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**Taylor Olson**

*Nova Scotia actor makes directorial debut*

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**Cover Photo:** Neil Patrick Harris by Mark Veltman

## Published by

INspired Media Inc.

Operating: INspired Creative, Publishers of The Pink Pages Directory, PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, and The Local Biz Magazine. Producers of On the Couch

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# The Editor

Greetings and Salutations,

We're here, the month we celebrate love, families, and groundhogs, before the arrival of spring. This issue is jam-packed with creative artists spanning a wide variety of talent, from musicians and actors, to authors and activists. We're also excited to introduce our readers to our new writers, Ed, Jordan, and Jon, along with a special long-distance guest contributor for the *Wiggled Out* column.

As you likely noticed, that's **Neil Patrick Harris** on our cover, known to many for his role as Doogie Howser on the hit series, *How I Met Your Mother*. It was while playing that character that he publicly came out as gay, so it's understandable that he's excited to now be playing a gay character lead along with several other out actors in the new British mini-series, *It's a Sin*, that takes place during the early 1980s at the height of the AIDS epidemic. Harris gives some insight into that, along with his thoughts on straight actors playing gay roles, and so much more.

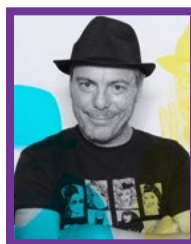
For our second feature, writer Jordan Parker chats with fellow Nova Scotian, actor **Taylor Olson**, who has appeared in several indie flicks, and has just recently released his first directorial debut, *Bone Cage*. Find out what makes this man so versatile, and how he's been shaking things up in the industry with his partner in crime, **Koumbie**.

Dialing in all the way from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, where she's doing her annual winter cabaret rendezvous, the dazzling **Miss Conception** gives us the goods on what it's like performing behind the plexiglass during a pandemic. Our regular columnists have outdone themselves once again, with Cat Grant spotlighting glass artist/instructor **Beth Wallace**, Boyd Kodak giving us an update from local activist/author **S. Bear Bergman**, Paul Bellini discovering **David Bateman's** latest novel, and Jon Pressick getting inside the mind of musician/stylist **Don Pyle**, owner of *Town Barber*.

Our popular **BUZZpicks** events listings remain virtual for the time being, but by no means boring, carefully selected by Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain. As always, a huge thanks to our designer, Mychol Scully, for making us all look so damn fabulous!

Stay safe, and wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2021.

Bryen Dunn  
Editor-in-Chief



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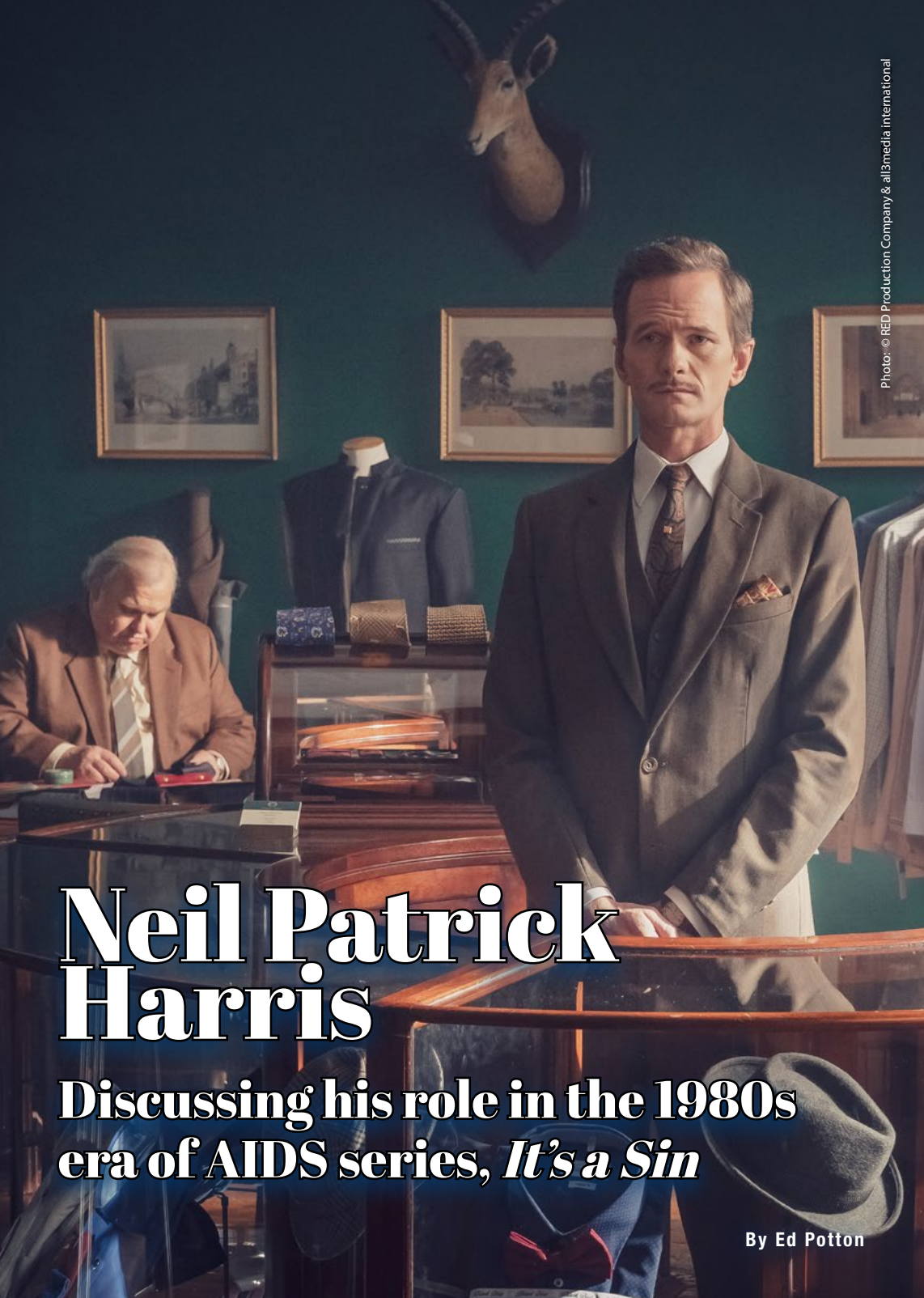


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# Neil Patrick Harris

Discussing his role in the 1980s era of AIDS series, *It's a Sin*

By Ed Potton

Neil Patrick Harris has brought a contained twinkle to all his roles, from his breakthrough as a 16-year-old doctor in *Doogie Howser, MD* to the serial womanizer Barney Stinson in *How I Met Your Mother*, and the dastardly Count Olaf in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. He won a Tony in 2014 for playing a gender-fluid singer in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. He's also hosted the *Emmys*, *Tonys* and *Oscars*, the first openly gay man to do the latter, and he once turned down an offer to replace David Letterman on his talk show.

Now Harris, 47, is playing a Savile Row tailor in *It's a Sin*, the exuberant new series from **Russell T Davies**, the creator of *Queer as Folk* and *Years and Years*. Following a group of gay men through the AIDS epidemic in 1980s London, it features a cast of young Britons including **Olly Alexander** (the lead singer in the band Years & Years), **Omari Douglas** and **Callum Scott Howells**, plus **Stephen Fry** and **Keeley Hawes** in supporting roles.

He's the only American — although Henry, his elegant, moustached character, is British. His wry English accent is impressive, although he wasn't sure whether to maintain it when the cameras weren't rolling. "Would they think I was a super-weird method actor?" In the end he did keep it up, "because everyone else was speaking with British accents".

What Harris did have in common with the other male actors was that they were all gay, something that Davies has been vocal about in recent interviews. "You wouldn't cast someone able-bodied and put them in a wheelchair; you wouldn't Black someone up," the writer told the *Radio Times*. "Authenticity is leading us to joyous places." Does Harris agree? "I'm not one to jump on to labelling," he says. "As an actor you certainly hope

you can be a visible option for all kinds of different roles. I played a character in *How I Met Your Mother* for nine years who was nothing like me." Davies has directed for TV and theatre, and with that hat on, "I would definitely want to hire the best actor."

There's something sexy about a straight actor playing a gay role

Harris, who was born in New Mexico, was a big fan of *Queer as Folk*, in which straight actors played the main gay roles. "It was one of the real true turning points for me as examples of sexy guys behaving as leads in something of import, not as comic sidekicks," he says. "I think there's something sexy about casting a straight actor to play a gay role, if they're willing to invest a lot into it. There's a nervousness that comes from the newness of it all. To declare that you'd never do that, you might miss opportunities."

It should work both ways, Harris adds. He certainly intends to keep on playing straight characters. "In our world that we live in you can't really as a director demand that an actor be gay or straight. Who's to determine how gay someone is?" He doesn't think Davies was being that militant, though. "I think he was speaking more about the joyfulness of being able to be authentic."

*It's a Sin* opens in 1981, with Ritchie (Alexander), Roscoe (Douglas), Colin (Howell), and Jill (Lynda West) sharing a flat in London and making their way in their world, socially, professionally, sexually. They greet each other by shouting "La!" in sequence, like a hyperactive barber-shop quartet. Ritchie and Roscoe tuck into the carnal smorgasbord, sleeping together and with scores of other men, sometimes more than one at once, to a soundtrack of **Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark**, **Bronski Beat**, and **Kim Wilde**.

Soon, though, AIDS starts to bite. "I was fascinated with simultaneously hoping that the characters get to live life to its fullest in a nasty, fun, in-your-twenties kind of way, yet knowing that there are significant repercussions for it," Harris says. "Watching it from both sides is really inspired. Russell can write about very consequential things in an inconsequential way that almost adds more impact."

Harris wasn't like Ritchie and Roscoe as a young man, he says. "I went through puberty really late, so I wasn't very sexual early on and I came into my own much later. So for me it was more about getting over my own fears of going out on a date, because I didn't even know how to accomplish that living in LA in the early 1990s. So I didn't get to play around promiscuously, but I value the



notion of having this dark queer underbelly. Now I'm a parent with my husband (**David Burtka**, a former co-star on *How I Met Your Mother*) and my ten-year-old kids!"

Harris remembers the conversation around AIDS changing in the mid-80s. "It shifted very quickly from this thing that may not really exist, to something where if you went to the hospital you realistically never came out." He had dreams "about being terrified of touching or hugging or kissing". That has uncomfortable echoes of our present situation. *It's a Sin* was written and shot before the Corona virus pandemic, but the way in which a skeptical Ritchie dismisses AIDS as 'a money-making scheme for drug companies' has a topical sting.

"Wow, that is true," Harris says. "I hadn't processed it through that lens. But totally different stakes." A big difference is the amount of information available. The AIDS story may have unfolded very differently had the internet and social media existed. "It's interesting to see how quiet and suppressed everything was. If somebody didn't go to work any more and was replaced with someone else, it seemed like it happened with so much decorum, as if it was not something to be talked about. I'm glad it's being talked about now."

Harris's coming of age happened in the mid-90s when he moved from Los Angeles to New York. He had not publicly come out, but in New York, he says, "people care much less about noticing who is at a bar on a date. That allowed me to date a little more." He was cast in the second national tour of *Rent*, the musical about gay men living under the shadow of AIDS. "They were so filled with pride and authentic posturing because they had war wounds, they had learned lessons from living as opposed to just observing. That's when I took to the idea that if you're going to the school of dance you might as well dance."

In 2006, Harris "had to come out publicly to avoid any kind of weird news story that seemed like it was circling around back in the Perez Hilton days of the internet. I was worried there would be a sense of shock or [thespian voice] dismay." In the end, "no one seemed to care at all! Which offended me, but at the same time made me so appreciative." Did he worry about the effect on his career? "No. I was on *How I Met Your Mother* at the time, so I guess my only concern was that the writers, who knew that I was gay, would somehow write my character differently. But they didn't at all."

Harris has been with Burtka since 2004; their twins — a boy, Gideon, and a girl, Harper — were born via a surrogate in 2010. He married Burtka in 2014, with **Elton John** performing at the ceremony in Italy. John

and his husband, **David Furnish**, are "very close friends. To be honest it would have been insulting to invite Elton John to the wedding and have someone else play." All four of the family tested positive for COVID-19 early in the pandemic, but none got very sick and they're concentrating on renovating their house, "trying to lay low and keep the kids interested in home schooling".

Pandemic permitting, it appears that Harris is really hitting his stride. He wants to direct more, having taken charge of a production of *Rent* at the Hollywood Bowl in 2010, and is developing a murder-mystery movie. He will soon star in *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*, an action comedy in which **Nicolas Cage** plays an even more supercharged version of himself. "He was warm and welcoming and committed to his decisions," he says of Cage. "It's fun to be surrounded by people that aren't second guessing themselves."

There's also a role — he can't say any more — in the forthcoming fourth *Matrix* movie. Harris raves about its director, **Lana Wachowski**. "She's a remarkable spirit, and it's so infectious. The cast and crew works extra hard for her. She runs a gorgeous ship." Seeing Wachowski, a transgender woman, so comfortable in her skin reminded Harris how far trans acceptance has come since playing Hedwig on Broadway. That role, he says, "allowed me to confront my own internal fears about femininity, masculinity and acceptance."

*It's a Sin* could have a similar effect on a younger generation, Harris says. He thinks they will watch "this story about a very challenging time for a lot of gay men, and still feel like it's horny and they can be invested in it. Hopefully it will be a sexy history lesson."

*It's a Sin* is available exclusively on Prime Video Canada on February 19th.

[www.primevideo.com](http://www.primevideo.com)

Ed Potton has been writing for The Times since 1998, covering film, music and television. As the newspaper's deputy movie critic, he co-presents the weekly Times Film Show and commissions features for the arts pages. He has interviewed Steven Spielberg, Juliette Binoche, Bill Murray, Julie Walters, Nicolas Cage, Elvis Costello and Miss Piggy.



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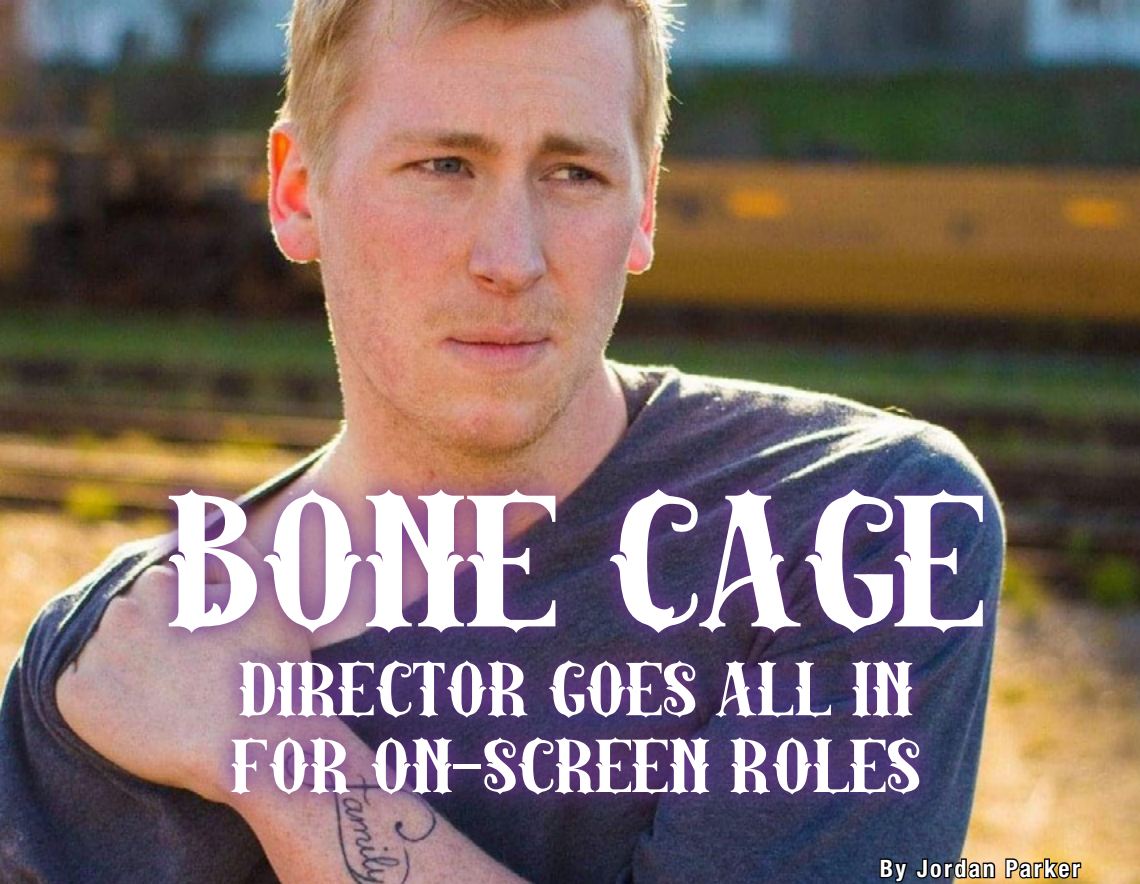
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# BONE CAGE

## DIRECTOR GOES ALL IN FOR ON-SCREEN ROLES

By Jordan Parker

**Haligonian actor and stage presence Taylor Olson is known for his consistency, no matter what he does, he takes it all the way. In his career, he's played it all – gay, straight, and a range of characters from an incel, to a nervous expectant father, a man dealing with toxic masculinity, and a monster – and he's pushed himself to the brink each time.**

Now, Olson has switched gears and moved into the director's chair for his debut feature, *Bone Cage*, a film where small-town Jamie, played by Olson with his typical bravura, tries to escape the trappings of his modest life and move somewhere where he can have a new start.

It pushes the young actor to his limits again. But there's also an edginess to *Bone Cage* that Olson brings from behind the camera to the entirety of the film that can't be ignored. "It's really heartwarming to see people like it. It's not an easy film, and it doesn't pull any punches," he says of the adaptation of the **Catherine Banks** play of the same name.

Though *Bone Cage* is seeing some real love on the festival circuit, both here in Canada and south of the border, Olson admits it's a weird year to have his directorial debut open. "It's all just so strange. With COVID-19, the positive of virtual festivals is that people in more remote areas are able to access our film," he said. "The film is doing so well, but we don't get to see the community coming together, and that communal watching experience isn't there."

Olson cautiously sits in a comfortable position right now with the positive reviews for *Bone Cage* still trickling in, and yet, he's never fine with resting on his laurels. He attributes that to a humble beginning in the industry, attending theatre school at *Dalhousie University*, where he received camera training from the late, great actor **John Dunsworth**, who portrayed Mr. Lahey on *Trailer Park Boys*.

"I was uncomfortable with myself, my body, my look and everything else. I didn't think I was handsome enough to be a



screen actor, and I didn't feel I generally had the look. But John pushed me and cast me in this run-and-gun play, *Deception: A Rock Opera*, and then there was no turning back," he said.

Olson, an openly bi actor, has been unflinchingly honest his entire career, taking on roles about his nervousness with raising a daughter in the short film, *Hope*, his issues with weight and an eating disorder in the stage play, *Heavy*, and playing the lead character of Hunter in a CBC short, *Hustle and Heart*, where he develops a crush on a teammate on the same football team.

"I had a professor at DAL, **Susan Stackhouse**, who said, 'the things that scare you most are the most important things to do.' In my eyes, my sexuality and the way I live my life don't matter. I leave it all out there in my performance. If some 16-year-old kid can see that short and see that you can be that vulnerable, then that's a good thing."

He's also worked with mega-director and queer icon in the Maritimes **Thom Fitzgerald** on the series, *Sex & Violence*, and recently bared more than his soul in director **Robert Gray**'s queer-themed LGBTQ+ film, *Entropic*.

But he's not the only filmmaker in his circle who isn't afraid to be frank with their work. His long-time partner and frequent collaborator **Koumbie**, who directed him in *Hustle & Heart*, has been there since the beginning.

"We met in 2015 when we were redoing background voices for *Trailer Park Boys*, and we hit it off. She was in the industry, and we just chatted back and forth. She's so talented, and we work so well together," says Olson. He and Koumbie recently co-directed the award-winning shorts *Keep*, and *I Hate You*, and she also directed the film, *Ariyah & Tristan's Inevitable Break-Up*, which she co-starred in with Olson. The two also recently starred as a duo in a series of Province of Nova Scotia COVID-19 safety commercials they co-directed together.



"We like to work together, and there are huge advantages to writing and being on set with someone you know so well. It's all out in the open, and we never have to guess what each other is thinking," he states. The pair will both have recurring roles in the new spin-off series, *Trailer Park Boys: Jail*, and he divulges details of another feature he appears in. "I acted in a movie about a trans woman who comes home to her family, and begins to reacquaint herself and work with her father on their relationship. I get to play the bad guy, which should be fun," he says. *Dawn, Her Dad & The Tractor* is directed by **Shelley Thompson**, a Maritime veteran actress and mother to trans musician **T. Thomason**.

"I'm also hoping to get an autobiographical comedy about my experience with eating disorders going, and I have a film called *Bystanders* that we are hoping to shoot in March. I play a bad guy in that one too. I'm not a very kind or loving person there," says Olson.

"It's going to be weird, but it will be a nice challenge to take on a few very flawed characters and make them human, despite the despicable things they do. No matter what, I'll be keeping it interesting."

[www.taylorolsonactor.wordpress.com](http://www.taylorolsonactor.wordpress.com)

Jordan Parker is a freelance entertainment journalist with more than a decade in the business. An avid filmgoer, his favourite movie is *Fight Club*, but he has a soft spot for rom-coms. A proud queer communicator, he also runs film and TV firm Parker PR. [www.parkerpublicrelations.com](http://www.parkerpublicrelations.com)





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# WIGGED OUT

## PERFORMING DURING a PANDEMIC

BY MISS CONCEPTION



It's definitely trying times we're living in, and as a performer it's been extremely hard. I was very blessed to be able to get my job back in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico for the 2021 winter season. We usually run at a 140-seat theatre capacity, but this year we only have a limited capacity of 50 people, taking all safety precautions into consideration.

The [Palm Cabaret](#) followed the same rules as Woody's in Toronto was doing in the fall of 2020, trying to keep attendees and their performers safe. They put the audience behind glass, and in personal pods to accommodate the size of their group. It's like performing at *SeaWorld*, and Shamu Conception is here to make a splash.

The club has installed Hepa filter system pumping in fresh air the whole time, and they removed part of the roof for open air. This year I'm celebrating 10-years of performing in Mexico, and who knew I'd only be performing for 15 to 25 socially-distanced people. Don't get me wrong, I'm very grateful to be able to have some income right now. The show features the *Best of Miss Conception* with a number from all 10 of my past live shows. I open the show on roller skates while singing the COVID Mash (Monster Mash).

Sadly, some people are not following the rules and throwing circuit parties during the pandemic here in Mexico, which is causing us to shut down our shows. I wear my mask every time I leave my house just like I did in Toronto, and I follow all the rules to keep everyone safe.

I hope to be back at Woody's in Toronto to perform and make people smile again soon, but in the meantime I will continue to do online shows from my Miss Conception [Facebook](#) page

from time to time. I want to take people away from thinking we are never gonna get out of this, and to make them laugh again. I will be back in Canada very soon to quarantine and have another lovely summer there, as my job in Provincetown is not happening once again.

I'll leave you with this...I can't wait to hug you all, and kiss you, and stick my tongue down your throat when this is all over and done with, and the vaccines are all out. I love my Canadian family and miss you all so much. I just wanted to check in and let you know what's going on in my life.

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# Beth Wallace



Born in Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario, glass artist **Beth Wallace's** family was sporty with a creative streak. Her mom sculpted, one brother drew, and all four siblings played piano. Beth played the organ as well, however being a sports enthusiast she didn't discover her artistic passion until later in life.

"I was a hurdler, ran track, and was on the downhill and cross country ski teams. In grade 13, I was awarded the Senior Athlete of the Year Trophy," she says.

When living in Toronto Beth took drawing courses, and a stained glass course. "As soon as I began, I fell in love with it and knew it was something that I would always have in my life." She was tapping into her creative side which was like lighting a fire in her soul. Beth elaborates, "I had found something that had been missing from my life. I loved being able to express myself in ways that didn't require words."

Beth later began teaching both beginner and intermediate classes, while maintaining a small studio in her house, and working her day job as a 911 dispatcher for *Toronto Fire Services*. While she loved it, the dispatch job took a toll on her health. "I decided to take early retirement, and it was at that point that I started doing stained glass full time." Her company, *Wallace Artistry in Glass*, was founded in 2019. Beth began coming back into balance, physically, mentally and spiritually.

She loves the texture and colours of her chosen medium, and believes each piece of glass is trying to tell a story. "My philosophy is to try and make the glass the star of each piece." Beth explains, "I often start out with no real idea of what the finished piece is going to look like. The inspiration

I get as I'm working leads me in many fantastic directions. I believe in myself and in the process."

Her personal inspiration comes from her sister Laurie, who encouraged her to try and be the very best version of herself. "She led by example and lived her life with truth and love. She was my biggest supporter and my number one fan. Laurie passed away a number of years ago, but I know that she is always there by my side, watching over me, watching over all of us."

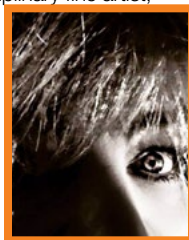
Beth and her wife Frances have been married for 2 1/2 years. They have two daughters attending university, and two Golden Doodles. They all enjoy their travel trailer, and Beth picks up natural items along their journeys to include in her art.

Beth listens to classical music or audio books when working, and finds that lighting really affects her focus and creativity. "I enjoy working any time of the day, but especially after dinner. When it's dark outside, I am safe and secure in my creative bubble," she concludes.

To purchase an original glass art piece or learn how to make one yourself, contact Beth via [www.wallaceartistryinglass.com](http://www.wallaceartistryinglass.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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## DAVID BATEMAN



I laughed out loud in the first chapter of *Dr Sad* when Steven, the protagonist, is having sex with another man in a bathhouse. Being a poet, he cannot resist counting his partner's moans as haiku syllables:

uhh uhh aw awwwww uhh  
 ooohhhghh uhh uhh aw awwwww uhh aaaaaahhh  
 uhh uhh aw awwwww uhh

*Dr Sad* is a novel by **David Bateman**, a poet with a Ph.D in English Literature, who is familiar to many in Toronto as a painter and performance artist as well. With this new novel, Bateman reveals the breadth of his talent. The book is about a poet teaching at a university in Kamloops. One day, he is told he is HIV positive, and it changes his whole life.

The book's structure is daring, set in both Kamloops and Toronto in different years, with both stories set in October and leading up to Halloween. Though the protagonist is clearly based on the author, the story elements are mostly fictional, and for a book about a life-threatening diagnosis, it is surprisingly optimistic. "Someone did call me Dr. Sad once, at an arts residency in Banff," he told me. "But it isn't a sad story or a sad character at all. The only way to cope is to laugh and carry on."

Hence the ironic title, the story of an academic filling his time with Value Village shopping sprees, sushi dinners, and lots of sex. "All the sex scenes are fictional," he admitted. But the poetry is real. I can't remember a novel that used poetry so effectively to show not only a character's state of mind, but his whole approach to life.

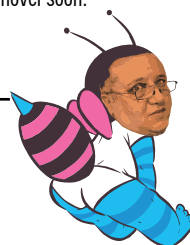
"The structure is autobiographical. In the first draft I named places, but then I decided to not be so literal. I had to edit out a hundred pages anyway. I had to take out some quotes. A couple of lines from a Bob Dylan song could cost thousands of dollars." Bateman also tackles Indigenous issues, preferring the First Nations spellings of both Tk'emlups and Tkaronto. "The protagonist is acutely aware of the fact that he is skiing on stolen land."

There is also a love of kitsch. Bateman is not afraid to mix the high-mindedness of poetry with the vulgar appeal of Styrofoam headstones, or carpets depicting wildlife. "Kitsch is beautiful. Some people are snobbish about things like limericks, but kitsch and camp have a connection with gay sensibility. I go to *Winners* and find a pair of leopard pants for only four dollars that I will never wear, but buy them anyway. Every time I came home from shopping, my roommate would say 'Not another plastic raccoon!'" This is not surprising from someone who once did a performance piece on roller skates with a *G.I. Joe* doll lodged in his buttocks.

*Dr Sad* is, like the author himself, smart, funny, and kind of wonderful. Reading it made me feel more intelligent than I actually am. I hope Bateman writes another novel soon.

*Dr Sad* is available from the [University of Calgary Press](http://University of Calgary Press).

**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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# A KODAK MOMENT

## S. Bear Bergman

BY BOYD KODAK



*In Being a Human*. It's an illustrated guide to complex emotional situations, broken down into digestible steps, that I'm making with friend and collaborator **Saul Freedman-Lawson**. In some ways it's very, very queer - it really applies queer cultural concepts and a justice lens to a lot of problems we imagine are just individual, but are actually full of systemic and cultural challenges as well.

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

**SBB** - They're all differently exciting, but honestly the book is probably the most exciting because it feels very new. It's a real departure for me in some ways from my previous books. I usually write essays, but in other ways it's very much the same vibe: tender, rigorous, full of love and support, but also confidence that people can do better.

**BK - What are you looking forward to this year?**

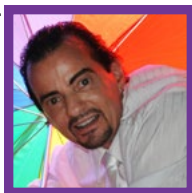
**SBB** - I'm looking forward to a couple of my consulting projects for large organizations coming to fruition, and the education portion to begin. I love the research, planning and reading phase of course, but digging in to the teaching and explaining, watching the light come on in people's eyes when they understand something, or being able to apply a different lens for the first time. I also really hope that at least by the end of the year I'll be able to go back to some live performance, and wow am I looking forward to that.

**BK - Future plans?**

I'm thinking about other ways to do storytelling right now. Is that television, movies, or more theatre? I've definitely made some very book-centred work choices, because I am a giant nerd and a very enthusiastic reader, but I'm starting to give more energy and attention to the question of "okay, if live events are on the wane for the next little while, then what do I do for a living now?" The answers to that question are all a little scary and all fairly exciting, so I'm exploring them and trying to see what I might try next!

Visit [www.sbearbergman.com](http://www.sbearbergman.com) or [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/sbearbergman) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/sbearbergman) for updates. Books available from [Arsenal Pulp Press](http://arsenalpulp.com).

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



Award-winning writer, educator and storyteller **S. Bear Bergman** is the author of six books, as well as the founder of [Flamingo Rampant](http://flamingorampant.com), a press focused on feminist, LGBTQ-positive, racially-diverse children's books. His most recent book for grownups (*Blood, Marriage, Wine, & Glitter*) made several Best Of lists and was a finalist for the [Lambda Literary Award](http://lambdaliteraryaward.com). Bergman is also a much sought after speaker and storyteller at universities and festivals.

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

**S. Bear Bergman** - I've been working on consulting projects around LGBTQ equity, launching the next season of *Flamingo Rampant*, and working on my own new book, *Special Topics*

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## TOWN BARBER



Photo credit: Rannie Turingan

One of the great pleasures in life is putting your hair in the hands of a true artist. Now, what if that artist was also a Canadian music legend? “Being a touring musician, it was always a treat to get haircuts in other places, quite often on impulse just by coming across an attractive shop,” reveals **Don Pyle** of Toronto’s *Town Barber*.

Pyle’s accolades include being a Juno award-winning member of the band **Shadowy Men on a Shadowing Planet**, a contributor to other influential bands including, **Greek Buck**, **King Cobb Steelie**, and **Fifth Column**, a noted music producer and writer of film scores, and a photographer/historian within the Canadian punk rock scene. Now, the renaissance man has added Barber to that list!

After a lifetime of working in the music industry, Don, like many other creative professionals, found himself at a crossroads. “I do love collaborating and working on projects like film scores usually, but I found myself only having time to make music for others.” This feeling of stifled creativity combined with the financial challenges of working in the arts prompted Don to try his hand at a “job-job.” “I wanted to do something that was social, creative, and also allowed me to listen to music, and barbering seemed like a fast-track to that.”

After taking time to learn the tonsorial trade (which he admits wasn’t a fast-track at all!), Pyle has opened two *Town Barber* locations to meet the demand of the renaissance of traditional barbering. He has noticed that younger people see barbering as an “art form” and those breaking into the industry are modernizing the traditional model to make it a value-added experience. “An aspect of *Town Barber* that I so appreciate

is that I know I’m not going to hear any of the sexist or homophobic talk from our barbers that I’ve heard in way too many shops all of my life.”

Coming from the music scene, Don can appreciate extreme, wild hairstyles, such as those sported by **Johnny Thunders** and **Blixa Bargeld** back in the day, but his preference has always reached further back. He’s drawn to the haircuts of the 50s and 60s, with a predilection towards, “beautiful buttery fades and fantastic pompadours.”

As with other small businesses, the pandemic has been a challenge and a learning experience. “After the first lockdown, so many guys came in saying their girlfriend or husband is really digging them with longer hair so just clean it up. It’s interesting to see how the pandemic is having a direct impact on the evolution of style.” Currently, you can purchase hair care products and t-shirts, as well as [gift certificates online](#) to help the shops out, but Don asserts, “don’t get too used to your hair getting long, and do come back when we reopen!”

[www.townbarber.ca](http://www.townbarber.ca)

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



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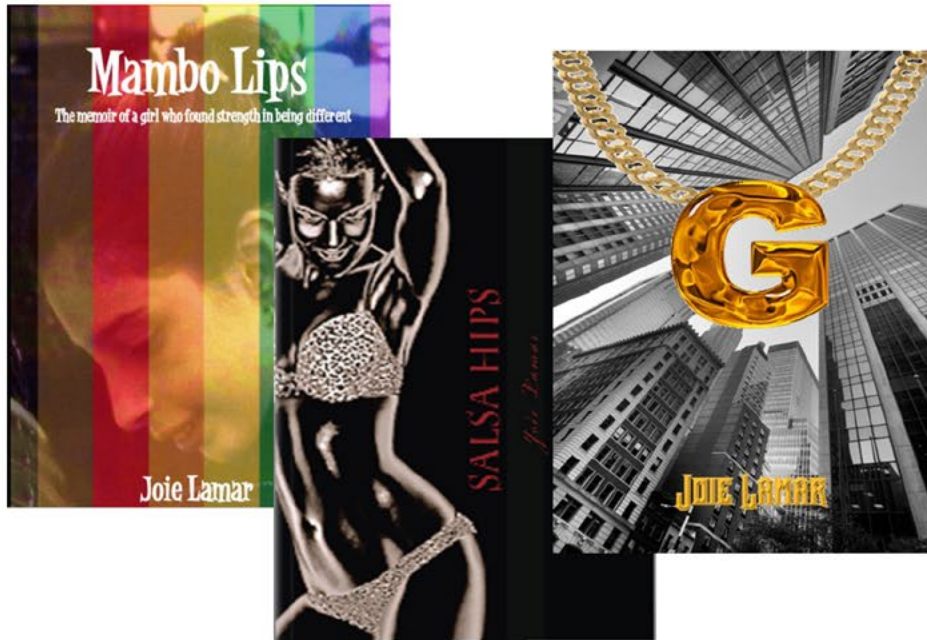
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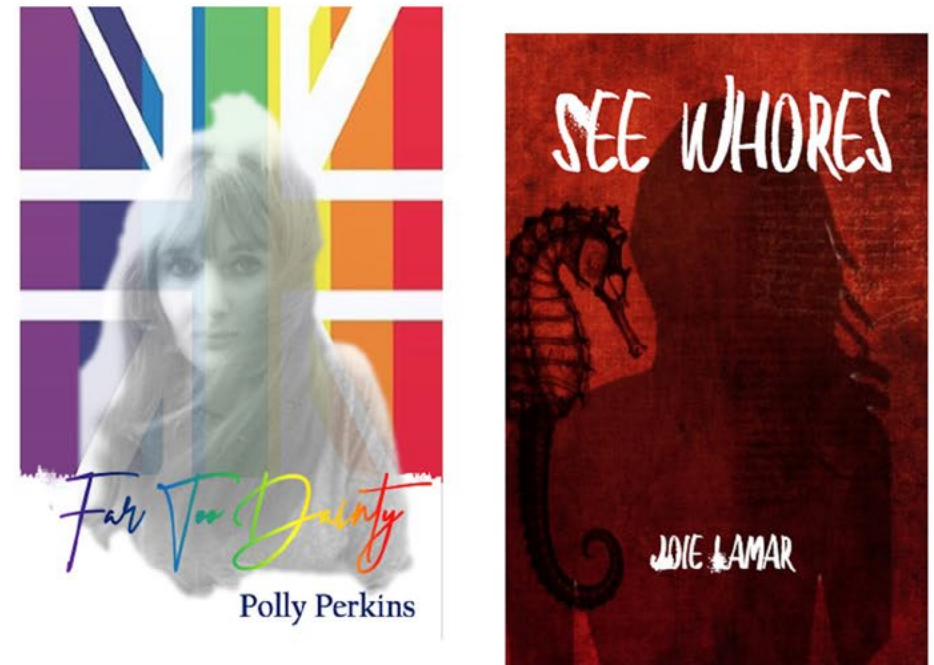
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In response to COVID-19 and the closure of venues due to restrictions on social gatherings, all events, festivals, and other group activities have either been cancelled or postponed for the immediate future.

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](http://www.thebuzzmag.ca/events)

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

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