

TORONTO'S PREMIER GAY LIFESTYLE DIGITAL MAGAZINE

MGT

We Know Gay

MY GAY TORONTO

ISSUE #57 MAY 15 2018 - JUN 15 2018.



Graham Martin



MGT DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Issue #57 May 15 2018 - Jun 15 2018

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REBEL MEDIA

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InsideOut - opens with **A Kid Like Jake** and a lady bear like Fay Slift

DREW ROWSOME

It appears that we can state, hesitantly rather than emphatically, that spring has arrived. For cinephiles, the new season teases the arrival of the Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film Festival running Thursday, May 24 to Sunday, June 3. To whet appetites, the festival has announced the opening gala: the Sundance hit *A Kid Like Jake*.

The comedy/drama headlines the thinking gay man's sex symbol Jim Parsons, with Claire Danes playing his wife. The central dilemma revolves around their child, Jake played by Leo James Davis, who, due to his choices in fashion and playthings, may be trans. The central twist is that his gender choice may be exploitable instead of traumatic, the hook to getting him into an exclusive private school for gifted children. A film focussing on upper-middle class parents reacting to a trans child is suspicious, but the director Silas Howard is trans and has directed episodes of *Transparent*, so at the least we can expect a solid point of view amongst the popcorn baiting.

Of course the opening gala is followed by the Opening Gala Party, consistently a lavish and dramatic affair. This year there is the tantalizing prospect of a summit of divas. *A Kid Like Jake's* strong supporting cast - Amy Landecker, Priyanka Chopra and Ann Dowd - also includes the woman most advantageous to have your back when puzzling out sex with a fish or a trans dilemma, Octavia Spencer. Headlining the Opening Gala Party is Fay Slift who is reliably over-the-top fabulous. To be a fly on the wall if those two meet. Of course it is unpredictable as to which stars will show up for the festival and it would also be entertaining to see Slift overwhelm Parsons.

The Opening Gala Party also features a silent auction, a performance by Champagna Ene-mea, DJ Relentless, and surprise acts. The films that fill the rest of the festival are still cloaked in mystery but will be revealed, along with the official program and schedule, at the Inside Out 2018 Launch Party on Friday, May 4. Also a glamorous and star-studded affair, the launch party is driven by the beats of DJs Ticky Ty and Yes Yes Y'All's Sammy Rawal. Yes, it is definitely spring.

A Kid Like Jake screens on Thurs, May 24 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St W.

The Opening Gala Party is on Thurs, May 24 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St W.

The Inside Out 2018 Launch Party is on Fri, May 4 at St. James Cathedral Centre, 65 Church St.



**Inside
Out**

Connect, Transition & Archive: Pride Run Announces Beneficiaries

RAYMOND HELKIO



In 1996 three gay triathletes founded The Pride and Remembrance Run, an annual 5K fundraising run/ 3K walk coinciding with Toronto's Pride Week. It was dedicated to partnering the themes of pride and remembrance with community celebration and personal achievement.

This year the annual Pride & Remembrance Run (P&RR) proceeds will be split between the P&RR Foundation between three charities, each doing pioneering work within our community. The beneficiaries this year are; Women's College Hospital's transition-related surgery fund which offsets the cost of transition-related surgeries, the Canadian Lesbian & Gay Archives digital hub project which will enable researchers across the globe to delve into the collections and the LGBT Youthline's networking, skill-sharing, and collaborations portal for youth groups and youth leaders across Ontario.

With over 1,600 participants, this event is the largest of its kind in Canada and one of Pride week's largest fundraising. This year the Pride Run will take place on June 23 at 10 AM, but early birds who register before April 30th will save some cash.

Pride & Remembrance Run 2018
Saturday June 23, 2018
10 A.M.

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Did Iggy Pop Just Have Sex With Marilyn Manson?

RAYMOND HELKIO



Photo MICHAEL SHARKEY

Like a slow pulsing alien making it's way from the pit of your stomach to the inside of your head, transgressive queer singer and performer Christeene's new album, *Basura* comes out May 22 and it's as radical as it is sophisticated. Take for example the single "Butt Muscle, which is an 83 beats per minute rhythmic journey through the sexy, dirty and forbidden underground of the ego. Christeene describes the video as "sexualized sub sounds layered with heat sinking harmonies, surfing up a surreal soundscape."

After galvanizing audiences for years throughout Europe and the US, Christeene maintains her rusty, stained-pop aesthetic while tightening her grip and maturing musically. Expanding on the raw punk and electro influences of her debut album, the new tracks are more dense and personal, packed with fresh aggression, choral screams, live instruments, and a broad spectrum of styles/genres melted down into one very unique creation. *Basura* employs a dizzy and diverse sonic palette of punk and funk soundscapes, processed vocals, and influences including Laurie Anderson, Trent Reznor, and Yaz. Christeene's work strikes down heteronormative structures in the queer, artistic, and outsider communities with an aggressive push to preserve rituals and languages allowing the outcast and marginalized to gather, celebrate, and mobilize their voices, identities, and sexualities. Enjoy the butt muscle



Photo : ELI SCHMIDT

HOUSE MUSIC, HOT DADDIES & DADDY CHASERS

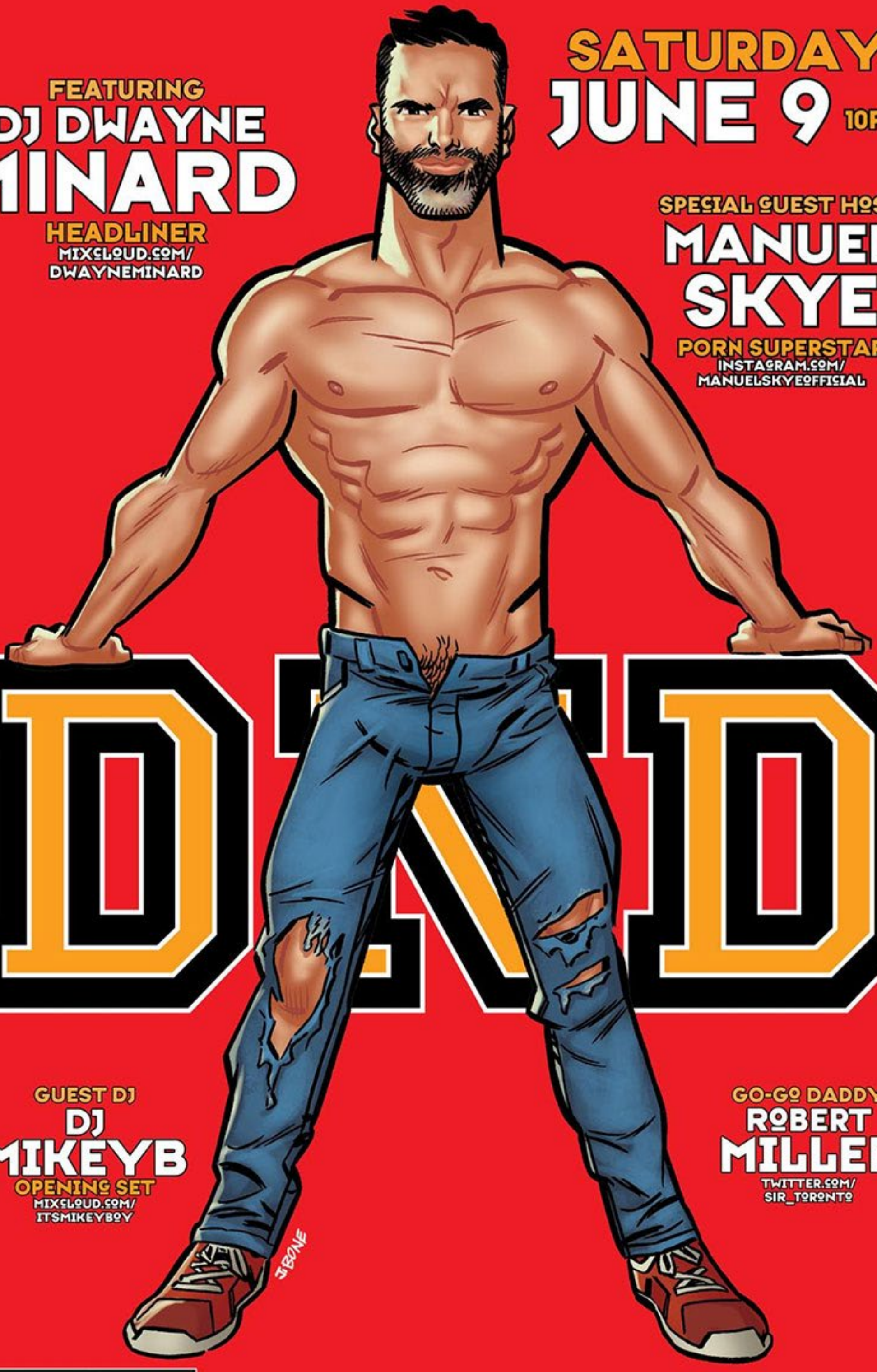
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My Gay Toronto.com

SWISH EMBASSY

The UPS Store

Pop Music: engaging with joy of music

DREW ROWOME

Derek Antonio has thrown the front doors of Pop Music wide open to let in the fresh air and breeze. He confides that this is what he has been waiting for, having the barriers between the street and the music banished for the summer.

It is part of the store's mandate. "We're not showcasing things that are so cool," says Antonio. "Our big focus is to have what people want." Hence the word "pop" being the dominant half of the store's moniker. During the time I spend in the store talking with Antonio, several potential customers stroll in. Antonio is not only the owner, manager and clerk, but he is also an encyclopedia of inventory.

The obscure pressing a collector is looking for? Antonio can have it in three to four days. A punkette searching for a specific Clash t-shirt? That particular one is sold out but there is a slightly different version, in her size. In the sales rack. Asking about an Eurythmics reissue earns a complete rundown, from memory, of the upcoming slate and the exact date of the one being searched for. "It's the advantage of being a one-man show," he says. "I'm having a good time, it doesn't feel like I'm working."

Antonio's impressive knowledge, and extensive contacts, come from his former career as the general manager of the HMV Canadian Flagship Toronto Superstore. It has been accentuated by his current labours of love: Pop Music the store, and music in all its forms. He explains why he has chosen to focus on vinyl. "We live in a chaotic world," he says. "People need to engage. Digital is very passive, you don't listen to an album, you have a playlist. And even skip songs. A album is engaging, it is a work of art."

There is a huge difference between pushing "random select" and lowering a stylus onto a spinning piece of vinyl. It's the difference between music as background or accompaniment, and poring over the gatefold artwork and lyrics while absorbing an artist's creation. And of course sonically vinyl is infinitely superior, richer and warmer with depths that digital just hasn't bothered to capture (and tragically those depths are often no longer even recorded, there is a difference between pop and disposable). There is a reason that downloads and digital music distribution are stagnant, while Antonio notes that sales of vinyl climbed 23 percent last year.

For those looking to engage more with their music consumption, Pop Music stocks turntables. "We carry Audio-Technica," explains Antonio. "The price is good and they have a great warranty. Also you only need powered





speakers instead of a full stereo system.” The selection of vinyl is also supplemented by t-shirts, key rings, coffee mugs and other accessories. “The t-shirts are unique from the UK,” says Antonio. “And they’re all officially licensed with new styles weekly.” They are also reasonably priced with t-shirts going for under \$30 and the swag mostly under \$10.

Antonio picked the location at Broadview and Gerrard, the heart of Little Chinatown, because of the streetcar access as much as for the currently below average rents. “There are only a handful of stores selling vinyl in the east end,” says Antonio. “And the streetcar lines intersect here as do Riverdale, Little India, Leslieville and we’re just over the bridge from Cabbagetown.” And only minutes from the Village, and even closer to the cruising grounds of Riverdale Park and the social hub that is MCC.

As if the prominent Bowie, Madonna and Tracey Thorn albums weren’t enough of a clue, Antonio is determined to remain connected to Toronto’s gay scene. “We do a lot of sponsorships,” he says. “Condom stuffing with ACT, events at WAYLA. I want the community to know I’m here.” The ringing endorsement from east end promoter and hunkster DJ Dwayne Minard (who shops at Pop Music) doesn’t hurt either.



And the east end is gentrifying. The market on the corner of Broadview and Gerrard, two storefronts west, went up in flames five years ago. It is being replaced with a mainstream fast food restaurant. "This will always be Chinatown," says Antonio describing the thrill of having a dragon dancer in the store during Chinese New Year. "There's been an influx of new business owners and the A&W will just makes the corner more alive. Lady Marmalade, a brunch stalwart with constant line-ups, is leaving Leslieville for Broadview. Is Starbucks coming? It will be a test to see what summer is like here."



Antonio admits that his business plan is always in flux as he adjusts to what his growing clientele wants. "We started with a core catalogue of legacy artists, new releases and resissues," he says. But when two kid brothers became infatuated with the cartoon feature *Scooby Doo!* and *Kiss: Rock and Roll Mystery*, Antonio supplied the delighted father with *Destroyer* and custom-printed mini-tees. A social media post about an NYSNC compilation, special for Record Store Day (when Pop Music had line-ups), garnered multiple requests and Antonio is determined to upgrade Pop Music's website. Right now swag can be ordered and shipped but not vinyl. Yet.



Perhaps that is for the best. As well as the lower-tech thrill of a turntable, there is the particular joy of browsing through bins of albums, being seduced by the artwork, anticipating the auditory thrill, stumbling upon something previously unknown but certainly fabulous. Music is an intensely personal experience that is, ironically, often best experienced communally. Sharing a discovery, dancing in a crowded club, the collective catharsis of a concert, or debating and discussing your choices. Or shopping at Pop Music.



Pop Music is at 581 Gerrard St E.
popmusiccanada.ca



Art on the Street

PAUL BELLINI



I was biking down Church near Richmond when I heard someone call my name. I braked, spun around and saw Nina Arsenault. It's been a while since I had seen Nina, and clearly, she has fallen on hard times.

For a dozen years, Nina was one of Toronto's and the world's most famous and fabulous trans women. She embarked on her gender change in the late '90s, using money from her sex cam work to pay for the almost one hundred surgeries. But the results were astonishing. Back when she and I were co-hosts on PrideVision's *Locker Room*, she looked pretty good, but then another round of surgeries eventually transformed her into a modern-day Venus de Milo.

Nina was pretty, in a classic Hollywood way. She worked it, too. No dummy (she has two Masters degrees), she made her life the subject of her art, starring in such one-Nina shows as *I Was Barbie* and *The Silicone Diaries*. She did fabulous performance art at the Sodom club nights at Goodhandy's. She was a living art installation, she flirted with rock star Tommy Lee, and she even dated Luca Magnotta back when he was a stripper called Angel. The one thing she never thought she might become is homeless.

Nina told me that she feels abandoned by all the people in her past. She feels used and abused, and worse, thinks that everyone is making fun of her. She showed me her shoes, so worn out they are practically falling off. Even though she is bald, she still looks pretty good, and she's still strong, likely from lugging around that huge backpack. She told me that the problem with being homeless is that other homeless people steal from you, so as a result she has no laptop, no dresses or wigs, nothing of value. The other thing about being homeless is the inevitable succumbing to street drugs. At the age of 44, she doesn't need the added health issues that addiction brings.

Frankly, I don't know what to do, but as a community, we should try to do something. I don't want my next column about her to include the words "rest in peace."



MGT COVER PHOTOGRAPHER mastermind behind MenArt.co.uk

GRAHAM MARTIN

DREW ROWSOME



Stven Di Costa - [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/crbllm) - [crbllm](https://www.instagram.com/crbllm)



"I guess I'm a little immune as to what's outrageous," says photographer Graham Martin, a busy commercial photographer and the creative force behind MenArt.co.uk. *"Solo, duo, threesomes, full-on sex, sex with guys dressed as gladiators, it's all in a day's work."* Martin's MenArt photographs are an exuberant celebration of the male form.

In all its forms.

This is deliberate and Martin is happy to answer questions about his art and how he turned that art, and egalitarianism, into a thriving business.

Diego - [Instagram - diego.martinez.san](https://www.instagram.com/diego.martinez.san)

Drew Rowsome: [What inspired the concept of MenArt.co.uk?](#)

Graham Martin: *I'm gay, I like men and photographers take pictures of things they like, so I started taking pictures of men. It seemed I have a bit of a gift for it and I needed to make some money, so I got my thinking cap on and developed MenArt...*



I wanted MenArt to be for everyone who was male and wanted to be photographed in an artistic style, be it clothed, naked or full-on porn. I don't care how old they are or what size they are. My aim is to allow people to express themselves in the studio, have fun and come away with pictures that they love. Of course men with great bodies and a big package are far more commercial - so they have always been and always will be - so they are the subject matter of my promotional projects. Those guys are also the guys happy for the world to see their pictures. Many guys like me, that have had too many pork pies and bottles of wine, prefer to keep our pictures private.



What inspired you to become a photographer?

I had a life changing moment when a pro photographer set up a shot and then asked me to take their picture. I pointed, clicked, then looked at the back of the camera.

I was totally amazed at the quality of the picture. It was just a head shot yet it was a piece of art at the same time.

Of course it was not my camera skills,

it was the photographer's but f

rom that moment on,

at the age of 51,

I decided I was going

to become a

professional photographer.

And as soon as possible.

Before that point I was

a sales manager

in publishing,

I'm now knocking

on 60 and have

never looked back.



How does MenArt.co.uk differ from your other commercial work? Where does it intersect?

Chalk and cheese. The thing that binds them together is people. I love people and I love taking pictures of them. I try and capture emotion and movement whether that is a guy in my studio or at an event in Westminster or an awards event for designers.



Your stated "love of the male form" shines through in your work and you are to be commended for the variety of body shapes, ages and races. How do your personal preferences intersect with the clients?

I don't really have a personal preference or a type. As I've stated before, I love people and their looks are pretty much irrelevant. Photographically if it's a paid shoot then anything goes. If it's a personal project then I am looking for a body and personality that goes with the shoot. I have pretty much photographed every type and shape.

I am told I manage to capture the sexiness and good looks in everyone I photograph, maybe that's because I see good qualities in all people. So when it comes to my art I don't really have a personal preference. Of course as I mentioned I understand the difference between good looks and commercial good looks.



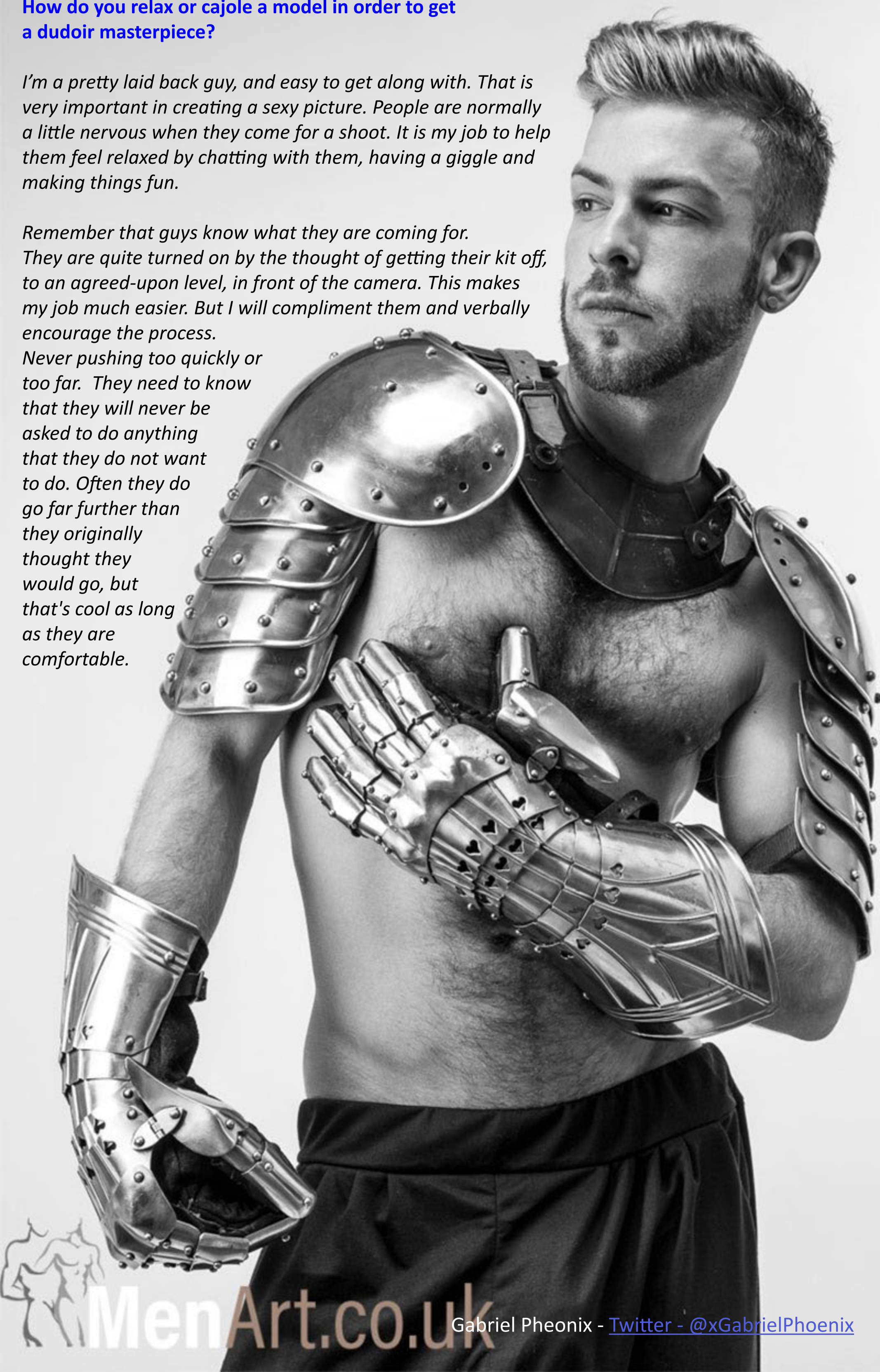


How do you relax or cajole a model in order to get a dudoir masterpiece?

I'm a pretty laid back guy, and easy to get along with. That is very important in creating a sexy picture. People are normally a little nervous when they come for a shoot. It is my job to help them feel relaxed by chatting with them, having a giggle and making things fun.

Remember that guys know what they are coming for. They are quite turned on by the thought of getting their kit off, to an agreed-upon level, in front of the camera. This makes my job much easier. But I will compliment them and verbally encourage the process.

Never pushing too quickly or too far. They need to know that they will never be asked to do anything that they do not want to do. Often they do go far further than they originally thought they would go, but that's cool as long as they are comfortable.



Trust and privacy are very important and guys need to know their pictures will not be seen where they don't want them to be seen. Once this trust has been established, often very early on in the shoot, I feel the barriers come down and the guys relax, feeling secure in the environment.

I shoot everything from 90-year-old guys that are looking for a bit of frivolous fun, through to porn stars and escorts.

Then there are the pro models and amateur models. Each shoot is different in many ways, but all are the same when it comes to relaxing people.

I am my natural self and I help them be the same.







Nick Boulton - [facebook.com/nicholas.boulton](https://www.facebook.com/nicholas.boulton)



www.menart.co.uk

When clients arrive do they have a firm idea of what they want from a photograph?

It varies a lot. Some say you're the expert I'll leave it to you. Other times they are there as I am working on specific projects so they know what they are in for. Other times it's a collaborative approach.

Is it different working with a man who wants a portrait, even an erotic or nude portrait, and an escort or porn star?

Mostly, in my experience, porn stars and escorts are very easy to work with. Normally we have already discussed what is required and we get on with it. There is no shyness nor pretensions. And certainly, no prima donnas in my studio. Inexperienced guys need more directing, but they usually have open minds and are easy to work with.

Interestingly, escorts often don't want naked shots and nearly always require lifestyle images. I will discuss their average client with them and what they are looking for.

A portrait shoot normally starts with nerves, so to get great pictures I have to work on relaxing them with lots of encouragement. Often it starts with a chat and a cuppa. If they want to get naked I nearly always start with them fully clothed and get them to strip in front of the camera. We chat as they do this and try have a laugh at the same time. It's a great way of getting action pictures and removes the stiffness of asking a novice to pose.

I get guys naked as quickly as comfortably possible. This takes away the thought that is always going through their head of: "He's going to ask me to get naked soon." Once they are naked, they are usually as happy chatting and being in the studio as when they were clothed.

Actually I avoid posing as much as possible. I will place them in the right spot with the lights and then give a few instructions like, "Slowly undo your shirt and undo your belt." When they do this they move into great poses. I will stop them and shoot and then let them carry on, or even shoot as they move. This is a great way of getting a natural smile, something I love. I'm always looking for fun and happy faces.



Men [st.co.uk](http://menst.co.uk)

Niko - [@nikowirachman](https://www.instagram.com/nikowirachman)



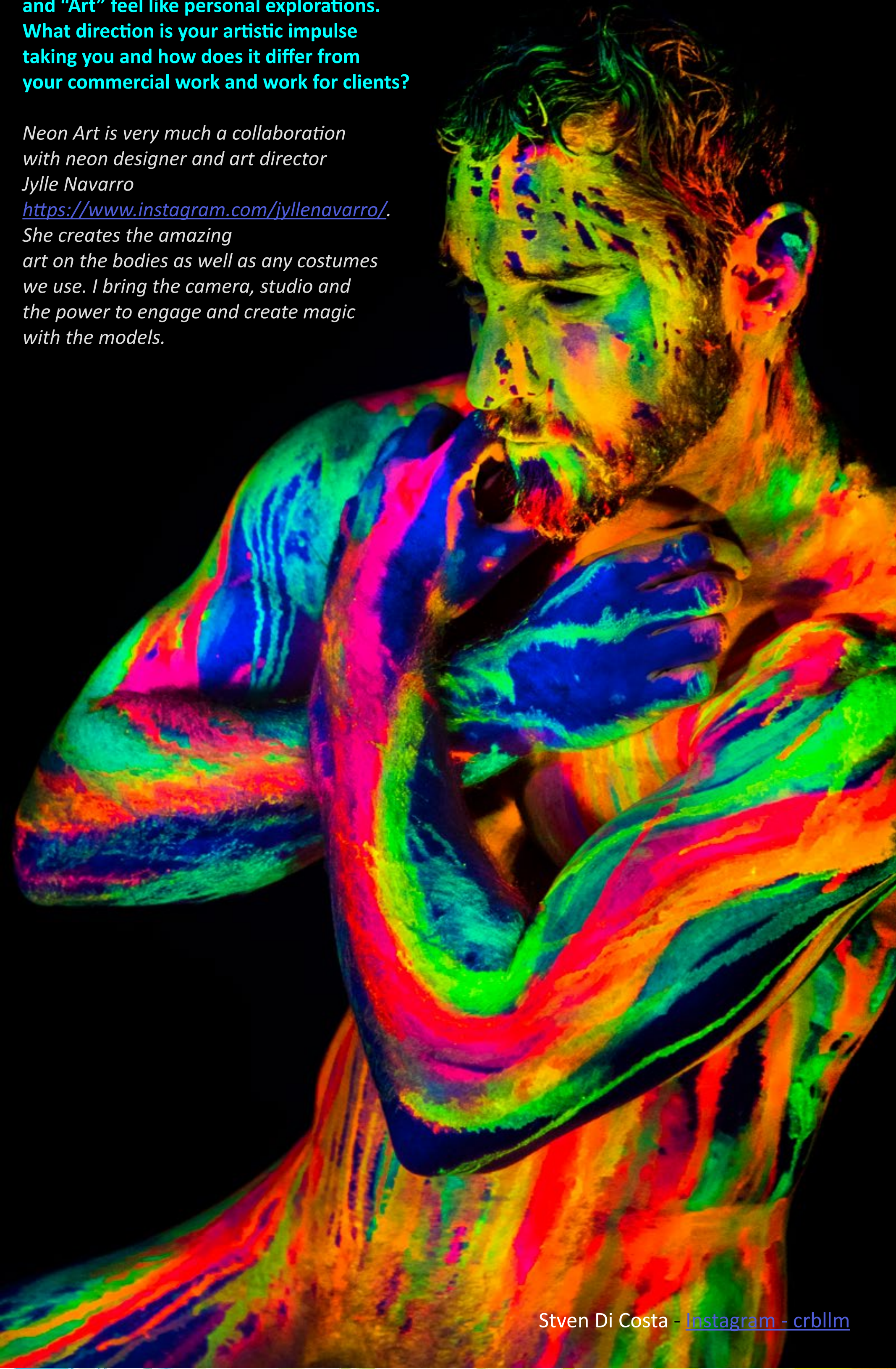


The examples of “Male Neon Body Art” and “Art” feel like personal explorations. What direction is your artistic impulse taking you and how does it differ from your commercial work and work for clients?

Neon Art is very much a collaboration with neon designer and art director Jylle Navarro

<https://www.instagram.com/jyllenavarro/>.

She creates the amazing art on the bodies as well as any costumes we use. I bring the camera, studio and the power to engage and create magic with the models.





What makes a photograph art as opposed to porn (I love your concept of "pornart")? Or should they even be separated?

There are no defining guidelines on this but let me explain where I am coming from on the subject. The motivation for "pornart" came from porn stars coming to me to get stills for their profiles. They felt I would be able to work with them to create something more "artistic" than what they would get from a porn video shoot. I'm sure there are many artistic porn video/photographers out there, but this is what I was asked for.

To me it was a natural thing to do, if I'm going to take picture of men in a porn scenario, I'm going to make it as artistic as possible. The use of light and costume will come into play here.

I am told the reason my OnlyFans page is successful is because it is crammed full of pornart. Subscribers feel it's worth paying to see my pictures as they know they will get something artistic as well as the treat of seeing hundreds of hard cocks and cum shots. Maybe it makes some guys feel a little better about ogling hot men. I don't know, but I'm glad they do and it makes me feel very happy to know people are liking what I do.

Fire exit
keep clear

bar to open





MenArt.co.uk also creates “Epic Shoots” which can be just about anything - costumes, locations, extras - that the client can imagine. What is the most elaborate epic shoot you have been commissioned to create? The most outrageous?

In truth my epic shoots to date have been very much about the art and not the tart. For example, I was commissioned to photograph Craig, a dancer, by an American client. There was no brief so I had full artistic control. I wanted to create something very moody, so we headed to the beach with a ton of lighting and an awesome length of fabric material and got creative. It's one of my most popular shots to date.

Outrageous? I do get commissioned often by an exhibitionist to photograph him in public places stark naked. I have shot him in parks, walking along the side of the river Thames in London and then out and about in all sorts of places.

What would your fantasy epic shoot be?

I would love to shoot some porn stills on a boat of the coast. Or maybe in a private jet.

What qualities does a good model possess?

A little bit of magic. They need to know how to pose, how to find the light, be punctual and easy to work with but most of all they need that magic that happens when the camera points at them and they become alive. Often not such obviously good-looking people will look awesome in the camera.

What makes a photo erotic? How do you know when you have captured the moment that you want to achieve?

I don't know, is the honest answer and I don't think I want to know. I am told I do it and I do it very well. It's something inside me that comes out when I have the camera in my hand, it's my little bit of magic that helps me create erotic and beautiful pictures. Maybe if I did know exactly, the spell would be broken and the magic would end. God that sounds very pretentious but it's how I feel. I just do what I do

Why do you think male nudity is so heavily censored in society at large? Have you experienced censorship or disapproval?

I think a lot of people are too worried about what other people might think. Some people can be very hypercritical about nudity and eroticism. People can do what they think they should be seen to do and claim to have opinions that are often different to reality.

I have had some scary moments where I have mixed up my commercial world and the erotic one but on a face-to-face basis no one has ever minded, in fact I have many middle aged female clients that love a little peek into my naughty world and love it.

Photographic images can be distributed easily on social media. How do you maintain control and preserve a financial stream? The OnlyFans and Patreon formats are changing the way artists and porn performers are compensated. From experience, is this a step in the right direction?

Paid social media is a great step in the right direction. It costs a lot of money to create pictures and this is a way of gaining some of it back. That said it's a hungry beast and takes a lot of time and effort to feed.

The MenArt business is funded in many ways. Paid social media is one, escorts and porn stars looking for portfolio shoots another. Especially if they don't want me to use their pictures. Without doubt the main MenArt revenue comes from private shoots. Guys pay to come and have fun in the studio. They know it's one hundred percent private and no one will ever see their pictures from me.

As to controlling where my pictures go and how they are presented I'm incredibly relaxed about it. If a pic ends up on the internet it's going to travel and there's not a lot I can do about it and frankly I just look at it as free promotion. The only caveat to that would be if they are used commercially without my permission, then of course I would push for reasonable reward for the use of my professional work

MenArt.co.uk
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onlyfans.com/menartlondon







RAYMOND HELKIO

OASIS LOVE

buddies
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BUDDIESINBADTIMES.COM

JUNE 16, 2018

8pm



OASIS LOVE returns to Toronto as part of the 2018 Buddies In Bad Times Theatre's QueerPride line-up. Having conceived the show after a relationship gone mad, writer and performer Johnny Salib is bringing it back one last time with uber-talented director/dramaturge Franny McCabe-Bennett. Having produced the show in Toronto, Hamilton and Kingston, *Oasis Love* has blossomed into an intimate journey combining music and comedy into an experience that is as uplifting as it is heartbreaking.

Oasis Love follows the journey of Damien, a love-stricken boy navigating himself through his first real relationship. Manipulation, music, delusions and comedy combine to create this thought-provoking response to relationship struggles. In an interview with MGT, Johnny explains how the piece was originally conceived, "I was working on a different piece for PRIDECAB 2014 at Buddies in Bad Times called *Me Dating Myself*. It explored the different types of dating profiles I had created over the years, the types of boys I had met and the weird and awkward dates I had been on. As I kept writing *Me Dating Myself* my mentor challenged me to develop a piece that only focused on the one relationship I kept having difficulty talking about. So, I began writing about it, analyzing each moment of it and trying to figure out why it was still eating at me... and that's when *Oasis Love* was born!"

In recent years, our culture's definition of abuse has expanded to include more covert forms, such as the mental and emotional scars that can manifest before a person can recognize the danger, "Sometimes you're too close to a relationship to realize how toxic it is. Damien is so love-stricken, it's hard not to understand why he's gunning to make the relationship work." explains Johnny. While the story remains essentially the same, this show delves deeper into the challenges of coming out, being openly queer and coming out as a person of colour. In a recent interview with Johnny Salib, I ask him about what audiences can expect from this performance.

What has writing this play taught you about love?

Quite frankly, that sometimes you're too close to a relationship to realize how toxic it is. Damien is so love-stricken, it's hard not to understand why he's gunning so hard to make the relationship work.

What do you hope the audience will take away from the show?

That's a toughie! There are so many themes covered in *Oasis Love* that speak to all different types of viewers. There's a lot about the stupidity that goes into meeting people to date, there's a lot about making it through a rough break up, there's a lot about being a proud openly queer individual, there's a lot about the fear of being scrutinized for being queer, there's a lot about coming out as a queer person of colour, there's just... a lot! So I hope the audience takes away a theme or battle that they're struggling with or relate to and feel less alone.

How is this version of Oasis Love different from previous ones?

Well, the show is now officially an hour long (as it started as a 5-minute piece, which went on to 30-minutes, to 45.) There's also a lot more comedy, music and hard-hitting facts about the world we live in right now. Each time I remount this show Franny (my director/dramaturge) and I take a close look at the script and update it to make sure it's still relevant. While the story of Damien and Jason stays pretty much the same, we dive deeper into their worlds, rounding out the characters and polishing the show to its full potential. This version of the show is my absolute favourite, especially because it balances everything out so perfectly.

OASIS LOVE - JUNE 16, 8:00PM - Buddies In Bad Times Theatre - \$30
[VIP INCLUDES RESERVED SEATING AT THE FRONT - \\$20 REGULAR ADMISSION](#)

TORONTO'S PREMIER GAY LIFESTYLE DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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PAUL BELLINI



Discreet is a creepy melodrama written and directed by OUT 100 director Travis Mathews, whose previous credits include co-directing Interior. Leather Bar and I Want Your Love.

It concerns a drifter, played by Jonny Mars, who returns home to confront the man who abused him in childhood. The abuser is an inordinately tall weirdo with a big white Santa beard and a left hand that just keeps shaking. He is apparently incapable of speaking. Not much else happens.

Mathews himself issued this statement about his inspiration for the film: "Late in the summer of 2015, I needed to do something that felt urgent and unafraid. I was driving around central Texas . . . so I indulged in talk radio . . . what I heard sounded noticeably different, like the drum-beat to war. There was an unhinged desperation in these voices and the rumbling sounds of the 'alt-right.' In Texas towns, both big and small, I turned on gay hookup apps like Grindr and Hornet...but I wasn't prepared for the degree of racism, internalized homophobia, and the general fear of being seen, that was rampant. What fascinated me most were the profiles labeled discreet . . . Shame was feeding the darkness, amplifying mythologized ideas of what a real man should be . . . It's fear of being emasculated."

What resulted was Discreet. As a viewer, I'm afraid I must be honest - I found the film torture to watch. It's very quiet, deliberately paced, and everything is seen at a distance. It is not engaging. It also isn't that gay. There's some sex scenes in a sauna, but none of it is all that hot. There are no real characters, or dialogue, or even scenes, just moments in time out of sequence. And all that American 'blue state'/'red state' stuff is lost on me. Discreet may have lofty goals, but even at just 76 minutes I could not wait for it to end.

A TRAVIS MATHEWS FILM

DISCREET

THE PAST IS HARD TO FORGIVE



Bruce La Bruce: Radical Feminism and The Man in the Basement

RAYMOND HELKIO



Already an official selection for Berlinale, Karlovy Vary, Sitges, and Raindance London film festivals and named one of the 15 greatest lesbian films of all time by Indiewire, *The Misandrists* is a loose sequel to Bruce La Bruce's 2005 film *The Raspberry Reich* and could be considered a remake of Don Siegel's 1971 film *The Beguiled*, about a group of would-be terrorists, believing that heterosexual monogamy is a bourgeois construct that needs to be smashed in order to achieve true revolution.

In *The Misandrists*, an injured male leftist on the run discovers the remote stronghold of the Female Liberation Army (FLA) when one of the FLA members takes pity on him and hides him in the basement. But this is just one of many secrets threatening to disrupt the FLA's mission from within.

In a recent interview with Bruce, he told MGT about the inspiration for the film and its timing in relation to the growing politics surrounding gender inequalities, "I wrote the screenplay for *The Misandrists* in five weeks at the very end of 2015/beginning of 2016, and then we shot it in the spring of 2016. The infamous Trump Access Hollywood grab 'em by the pussy tape wasn't leaked until October when I was in post-production, so that wasn't the inspiration, but it could have been! But Trump's antediluvian sexism was definitely in the air in the US election while I was making the movie."

The high cost of filmmaking combined with Bruce's radical subject matter presents challenges for the creation and execution of his work. As Bruce explains, "The film had a modest budget, to say the least, so one of the biggest challenges was to make it look stunning, which I think it does. My oft-time cinematographer, James Carman, shot it in 4K and he's a great lighting DP, so it looks great. Desi Santiago, who designs tours for the likes of Madonna and Britney, did a great job with no budget on the production design. The other biggest challenge, of course, was to make, as a gay man, a credible film about feminism. I drew on a lot of my academic history, having studied feminism in university in courses like "Protest Literature and Movements" and a grad course I took, "Psychoanalysis and Feminism.""

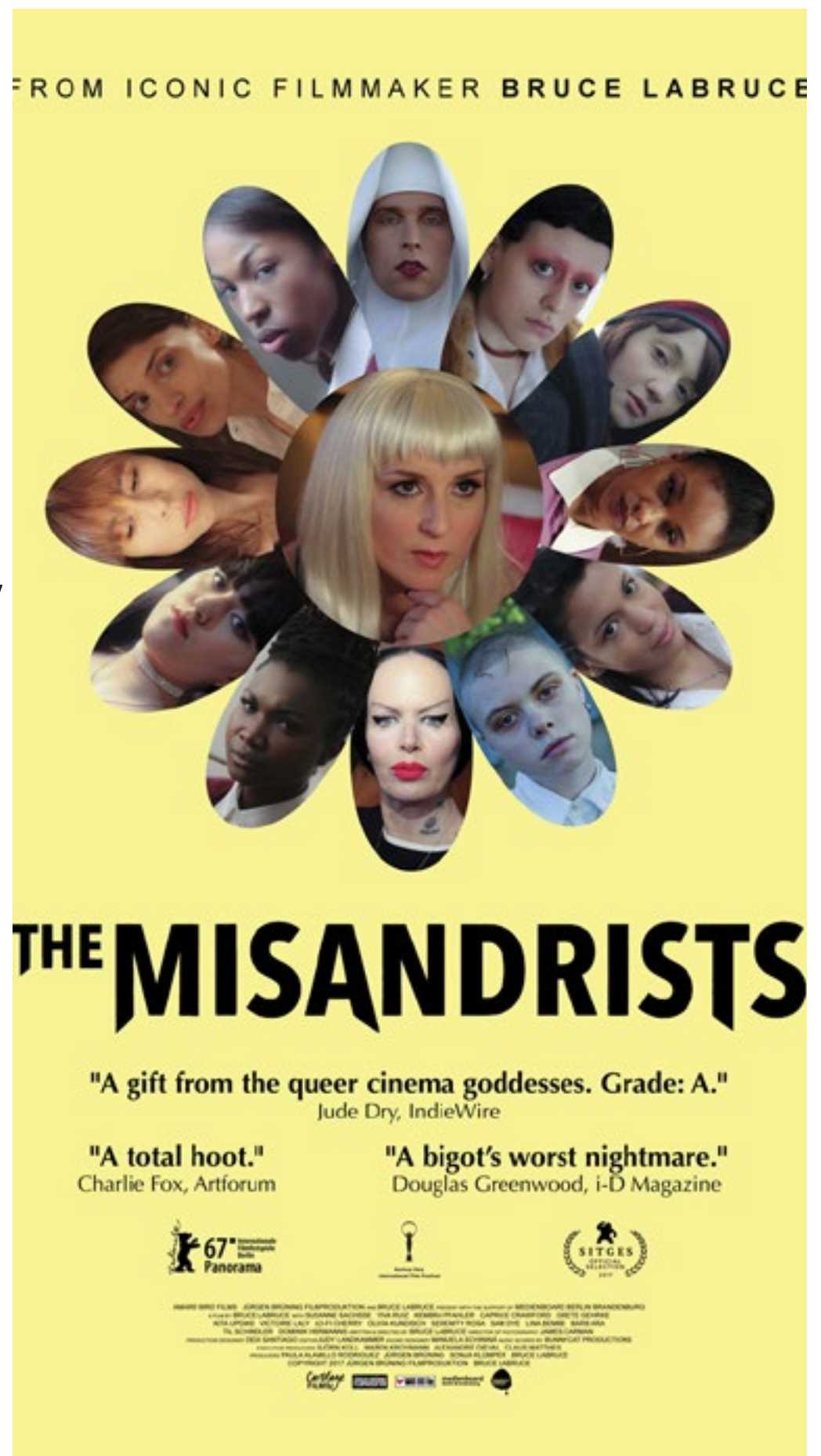
Ironically, the challenges faced by Bruce were offset by the fulfilment he received by working with an all-female cast, "Much of my work has centred around more masculine themes – whether as a celebration or a critique – but to work with so many amazing women, and learn from them as well while making the movie, was very satisfying and enlightening."



Photo credits // Bruce La Bruce by Jackie Baier // Scene from Bruce LaBruce's THE MISANDRISTS. Front row left-to-right: Lo-Fi Cherry, Lina Bembe, Serenity Rosa, Victoire Laly. Center: Susanne Sachsse as Big Mother.

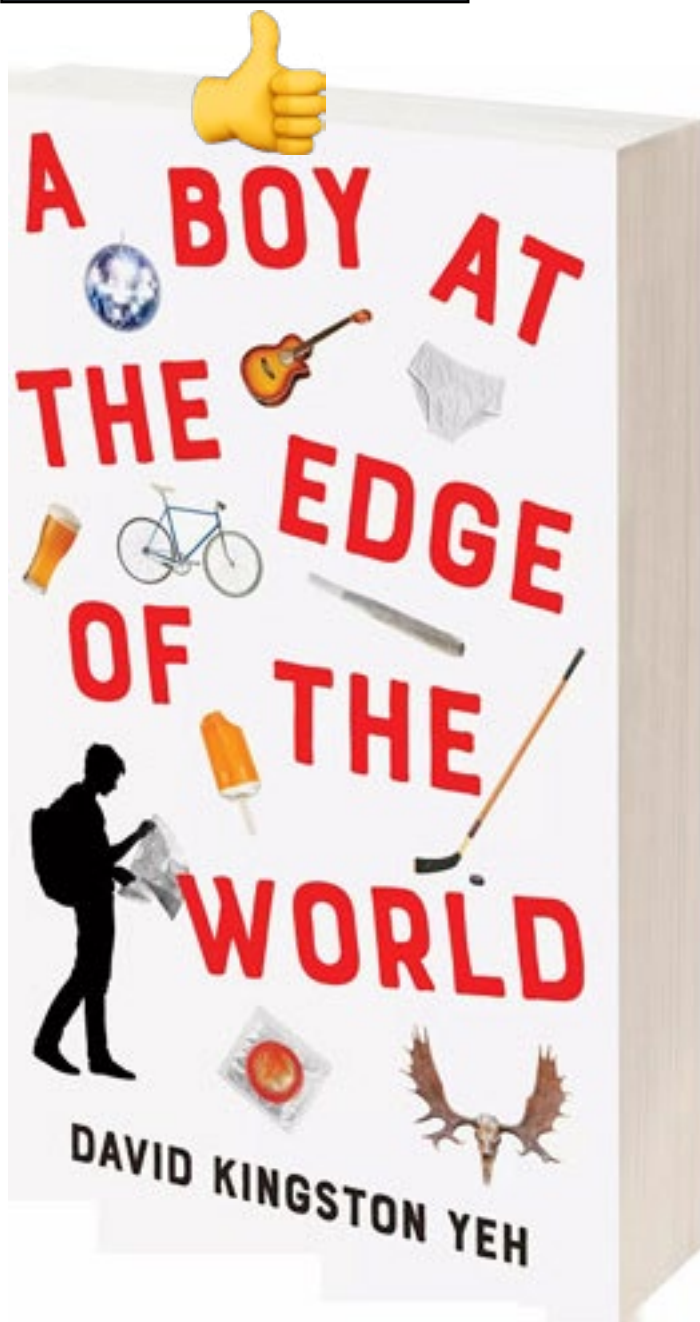
The Misandrists is not only beautifully filmed, the set and locations combine to create an expansive and surreal world in which Bruce sets up his adventure, "The spectacular location that we found, a very old estate house in the German countryside that dates back many centuries, was pretty far away from Berlin, so the core crew actually lived in the house for the duration of the shoot, which was a couple of weeks. There was construction going on in the house and some workers were staying there as well, so we billeted the cast members in small hotels in nearby villages. But we were all stuck in this remote location, so the crew, and particularly the female cast members, bonded very strongly, which was amazing to observe. The heat was only from old coal ovens, and it was extremely cold in the early spring. The floor was like ice getting up in the morning, and there was only one shower! So it was like endurance art."

While Bruce's earlier films such as, No Skin Off My Ass (1991) and Super 8 1/2 (1994) may have launched his career as an agitator and boundary pusher, it's films like Huster White (1995) and [Gerontophilia](#) (2013) that have branded him a counter-culture influencer, giving him greater confidence as a filmmaker. Thinking back to his earlier days, Bruce wished he had more confidence when he was younger, adding that he "was always afraid of technology and of how complicated filmmaking can be, but eventually I realized I am actually a pretty good filmmaker! Part of that lack of confidence was because I was gay and it felt like such a macho world, but I learned how to make friends with the hetero grips and gaffers, and most of them are usually pretty cool!"



A Boy at the Edge of the World and integrating the gay voice

DREW ROWSOME



The first two sentences of David Kingston Yeh's *A Boy at the Edge of the World* sets up the intriguing dichotomies that lies at the heart of this book. The novel is an unabashed gay rom-com coming of age story that entertains with a deceptively light style. The protagonist Daniel Garneau, a former star hockey player from Sudbury, explores his sexuality and struggles to learn to love in a series of vignettes that skip forward in time. But unlike a photo album, *A Boy at the Edge of the World* is not nostalgic and is set firmly in an idealized version of contemporary Toronto.

While the coming out process is central to the novel, it is not the central dilemma. Almost everyone is non-plussed and the two characters, a brother and a grandfather, teased as having the potential for conflict, wind up being casually supportive. It is Daniel needing to open his heart and love that is the central conflict. There are no gay bashings, HIV is mentioned in passing, and the only tragedy is a trans character who is a plot device that is abandoned.

Author Yeh consistently introduces characters and descriptions and only later, often much later, provides an ethnicity, sexuality or even gender. Daniel and his two brothers, they are triplets, who are the core of the novel - *A Boy at the Edge of the World* is also an ode to family - are First Nation but it is rarely commented on, nor is it particularly relevant to the plot or tone. This is not a sociological text or a plea for tolerance or an exposé, it is more an illustration of the Toronto dream, where everyone, no matter their background, is a part of the fabric.

While reading *A Boy at the Edge of the World*, I also read Frank Bruni's excellent New York Times article "The Extinction of Gay Identity" where he debates the pros and cons of assimilation. While jubilant about the strides that LGBTs have made in becoming mainstream, he also laments the loss of uniqueness, culture, community and social cachet. And while he misses that lost world, he would never trade our progress in order to get it back. That is the irony of Yeh's first sentence, *A Boy at the Edge of the World* is not full of the agony, horrors and comedy of coming out, it is the light comic misadventures of one man's coming out.



Ash Reginald Evasco PHOTOGRAPHER

Fortunately Yeh doesn't stray into whitewashing the gay experience. The sex is explicit in a matter of fact and whimsical way. The joy of it is emphasized - except for one assault with a dildo - and gay sexuality is posited as a force for good, a world where straight characters are introduced to the practicality of cock rings and strap-ons. The romantic sex scenes are particularly well written with that casual frankness that occurs only at the most intimate, sexually charged and comfortable moments between men.



A Boy at the Edge of the World is also a love letter to Toronto. Sneaky Dee's, fly nightclub, The Beaver, the AGO and other landmarks are referenced. This grounds the novel in a real world though it is questionable that, if those spaces were not so familiar, would they resonate so intensely? There is also an appearance by Michelle Dubarry, another iconic institution. The novel takes place in a milieu, gay and artsy and food-obsessed, that is realistic because we gay Torontonians live in it and have had similar experiences.



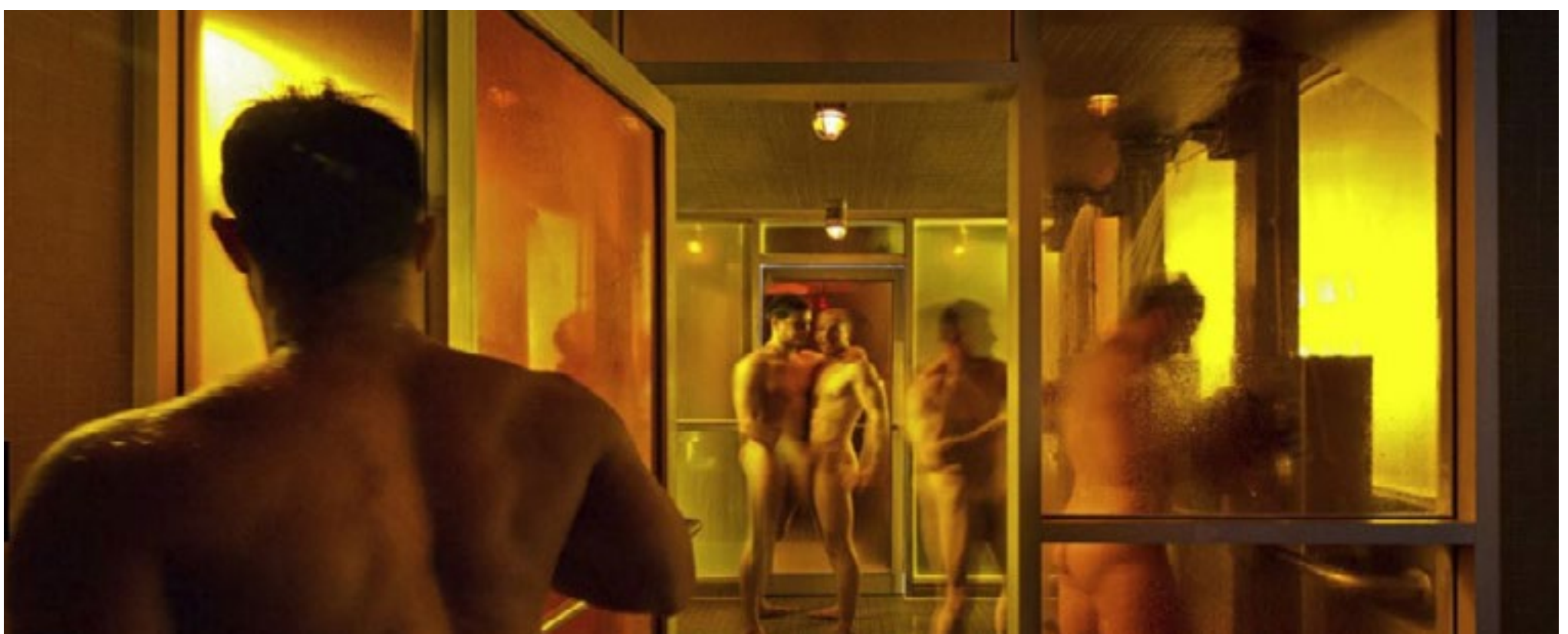
While Daniel remains a bit of a cipher throughout all the snapshots, partially because his dilemmas are minor and his demons are brushed over instead of sensationalized, the cast of supporting characters are vivid. The masturbating grandmother, a sexually magnetic performance artist who is eerily reminiscent of Keith Cole, Blonde Dawn who is a match to Daniel's irascible rock n roll brother Pat, a zamboni-driving thick-dicked virginity-stealing bisexual coach, a boyfriend's mother who converses with ghosts, and a mohawked babysitting bathhouse attendant with ripe foreskin and a shifting sexuality. And of course Daniel has to meet Mr Right who is quirky, horny and understanding, but flawed and practical enough to not slip into whimsicality.

Because this is a Canadian novel and the central characters are nominally First Nations, there is a tension between the urban Toronto and the rugged country. A family cottage is a place of healing, Christmas and snow hold the family together, and Toronto Island (though oddly Hanlan's Point is never mentioned) is a place of refuge and rebirth. In a very Atwoodian manner, the two worlds combine in an outdoor rooftop sex scene that is an act of bonding and sweet revenge.



That scene is also the culmination of a thread of mild satire of celebrity culture. The artists - performance, music, etc - all have motivations that spring from an organic place instead of a desire to be famous or rich. Daniel himself is studying to become a doctor but it is ambiguous as to why, until events dovetail with the past. *A Boy at the Edge of the World* reads like a memoir, with all the allusion and convenient omissions that the genre is known for. The structure (a less literary or ambitious version of *The Sparsholt Affair's* sweeping mystery) breathes with pauses and information doled out when needed.

Returning to Bruni's essay I miss the gay voice absent in *A Boy at the Edge of the World*, that sardonic, quick-witted, coded and camp stylistic flourish that defined gay literature, theatre and art. But that is not Yeh's point. Yeh is describing how contemporary gay is just another piece of the fabric, another of the contributions to the polygot passions of the world. And then the title makes sense. Daniel is not perched dramatically on a precipice at the edge of the world, he is stepping into the world to further become a part of it.



My GayToronto

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DREW ROWSOME ★★★★★

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM



A little conceptual sleight of hand elevates Ma Rainey's Black Bottom from a historical artifact into incisive contemporary commentary. It's no secret that the music industry, and much of the culture around us, was built on the backs of many now distantly remembered black musicians and innovators. Soulpepper and playwright August Wilson lure the audience in with a backstage story and a glamorous blues star dressed in sequins. But Ma Rainey's Black Bottom is not a musical - though the songs and performances of them are exhilarating - it is a meditation on how black men in the '20s, and it's not much of a leap to apply it to today, were ripped off, pitted against each other and struggled to survive in a toxic world.



Like the musicians, the audience is lead to believe they are getting one thing, but they are getting something else entirely. The only difference is that in this case, the audience is the winner.

The set is a wonderful slice of magic realism, with the white men - manager and producer (Alex Poch-Goldin and Diego Matamoros) - perched high above the stage. The band is relegated to a rehearsal space far below. Ma Rainey (the luminous Alana Bridgewater) and her entourage occupy the centre space, struggling to move from one world up to the other, caught in between. Split second light and sound cues create a solid authenticity that is bolstered by powerful performances.

On another level Ma Rainey's Black Bottom is about the stories we tell ourselves, the mythology we create to survive a world that is inexplicable. The focus is firmly on the band members who bicker and spin tall tales and attempt to explain to themselves, and each other, just how systematic racism can exist and how they are going to not be destroyed by it. The main conflict is between

Leave the trumpet player - a star turn from Lovell Adams-Gray who burns up the stage with a flamboyantly physical performance solidly supported by the ability to shift personas from seductive to maniacal in seconds - who plans to beat the system by sheer force of talent and charm. Opposing is piano player Toledo - the strong but suffering Beau Dixon (Hamlet) who knows more than he can express and whose entire physicality shows stolid wear and tear and latent rage - who is trying to find solutions and solace in research and a faith in the written word.



A dapper Lindsay Owen Pierre and a suspiciously taciturn Neville Edwards round out the quartet and they too get their turn in the spotlight, often when least expected. The four ride the words, flowing and overlapping and turning on a dime, a flood of thought, anger and resignation. Wilson's text is old-fashioned and schematic, but so deliciously detailed and written that it grips and draws the audience into a world that is other but emphatically current. The four are an ensemble that plays together with all the skill that only session musicians who have been around several blocks can create. And who are delighted to be given such rich musical words to work with.

The supporting cast are all worthy of their full stories being told. Marcel Stewart's stuttering nephew's triumph would, in a more conventional backstage story, be a cathartic moment of elation.



Virgilia Griffith (The Wedding Party, They Say He Fell) spins and twirls as a woman making her way with the only currency she can rely on, her beauty and erotic allure. Her attraction to Ma Rainey may be one of convenience, but it is definitely a burning one, and Griffith's journey from coquette to vixen with Adams-Gray generates real heat.



It would be wonderful to have a full evening of Bridgewater strutting and singing. There is a subtle aching vulnerability lurking just beneath her force of nature persona and Bridgewater plays it delicately and heartbreakingly. But a musical tour de force would be a different play. Just as Bridgewater is denied a microphone - except, tellingly, for the manipulators above - to amplify her vocals, Ma Rainey rails that "All they want is my voice." All of the characters are struggling to reclaim or even find their voices and it a tour de force that Wilson gifts the voices to them.



Ma Rainey's Black Bottom continues until Sat, June 23 at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, 50 Tank House Lane, Distillery Historic District. soulpepper.ca

DREW ROWSOME ★★☆☆



Girls Like That moves at such a lightning pace, peppered with hilarious one-liners, that it is only after that the bleakness of the vision of playwright [Evan Placey](#) (*Scarberia*) sinks in. The play opens with a lip-sync dance number - one of many that punctuate and facilitate costume changes - wherein we meet the cast, clad in schoolgirl uniforms and exhibiting all the gawky awkwardness and obliviousness of dancing with no-one watching. We are a long way from the bio-drag queen controversy. The music is all female empowerment anthems, with an accent on Queen Bey. That is deliberately ironic.

The characters are seven of the 20 advanced students who attend St Helen's primary school. We meet them at various stages in their lives as the bonds of sisterhood and friendship are tested and eventually torn apart. There are three plot strands that interweave and it is here that Placey's cleverness shows itself: the structure is so tight, studded with clues that cut like razors when they recur, that accelerates to a startling denouement that is obvious in hindsight. The main through line is the downfall of Scarlett, the only girl given a name and the only one who is not an archetype, who sends a nude photo to Russell, the jock object of all the girls' desire.

The photo spreads on social media and the nastiness begins. This is a simple plot and Placey begins with a blunt heavy-handed metaphor that could have ended the play in under five minutes. But then he approaches it from another angle. And another. And our sympathies and anger shift from moment to moment. The girls are as apt to insult with "I bet she's still a virgin," as they are to frequently call each other "slut." A nude photo of Russell appears, possibly in retaliation, online and the girls, and the boys, have a much different reaction than they do to Scarlett's photo. Even Hannah Arendt's theory of the guilt of the bystander is given a contemporary massage.



The results could easily be didactic and Placey takes a big risk in having the characters speak directly to the audience as narrators as well as characters. But their narration is oblivious, extremely fast-paced, and, for a plot that skips about in time, supplies coherence. The cast is called upon not only to play their basic characters believably at ages five through 40-something, but also to inhabit historical figures, sundry bit players, and, to great comic effect, posturing boys who are also somewhat like that. Director Esther Jun keeps things moving and intensely physical, but the cast's chameleonesque timing is remarkable.

Shakura Dickson as Scarlett has not only the weight of that metaphorical name, but also needs to hold centrestage with only the notoriety of the photo, which we never see, to define her character. The others - Nadine Bhabhas as a self-centred wannabe star, Lucy Hill as an airhead, Rachel Vanduzer as the worrier, Tess Bengler as the moral authority with the best ringing non-feminist indictment - all get lots to play with and with which to enchant. The meanest of the mean girls, Cynthia Jimenez-Hicks ([Hello Again](#)), speeds from self-centred innocent to coquette to vicious and back with a flip of her hair or one glance at her ubiquitous cell phone.

Allison Edwards-Crewe is the girl with the moral doubts, the conscience, the girl who felt the most ostracized until Scarlett had the misfortune of disrobing. So it is fabulously ironic and tasty when she gets a number, the context of which can't be revealed but must be seen, that almost stops the show. It would stop the show, if the show weren't a runaway train speeding toward Dickson's big moment where her previous passivity proves to be just a slow burn to a fiery climax. And the audience suddenly realizes how much empathy she has earned by subtly appearing to have done little, by being the one naturalistic performance in a sea of virtuosity.

Though the individual moments of *Girls Like That* are blunt and unsubtle - the set design and lighting verges on overbearing metaphorically - the overall effect is thought provoking, questioning. And an indictment as much as it is social commentary. The English accents are initially distracting but then the British school system has a hierarchical structure that amplifies the horror. And the accents allow for some jokes at Canada's expense as well as a heartbreaking reference that resonates. Entering the theatre itself, we were warned that the show is "one hour, 45 minutes with no intermission," but when the curtain call began I had to check my watch to verify that fact. We had been royally entertained and given some lingering bitter insights in what felt like a burst of adrenaline.

Girls Like That continues until Sun, May 27 at Tarragon Theatre, 30 Bridgman Ave.

tarragontheatre.com

Photos by Cylla von Tiedemann



DREW ROWSOME

★★★★☆

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ANDRÉ



Fabulous.

Not only is that the best superlative to describe Andre Leon Talley and the documentary *The Gospel According to Andre*, it is also the word used most often in the film. And quite possibly in this review.

Talley has been at the epicentre of the fashion universe for decades and the film is full of designers and fashionistas who sing his praise. Marc Jacobs, Tom Ford, Sandra Bernhard, Isabella Rossellini (and her charming pigs), Norma Kamali, Whoopi Goldberg and Rhianna are just a few of the famous faces and names featured. And many more appear in archival footage.

Talley began as a receptionist at *Interview* magazine and became a crucial part of the Warhol and Studio 54 scene. At the same time he volunteered at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art where, a hilarious story, he became a protege of Diana Vreeland. From there he worked as a writer and editor at *Vogue* and *Woman's Wear Daily*, became a fixture in the front row of fashion shows, hosted a radio show on fashion for Sirius XM, was a judge on *America's Next Top Model* (oddly not mentioned in the film), a fashion consultant, and was just all around fabulous.

The timeline in *The Gospel According to Andre* is vague - as are most actual work titles of fashionistas, writers and celebrities - but that is because the film has a much more important agenda. It is great fun watching Talley swan around in his elaborate caftans and capes, making pronouncements and being fabulous, but *The Gospel According to Andre* also gets him to reminisce and chart his history. Born into segregation and being a black man, a big black man (Talley is 1.98 metres tall and, as he says, "I was thin until 40 and then bloated up like a manatee"), Talley had to work hard to make it in the fashion world.



His solution was to get a degree in French and to study fashion and art in meticulous detail. In the film he tells friends of shocking Parisians with his fluency, and Anna Wintour admits that she hired him because his knowledge of fashion history was much deeper than hers. One wonders if he ever told her, as he does the film audience, that his grandmother's church parishioners were his first and defining inspiration of what a fashion show should be. The Gospel According to Andre explores his intellect and his wit before noting and quoting that he had little to no love life, and has never been in love.

Talley has a bitter monologue where he describes how he had to be a neutered black man in order to be accepted in society and the fashion world. He rails against the sexual implications of being labelled a "black buck. How offensive, how rude" and an "African Prince," still resents those who gossiped that he got his start by sleeping with Vreeland, and disparages a Yves St Laurent employee who nicknamed him "Queen Kong." Though he is never as blunt or crass, he has fought against the stigma of the fear of the BBC from childhood. It is a powerful passage, biting relevant beyond his rise in the '70s, underscored by the many images of Talley interacting with black designers, models and celebrities, all of whom went through the same or similar discrimination.

Talley says he has always been "flamboyant" and he comes across as a confident gay man. His sexuality is never addressed except for descriptions of the lack of it, and one coy comment reflecting on his life in the early '70s. Fran Liebowitz says of the '70s that "promiscuous doesn't begin to describe it. Sex was like orange juice," then Talley describes his life at the time as "sexless." Fortunately he may be exaggerating for effect. He relates that his grandmother, as big a force in his life as Vreeland, insisted he come home for Christmas because she was afraid he was sleeping with a white woman. Talley chuckles and says, "If she only knew."

The Gospel According to Andre teases Talley's sexuality when Talley recounts first befriending Karl Lagerfeld. Instead of sex, they bond over fashion and that appears to be the pattern of his life. It is the only time that The Gospel According to Andre is deceptive, for the rest of the film, director Kate Novack expertly mixes interviews, photographs and archival footage into a studiedly casual and very incisive portrait. Like fashion, where small details can make or break a design or ensemble, The Gospel According to Andre weaves themes and symbols - veils, the colour red, gowns vs caftans vs capes, the election of Trump - to create a portrait of a man who appears to have it all but has paid a horrible price.

Talley is shown, surrounded by luxury, and it did my heart wonders to see that this arbitrator of taste has decorated the grounds of his home with garden gnomes. A small personal victory found in a film chronicling the triumph of an unlikely but fabulous fashion superstar.

Fabulous.

The Gospel According to Andre opens Fri, May 25 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St W. tiff.net



The Female Gaze

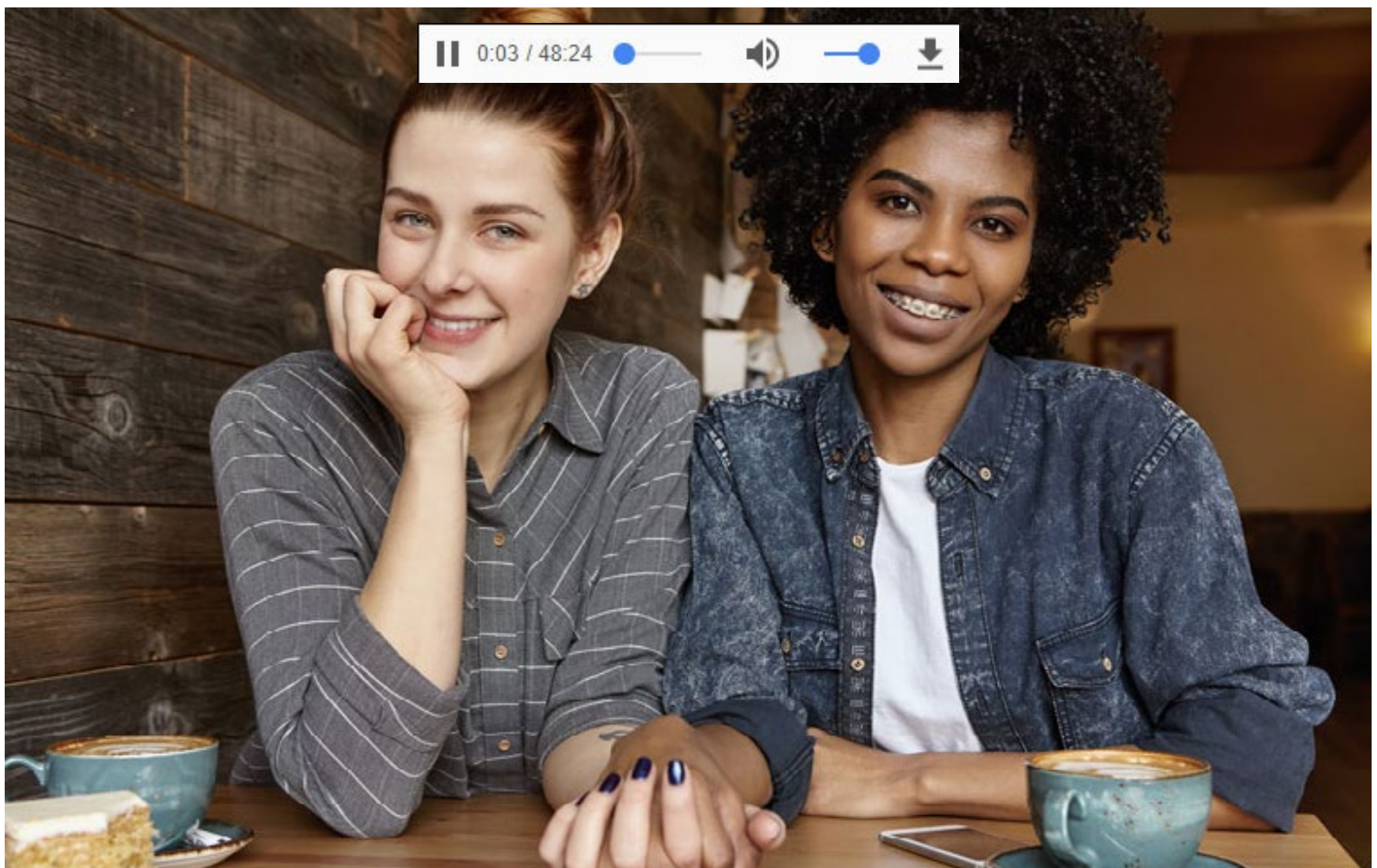
MARK TARA



Rainbow Country, a gay radio show helping give voice to the LGBT community, is joined in the studio by lesbian couple Ivana and Jackie for [episode 95](#).

The couple share their views on topics like the lack of lesbian spaces - Where have they gone? - dating Apps like HER, and so much more.

Tune in and get turned on to gay talk radio Toronto style: Rainbow Country, Tuesdays at midnight on CIUT 895FM



MARK TARA

RAINBOW COUNTRY

Tuesday's Midnight @ CIUT 89.5FM

DREW ROWSOME



May 24 –
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Toronto LGBT
Film Festival

Time to grab a highlighter - or use the handy "Festival Planner" button on the Inside Out website - and start choosing which films are the must-sees of this year's edition of Inside Out. Screenings do sell out and tickets are already on sale, so hard decisions have to be made in advance. However do leave some wiggle room for the word of mouth that makes Inside Out so much fun. There are always unexpected pleasures that explode on the screen and surprising celebrity sightings that seduce the starfucker in all of us.



Everyone will approach the festival in their own way. Some are drawn to the big premieres, some want to catch the more obscure and offbeat that may not ever get a large release. And some just go for the sexiest - the films promoted with shirtless photos and nudity warnings always sell out first. The following films are a fraction of the ones that have me intrigued - and of course it is an intensely personal set of choices - and as the screeners arrive, there will be more detailed reviews added.



Musicals are the great gay artform and *Canary* is a South African production following a new wave/Boy George-loving youth who joins The Canaries, The South African Defence Choir in 1985. Our hero Johan not only sings and dances but has a moral dilemma when he finds that singing and dancing is still contributing to the war effort. And, of course, he falls in love with a fellow canary, Wolfgang.

Sook Yin-Lee is fearless and couldn't be dull if she tried. With *Octavio is Dead!* she tackles

Sook Yin-Lee is fearless and couldn't be dull if she tried. With *Octavio is Dead!* she tackles directing "a moody and sexually charged supernatural tale." It sounds vaguely Gothic, with a dead mysterious father leaving an inheritance with "sensual" strings attached. The mother is played by Rosanna Arquette which makes the film an instant quirky curiosity.



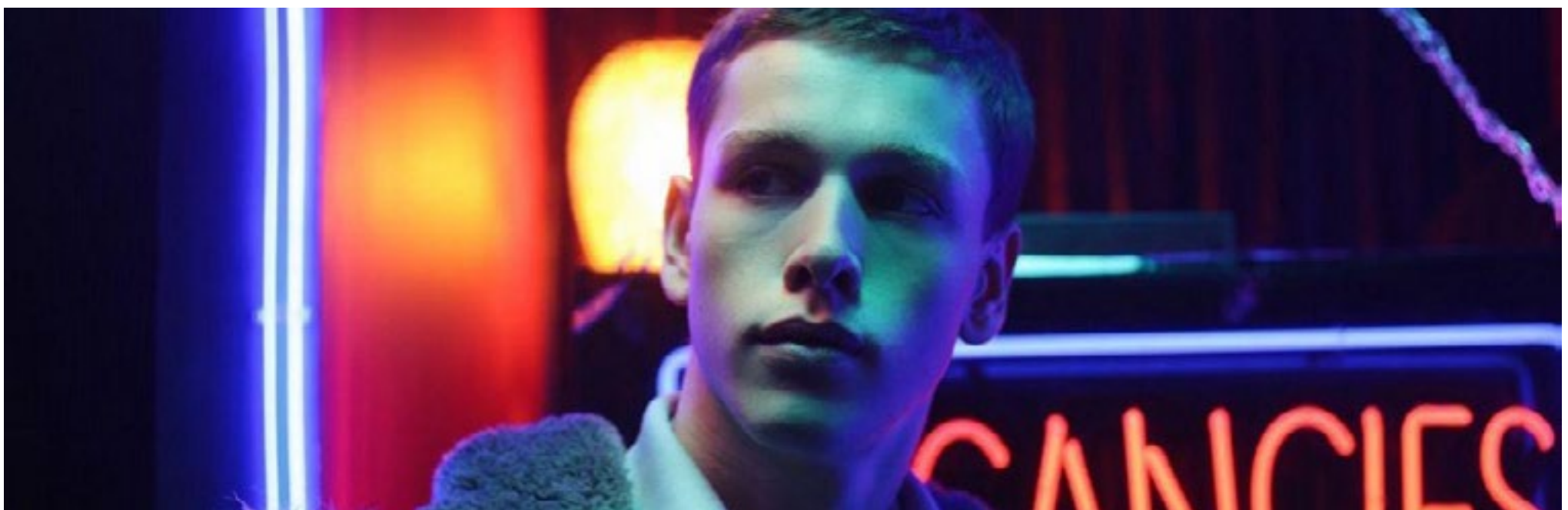
Yin-Lee was directed in *Shortbus* by the creator of *Hedwig* himself, John Cameron Mitchell. Based on a story by Neil Gaiman of [American Gods](#) and [Doctor Who](#), *How to Talk to Girls at Parties* involves aliens and the rise of punk in suburban London. The only thing keeping this from being the must-see of the festival is that it stars Nicole Kidman who can elevate or desecrate any project she appears in. She plays "Boadicea the punk queen," so I predict the worst she can do is camp.

Alaska is a Drag was, as a [13-minute short at the imagineNATIVE film and media arts festival](#), a charming gay rom-com. Now fleshed out to feature length there should be more room for the drag extravaganzas, boxing bouts and romance among the roughnecks. The short packed an emotional romantic wallop and with room to breathe, and linger on the exceptionally handsome leads, more should be better.

Noting that *Alaska is a Drag* grew from a short to a feature, this is probably the place to mention the shorts programs. Loosely grouped with teasing titles, each program contains a handful of short to very short films that can range from mini-narratives to one-liners to arty headscratchers. Experience teaches that one of the films will be a dud but at least one will be fabulous: it's worth the investment. My curiosity is piqued by the gay malecentric shorts programs - *Riding in Cars with Boys*, *He's Just Not That Into You*, and *Boys on the Side* - with *Shit! (An Opera)* taking the prize for the best description of the festival:

[After a particularly impressive trip to the bathroom, Frankie is inspired to bottom for the first time.](#)

The most celebrity-studded film (aside from [fest opener A Kid Like Jake](#)) is *Lez Bomb* where high hilarity ensues when coming out is attempted at Thanksgiving. When the extended family arriving for turkey and farcical melodrama includes Cloris Leachman, Bruce Dern and the eternally hunky heartthrob Steve Guttenberg (the bulging short shorts in *Cocoon*, the graduation to daddyhood in *Lavalantula*, everything in *Can't Stop the Music*), *Lez Bomb* should be this year's *Sordid Lives*.



The allure, and the opportunity to expose much nubile flesh, of sex work appear in *Hard Paint* and *Postcards from London*. Both have an artistic edge with the rentboys and hustlers being either into body painting or discovering that "knowing the history of gay art is key to their success." Art, glamour and the refugee crisis collide in *Mr Gay Syria* with a tiara and survival up for grabs.



Documentaries are the backbone of the gay film festival experience with experiences that range from joyful to heartrenching. Trans/black Brazilian musician Linn da Quebrada gets a biographical treatment in *Bixa Travesty*, and *Larger Than Life: The Kevin Aucoin Story* has Cher and supermodels extolling the legendary photographer. Canada's shame, lest we forget, is explored in *The Fruit Machine*, and *Man Made* documents a trans bodybuilding contest and the lives of the competitors.



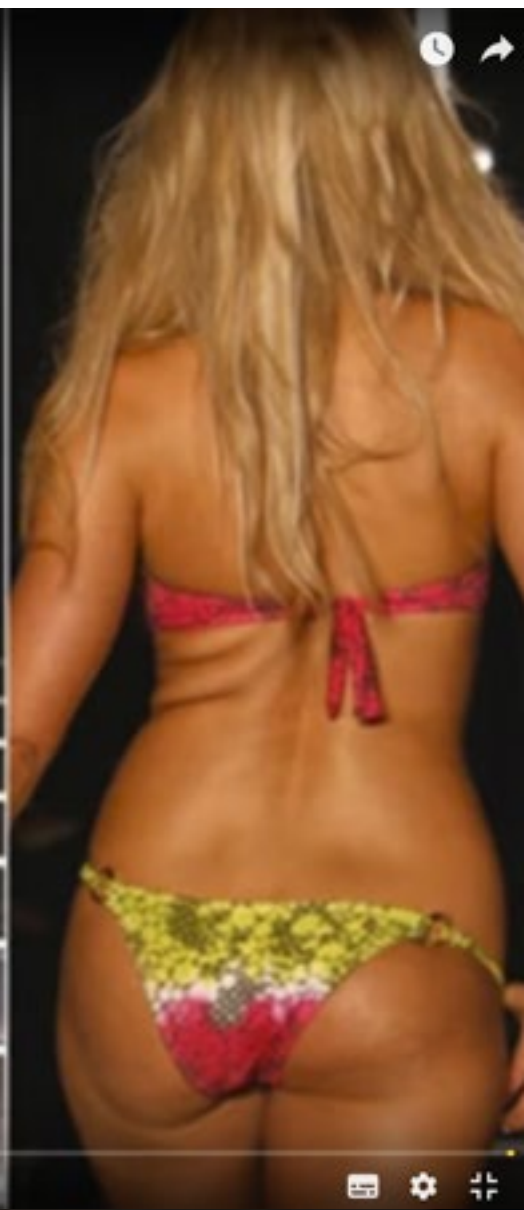
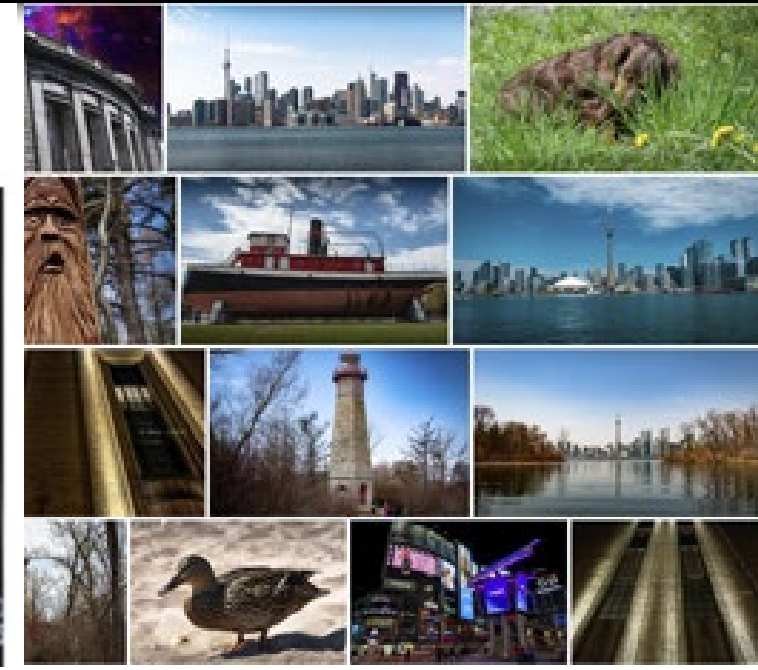
And that is just from my first readthrough of the catalogue . . . And doesn't cover any of the many parties, receptions, popcorn and red carpets that are so much a part of the Inside Out experience. Any of these films could live up to the hype. Any could exceed it. And I can guarantee that there is a great gay masterpiece in the catalogue that I have missed but will hear about while waiting in line and will add to the list. And enjoy on the screen.



Inside Out runs from Thurs, May 24 to Sun, June 3 at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St W. insideout.ca



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We Know Gay



Drew Rowsome - MGT Editor, a writer, reviewer, musician and the lead singer of Crackpuppy. drewrowsome.blogspot.ca.



Sean Leber - Founder, MGT Creative Director, and contributing editor.



Raymond Helkio - is an author, director and award-winning filmmaker. He cofounded TheReadingSalon.ca



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Bil Antoniou - is an actor and play writer. He is also movie reviewer who has been writing for myoldaddiction.com



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