After her iconic turn in *Hairspray*, Nikki continued to play a leading role in the entertainment industry, starring in the ABC family drama, *Huge*, and appearing in the NBC musical drama, *Smash*. She then landed a part in the feature film, *The Last Movie Star*, that featured **Burt Reynolds** in one of his final performances, and she was cast as a high-school outcast in the LGBTQ film, *Geography Club*.

This year, Nikki revealed that she's gay on an Instagram live event hosted by **Alec Mapa** in support of *Transgender Law*. Later on TikTok, she performed along to, *I'm Coming Out*, by her primary source of inspiration, **Diana Ross**. "My first memory of wanting to perform was when I heard Diana sing, *Stop in the Name of Love*, and that song just made me want to move and dance," she recalls.

"It felt so right. I felt safe with my friends, and my team was supportive. I'm a direct person and it's hard for me to not be totally transparent. I felt it coming up. It was bubbling in my chest, and then it exploded out," she says. "Coming out on my own terms means not being afraid anymore. I was anxious the media would find out, and write about it in a negative way. I didn't want to be exposed before I was ready to deal with the possibility of a fall-out," she explains.

Admittedly nothing on the outside has changed dramatically. She still performs at Pride events, belts out Broadway tunes, and raises money for LGBTQ rights. But, now she feels the freedom to hold her partner's hand in public, which can be tremendous.

Currently chronicling her personal journey in her forthcoming biography, "There are a lot of layers to peel back on this onion," she stops to laugh. "It's a personal account of my life on stage, from my first role in *The Wizard of Oz* and learning the power of self-motivation," to producing creative content and being in control of her own image. "My memoir dips into my relationships on and off set, and I think my fans are going to get a lot more than they bargained for. I'm no longer afraid to put it all out there."

Nikki is no stranger to controversy either, and was recently hacked on social media, but continues to remain effervescent. "I think we are all on our own journeys, and we have to find it within ourselves to persevere, rise above, and take the high road." She tells me with great diplomacy. "Plus I got my account back!"

Recently Nikki received minor backlash for possibly over-branding herself on Twitter, to which she says, "I've been blessed to have been able to play a character that continues to makes people smile, so I try to carry on her legacy. I'm also non-apologetic over positive self-promotion; that's what social media is for."

"It's important to have a person in the media that represents you," and Nikki believe-it-or-not looked to **Rikki Lake** as a role model, whom serendipitously played Tracy in the John Waters directed version of *Hairspray*. "I used to run home everyday to watch her talk show too. She wasn't afraid to ask the hard questions. Then when I started my podcast, *Nikki Nights*, she was my first guest."

As for the future of her podcast, "It's still new, so I can't say too much," she teased. "But I'd love to book the top three queens from *Canada's Drag Race*. Also, **Hollywood Jade**, the choreographer for this season was in *Hairspray*. He's incredible and so are the queens."

As for her favourite **RuPaul** drag icons, "That's the hardest question I've ever got. These are my friends, but if I had to pick four queens to be in my fantasy girl-group I would have to go with, **Shangela** (of course), **Chad Michaels**, **Asia O'Hara**, and **Ben de la Crème**. And **Mrs. Kasha Davis** would be our tour manager."



Nikki considers Toronto a second home, and notes the beauty of the rest of the province, and Saskatchewan too. "We filmed *Hairspray* in Toronto, and it's such an amazing city. I have fantastic memories of going to Jays' games, walking along Lakeshore Boulevard, and grabbing an Ice Cap at Tim Hortons."

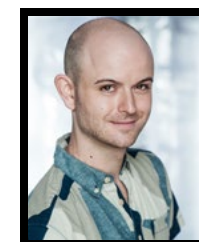
If not for performing, Nikki says, "I would have to stay in the entertainment industry because that's where I feel most at home. I'd probably still produce and write. I would love to host a talk-show, or be a judge on *RuPaul's Drag Race*. I've always wanted to play the lead in *Cabaret* as well. Sally is an excellent character full of complexity, and taking a turn after Liza would be incredible." She pauses for a second, and then blurts out, "I'd love to do my one-woman musical show on tour, starting off at *The Met*."

Nikki is keeping busy these days exploring new avenues for performance, challenging herself to learn new media skills, and inspiring others by being her authentic self. Check out Nikki's podcast, *Nikki Nights* on Thursdays at 8pm on Instagram, or for an immediate fix check her out in the new web-series *Quarantine*, which raised money for *The Actor's Fund*.

After a final moment of reflection Nikki tells me, "It's such a dark time for people. I want to bring as much joy and hope as I can." And on that note, no matter where you are in the world, there ain't no mountain high enough to keep her from you, and that's the way she likes it.

Aaron Rothermund wrote, directed, and produced two plays, *Ambiguous* and *Charming Monsters*. Aaron made three films as part of the *Script to Screen* program at Centennial College. *Power Lines* and *Love Wins* are currently touring Canada, UK, and the US.

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WIGGED OUT

BY ALMA B ITCHES

ALL DRAG IS VALID



I never set out to change the world...

Well I haven't actually, but now that I have your attention let me tell you about my years as a drag show host and why I think you should book as many different entertainers as possible.

I used to throw parties and curate drag shows in Vancouver before COVID-19 hit, and the whole time I was doing that I never once had a bar manager or a fellow artist try and control who was in the cast. As drag time rolls on I've come to realize how lucky I am to have that as my experience. Too often I hear about discrimination and gate keeping in the drag scenes of other cities. Whether it's coming from the top management of a venue, or maybe it's just the dusty personal preference of a show runner, gate keeping your scene is not doing your show or your venue any favours.

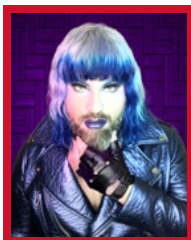
Let me tell you about the time when one of my drag children, who is a cis woman, was approached by an older patron after having performed, and told, "you don't do drag, you're just a woman who really likes drag." When my daughter told me this she also told me other things she had heard before, such as, "once I realized you were a woman I got bored." Imagine being on stage, performing your heart out, collecting tips and basking in applause, only to have someone tell you right after that you aren't valid. I was not happy about it.

After being exposed to the misogyny that was happening in my audience, in what I thought was a "safe space," I came up with a plan. I was going to create a night that only featured non-cis male performers, and I dared anyone to tell my headliners they weren't really doing drag. I was going to cram these incredible artists down people's throats and LET THEM KNOW!

I called the event **HYPER DRAG**, in honour of a term I had read about on Tumblr (*Hyper Queen*), which I thought was more progressive than *Faux Queen* and *Bio Queen*. In retrospect, these performers don't need a special term to define them, because it's all drag baby, and we're all playing in the same sandbox. I scheduled the event quarterly over the next year and it was so popular that I was able to build a competition around it and fly in **Creme Fatale** as a headliner and judge. Since **HYPER DRAG**, a bunch of the competitors have gone on to start their own shows and productions, and our scene is better for it!

I want to see more trans performers get their due, I want to see more queerdos expressing their non-binary beauty, and I want to see people who identify differently than I do blow me away by showcasing their invaluable uniqueness. It's 2020, and all drag is valid

Alma B Itches (she/they) is a bearded, non-binary goddess for the people, who has hosted just about everything you can in Vancouver. In March 2019 Alma became the 48th elected *Empress of Vancouver's Dogwood Monarchist Society*; dedicating a year of their life to local fundraising efforts! During this time Alma and her team raised a record amount of money for the *DMS*. Alma has been active in the drag scene since 2010 when they began their journey as *Sister Alma B Itches of the Vancouver Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence*.



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Julie Armstrong



when I started making jewelry out of bicycle chains. Now I use everything and anything that can be repurposed, from old computers and electronics, to stir sticks from restaurants." She currently creates tiny figurines from nature using stones, along with other repurposed materials.

Julie truly believes one person's junk is another's treasure. "If you don't want to use something anymore or it's broken, donate it to a charity or a collection store," Julie suggests. "It doesn't mean its garbage. Keep it out of the landfill and think of someone like me, an artist who could possibly use it to create and make someone else's dreams come true." Her dream project is to one day learn to weld. "I want to make some of those massive animal statues you see made out of old farm equipment."

Julie attended art shows a couple of times a month before COVID-19 struck. "Right now unfortunately, I must sell online. Times are a little tough for artists at the moment," she confesses. Julie told me how the pandemic has affected her art. "I started creating figurines to get my emotions out. For example, I designed one character, Toilet Paper Man, who is a black figure surrounded by toilet paper rolls. It was a ridiculous time of fear and hate, and just a lot of anger, so I designed something to make people laugh," she explains.

Julie's working ritual starts with her coffee ready, and 10 containers full of mix and match items. She laughs, "I don't really have a plan until I sit down and know a rough idea of the piece I'm looking for."

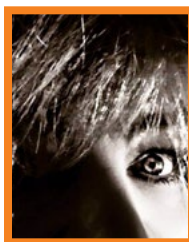
At the moment she's designing and creating a *Walt Disney Mickey Mouse Club* chess set. She stated, "It has taken me about 175 hours so far, with about another 15 hours to go, but I'm almost there and so excited!"

So what's next? "Well I am not sure!!" is her reply. "At the moment next is whatever inspires me at the time. "I would love to be on a farm somewhere quiet with my own work shop and animals all around me. That's my dream life."

You can reach Julie at jewelsarmstrong@hotmail.com or Facebook @julie.armstrong.1848

Cat Grant (OCAD) is a multidisciplinary fine artist, with a focus on photography, multimedia portraiture, and illustrating children's books. She's also a published poet, and senior reporter for *On the Couch* LGBTQ TV show.

Facebook @grantedarts



Born in New Brunswick, environmentally conscience artist Julie Armstrong was adopted at the age of four by an amazing Oakville couple. Growing up dyslexic caused her to struggle in school. "It was not a fun time for me. I didn't find out until college, and then I also later found out in my 40s that I had ADHD as well," she recalls.

Julie believes everyone has a creative side and shares, "I have many creative people in my family, from painters and engineers, to cooks and gardeners." She started her professional arts career while doing a fundraiser for a long-distance bicycle ride to raise money for AIDS, called AIDS/ LIFECYCLE. She explains, "We were going from San Francisco to Los Angeles, a total of 545 miles in seven days. That's



PAUL LYNDE BIOPIC



Born in Ohio in 1926, he struggled with his weight and with alcoholism his entire life, but he was always funny, and unapologetically gay. Though never officially 'out', he never pretended to be straight off-camera. He referred to his hustlers as his 'writers' and was sidelined by scandal when one of those hustlers fell out the window of his hotel room in 1965.

Lynde's premature death by heart attack in 1982 led to all sorts of wild speculation, that he had a dungeon in his house and that he died from a poppers overdose, but none of that was true. Soon the world will get to know the real Paul Lynde with, *Man in the Box*. Even better is the casting choice, as the role of Lynde will be played by a genuine gay actor, **Billy Eichner**.

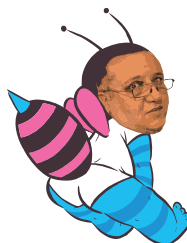
If anyone can inherit the mantle of Paul Lynde it is Eichner, who's familiar to audiences from his show, *Billy on the Street*, and as Craig on, *Parks and Recreation*. I loved Eichner in the little-seen but utterly brilliant series, *Difficult People*, in which he and Julie Klausner played vile social media influencers. The show, which also starred **Gabourey Sidibe** and **Cole Escola**, is maybe the gayest television show since, *Bewitched*.

Lynde was also famous for his horrible temper, but even that could not mask his brilliant sense of humour. Once, enraged by a shabby dressing room, he yelled at a promoter, "This trailer smells like a c—t . . . I think." In another incident, when stopped for drunken driving, he asked the cop for a burger and fries.

Paul Lynde may have had an ugly streak in him. We could blame the booze, the closet, or the lack of a long-term partner, but he never ever let his rage overwhelm his amazing sense of humour. If you ask me who the greatest comedian of all time is, I'd probably say Paul Lynde. I cannot wait to see what McNulty and Eichner do with his life story.

Read this [Deadline interview](#) with Billy Eichner for more on Lynde, the film, and being gay in Hollywood. No release date has been announced as yet.

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.



In July 2020 it was announced that producer Tom McNulty was developing, *Man in the Box*, a biopic about the late great Paul Lynde. For those of us who are gay and in the world of comedy, this comes as huge news, because he was a pioneer and deserves our highest respect.

Most people remember Lynde from the TV show, *Bewitched*, in which he played the lead character's 'funny uncle' Arthur, or from his frequent appearances on the daytime game show, *Hollywood Squares*. Lynde always got a laugh, like when he was asked why a chef might pound his meat, and he replied, "Loneliness". Even as a child, I knew two things intrinsically, that I was a homosexual, and so was Paul Lynde. He may have been the only real role model I had growing up.

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A KODAK MOMENT

Am Taylor

BY BOYD KODAK

Photo: Christy Parry



Recently re-emerging on the scene after a self-imposed hiatus, Am Taylor is now embracing their creative calling as a stronger, smarter solo artist entrenched in indie dream-pop, psychedelia, and post-punk. The last few years have been deeply transformative for the Atlanta-based singer-guitarist, and they've come out the other side with a wealth of new material from these experiences.

"There's a key theme of me being reborn," says Taylor, who as a transgendered person, intrinsically understands the power and often necessity of personal metamorphosis. "We're born with this newness, and we live our lives and everything is awesome and great, and then something comes along and completely destroys and crushes us. That's what gives us empathy. This is something I've gone through that's given me a sense of renewed empathy for others, and it's also healing."

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

Am Taylor - I have mainly been recording songs for my solo project and my other collaborative project with punk legend **Jayne County** that we are calling *Jayne County & Am Taylor*. Since COVID has happened I have spent time filming music videos, releasing songs, as well as writing new songs.

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

AT - Filming music videos is always a fun endeavour, but since quarantine has happened I had to pick up a lot of the efforts in filming and editing the video myself. I also really love the new song I am just now finishing recording called, "*Turn This Thing Around*". I wrote it at the beginning of the pandemic, but it has special meaning to me as a love song, and I am excited to release that song soon.

BK - What are you looking forward to next year?

AT - I am looking forward to getting more of my music out, and then touring once the pandemic fully clears. Hopefully that will happen by next year. Till then I have a series of singles for mine and Jayne's project that are going to be released. I also look forward to putting together a full length as well for both projects.

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

AT - Be yourself. I think the real true meaning of life is that we are all different for a reason. From within our differences, and different experiences, we find the cross-section of living a human experience. Within that exists our life lessons, our compassion, and empathy for others, and the true understanding of why we live these human lives.

BK - Finish the following sentence for us - Life wouldn't be the same without...

AT - My guitar.

BK - Where can we find your work?

AT - My website amtaylormusic.com has links to everything, including *YouTube*, *Spotify* and all streaming platforms.

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



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EAST END EXPLORATIONS



I recently rode across Danforth Avenue and had the opportunity to discover several community groups and businesses that are helping to keep the area vibrant, happening, and a safe destination for all. Below are a few of the organizations and groups I spotted, with a brief word on who they are.

Danforth East Community Association (DECA) is a group of neighbours that started working together in 2007 to make the community more vibrant, walkable, safe and fun. They are responsible for organizing the popular **East Lynn Park Farmers' Market**, and providing upgrades to a number of Danforth organizations. Local events include Danforth East Arts Fair, DECA Pride, East End Music Project, Festival of Lights, Kids Programming, Pumpkin Parade, Theatre, and Dance. The organization also creates *DECA Discussions* podcasts, have an online blog, newsletter subscription, and membership options.

East Side Pride celebrates 2SLGBTQ communities in East Toronto, and was established after the a group of community agencies recognized a need for more LGBTQ services and supports in the east end of Toronto. The hope of this event is to raise awareness, reduce stigma and celebrate Pride. If you would like to support this annual event (donate, volunteer or have an information booth present during the event) please send a direct message via their Facebook Page

The purpose of the **East Enders Against Racism (EEAR)** Facebook group is to bring together people in the community who are committed to racial and social justice. They welcome people looking for opportunities to make change and working towards building a diverse and thriving community. While the moderating team are not leading actions at this time, they want the Facebook group to be a place where people come together to post relevant actions, opportunities for community participation, and connect with other interested neighbours. There's also a Facebook page for this group, that is more informational based, should you not want to get directly involved in planning.

At **Daydream Adventures** your goal is not to simply escape. Your team will embark on an unforgettable journey. Play through an immersive story, solve interactive puzzles, and achieve your goal. There's even a jump through portal. **The Witch's Forest** is a unique story-driven, live video adventure hosted by the infamous witch Hilda, who gets tricked while away. When Hilda calls for your help, your spirit can tell Hilda exactly how to undo the trickster's mess. In **Dream Portal** the world keeps growing as portals open and reveal magical realms. Through this portal is a land of magic and dreams. There are stories that an evil witch took over what may have once been a wonderful place. Your goal is to restore balance in the growing universe. A new **Ice Cave** room is in the works to be built, but is on a short hiatus at this time. Stay tuned!

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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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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