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*Groundbreaking Editor-in-Chief Making History*



**Pleasure Positive Living**  
*Katie, Lindsey and Madison on Sex and Empowerment*

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Hello Friends!

It's a brand-spanking new year... 2023, can you believe it? I still like to think 1993 was 10 years ago. And with this fresh beginning to another trip around the sun comes a new editor for theBUZZ – and it's me! I'm honoured to step up to the helm of this beloved publication and not only will I respect the torch passed to me, but I'll also make sure the flame on this torch continues to burn bright – as bright as each and every one of you, because this magazine is for you.

I thought it would be fitting for me to grasp this opportunity to have our first feature showcase a conversation with **Denne Michele Norris**. She's broken barriers, glass ceilings, doors, windows, and gloriously so as the very first black and transgender Editor-in-Chief for *Electric Literature* magazine. Aaron Rothermund had the chance to talk with her about the admirable and history-making journey she's been on thus far and what she plans on accomplishing (and powerfully tackling) in the future.

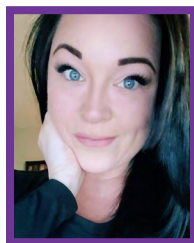
Prepare to blush because our second feature will honour the month of love in all the positive, sexy, and empowering ways possible. Three badass women, **Katie, Lindsey and Madison** of *Pleasure Positive Living* talk openly to us about experiencing the sex, pleasure, and intimacy we queerly desire and deserve in life. They also share not only how their titillating podcast came to be, but how they discovered their own personal sexual truths.

Our Wigged Out guest writer is the eccentric but wonderful, **Weird Alice**. She's a film-buff extraordinaire who screens the best in bizarre cinema at *Drag Me to the Movies*. She Beat columnist, Cat Grant, spoke with one of Toronto's favourite DJs, the iconic **Denise Benson** to discuss her early years and the streaming series she's involved in, *Outrage*. Boyd Kodak chatted with fantasy novelist, **Lyn McGinnis**, about her utopian *Anu Awakes* novel series. Sherry Sylvain gave us the scoop on a great little takeout spot in Stratford, **Sirkel Foods**. And Rolyn Chambers gives us the Deep Dish during this season of the Valentine on queer divorce.

Don't forget to check our BUZZpicks for upcoming event listings you won't want to miss!

Happy reading my queerlings. xx

**Mel MacMullin**  
Editor-in-Chief



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# Denne Michele Norris

## Busting Down Doors as First Black Trans Editor-in-Chief

By Aaron Rothermund

### Denne Michele Norris is an accomplished author, an in-demand public speaker, and the former fiction editor at *Apogee Journal* and *The Rumpus*.

Her critically acclaimed short stories have appeared in the anthologies: [Everyday People: The Color of Life](#), and [Forward: 21st Century Flash Fiction](#). Her writing has also appeared in *ZORA*, *American Short Fiction*, and *McSweeney's*.

Norris studied English in college but when she graduated, she knew she wanted to pursue writing in a more practical way. “Studying literature is different from studying craft, which really boils down to the mechanics of how someone writes literature well. I wanted to feel like I had a toolbox filled with various techniques at my disposal. My MFA was the chance to study writing from the writer’s perspective, with a specific eye towards technique and practice. It was also incredibly valuable time because I could focus on writing without having to build it into a life filled with more pressing things, like earning a living to pay bills.”

Norris says she first discovered [Electric Literature](#) a decade ago while studying fiction at *Sarah Lawrence College*. Then in 2021, Norris would be empowered to lead the online publication, and in doing so, she would become the first black and openly trans editor-in-chief of a major U.S. literary publication. Her reputation quickly grew as she was aptly listed as a 2021 Out100 Honouree, and *Electric Literature* won the 2022 Whiting Literary Magazine Prize.

“I think the biggest surprise has been the way that *Electric Literature* has positioned me in the publishing industry. It’s been so wonderful because in many ways, I’m the face of the organization. I get to drive our editorial vision, and I get to impact the publishing industry in some pretty significant ways. Obviously, I’d been aware of EL, and reading EL, since its inception, but I wasn’t expecting the job to impact me in this way. I can enter any room filled with writers and publishers and people know who I am. I’m still not used to that visibility, but it’s a powerful tool in my efforts to affect change in publishing, and in identifying talented writers from various, under published communities.”

Although Norris has numerous literary accolades, one of her most impressive feats is simply living openly as her authentic self. Her public image as a positive role model to the trans and queer community while experiencing intersectional bias makes her struggles and triumphs more eye-catching and deeply felt. Not only is she opening doors for other struggling artists, but she’s holding it open for people from marginalized communities.



“Keeping in mind that EL has long been a publisher and advocate of queer writers, I assumed that I would get frequent submissions from trans and gender non-conforming writers when I got the job—if for no other reason than the amount of press my hiring received. But several months in, we were in the middle of another Dave Chappelle inspired discourse, and not only had I received very few submissions from these writers—I wasn’t even looking for pieces on Dave Chappelle, just general submissions from trans and gender nonconforming writers—but I wasn’t seeing trans people of colour platformed or uplifted during those weeks. The vast majority of folks who defended our community in the media, were not trans, and didn’t really know enough about trans people or trans experience, to effectively advocate on our behalf. Now, I can’t just go and get someone booked on CNN—I’m not that powerful. But emerging writers who publish at EL are read, every day, by literary agents and editors. Publishing on our site can lead directly to a major book deal. And if more trans writers are being published, more trans writers will be visible, and will have opportunities to speak out for us in the future. But I had to find these writers. It became about building a pipeline, so that when this happens again in 5 years, there’s a whole cadre of people living at the intersection of race and transness who are well positioned to speak up.”



Photo: JHolden Kent Blanco

Norris has made a commitment to searching out work from people that may not be published elsewhere, because all genuine stories are valid and should be celebrated. Norris has begun working on an essay with **Addie Tsai**, and *Electric Literature* will be covering **Camonghne Felix's** forthcoming book as well, both of which she is excited to share with her readers.

As for the future she says, "I am knee deep right now in drafts of essays for both/and, our new limited essay series by trans and non-binary writers of colour, and this is the most rewarding work I've done as an editor so far—in my entire career. These 16 pieces are filled with nuance and newness, and they are more authentic than anything I've ever read. Look out for them because they will be published in spring/summer 2023."

If you're looking for other vital readings by provocative artists pushing forward in their craft, Norris states. "*Recommended Reading and The Commuter*, our acclaimed literary journals, are doing this on a weekly basis. Our book lists are often relevant to current events and serve as resources to our readers who want to know where they can find reliable information to better understand what's going on in the world. This [book list](#) that was published in March, just days after the invasion of Ukraine, is a perfect example of that."

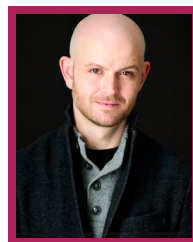
Norris prizes accessibility, and states, "At EL, everything we publish is available for free online. More access for readers to good literature means a better world for everyone; I really believe that."

Also, make sure to buy Norris' debut novel, *When the Harvest Comes*, which was sold to *Random House* in early November. "I'm in the editorial process with my amazing editor, and I couldn't be happier. In general, I find more joy in the revising and editing process, than I do in the process of generating new work."

It seems Norris isn't content with just being lifted up to new heights. She demands a bridge be built behind her with an accessibility ramp to provide everyone with an equitable chance to succeed regardless of their physical characteristics, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and for all our sakes I hope she never slows down.

All photos by *Hilary Leichter* unless otherwise noted.

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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# PLEASURE POSITIVE LIVING WITH KATIE, LINDSEY, AND MADISON

By Melissa MacMullin



**Let's talk about sex, baby. Let's talk about you and me. Remember that song? It's time to talk pleasure. Let's be frank. Let's get straight, or better yet, let's get queer to the pleasure points.**

Are you ready to feel empowered to a point where you're able to transform your life in and out of the bedroom? In and out of the closet? Upside down and inside out? Well, however you dig it and wherever you like it, Sex and Empowerment Coaches, Katie, Lindsey, and Madison of [Pleasure Positive Living](#) can help us queer folk harness our true passion and power, connect with our wildest desires, and live our most pleasure positive lives.

"You are a creator, leader, innovator, and teacher. A bad-ass, you are seen, you are known, you are loved." Whether it's a self-worth reset you're looking for, a want to overcome sexual shame, confusion or frustration, fresh hot sex tips you're seeking, or perhaps you're curious about unlocking a deeper level of intimacy with a partner or with yourself—whatever you can dream of, fantasize, or think up, they can provide you the ultimate roadmap to attain.

Katie, Lindsey, and Madison are the spicy wranglers and no-BS hosts of a top-rated sexuality podcast, *The Pleasure Positive Podcast*, formerly known as *Clit Talk*—but it's not strictly for women, they're all about helping men too. They've interviewed doctors, sexperts, celebrities, porn stars, you name it, they've talked to them and there's no topic that's untouchable, having created over 250 episodes with a following of 40,000+ listeners in more than 180 countries.



"It all started at a bachelorette party in Palm Springs. Madison was given a very unique gift by our friend - a book called *Pussy: A Reclamation* by **Regena Thomashauer**. At this point, none of us were on the path to sexual empowerment just yet. Katie was a 31-year-old woman who had never masturbated, Madison was soon-to-be-married into a monogamous heteronormative relationship but had a massive secret crush on a lady and Lindsey didn't understand why she wanted to grab all her girlfriends in naughty places even though she had a long-term boyfriend."

The three friends were so enamored by the book, they decided to start a book club which launched them into conversations they never had before. It didn't take them long to realize their hunger to explore their sexualities and to inevitably discover the missing links in their lives. "If us women were seeking this type of transformation around our sexuality, we thought there must be others out there too, so we launched the podcast, *Clit Talk*."

Since the launch of *Clit Talk* (now *Pleasure Positive Living*) Madison came out as queer in her now polyamorous marriage and has been dating women, Katie discovered masturbation and its health benefits, and Lindsey tapped into her desire and truth to be fluid. "Inclusion is very important to us while a lot of our listeners are female identifying our podcast is not gender specific and we wanted everyone to know they were welcome, that sexual empowerment and pleasure are everybody's birthright."

"I now explore what people would call an open relationship. It feels free, scary and I'm sure some people will judge me for my lifestyle but for me it's my truth and I believe everybody deserves to live their truth whatever it may be. Am I bisexual? Heteroflexible? Pansexual? I don't know. Labels don't empower me," shared Lindsey. "Over the years how I identify has shifted. Bisexual turned to pansexual and then eventually what resonated the most was queer," Madison added.



If you're wondering why they changed their podcast name from *Clit Talk* to *Pleasure Positive*, it was due to the restriction of expression—yes, that's right—apparently “clit” is viewed as an offensive word. “*iTunes* starred out our name, so it looked like “C\*\*t Talk. We don't understand why the word clit would be censored. It's short for clitoris which is the pleasure center and a very fun part of the vulva anatomy.”

Their plans for the future are commendable ones at that, and very much needed when thought about from a progressive stance. “One of our dreams is to have a TV show. Our biggest goal is going mainstream, which was a huge reason for our name change. We want to normalize the word clit, so it is no longer considered profane, and not banned or censored.” They live to see the tides turn, and they aim to be the change they want to see. Power to them.

“We are committed to bringing what some people would consider taboo conversations in a way that anyone can participate. I always say one man's taboo is another man's Tuesday, right?” In their podcast, Katie, Lindsey, and Madison go all out, try all the boundary-pushing sexcapades, confront and disrupt shame, then hop on the air to tell their listeners all the gritty details. Some special LGBTQ+ topics in the past have included conversations on non-binary, gender identity, coming out, the future of fluidity, queer movies, queer celebrities, transgender therapists, cock talk and masculinity.

“With two out of three of us being queer, we openly share our journey as well as current experiences throughout the whole show.” You can hear about queer experiences in practically every episode from what Lindsey and Madison divulge about their personal lives. “What we've discovered, no matter what your sexual orientation, communication is the number one thing needed when it comes to positive pleasurable sexual experiences. Many people have come out in their relationships as queer, bisexual and pansexual out of listening to our show or participating in our programs.”

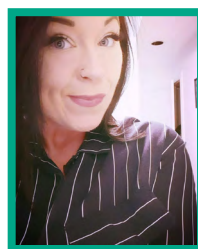
Their website offers support in creating a lifestyle where pleasure is clearly and obviously the star of the show, as it should be. They provide resources through their podcast, social media, and *YouTube*, as well as their exclusive online courses and membership community with pleasure education. “Sex is only one part of that.” They have one-on-one coaching, various digital products, and free masterclasses and workshops to indulge in too.

Coming in March, they'll be launching their *Sex & Empowerment Signature Masterclass: A roadmap to regain self-love, harness your true voice, and live a turned-on life.* Their free workshop series *Confidence Under the Covers* is happening in February—visit their website for more information and to sign up for their masterclasses, workshops, and courses offered.

It's time to wake up your deepest pleasures from their slumber. Poke the sleeping bear. Or maybe your bear is already awake, wide-eyed, and bushy-tailed but it's ready to take pleasure to a whole other level. Intimacy has no limits. Pleasure has no limits. Be limitless. Be open. Be free. Be love. “Give yourself permission experience pleasure in everything you do.”

*All photos courtesy of Ryan Marsh*

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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## Happy Divorce Day, Valentine!

Whats your name again?



Happy Post Valentines



Having happily resigned myself to being a confirmed life-long bachelor, I feel the need to encourage queer married couples in my circle to at least consider the possibility of breaking up—especially during this time of the Valentine.

Fun fact: To celebrate the month of love or the lack thereof, I create my own Post-Valentine's Day cards and eagerly hand them out to all.

Now, with queer marriage and unions legal in almost 30 countries as it stands today, my curiosity got the better of me. What is the divorce rate like?

In Canada, queer individuals have been legally able to tie the rainbow knot since 2005, but it was the court ruling of Halpern v. Canada in 2003 that got the ball rolling. Though the LGBTQIA community had been fighting for legalization of queer marriage for decades, this new push began in 2000 when Toronto's Reverend Brett Hawkes began issuing proclamations of marriage (or "banns") at the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto. These "banns" allowed couples such as Hedy Halpern and her partner Colleen Rogers to begin a legal challenge to the marriage ban. They eventually won.

In June of 2003, the government passed the Civil Marriage Act, making same-sex marriage (and divorce) lawful across the fair land. But before the brides could

kiss there was a hitch; the Court of Appeal for Ontario's jurisdiction couldn't override federal law. This meant that although it was legal in Ontario and technically legal across Canada, it was not federally official until 2005.

Over the years, studies have found that the "first-wave" gay marriages have proved more durable than straight ones, but not expected to last." This means that as time goes on, queer people won't see marriage as "special" and "new." Still, statistics prove that worldwide the queer divorce rate is less than that of heterosexual couples.

Not surprisingly, two out of three married same-sex couples are lesbians, which might explain the unusual rate of lesbian divorce. Where the divorce rate for gay male couples is 16% and heterosexual couples have a divorce rate of 19%, those happy U-Haul lesbians have a whopping 34% divorce rate.

I called you an Uber



Happy Post Valentines



Melissa & Tammy Lynn • 7 Years



Happy Valentines Divorce



### Queer Celebrity Divorces

The queer creatures below, with their millions of dollars and celebrity stylists, couldn't make their marriages work, so how can you?

- Actor Elliot Page and Emma Portner married in 2017 and filed for divorce in 2021
- Actor Sara Gilbert and Linda Perry married in 2014 and divorced in 2019
- Glee actor Cheyenne Jackson was together with physicist, Monte Lapka, for 13 years—married in 2014 and divorced in 2016
- Melissa Etheridge and Tammy Lynn Michaels married in 2003 and filed for what ended up being the longest and nastiest queer divorce ever in 2010
- Rosie O'Donnell and Kelli Carpenter married in 2004 and divorced in 2007
- Rosie O'Donnell and Michelle Rounds married in 2012 and divorced in 2015
- Figure skater-turned-sports commentator, Johnny Weir, married Victor Voronov in 2014 and filed for a bitter divorce two years later
- Actor Jane Lynch married psychologist, Lara Embry, in 2010 and filed for divorce in 2013
- Colton Haynes and Jeff Leatham married in October of 2017 and divorced six-months later amid cheating allegations
- Actor Lena Waithe and Alana Mayo married in 2019 and filed for divorce two months later

It's obvious that while marriage and coupling is not in my cards, except my Post-Valentine's Day cards, it seemingly has worked out for the majority of gay men who chose to tie the knot.

I say be more like the divorce-happy lesbians. The pickings are getting slim out here.

Cheyenne & Monte • 2 Years



Happy Valentines Divorce



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*, which ran for a full decade, allowing him to interview everyone from clubbers and promoters, to celebrities and politicians. *Deep Dish* has now been resurrected once again here in theBUZZ. Chambers is also the author of, *The Boy Who Brought Down A Bathhouse*, self-published by himself via YumEee! Communications. IG @rahrhrolyn



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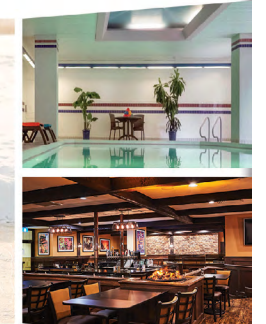


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# WIGGED OUT

BY WEIRD ALICE

## DRAG ME TO THE MOVIES!



They're composed primarily of static and that feeling you get when you fall asleep in front of your TV's warm-glowing warming glow to the sound of late-night infomercials and phone sex hotlines. Say hello to your guide through all things queer and bizarre in cinema—[Weird Alice!](#)

Trying to find and choose a movie to watch these days is tiring, expensive, and kind of draining. Too many subscription services full of bland and heavily edited or censored content, nothing out of the ordinary or remotely queer.

Do you yearn for those personal picks from the video store clerk? Wish you could go back to hours of curated movies on cable?

There's a solution and it's [DRAG ME TO THE MOVIES!](#)

*Drag Me to the Movies* is an interactive screening series painstakingly curated by Weird Alice for your personal viewing pleasure. Every month a different movie is played at Toronto's prestigious [Paradise Theatre](#) accompanied by a variety of themed drag numbers before the feature.

To make things even more exciting, Weird Alice and their cast of guest stars deliver insights and added flavour to what's on-screen. Think of them as the butter for your popcorn— 'cause the only thing that makes a movie better is watching it with snacks, friends, and yelling at the screen!

Still not enough for you? Well, greedy guts, we've got you covered with movie bingo.

How does that work? Clever but crass bingo cards are provided with options of things that may or may not happen on screen, and it's up to you to pay attention and mark them off as you see them. From explosions and decapitations to big dyke energy, awkward boners, and fashion faux pas, there's a square for them all.

And because transgressive cinema is paramount to queer and cult cinema, unfortunately a lot of the time we're met with dated and oppressive content, so you've also got squares like casual racism, homophobia, and what an asshole! This allows you to still enjoy the movies while keeping your critical thinking skills sharp.

Sound easy? You've got to be cutthroat and willing to make enemies with your fellow audience members to win, but you also may have to make a convincing argument to Weird Alice to secure the coveted prizes!

Weird Alice will pick your next movie, and you're going to like it, because as **John Waters** himself has said, "Weird Alice knows a thing or two about nutcase films!"

Weird Alice is an award-winning drag artist and filmmaker who has performed all around the world and you can find them on or in front of a screen near you. [www.watchwithweird.tv](http://www.watchwithweird.tv)




## Get a kitchen with a view.

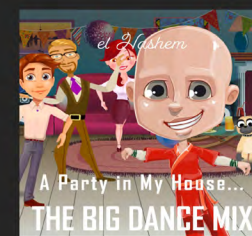
Selecting the appliances that will complete your luxury kitchen is an important design decision. Make your kitchen a feast for the eyes. Get inspired at your local Tasco showroom.

**TASCO APPLIANCES** [tascoappliance.ca](https://www.tascoappliance.ca)

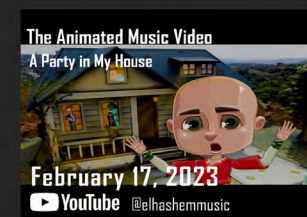
# DROPPING SOON



from the popular EP  
(OUT NOW on all music platforms worldwide)



February 16, 2023  
From UK producer Hectic, comes the dance mix you're going to want to play on repeat at your next house party.



From Toronto film maker Davina Hader comes the hopping, twerking, boozy music video

# Denise Benson

Photo: Lulu Wei



properly beat mix for a long time. I still can recall lots of trainwrecks at fairly high-profile gigs and I shudder!” Favourite events include Dyke Nite at the *Boom Boom Room*, SHE Saturdays, Glide Wednesdays at *Gypsy Co-op*, and [Cherry Bomb](#), which she continues with [DJ Cozmic Cat](#).

By the early ‘90s, Denise was writing for *Exclaim* magazine, then as a columnist in *EYE Weekly*, focusing heavily on electronic music and culture for 15 years. “Toronto was a hotbed—our rave and club scenes were exploding at the time. I was lucky enough to interview many of this city’s, and the globe’s top talents.”

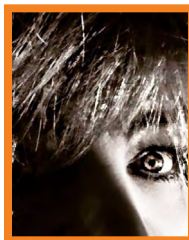
A mom of an active and creative 8-year-old, it may surprise people to know Denise is an introvert who requires silence to write and has struggled with social anxiety—however, that hasn’t stopped her from accomplishing great things. Her successful book [Then and Now: Toronto Nightlife History](#) has gone through two printings. Also, Denise wrote and narrated the Gaybourhood Music Tour which is interactive and can be downloaded at [ON-FOOT](#).

Doing story research and writing for TV and film over the past 5+ years with *Bangor Films*, director **Chris Remerowski** approached Denise with an idea; a queer take on electronic/dance music. “The project grew to explore connections between 2SLGBTQ+ people and electronic dance music, from the origins of house to today’s massive rave culture.” Titled *OUTRAVE*, it can be found on [Revy](#), a global streaming network focused on queer content and creators. The aim is to develop this into a city-centric docu-series, with the first episode hosted by Benson, focusing on Toronto.

“My favourite part is getting to speak with queer club and rave contributors—from scene-builders to trailblazers, about why it’s always about more than a party for queer and trans people. It’s a significant time to talk about queer and trans contributions to electronic/dance music culture and why this matters.”

Cat Grant (OCAD) is a multidisciplinary artist. Starting her career in dance and music, painting and photography are her main focus now. As a published poet, Cat is also the Executive Director for Toronto’s *Goddess Day Arts Festival*.

[Facebook @grantedarts](#)



Born in Bowmanville and raised in several small southern Ontario towns, Writer, Researcher, DJ, and Toronto icon, [Denise Benson](#)’s first inspiration was her mother. “My mom was a very strong, independent woman who had an incredible eye for colour and detail.” An antique dealer with interior design skills, Benson’s mother read voraciously and loved music.

It was through her mom’s eclectic record collection that Denise began her own love affair with music. Mixing tapes from the radio at the age of 7, she DJ’ed her grade 8 graduation dance, and at various high school events.

In Toronto’s late ‘80s, actively interested in social history as part of coming out, Denise volunteered at CKLN 88.1FM. With access to professional equipment, she made her own demo tape and landed weekly DJ gigs at *Showbiz* and *Nuts & Bolts* before starting the very first Dyke Nite at the *Caribou* in 1990.

“I was always a pretty strong programmer—able to read crowds and play across music genres but didn’t learn to



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# A KODAK MOMENT

## Lyn McGinnis

BY BOYD KODAK

Photo by Mathew McCarthy



the process of creating both the e-book and print-on-demand (physical book) versions.

**BK** - Where can we see your work?

**LM** - *Hesha Vira's Challenge* may be purchased in e-book form wherever you buy your online reading material. The print-on-demand version may be acquired from *Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart, Powell's Books*, and *Books-A-Million*. It is also available through the following wholesale networks: *Ingram, Baker & Taylor, Nacscorp, Bookazine*, and *BPDI Corp.*

**BK** - Future plans?

**LM** - My intention is to publish one additional novel per year for the next seven years.

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

**LM** - As someone who identifies as both a bisexual and genderqueer person, there are many queer aspects woven through the narrative of my novel series. This includes polyamorous social units where everyone is bisexual. There are two honoured classes of genderqueer characters. The 'Betweeners' are genderqueer and serve as bridges between the genders. The 'Completes' are intersex and are venerated as perfect and complete beings.

**BK** - Finish the following sentence for us, "life wouldn't be the same without ..."

**LM** - A vision. My novels are set on the planet, Anu. There are two species; two of the main characters belong to an upright bipedal group, the Tolku. The other is a quadrated creature, the Suvuka. The two Tolku are on opposite sides of a division brought about by a rapidly changing world. This is the advent of a life system called Tatchlan, which will remake Anu into a society free of self-absorption. One of these Tolku is young Shuna-Shapta; she is on the verge of becoming a Tatchlan Master. Seti is an itinerate boy with mental challenges who, through visions, sees himself as a prophet of an old religion long opposed to Tatchlan. The Suvuka is named Sinkin; he is also a youth. He will undergo a trial of initiation into adulthood. His species lost a war of aggression with the Tolku and now are banished to a third of their former homeland. These characters move through an ancient landscape towards surprising meetings and an unexpected conclusion to their separate journeys.

[hfacebook.com/profile.php?id=100089624287324](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089624287324)

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



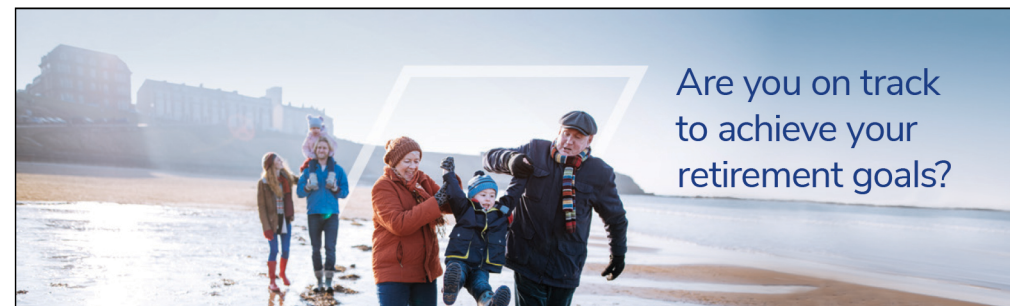
**Lyn McGinnis** is an epic, utopian fantasy series author with an approximate eight novels under their belt—favouring the medium of a typewriter or a pencil and paper. A very talented and creative writer, Lyn's work is being compared to other extraordinary epic series greats. Openly bisexual and gender variant, Lyn is also an LGBTQ+ activist and personal support worker.

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

**Lyn McGinnis** - In 2022, the first novel of my eight-part epic, utopian fantasy, *Anu Awakes* novel series, *Hesha Vira's Challenge*, came out. This is the culmination of several decades of work growing this fantasy world.

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

**LM** - Early in 2023, the series' second novel, *Amarel Mountain*, will become available. I am about to begin



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## SIRKEL FOODS



**Sirkel Foods** is a small takeout restaurant located across from City Hall in downtown Stratford, Ontario. Open since 2007, run by chef and co-owner, Kelly, the restaurant is adorned with rainbow logos, prideful door decals, and a menu which includes the Rainbow-wich, Pride-wich, and LGBTQ+wich—they even put up a rainbow tree at Christmas. They will be closed for a week this March for renovations, the work will include painting a feature wall with a big rainbow for photo-taking opportunities and an entire wall showcasing their menu. *Sirkel Foods* is a plethora of rainbows and pride, where all are welcomed to an inclusive and supportive environment, and where everyone can feel comfortable.

Although they were originally an eat-in venue, at the start of the pandemic they changed to takeout only and have maintained this format. *Sirkel Foods* is a woman-centered operation, with 2 female owners, a staff of 15 women and one man. Their regular clientele is comprised of local people working in the downtown neighbourhood dropping in for a quick bite, or to take something more substantial home to share with family and friends. *Sirkel Foods* currently does not offer public washrooms—when they were open for eat-in service, they did offer an accessible facility which they now maintain for gender neutral staff use. Otherwise, the space is handicap accessible, with a large, wide front door for ease of entrance.

The menu for this little gem is eclectic and intriguing—with soups, sandwiches, salads, mains, and sweet treats. They feature a Jacked-Up Mac and Cheese, which changes daily but could be topped with pulled pork and coleslaw or bruschetta or butter chicken with mango chutney or bacon supreme. Their most popular offerings include the Meatloaf Sandwich, Dream-wich (goat cheese, red pepper jelly, chicken, and arugula), and BBQ Chicken Caesar Salad. The Ewen-wich appealed greatly to me, with smoked turkey, bacon, Swiss cheese, sundried tomato mayo, tomatoes, cucumbers, and arugula. Chef Kelly prepares everything on site and is happy

to accommodate dietary restrictions and food allergies. They have gluten free baking, bread, salad dressings and stir fry sauce, and they can make vegan, dairy free, gluten free, nut free versions of items.

Beverage options are straightforward: pop, juice, water, coffee, and tea. They are located in a safe area but a little while ago, the rear door, window, and dumpster were vandalized with hate speech. The situation was upsetting to the owners and staff, and to other local businesses who responded by displaying rainbow flags in support of *Sirkel Foods* and the 2SLGBTQ+ community at large. The Festival Theatre ran a “GoFundMe” which raised enough money to install security cameras and a large back light. Kelly has also worked with the local Pride group to raise funds to install the first Pride crosswalk in Stratford. Sadly, it was vandalized the first night, illustrating how much work remains to be done in the fight for acceptance and equality. Displaying community resilience, Kelly and the Pride group will work to have the rainbow Pride colours repainted.

This place is definitely worth a visit, with glowing reviews across *Facebook*, *Yelp*, and *Trip Advisor* platforms, each boasting an average 4.5 stars. “We are just a small takeout restaurant, owned by two women who pour their heart and soul into everything we do at *Sirkel Foods*. We care about our customers and enjoy making delicious food for them. We would be nowhere without our community.”

**Sirkel Foods** - Monday to Friday—8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday—Closed

40 Wellington St., Stratford, ON

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).



## Nominate those who INSPIRE you

Person of the Year  
Youth of the Year  
Positive Business of the Year  
Inspiring community Organization of the Year  
LUX Award for the Arts  
Accenture Innovator of the Year  
Charles Roy Award for Activism in HIV/AIDS  
Lifetime Achievement Award

## BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

We are extending nominations period to April 15th to allow for everyone to get their nominees in

Inspire  
AWARDS

Celebrating inspiration, accomplishments, and good deeds, in our LGBTQ2S+ community

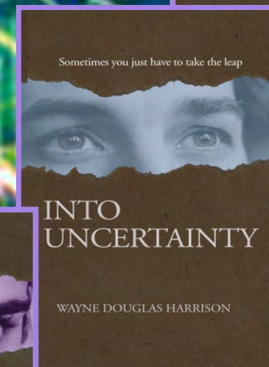
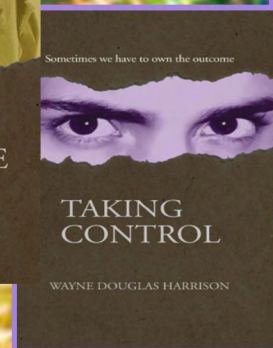
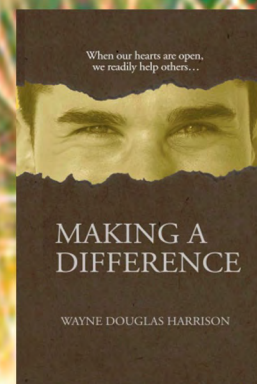
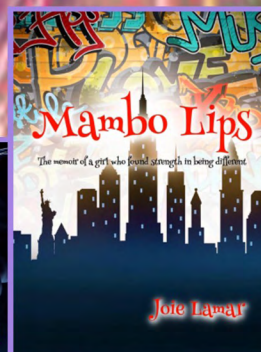
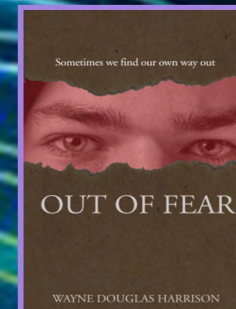
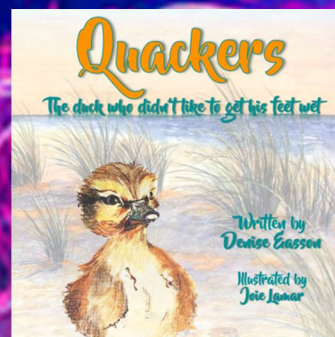
[www.inspireawards.ca/nominate](http://www.inspireawards.ca/nominate)  
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By Sherry Sylvain

### POP: SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE

February 17; 10:00 p.m.

Throw on your sexiest jammies for a slumber party like no other. DJ Sofia Fly will bring you current and retro lullabies to keep your slippers tapping and your booty bouncing. Hosted by BOA.

**Buddies In Bad Times, 12 Alexander St., Toronto**  
[buddiesinbadtimes.com](http://buddiesinbadtimes.com)



### Oh Fudge 2023

February 20 to 27

As a tribute event to the late Candice Kelly, 3X Empress, and renowned host and entertainer, The Imperial Court of Toronto hosts an online auction of exceptional jewellery, keepsakes, and collectibles, to raise funds for Rainbow Railroad, and PWA Food Programs.

**ONLINE Auction**  
[www.32auctions.com/Fudge23](http://www.32auctions.com/Fudge23)

### Rock of Ages

February 23 to May 20

Rock of Ages, one of Broadway's longest running hit musicals, is exploding on this Toronto stage before embarking on its international tour. Featuring earworm 80's chartbusters from iconic and platinum-selling artists.

**Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto**  
[www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home](http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home)

### Jock Night Thursdays

Thursdays from 8:00 p.m.

Hosted by Morgan James and sponsored by JockstrapCentral.com. Meet the newest entertainers, and existing favourites in the field of male striptease. A male-only venue. Located above Flash.

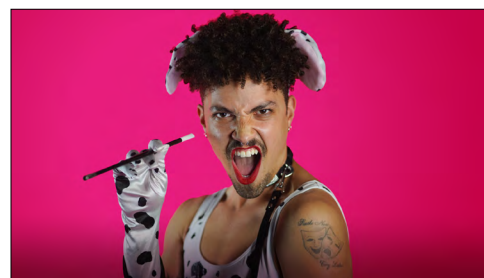
**Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto**  
[www.flashonchurch.com/](http://www.flashonchurch.com/)

### Sex Dalmatian

March 3 to 11

The adventures of a canine business-mogul, her too-eager assistant, and her psychosexually charged arch nemesis. The titular character will be played by all five members of Rock Bottom Movement, rotating parts each episode, as a means to decentralize a single identity as a lead character.

**Citadel + Compagnie, 304 Parliament St., Toronto**  
[www.eventbrite.ca/e/sex-dalmatian-tickets-404765613847](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/sex-dalmatian-tickets-404765613847)



### Jurassic Park in Concert

March 3 and 4

Watch this well-known and popular film while an orchestra plays the score, live and perfectly synchronized.

**TO Live, 1 Front St. E., Toronto**  
[www.tolive.com/Home-Page](http://www.tolive.com/Home-Page)

### Fairview

March 4 to 26

The Frasier household is preparing for Grandma's birthday party but, while Beverly holds onto her sanity by a thread, her sister can't be bothered to help, her brother is MIA, her husband doesn't seem to listen, and the party guests are more than unexpected.

**Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto**  
[my.canadianstage.com/overview/8231](http://my.canadianstage.com/overview/8231)

### Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro: Och & Oy! A Considered Cabaret

March 4; 8:00 p.m.

Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro transport audiences to other worlds through their stories. Now, they're joining forces in song. Witness their new evening of tunes and tall tales.

**Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto**  
[masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/alancumming](http://masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/alancumming)

### Destination Dancefloor: A Night Of 90s & 2000s Club Anthems

March 10; 10:00 p.m.

The ultimate 90s & 2000s dance music party experience. Move and groove all night alongside the best DJs and performances with the most positive vibes. Performance by Toronto's very own Simone Denny, voice of Love Inc.

**Revival Bar, 783 College St., Toronto**  
[www.eventbrite.ca/e/destination-dancefloor-a-night-of-90s-2000s-club-anthems-toronto-tickets-485262762987](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/destination-dancefloor-a-night-of-90s-2000s-club-anthems-toronto-tickets-485262762987)

### TICOT Drag Bingo

March 12 and April 16; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Join The Imperial Court of Toronto for an afternoon of fun and friendship. Proceeds go to the Reign 36 Charities of Choice: Rainbow Railroad and The Toronto PWA Food Essentials Market.

**Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto**  
[www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com](http://www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com)

### Taste of the Middle East Winter Festival

March 17 to 19

This 1st Annual Festival will feature Middle Eastern delights of food, a bazaar, shopping, drinks, kids activities, music, dabke, dance, chef demonstrations, and more.

**Mississauga Convention Centre, 75 Derry Rd. W., Mississauga**  
[www.tasteofthemiddleeast.ca](http://www.tasteofthemiddleeast.ca)



### VIDEODROME (Video Dance After Party)

March 24; 11:00 p.m. - no cover

Toronto's home of pop, hip hop, disco, club, house and LGBT music videos mixed by DJ Relentless. Just you, the videos, and the dance floor. Requests are welcome—if the DJ has it, they'll work it into the mix.

**Buddies In Bad Times, 12 Alexander St., Toronto**  
[buddiesinbadtimes.com](http://buddiesinbadtimes.com)

### Still Playin' Around – DJ Dallas' 35th Anniversary

March 25; 8:00 p.m.

A community DJ for 35 years, DJ Dallas celebrates with a dance party of all of your classic favourites, with a special guest (supporting) DJ. E-transfer \$16.50 per person to [musicandfriendsdanceparties@hotmail.com](mailto:musicandfriendsdanceparties@hotmail.com)

**Impact Lounge, 238 Parliament St., Toronto**

### Sibling Rivalry Live

March 29; 8:00 p.m.

A multimedia extravaganza that takes one through the television tubes on a quest to settle the ultimate dispute. Sit back, relax, and don't touch that remote because this is a battle royale of lip-syncs, costume changes, and low blows you do not want to miss. Are you team Bob or team Monét?

**Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto**  
[www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home](http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home)

### Maanomaa, My Brother

April 11 to 30

When childhood friends Kwame and Will reunite in Ghana for the funeral of a loved one, they realize just how much has changed since the events that separated them 25 years earlier.

**Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto**  
[my.canadianstage.com/overview/8295](http://my.canadianstage.com/overview/8295)

### YAMATO: The Drummers of Japan - 'Tenmei'

April 13; 8:00 p.m.

From Nara Prefecture in Japan, YAMATO The Drummers of Japan bring their captivating and high-energy performance on this traditional Japanese musical instrument, the wadaiko (Japanese drum).

**Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto**  
[masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/yamato](http://masseyhall.mhrth.com/tickets/yamato)





## ROAD TRIPS

### Smoke My Caboose Drag Show

February 18; 7:00 p.m.

Join in at CASO Station for a fun and exciting night of drinks, drama, and drag. Tickets in tables of 8; individual tickets will be seated to complete tables. Table - \$175.00 +tax; single - \$25.00 +tax.

CASO Station, 750 Talbot St., St. Thomas

[hop.events/caso/e/P25fgz](http://hop.events/caso/e/P25fgz)

### Love IS Love Drag Show

February 19; 7:00 p.m.

Some of Ontario's BEST Drag entertainment from across the province, alongside some of North Bay's very own in a show filled with choreography, hot looks, and the music of your favourite divas.

Boston Pizza, 50 Josephine St., North Bay

[www.tickettailor.com/events/troyboventertainment/832906](http://www.tickettailor.com/events/troyboventertainment/832906)

[troyboventertainment/832906](http://troyboventertainment/832906)



### Hamilton Jewish Film Festival

February 26 to 28

Bringing entertaining and thought-provoking films to engage the broadest spectrum of the Jewish community, and provide an opportunity to learn about Jewish culture, Israel and Jewish history.

The Westdale, 1014 King St. W., Hamilton

[hamiltonjewishfederation.regfox.com/2023-hamilton-jewish-film-festival](http://hamiltonjewishfederation.regfox.com/2023-hamilton-jewish-film-festival)

### The Book Of Mormon

March 20 to 22

Two young missionaries who are sent to Uganda to try to convert citizens to the Mormon religion. One is an enthusiastic go-getter with a strong dedication to his faith, while his partner is a socially awkward but well-meaning nerd whose tendency to embroider the truth soon lands him in trouble.

Budweiser Gardens, 99 Dundas St., London

[www.budweisergardens.com/events/detail/the-book-of-mormon](http://www.budweisergardens.com/events/detail/the-book-of-mormon)

### Bill Nye The Science Guy

March 27; 8:00 p.m.

Bill Nye the Science Guy will present a live multi-media performance based on his currently running hit show entitled "The End is Nye" where he will guide you through six of the most likely global challenges.

Centre In The Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener

[centreinthesquare.com](http://centreinthesquare.com)

### YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN the Musical

March 30 to April 2

From the creators of the record-breaking Broadway sensation, The Producers, comes this monster musical comedy. The comedy genius, Mel Brooks, adapts his legendarily funny film into a brilliant stage creation.

Palace Theatre, 710 Dundas St., London

[mytickets.palacetheatre.ca/eventperformances.asp?evt=368](http://mytickets.palacetheatre.ca/eventperformances.asp?evt=368)

### 6th Annual Winter Royale Pageant

March 31; 8:00 p.m.

Get ready for an explosion of competition. Cheer for your favorites. Hosted by ProjectBE, with the Step Down of the 2022/2023 title Winner: Maple Queef.

Forked River Brewing Co., 4 - 45 Pacific Court, London

[forkedriverbrewing.com](http://forkedriverbrewing.com)



### Drag Me To Brunch

April 16; 1:00 p.m.

A brunch and show to support local drag performers while they raise some funds for North Bay Pride 2023. Parental Guidance is advised. Tickets are \$35 and include Brunch and show. Cash Bar.

The Davedi Club, 313 Airport Rd., North Bay

[northbaypride.ca/event/drag-performance-brunch](http://northbaypride.ca/event/drag-performance-brunch)



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