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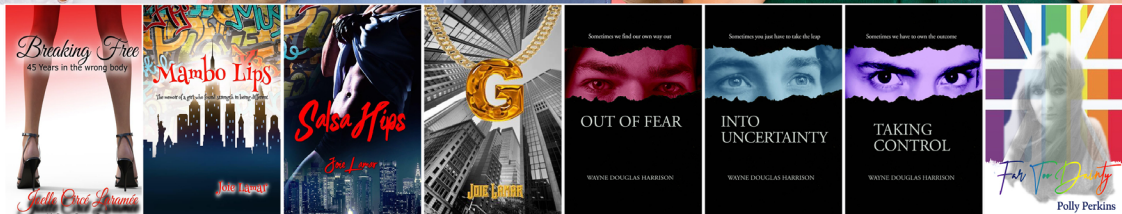


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Bryen Dunn

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Mychol Scully

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Events Editor

Sherry Sylvain

Counsel

Jerry Herszkopf Law

Feature Writers

Melissa MacMullin, Aaron Rothermund, Bryen Dunn

Columnists

Tina Burner, Cat Grant, Boyd Kodak, Roly Chambers, Jon Pressick

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Mailing address

205-1691 Pickering Parkway

Pickering, ON L1V 5L9

416.926.9588

IN THIS ISSUE

- 06 Amy Schneider – Melissa MacMullin
- 10 The New Boys Club – Aaron Rothermund
- 14 Sofi Tukker – Bryen Dunn
- 18 Wiggged Out: My Mix Tape – Tina Burner
- 20 She Beat: Michele Jelley – Cat Grant
- 22 Deep Dish: Village History – Roly Chambers
- 24 A Kodak Moment: Sophie Labelle – Boyd Kodak
- 26 Beyond the Village: The Well Hamilton – Sherry Sylvain
- 28 BUZZPicks Online – Sherry Sylvain



Greetings and Salutations,

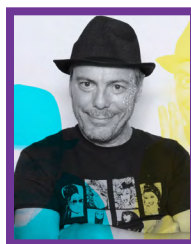
Spring has sprung, and this year is even more special as we not only emerge from winter, but also from a two-year pandemic pause. I'm sure we can agree, we are all looking forward to an amazing summer ahead!

Our cover feature is with someone who recently became a household name to many. **Amy Schneider** was broadcast into the living rooms of millions each week night on the long-running national trivia game show, *Jeopardy!* Not only did she make herstory by becoming the longest winning female contestant on the show, at 40 games, but also by being the first trans woman on the show. Melissa MacMullin caught up with her to find out all about that experience, her recent engagement, and what's next for this trans trailblazer.

Our second feature is written by Aaron Rothermund, and follows up on his feature from the last issue that spotlighted females within the film industry. This time, he delves into what some of the top emerging male actors have to offer, speaking with **Cory Bertrand, Thomas Duplessie, and Andrew Meikle**. It's an excellent read that will have you searching and streaming their latest productions. We also have a special third feature on musical duo, **Sofi Tukker**, who have a legion of queer fans that will be descending upon *History* in Toronto on June 1 for what will undoubtedly be a sweaty dance party.

Our guest Wiggged Out writer is **Tina Burner**, who has a tour stop in Edmonton on April 15 and 16, with her latest cabaret production, *Mix Queen: A Relationship Mix Tape*, that coincides with the release of her sophomore album of the same title. Our She Beat columnist Cat Grant caught up with screenwriter, **Michele Jelley**, who has worked on several prominent shows at CBC, and has a feature film in the works. Boyd Kodak connected with cartoonist, public speaker, and writer, **Sophie Labelle**, and Roly Chambers takes us on a Village walk to learn about the history behind some of the street names. Sherry Sylvain gives us a review of Hamilton's new hot queer spot, **The Well**, and has also compiled our [online event listings](#) of the very best Toronto and beyond has to offer.

Bryen Dunn
Editor-in-Chief



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Amy Schneider Breaks Records and Barriers on Jeopardy!

By Melissa MacMullin



Having brought us daily doubles of pride, Jeopardy! game-show winner and emerging LGBTQ+ icon, Amy Schneider, became the first trans contestant who qualified for the “Tournament of Champions.”

Schneider took home \$1.4 million after her 40 game-winning streak from November 17th, 2021, to January 26th, 2022 - the second longest win in the show's history behind Ken Jennings who set the record at 74. “Jeopardy was something I grew up watching with my parents. It's always been around in my life. I have a good memory and I've always been interested in participating on the show. It's been a long-standing part of the plan.”

Oakland, California-based, Schneider, and her fiancée, Genevieve Davis, were not prepared for the massive changes that would take place in their lives following her Jeopardy! victory. She didn't anticipate the impact and world-wide praise received as an openly trans woman making game show history. Growing up in a conservative Catholic family in Ohio, she says, “It all happened so fast. I couldn't have imagined that trans people would be as accepted as they are today.

I didn't expect for it to be this big; the level of media attention, the number of people following me on Twitter, it all came as a surprise.”

It didn't happen overnight for Schneider as she has been trying for quite a long time to get on the show, but her persistence eventually paid off two years ago. “I've been auditioning for over a decade. You can try out once a year - although I think they've changed that and now you can try out more often. I'd gotten to the last stage a couple of times, where basically after you've done your final leg of auditions, you've made it to the active pool of contestants. In the following year, you may get a call to be on the show, and if not then you would have to start over again. I originally got the confirmation call in the fall of 2020 and was set to go. Shortly after my plans got cancelled because of COVID, and then Alex Trebek passed away. It took a year before I actually got to be on the show.”

According to Schneider, the entire filming process for Jeopardy! was fantastic from beginning to end. “The people involved with and working on Jeopardy! were just good people in general, and they were wonderful about everything. They didn't bring up the fact I was trans until I brought it up. It was clear they wouldn't bring it up unless I did. I had a lot of anxiety going on in terms of my appearance and my voice and being comfortable with that. But once I was there, nobody had commented on it, and I was just able to focus on the game. After, when I started winning so much and realizing where I was at, it was kind of overwhelming. I didn't know or realize

how people watching would respond or how interested they would be in me as a person.” expressed Schneider.

“During the taping I was pretty nervous, but pretty much tried to stay focused so I didn't lose that edge. Once that was done and it was time for the taping to air, I was definitely nervous about the public's reaction and what I might be hearing about myself online. I had been put in touch with the people from GLAAD, and we had meetings to talk about strategies, to prepare myself on worst case scenarios of what to do and how to handle it. I've definitely seen trans people subject to some pretty awful treatment online, so I was apprehensive about that, but I was really surprised by how little of that there was for me.” Schneider commented on how the experience came with her own dose of jitters.

And as far as game strategies go, Schneider kept it simple and straight-forward. “If I saw a category up there that I felt a little less comfortable with, I'd try to get it out of the way first. If there happened to be a daily double in it, then there wouldn't be as much money at stake. Otherwise, I tried not to come in with too many strategies, because my overall thinking was that I wanted to be thinking about as few things as possible, which would keep me focused on the question at hand and getting the answer.” Schneider also felt there were moments worth more than the Jeopardy! money itself. “Aside from winning the game, my proudest moment was on my last day after I lost, when I thought I was done and good to go. The crew that was still there at the end of the game, stood around

and gave a long and heartfelt applause. Those were the only people there with me the whole time that really saw what it was like, and they understood. So, to feel like I earned their respect was very, very meaningful.”

Schneider held her immediate circle of supporters close to her heart. “Genevieve my fiancée was my number one supporter through it all, but beyond that I had several friends cheering me on. It wasn't clear at first whether or not the Jeopardy! hair and makeup people would be able to work on me because I wasn't sure what the COVID restrictions were. My friend Allison knew I was stressed about that, so she flew down to Los Angeles that first day to come to my hotel in the morning and do my hair and makeup, which was really sweet. My dad passed away a few years ago, but my mom has definitely been very supportive too. My two calls after I finished taping every day were from my mom and Genevieve.”

It was in July of 2020 when Schneider and Davis first met at a gathering at Schneider's apartment. Davis' brother had been dating Schneider's friend. “Genevieve and I have been together for a little more than a year now. We met during the pandemic because my friend at the time was dating her brother. And so, my friend who didn't have a car wound up asking Genevieve to come pick her up and give her a ride to her brothers. She started coming over during gatherings and we would get to chat a bit before she drove my friend off. One time I gave her a tarot reading, which is sort of my go-to when



I meet people. We seemed to really hit it off. We exchanged numbers and started hanging out.” reminisced Schneider.

Schneider also expressed the sentimental meaning behind the infamous pearl necklace she wore for the *Jeopardy!* taping, and Genevieve’s tie to the beloved accessory. “The pearls I wore for every taping were a birthday present Genevieve gave me soon after we started dating. She said every lady should own a string of pearls. Genevieve couldn’t come down to LA for the taping because COVID restrictions didn’t allow a studio audience to be in the studio to watch. She would’ve had to sit in a hotel room all day, and there wasn’t much of a point to that. I realized that having that necklace and wearing it all day and every day was just a little way of keeping her with me, and remembering that I had her to go home to.”

Davis had proposed to Schneider this past February 8th, which was close enough to Valentine’s Day and the one-year anniversary of their relationship on February 20th. Davis had surprised Schneider by getting down on one knee with a solitaire diamond ring. On February 24th, Schneider had also asked Davis to marry her in return while out celebrating their anniversary in Sonoma. The date for the wedding of the two lovebirds is tentatively planned for summer of 2023. Although Schneider shared, “the planning is not far advanced at all.” [laughs] What matters most is they both said, yes!

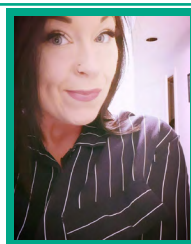
Schneider plans to explore future opportunities stemming from her *Jeopardy!* success and has even quit her day job

as a software engineer. “I’m planning to focus on writing a book. I just finished the proposal, so now that’s going to the publishers. I had all these meetings with people who wanted to talk to me about various opportunities, but I realized that a book would be something more under my control. I could do exactly what I wanted to do with it, as opposed to a podcast, a TV show, or something that’s collaborative. I’m basically at the stage where I’ve had my first round of meetings with many different people, and I’m trying to figure out which of these make the most sense to go forward with. So, it’s all still a little bit up in the air. I actually had a meeting with a documentary producer recently. It’s still unknown, like how big this is, what could be and might happen down the road. People have been approaching me more than I could’ve ever expected. It’s really been a new challenge.”

Here’s hoping there’s a bright future ahead for Amy.

All photos courtesy of Jeopardy Productions, Inc.

Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose. Author. Screenwriter. Performer. Part-time adventurer.



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The New Boys Club

Acting Out Loud



By Aaron Rothermund

Being gay in the entertainment industry can be a privilege and a challenge. Unfailingly, actors are often told to suppress their sexuality to be accepted by mainstream audiences.

Growing up as a gay person without positive representation can be quite lonely, so we're shining the spotlight on three up-and-coming actors proudly stepping into their own shoes and fostering a new generation of queer stories.

Cory Bertrand was born in Montreal where he studied at Dawson College. Soon after he graduated, he found himself acting alongside **Andie MacDowell** in the feature film *The Last Sign*. Bertrand's first theatrical show in Toronto (as a local) was the queer-themed, *Rejection Rate*, written and directed by **Mark Shyzer**. He later appeared in **Thom Bryce's**, *The Curative*, that centered around a gay character that decides to take a pill to "cure" his sexual orientation, which has apocalyptic results.

Bertrand says he joined *OutACTRato* to meet and work with other queer performers. "I started getting enthusiastic

about the missions of the committee and that led me to co-producing *Working the Scene in Rainbow*, which is an event inspired by *Working the Scene in Colour*," Bertrand explains. "The program allows queer members to write a scene, and have it read by professional actors from the LGBTQ2S+ community."

As the pandemic began, Bertrand wanted to remain creatively active, so he produced an immersive Facebook Live show called *The Trouble with Travis*, produced by his own theatre company, *Simply Twisted Productions*. "There was one episode where Travis talks about having a crush on this girl named Mildred," Bertrand shares. "Then he needs advice from the viewers on how to speak to her."

Shortly afterwards, Bertrand expanded his concept with *Roommate Roulette*, a mock-reality show where audience members interact with Bertrand as he searches for a new roommate amongst a cast of zany characters, including Travis and Mildred. "I thought of this like a showcase that I could send off to casting directors. I had never done drag before so Mildred was an obvious choice," Bertrand says. "Then I had to decide who the other characters would be, so I created a dark, creepy, nerdy character named Kelvin, and a gay, campy, fashionista-wannabe named Jean-Pierre."

Bertrand teamed up with **Matkai Burmaster** of *Fearless*, an inclusive digital content streaming service for all marginalized



Cory Bertrand

voices. "Fearless wasn't set-up for interaction between the performer and the audience," Bertrand tells me. "Luckily, they were able to retool, and now *Roommate Roulette* is credited as the first interactive show on the platform."

Check out the episodes of *Roommate Roulette* on [YouTube](#) and the [Fearless APP!](#) Watch out for a full collaboration with Burmaster on a new digital series grounded in ethical non-monogamy, and watch for Bertrand in *Cabinet of Curiosity*, a live-action horror anthology, created by **Guillermo del Toro**.

Thomas Duplessie was born and raised in New Brunswick but studied at the Randolph College for the Performing Arts in Toronto. After graduating, Duplessie began working on television shows such as *Reign*, *Bitten*, and *Heroes Reborn: Dark Matters*. "It was really exciting and nerve-wracking," Duplessie recalls. "As soon as I graduated from theatre school I immediately dove into acting classes for film and television. When it came to booking, it felt like earned momentum, but I also knew it was precarious."

I first met Duplessie when we both played murder suspects in *Death*, written by **Woody Allen** and directed by **Rosanna Saracino**. Later we'd reconnect during an audition for *Man Seeking Woman*. In the end he would book the part of the enormous-headed, Borton. "I think the call time for that was 4 a.m.," Duplessie laughs. "It took forever, and it was incredibly heavy. They filled the head with inflatable balloons connected to tubes going down my back, and there were crew guys underneath my desk in the episode blowing into these tubes

so it would look like my brain was swelling in different areas. Then during my scene with Jay [Baruchel] I had to watch his lips, because all I could hear was this horrible whooshing sound."

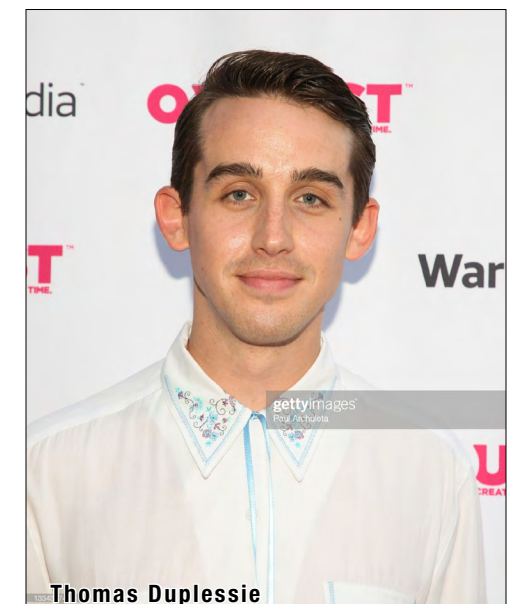
Then the stars aligned, as Duplessie auditioned for the leading role in the feature film *Jump, Darling*, that centres around Fishy Falters, a broken-hearted drag artist reconnecting with his grandmother in Prince Edward County. Although Duplessie had no previous experience in drag performance, he "put himself on tape" performing "Collect My Love" by The Knocks, featuring Alex Newell. "Watching drag in the village here in the city and watching *Drag Race*, I always fantasized about what it would be like to step into those shoes," Duplessie tells me. "When I got this part, I was given full permission to live my drag fantasy."

Jump, Darling placed Duplessie opposite the legendary **Cloris Leachman** in her final performance as Russell's mentally deteriorating grandmother. "It was mind-blowing," Duplessie shares with me. "Cloris was incredibly inappropriate, kind, and vulnerable. She was everything. She really forced you into the moment."

Duplessie had a magical time collaborating with writer/director, **Phil Connell**. "He was patient, had great energy, and we worked together really well," Duplessie divulges. "We had obvious chemistry and after filming was completed, we decided to pursue a relationship, and we've been together ever since."

Jump, Darling is available on CRAVE in Canada, and has recently launched in US theatres and VOD.

Andrew Meikle was born in Toronto and studied at the Etobicoke School for Performing Arts. Shortly after graduating,

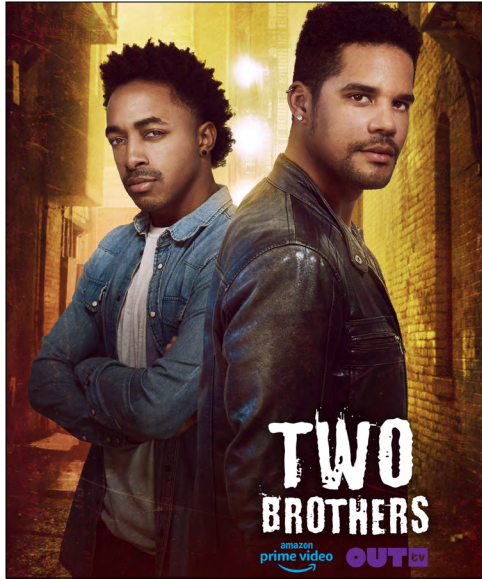


Thomas Duplessie



Photo: @inappropriate.touching

Andrew Meikle



Poster: Blake Morrow

Meikle emerged as a proud gay actor portraying two brooding queer characters in the provocative short films: *Inside the Whale*, written and directed by **M.H. Murray**, and *Alien Creatures* written and directed by **Kelly Paoli**.

Meikle's love for horror films, especially the *Scream* franchise, led him to start teaching himself how to write properly formatted screenplays. The first project planned by Meikle Productions was a scary short film about bullying, called *Consequences*. The lead actor, **Justine Cargo** helped to shape new scenes, and by the time they finished writing *Consequences* it was a full-length horror film.

Meikle, eager to further explore the slasher genre, went back to writing, directing, and producing his latest horror feature film, *The One That Got Away*. "The night before we were supposed to film *The One That Got Away*, we lost a lead actor and the film crew dropped out on us as well. The next day I was on my phone the entire day trying to search for replacements," Meikle reveals. "Luckily by the time we got to set I had everything sorted out and we shot the film over ten days in a beautiful cottage location."

Then, in an unexpected departure from the horror genre, Meikle made a sexy drama called *The One Night Stand*, which has since been viewed over 1.5 million times on YouTube. "I had gone to this male strip club called Remingtons (in Toronto). Eventually I got to know the dancers because I went way too much," Meikle laughs. "Magic Mike had just come out, and it was very flashy and choreographed, and I wanted to show a grittier Toronto strip club with less polished choreography."

For the past few years, Meikle has been pitching his new idea called *Two Brothers*, but instead of waiting for the greenlight, he held a fundraiser to self-fund the project. The eight-part

digital series follows fraternal twin brothers Aaron (Meikle) and Aiden (**Meshach O'Brien**) as they move to a small town and experience all the joys and triumphs of life while being visible minorities. To add fuel to the flame, Aaron falls for closeted same-sex love interest, Parker (**Evan Boutsov**).

"I couldn't recall a show that centers around two brothers dealing with intersectional bias in this way. I wanted to depict how difficult it can be to be Black and gay. We made teaser trailers for the series and sent them out to distributors, and we got positive feedback."

After constantly following up, and fighting for this powerful story, Meikle can proudly say that *Two Brothers* will be distributed by OutTV and Prime Video. You can also catch Meikle this summer acting opposite **Keiynan Lonsdale** in the feature film, *My Fake Boyfriend* directed by **Rose Troche**.

As members of the queer community, we can live outside of the heteronormative pressure to perform gender in a strict way, and we can make our own rules when it comes to our lifestyle. What we can learn from the next generation of queer performers is when gay people feel liberated in their work, their stories can transcend sexual orientation and identity and touch upon a sacred flavour that only we can add to the mix.

Aaron Rothermund is a freelance writer, theatre creator, and filmmaker. Aaron has worked on articles for *The Courier*, *Culture Days*, *theBUZZ*, and *PinkPlayMags*.



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Sofi Tukker's Freak Fam Get Ready to Dance Toronto

By Bryen Dunn



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Dance duo Sofi Tukker, comprised of Sophie Hawley-Weld and Tucker Halpern, first met in 2014 and were releasing music together by 2016.

When the pandemic began back in 2020, one area that was most adversely affected were those working within the arts and entertainment field. Productions and tours ground to a halt, leaving hundreds of thousands of creative individuals without an outlet, or an income.

Sophie and Tucker were quick to respond to the fact that not only were they affected personally, but their throngs of fans were also feeling the loss and isolation. Within weeks they began doing live streams from home across a variety of platforms, which allowed them to reach out and connect with individuals from around the world by doing daily online DJ sets. As the months progressed, the shows became more elaborate, and their fan base kept growing, self-identifying themselves as the Freak Fam.

The pair were able to interact in real time with their community, experimenting and getting feedback on ideas that would eventually become *Wet Tennis*, their [new album](#) being released on April 29 via [Ultra Records](#). In the process they became the second most livestreamed artist of 2020

according to Pollstar Magazine, racking upwards of 700 streamed broadcasts.

Forward ahead to 2022, and live shows are back with the pair embarking on a [North America tour](#) that includes Canadian stops in Quebec City, Montreal, and here in Toronto at *History* on June 1st, in what will undoubtedly be a sweaty dance party not to be missed.

theBUZZ caught up with these musical renegades to find out more about the album, their queer following, and what's in store for both new and old fans alike at their live shows.

This is an album made for their fans, but perhaps more significantly, with them. "We were so inspired and impressed that people weren't letting the pandemic get them down. It could have been the most isolating thing ever, but people found community, connection, and the joy of dancing." Sophie recalls.

Fans can expect to hear many of their now classic tunes, [Drinkee](#), [Best Friend](#), [Batsht!](#), and [Purple Hat](#), along with tracks from the new album, including the lead single, [Original Sin](#), which they describe as "a mantra of being kind to yourself and rejecting imposed social mores. A soundtrack to the journey towards self-liberation." It's already made the rounds of remixes - [Felix Jaehn's remix of "Original Sin"](#), and [Crush Club's remix of "Original Sin"](#).

Also released in advance of the album drop is [Forgive Me](#), a tune reflecting meditations on resilience, radical self-acceptance, and joy, that draws inspiration from traditional

Turkish music with an accompanying video that was filmed in Istanbul. Sophie shares, "It was written about one of the most challenging experiences I've ever add in my life, but I think we turned it into something really beautiful. It's extremely personal." A third release, [Kakee](#), clocks in at under two minutes, but still manages to pack a punch.

They've become two of the most sought after musicians for collaborations and remixes, but on this new album Tucker says, "We wanted to make sure a lot of it was just us, as we have been doing so many collaborations since our last album." However, that doesn't mean they aren't still willing to do collaborations. In fact, they both would one day like to work with international Belgian superstar, [Stromae](#). "He's the most iconic artist of our time, mixing so many different genres together. You have to see his music videos, they are so next level creative," Sophie exudes. "We saw him at Madison Square Gardens in New York. He moves like a ballerina, but is making EDM music. It's phenomenal"

Fans should be prepared to dress up as well if they want to fit in with their Fam on stage. The duo are well-known for their flamboyant outfits worn in videos and onstage, many uniquely designed by [Johnny Wujek](#) (Katy Perry, HBO's *Legendary*), and others that they put together themselves.

They also have a huge queer following. Sophie attributes that to their goal of "creating a safe space for everyone to be themselves." For this current tour, they've partnered with [The Ally Coalition](#), an organization founded by Jack Antonoff from the band, [Bleachers](#), and fashion designer Rachel Antonoff. One dollar from each ticket sale goes directly to

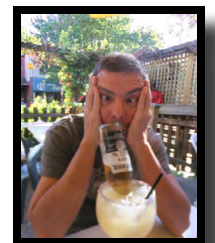
the organization, which is committed to bettering the lives of LGBTQ youth through tours, social media campaigns, and collaborative partnerships. In the past, they've also aligned with [The Trevor Project](#).

As for their unique combo name putting Sophie before Tucker, basically they said, "It just sounded better." As well, there's an early 20th century cabaret singer named [Sophie Tucker](#), whom they both admire. [I Don't Want To Be Thin](#), was released in 1929. Sophie says, "She was a woman ahead of her time on a lot of things, in regards to feminism and activism. She was also funny and a fantastic entertainer." Asked if they might do a cover one day, she replied, "We've talked about it."

So what can fans expect at the show? "Us against each other, a bit like a game of tennis," Tucker joshes. Get into the groove by watching some of their awesome [videos](#). You can also hear them on their bi-weekly SiriusXM radio show, [Freak Fam Radio](#), on [Diplo's Revolution](#) Channel 52 that airs every other Wednesday at 10 PM ET.

[Sofi Tukker plays History in Toronto on June 1, 2022 Tickets.](#)

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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WIGGED OUT

BY TINA BURNER

MY RELATIONSHIP MIX TAPE



syrup down his white shirt. Though my first meal was pulled pork poutine, to my surprise, Edmonton is in a "heat wave" and actually warmer than in New York (disappointing), raining, and there are no moose to be seen, there are no horses or men in uniform, and unfortunately, we have exchanged hottie JT for the "Best Winter Ever" Kenney. But the people here are wonderful, pronouncing their vowels, and apologizing for everything, "Sow-ree a-boot it."

But I digress.

RuPaul's Drag Race has afforded me the opportunity to travel across the world telling my life story with *MAYBE THIS TIME* (and the forthcoming *MIX QUEEN: A RELATIONSHIP MIX TAPE*). The best part of touring is meeting the fans, and experiencing the local drag artists of each region - that is truly what it is about. No matter where you are from, or what style of drag you do, we can all learn from each other, and learn from each other's jokes. From performing in Jonesboro, Arkansas to selling-out in Colorado Springs, it is always so fascinating to learn we are all the same; we have shared experiences in the LGBTQIA+ community, and we all just want to live the happiest life we can, inspiring others that though life is difficult, finding your own chosen family makes life worth living.

Especially during this time, when the Greek alphabet variances are haunting our daily lives, live performances and human interaction are more important than ever. Laughter is the best sugar to make the medicine go down, and it feeds the soul. It's what our soul truly needs, what makes us wake up each morning and put one foot in front of the other. And when the weather does end up being -47C, you can look yourself in the mirror and say "turn it and burn it, bitches."

And that's what it's all a-booooooot, Alfie.

Hope to see you when I'm in your town.

[Tina Burner](#) is an Emmy Award Winner, and star of *RuPaul's Drag Race Season 13*, and *Shade: Queens of NYC*. She also produces her own touring shows, including *Maybe This Time*, and *Witch Perfect*. As a recording artist for over 20 years, her latest cabaret production, *Mix Queen: A Relationship Mix Tape*, coincides with the release of her sophomore album of the same title. The show combines live singing mash-ups of chart-topping pop songs paired with Tina Burner's signature comedy mixes. There's one Canadian stop in Edmonton on April 15 and 16, 2022



I'm writing you from the True North, or Canadia as I like to say. The fire queen is now the ice queen! I've really enjoyed my time here, but I have some grievances. I showed up to Edmonton with my musical director Blake Allen thinking it was going to be the coldest place I've ever been, with moose running amok and mounted police tying me to their horses and having their way with me while Justin Trudeau (shirtless of course) watched pouring maple

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Michele Jelley



got that job followed by other CBC standouts like, *Material World* and *Kids in the Hall*. In film, she worked on HBO's *Everything's Jake*.

Michele later married and left film and television to stay home and help raise her young stepchildren. "I went back to school to finish my incomplete BA from decades earlier." While doing her Masters at Rutgers U-Newark, she was asked to teach some writing courses. Inspired by her young students, she continued on this path for 15 years.

Hands down her greatest inspiration has been her mother. "She was a complex character who had a very difficult childhood yet found very positive ways, through music and gardening, to overcome that trauma. My mother was very creative and a social activist. She was my rock and my best friend. I miss her very much."

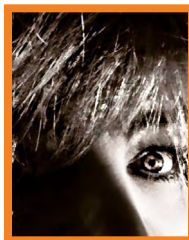
Currently working on the TV series, *Beacon 23*, a new sci-fi drama for AMC starring Lena Headey and Stephan James, Michele explains her writing ritual. "I write best in the morning when my mind is clear and fresh. I try to get up early and write for two hours before I have to go to work. Some days I'm very productive and others not so much. Facing the blank page can be very difficult. I try not to edit myself too much and just write, no matter how terrible it is. I can always go back and edit later."

Michele's recent feature film screenplay is titled, *Safe Home*, and is a dark comedy drama. "At its core it is a redemption story about a young woman, who with the help of a very eccentric and theatrical couple, is able to confront her demons and escape her past." The screenplay has been a finalist in numerous festivals and has won five screenwriter awards so far.

Michele has also done extensive research and is starting to write a limited mini-series. "It's a historical drama about Vaudeville." You can find out more about Michele [here](#).

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](#)



Award winning screenwriter, **Michele Jelley**, was born in New Jersey and raised in St. Catharines, Ontario, surrounded by a family of creativity. "My mom sang and danced, my dad and brother are both drummers, and my Uncle Kenny (Wheeler) is a world renowned jazz musician and composer."

At the age of 7, Michele started accompanying her mother to the musical theatre company she was involved with. "*Gypsy* and *Funny Girl* were my faves." At 14, Michele saw the film *Cabaret*, It's message spoke to her and she became obsessed with Bob Fosse.

Michele's passion for theatre led her to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, where she studied theatre production and specialized in Directing, Design, and Management, from 1979 to 1981. "I loved writing and directing."

Shortly after, Michele started working as Stage Manager for *Buddies in Bad Times Theatre*, when she heard CBC was hiring a props person for their series, *Street Legal*. She

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What's In a Name?



Do You Know The Streets In Your Queerborhood?

The streets of Toronto's Queer Village will soon be teaming with life as queers cautiously return after a two-year absence. But, how well do you know those streets that you walk, skip, and stumble down? In this two-part feature I'll provide a little commentary for your next walk-about.

WELLESLEY

Named after Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. Arthur, a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was a war hero and thorn in Napoleon's side during the Battle of Waterloo.

JARVIS

Originally named New Street, Jarvis Street was renamed when the Jarvis family sold their Hazel-Burn Estate. The Jarvis family were one of Toronto's founding families and were horrible, unsavoury characters. "Turkeys," "incompetent," "lazy," "selfish," and "dishonest" are some of the adjectives that can be found in historic literature to describe them. They were also proud slave-owners. When Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe sought to make slavery illegal in 1793, Jarvis opposed him. Because of Jarvis, Simcoe's law was watered down to gradually phase out slavery instead of ending it altogether. Samuel Jarvis, William's son, spent time in jail for murder, and both men were caught stealing in their appointed roles with Upper Canada's government. The younger Jarvis was found guilty of embezzling £4,000 from First Nations groups and was forced to sell his land to reimburse Toronto.

ALEXANDER STREET • WOOD STREET

Both streets were named for Toronto's first outed gay man, Alexander Wood, a Scotsman who possessed lots of inherited money, and owned much of the land where the queer village

now sits. Between the 1800s and 1900s many of the lands owned by prominent families around downtown Yonge St. were sold off to developers so that the city could grow. These estates were given the name "Park Lots." The 50-acre Wood estate, Park Lot 8, was one of the final lots sold, subdivided and developed. Wood was a respected magistrate until 1820 when he was hit with a sex scandal. While investigating a rape case, he inspected the penises of several young suspects after the victim said she had scratched her attacker. Though it was never officially recorded that he did anything "untowards," the town created a nickname for him, Molly Wood. "Molly," being cheeky British slang for homosexual men. As a result the lands that he owned became known as Molly Wood's Bush. Today he is considered the "father" of Toronto's queer village and a statue of Wood, commissioned by the Church-Wellesley BIA, sits at the corner of Alexander and Church St. The monument's fate is up in the air as some are now calling for its removal, based on that scandal.

Next Issue- Part Two.

Jamaican-born Rolyn Chambers grew up in the suburbs of Mississauga, before attending Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD). In 2001, he began his Deep Dish column with fab Magazine. Deep Dish has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. IG @ rahrahrolyn



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A KODAK MOMENT

Sophie Labelle

BY BOYD KODAK



SL - I think that would be the release of *The Best of Assigned Male*. I'm proud of the result, which highlights eight years of work. The book itself is also a beautiful object.

BK - What are you looking forward to next year?

SL - I can't wait to finally get to see some old friends and family that I haven't seen since the beginning of the pandemic. In 2019, my Finnish husband and I got married and I moved to Finland, right before COVID hit, so it was extra tough to travel to Canada, with the restrictions and everything. Hopefully, this summer things will be easier!

BK - Where can we see your work?

SL - Since 2014, I've been posting most of my strips on social media (think Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr) as "Assigned Male Comics". You can also find my work on the [Webtoons](#) app, an app that lets you read comics online by scrolling through pages, as "Serious Trans Vibes". And, of course, you can find my comic collections and novels at your library or at your favorite bookstore!

BK - Future plans?

SL - In addition to the new novel that I already mentioned I'm currently working on, I will continue to post new comics online three times a week. My husband and I are also currently working on a children's book, about a trans girl playing hockey. I think it's timely, considering the current legislative attacks on trans rights throughout the world.

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

SL - The amazing people at [SAFEBOW](#) and [Lambda Warszawa](#) are currently helping countless queer and trans refugees escaping Ukraine and they need remote assistance. You can help them in several ways by reaching them online.

BK - Finish the following sentence for us...I couldn't live without...

SL - ...the hope that someday trans people will be able to live without constantly having to justify their existence.

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



Cartoonist, public speaker, and writer, [Sophie Labelle](#) is an exceptional Canadian talent, well known for her webcomic, [Assigned Male](#). Filled with terrific imagery and brilliant narrative, it procures from her experiences as a trans girl and woman. She speaks on activism, trans history, and transfeminism.

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

Sophie Labelle - I've been working on a new novel and building stuff around the house, such as a chicken coop and a greenhouse. When the pandemic started, we decided to move out of the city to a rural centennial house. It's very quiet, but there's a lot of renovations that need to be done.

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

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THE WELL HAMILTON'S NEW QUEER HOTSPOT



I've attended a couple of events at [The Well Hamilton](#) restaurant and bar, which recently opened in Hamilton. The staff were exceptionally polite, pleasant, and helpful. As well, the bar was well stocked, the prices were entirely reasonable, and service was quick and friendly.

There is entertainment every night, featuring drag shows, Karaoke Thursdays, live music on select nights, and Saturday afternoon Bingo. Evening show times have been set a little earlier than the standard to which many of us are accustomed, with some shows starting as early as 7:00 p.m. with a DJ spinning later into the night.

The entertainment so far has been excellent, the sound system was better than many other venues, and the lighting was very good as well. They also have a large video projection screen which was retracted for the show, then came down after to show videos. It's also used for Bingo, Trivia, Drag Race viewing parties, and sports events.

As a lovely feature of added entertainment, there is a shower stall next to the stage, with clear views from three sides, of attractive, scantily clad young men, who are currently featured on Friday and Saturday nights. I hear rumours that a certain drag queen who shall remain nameless, recently performed a number while enjoying the pouring water. I can think of a few songs which would be appropriate... anyone for Rhianna's, "Umbrella", or the classic, "It's Raining Men"? There are plans to expand the talent roster to include some female shower "dancers". A talent search show might be on the horizon.

This is truly a community bar, hosting community groups such as: *The Imperial Court of the Waterfall Empire* (part

of the International Court System community fundraising association) for Sunday Trivia and FUNdraising drag shows; *Prime Timers of Hamilton*, a local social group for mature and senior LGBTQ2S+ community members; *Hamilton Queer Gamers*, a local LGBTQ2S+ group who meet in the space for social interaction, with a collection of several board games; and a local Leather group.

The bar has an arrangement with Topper's Pizza, next door, and offer food from their menu, including pizzas, wings, sandwiches and handhelds, salads, and dessert options. Plans are currently in the works to expand on the successful food-drink combo special which was offered on Valentine's Day – a heart-shaped pizza and bottle of wine for two.

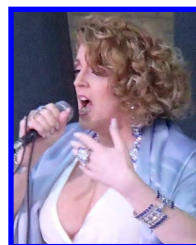
With so much going on, and such a friendly environment, I'll definitely be back!

Current hours of operation are:

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 5:00 p.m to 2:00 a.m., Saturday and Sunday 2:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. (some Sundays at noon for special social groups).

[The Well Hamilton](#)
161 Wellington Street North.,
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Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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We are now back to providing a wide array of happenings throughout Toronto, the GTA, and beyond, and are hoping our regular events print section will return shortly.

In the meantime please continue to check our combined online listing of both in person and virtual events www.thebuzzmag.ca/events.

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